

AUSTRALASIAN CATHOLIC COALITION FOR CHURCH REFORM (ACCCR)

Call, Principles, Aims and structure

Adopted 23 February 2023

1. Our Call

“Canon 212 §3)

According to the knowledge, competence, and prestige which they possess, they (The Christian Faithful) have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church and to make their opinion known to the rest of the Christian faithful, without prejudice to the integrity of faith and morals, with reverence toward their pastors, and attentive to common advantage and the dignity of persons.”

Code of Canon Law. Book II. The People of God. Part 1 The Christian Faithful. The Obligations and Rights of all the Christian Faithful (Canon 208 - 223)

Our Call as disciples is to be:

- A Catholic Church that reflects Jesus’ message of love, justice, equality, peace and forgiveness;
- A Catholic Church in which all people are directed by their consciences and assume their responsibility for the mission of the Church;
- A Catholic Church which inspires its people to recapture an experience of the mystical and the spiritual;
- A Catholic Church where God-given authority is used wisely and justly to propagate the teachings of Christ and respects the role of the People of God;
- A Catholic Church where all people, men and women, single and partnered, minister in a spirit of co-responsibility for the Church;
- A Catholic Church that influences Australasian society to be ever more just, compassionate and egalitarian.

2. Operating Principles

Preamble

ACCCR’s original *Our Call* was adopted in 2012. This statement was carefully discerned to recognise the signs of the times and to inspire the people of God directed by their conscience to assume responsibility to form a critical mass of the faithful for renewal in the Australian Catholic Church . It was designed to be attractive, succinct ,accessible and flexible. Since then there have been significant events and achievements including, the election of Pope Francis, the promotion of his reformist agenda, the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, marriage equality for LGBTIQUA+, the reports ‘Getting Back on Mission’ and ‘Light from the Southern Cross:

Promoting Co-Responsible Governance in the Catholic Church in Australia', the Australian Plenary Council and the Synod of Bishops' Synod on Synodality.

Catholics too have changed. Many Catholics have turned their backs on our church, others are hoping for renewal and reform and seeking a church which embraces and acknowledges them as having been incorporated in Christ through baptism, constituted as the people of God and sharers in Christ's priestly, prophetic mission entrusted to the Church to bring love, justice and peace to the world¹. The draft 2023 Operating Principles reflect these changes and achievements and detail how to live the Church that Pope Francis's leadership directs us to.

Jesus inspires his disciples through the Spirit to form communities to proclaim and live the Good News of love, justice, equality, self-giving and hope. Having reflected prayerfully, listened and discerned carefully, we Catholics of Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand affirm and adopt these operating principles.

The Spirit is calling us to be a synodal church in which we, the People of God, live and model Christ's concern for the common good, human dignity, local decision-making and solidarity.

1 The Common Good:

- 1.1 Means being a church that walks and works together to realize the vision and mission of Jesus Christ both in our lives and in our world by upholding the gospel call for love, peace, justice, equality, hope and forgiveness;
- 1.2 A church that necessitates us as the People of God, to model the church we seek;
- 1.3 An inclusive church which embraces all and seeks to engage the talents, gifts and wisdom of all the faithful inviting them to contribute collaboratively and synodally at each and every level of decision making in the universal church, and specifically in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand;

2 Human Dignity:

- 2.1 A church that recognises everyone is a child of God and is equal in dignity and by virtue of baptism must be eligible for any office of orders, mission and management;
- 2.2 Denounces discrimination in all its forms whether on the basis of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religious affiliation, marital status or political affiliation and embraces diversity and inclusion;
- 2.3 Upholds and defends freedom of conscience;

¹ Code of Canon Law par 204,1.

- 2.4 Acknowledges and respects the spirituality of all people;
- 2.5 Reiterates that the *sensus fidei* (Latin: "sense of the faith") qualifies all those baptised in Christ in the dignity of the prophetic function of Jesus Christ, so that we can discern what are the ways of the Gospel in the present;²

3 **Subsidiarity (Decision making at the local level):**

- 3.1 Subsidiarity requires that decisions are made, wherever appropriate, by the people closest and most affected by the issues and concerns of the community. That is, a central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more immediate or local level. This principle reiterates that people have the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives;
- 3.2 Supports working with local communities to assist, promote and develop their capacity in decision-making so they can better respond to their own needs;
- 3.3 Emphasises that transparency and accountability to avoid the dilution of trust are key elements contributing to effective collaboration and co-responsibility;

4 **Solidarity:**

- 4.1 Affirms that, as the People of God, we fulfil God's purposes by creating a network of multiple relationships of love, justice and solidarity with others;
- 4.2 Calls us to share the Eucharist with all those who wish to receive it in a spirit of love and unity;
- 4.3 Invites us to take shared responsibility for maintaining, building up and strengthening our church communities;
- 4.4 Asks that we work to ensure that the traditions, culture, heritage and rights of First Nations people are well known and understood;
- 4.5 Appeals to us to embrace our connection to the people of the land, the Earth itself and all of creation, and with each other in our communities, locally and globally;
- 4.6 Reinforces that we are stewards of the Earth not owners of it which should impact upon our lives, church practices and liturgies;
- 4.7 Reminds us of Christ's preferential option for the poor;
- 4.8 Prompts us that people of all faiths are children of God and as a consequence are our siblings;

² <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2021-09/pope-francis-discourse-rome-faithful-synodal-process.html>

- 4.9 Insists that we prioritise the pastoral care of those who have suffered abuse at the hands of our church especially First Nations people and those sexually abused by the ordained, in the hope of attaining healing and reconciliation.

3. AIMS

As a Coalition we aim, always with the benefit of reflective and prayerful discernment, to:

1. Contribute to the Spirit's transformation of the Catholic Church world-wide - in Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond, from a Church in which its Mission is entrusted to a priestly caste of celibate men to a Church in which all the baptised, especially women, are given an opportunity to use their God given talents, skill and knowledge to advancing the Mission of the Church and to participate in guiding its direction;
2. Be a prophetic voice within the institutional church and in the public arena;
3. Collaborate in carrying out our shared Call;
4. Facilitate communication between affiliated groups and be a means of consensus;
5. Encourage the sharing of resources between affiliated groups and other relevant parties;
6. Support the initiatives and programs of affiliated groups when requested;
7. Initiate and implement projects directed at church reform and transformation;
8. Draw on Catholic social teaching in reading the 'Signs of the Times' and responding to our Call;
9. Model synodality in our relationships and work within the Coalition;
10. Seek to work with the ACBC and/or diocese to implement reform;
11. Seek to expand the reform movement across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

In reaching to achieve these aims we prioritise prayer and discernment as foundational to our activities.

4. Structure

Membership of ACCCR. Seventeen groups are currently affiliated with ACCCR (February 2023). Each of the groups has its own focus and history. All are united in the call for renewal

in the Church. The Coalition is open to other groups who are committed to our Call and other key statements. These are listed in the Appendix.

Fees. Nominal membership fees for affiliated groups are not considered as needed at this time. This may change in the future.

Representatives Group. The Representatives Group currently consists of two Representatives of each affiliated group. It is the ultimate decision-making body of ACCCR, responsible for core positions, setting policy and strategic directions. In making decisions a consensus and the common good will be sought. In the absence of consensus, discussion will be held as to the appropriate way forward which is likely to vary with the nature and import of the proposal. The Group may appoint Project Groups for specific tasks.

Meetings of the Representatives Group. The Representatives Group will meet at least four times each year. The Group itself will decide on a Chair for its meetings. Members of affiliate groups who are not formal representatives may join these meetings but not vote. Meetings may be conducted by electronic means and representatives are not required to attend in person.

Executive: An executive will be elected to implement the Aims of ACCCR and to ensure effectiveness, accountability, representation and transparency. The Executive will be delegated with appropriate authority and responsibility by the Representatives Group.

A new legal entity, such as an incorporated body, is not considered for ACCCR at this time. If such a requirement becomes evident later, it can be dealt with then.

Executive membership. The executive will have up to six members with two co-chairs. The co-chairs should be gender balanced if possible but open to the possibility of a single chair, male or female if that is seen as the best option at a particular time. Gender balance will be aimed for amongst the remaining members of the executive.

Gender balance in the overall executive will apply.

Election to the Executive. The Representatives Group elects the members of the Executive, including the co-chairs specifically.

Members of the Executive are elected for two year terms with half the members being replaced each year. At the first election, half the members will be elected for one year terms.

Meetings of the Executive. The Executive will meet at least six times a year. Minutes of meetings will be circulated to all Representatives.

Spokespersons. The co-chairs will be the normal spokespersons for ACCCR. Co-chairs will respond to media events and other opportunities for promoting ACCCR's Aims in accordance with established Coalition positions, first seeking endorsement of the executive and member representatives if a Coalition position is uncertain.

Finances. Financial arrangements will remain as they are for now, with appreciation for the support of Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn. We acknowledge the need for credible,

transparent and regular financial reporting and a need for alternative arrangements may emerge in time.

We receive an annual official audit of our finances from Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn.

Project or Task Groups. Project Groups may be established by the Executive for particular projects or tasks such as liaising with the ACBC. Others (non-executive persons) may be co-opted onto Project groups. Project Groups will have clear and agreed delegations. The voices of First Nations people should be heard and heeded.

Appendix 1. ACCCR Key Statements

- Call Statement of 2012
- ACCCR submission to the Royal Commission
- Press Release, ACCCR ANU meeting 17 October 2013 9am -4pm
- University House ANU 40 attendees including Fr Frank Brennan and Fr Peter Maher.
- Early ACCCR correspondence to Pope Francis, ACBC, the Papal Nuncio and the Australian Ambassador to the Holy See.
- Correspondence to Australian Bishops on matters including the Synod on the Family 2014-15
- Communiques from the ACCCR's 2018 and 2020 Gatherings,
- ACCCR '*Renewal Propositions for the Catholic Church*' published as Supplement 4 to *Getting Back on Mission* (Catholics for Renewal), ACCCR's and any current documents, (Appendix X)
- ACCCR, *A Church for All – A Guide to the Australian Plenary Council ... and Beyond*, Garratt, Melbourne, 2021, and
- ACCCR, *Response to the Synod on Synodality: Final submission*, August 2022

Appendix 2. Members of ACCCR (January 2024)

- 'Be the Change', New Zealand
- Cardijn Community
- Catholics Moving Forward Shoalhaven
- Communities of the Way
- Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn
- Concerned Catholics Tasmania
- Concerned Catholics Wagga Wagga
- Concerned Catholics Wollongong
- Cyber Christian Community
- For the Innocents
- Welcoming Christian Community
- Rainbow Catholics InterAgency for Ministry
- South Australian Catholics for an Evolving Church
- VOCAL (Voices of Catholic Australian Laity)
- WATAC (Women and the Australian Church)
- WWITCH (Women's Wisdom in the Church)