

Anglican Parish of Tweed Heads



EMERGING MODELS OF PARISH AND COMMUNITY LIFE

MISSION AND MINISTRY OPTIONS FOR 2020 AND BEYOND

Objective:

To assist St. Cuthbert's Church family to reimagine God's calling to be a faithful and relevant church into the future and to enable decisions to be made regarding:

- 1) the parish ministry model,
- 2) the facilities required for the future ministry model, and
- 3) a means of financing ministry into the future.

1. The Parish Ministry Model

1.1 Decisions Required

The people of the Parish of Tweed Heads are confronting the reality that their inherited way of being the church no longer offers a practical way for the mission and ministry of Christ, to be accessible to those beyond the present faith community.

In its search for appropriate strategies of mission and ministry that will enable those beyond the existing church to explore and practice faith in God, a Parish Mission and Ministry Development Team has prepared an 'OPTIONS' paper, to enable the Parish to prayerfully prepare to make decisions that will enable the church to faithfully respond to its call to partner Christ, in the ongoing mission of the church in the 21st century.

The decisions required of the Parish family are to determine:

- 1 the Mission and Ministry model to be implemented to move forward;
- 2 the property and facility options and associated financing, to facilitate the Mission and Ministry model for the future; and
- 3 the financing of the new Mission and Ministry model.

1.2 Current Status

The Tweed Heads Parish has a significant history over the past 50 years of creatively responding to the changing challenges to be an effective church in mission and ministry.

The visionary initiatives taken in the 1970's, in hindsight, were awesome! A new spacious church for worship; a new parish hall to facilitate ministry events; a new Rectory to accommodate the parish priest and family; establishing a 76 unit low cost retirement village; and giving birth to Lindisfarne to grow into the superb centre of learning and ministry that it is today; together these initiatives highlight a church with a "DNA" that takes seriously, being a relevant and faithful ministry unit in the changing times and place in which the church now finds itself. In more recent times, this parish pioneered the four-year Education for Ministry Course in the Diocese, enabling many to grow a deeper faith in God.

Now history moves on and in the changing society of the 21st century, again the family of God acknowledges that new initiatives must now be taken to build on the mission and ministry of the past.

A new model of Mission and Ministry is required to cater for existing ministry and to connect with people currently beyond the life of the existing church. Facilities for a new era of traditional and pioneering ministry are required, to cater for new ministry strategies which need to be explored and introduced. New methods to finance future ministries are also urgently required.

Of particular note are the following realities:

- a. Lindisfarne Grammar School is now a ministry unit in its own right, and is open to developing new ministry strategies with young families, in partnership with the parish church family.
- b. St. Cuthbert's Retirement Village now requires the professional management of an organization highly practiced in overseeing the care of such complexes and has now been sold and transferred to a new operator.
- c. Clergy housing can now be managed either by the church providing standard housing, or offering a stipend package that allows clergy to organize their own housing within the community.

The Christian church around the world, including for the Parish of Tweed Heads, acknowledges that without listening and connecting with those beyond the current church family, potentially there will be no practicing church family when the current ageing congregation has passed away. No doubt there are many contributing factors to this demise, but essentially it is an outcome resulting from a prioritizing of liturgy and pastoral care in the church's ministry at the expense of reaching out in mission and connecting with people external to the church and not acknowledging, nor taking advantage of, new opportunities associated with the emerging culture of recent times (eg, not introducing strategies to better connect with the broader community).

Conversations with all church members who have responded to the invitation to discuss their hopes and dreams for the future church, have taken place with the Locum Minister. These conversations have revealed an overwhelming realization and willingness to explore and commit to new ways and strategies that have the potential to enable the church of today and the future, to facilitate mission and ministry, not only for the current family of God, but also with the cohort who refer to themselves as "*spiritual but not religious*".

From these conversations, it is clear that the current dilemmas for many parishioners are:

- a. the relative comfort and satisfaction with their place in the church as it is experienced today;
- b. the recognition that traditional worship at St. Cuthbert's is uninviting and impractical to those in the age groups of their children and grandchildren;
- c. their lack of experience or vision of what the church of the future might look like with a multi staffed church, providing a range of mission and ministry opportunities that acknowledges that "*one size does not fit all*";
- d. the challenge of change from ministry that focused on worship and pastoral care of the faithful which once appeared sufficient, to a mission and ministry that responds to an evolving society in which populations have grown, institutions have been found wanting, individualism prevails and culture is relatively *unchurched*; and
- e. their stage of life limiting their belief and stamina, that they might have left it too late to initiate the changes that may be required.

And yet overwhelmingly the church family is indicating that they want to discover and embrace a new practice of being church, for the sake of its mission and the spiritual health of the community and their families.

1.3 New Options for Mission and Ministry

1.3.1 Ministry with Seniors

The current ministry enables several hundred people, mostly in their senior years, to worship; be nurtured in the faith; to minister in the community; to find support and friendship; and to practice their faith. This can continue and progress to facilitate intergenerational worship and promoting inclusivity and hospitality to visitors and new comers.

Building on this will include pioneering new and innovative strategies to both offer an expansion of opportunities of ministry for the current church family, as well as creating more accessible ways for others to explore and find faith.

Initiatives could include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- a. appointing a dedicated full or part time person to focus on ministry with seniors, but including intergenerational worship;
- b. facilitating the recognition, training, support and utilizing of the giftedness, wisdom and generosity of the church family in areas of ministry and service that will be identified; and
- c. involving the church family as opportunity arises, in other pioneering ministries being considered as further options.

The benefits of these initiatives are that they acknowledge and build on what God is already doing in the church community, but with greater allocation of resources to promote and build this ministry. It attends to the new possibility of making this ministry more accessible to others in this growing senior demography, as well as enriching the worship to both cater for seniors as well as younger generations.

1.3.2 Ministry with Younger Families

Currently there is almost no evidence of ministry that connects with younger families, youth and children being undertaken in the Parish. This would be true except for the fact that the Parish gave birth to Lindisfarne Grammar School some 40 years ago. By envisioning a future of the church being connected with young families, this fantastic development has enabled not only access to excellent opportunities of education, but gives students the chance to explore, experience and commit to the Christian faith in an environment that engenders such opportunities. Thousands of young people have had this experience and thousands more will access this opportunity into the future.

Pioneering Ministry encourages churches to seek to establish connections with people beyond the existing parish church, by meeting with them at their common and safe meeting grounds rather than expecting them to come to us. Therefore, a new full-time ministry that connects with families connected with Lindisfarne, seems a *no-brainer*. The Principal, the Head of Junior School and the College Chaplain have expressed a desire to partner with St. Cuthbert's in creating this Ministry with Young Families with a view to it expanding to families beyond the school in the future.

This initiative could include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- a. members of St. Cuthbert's Church having an active participation with students and families at the Schools, in conjunction with school events and practices, especially in roles that give

- students and families access to “substitute grandparent figures” who are missing from many families today;
- b. contemporary worship services, youth and children activities, at locations conducive to the events, and with music that has a wide appeal;
 - c. gatherings for interest groups, discussion groups, Q and A’s, Book reading, and food nights; and
 - d. opportunities for students in their Gap Year to serve as interns in this ministry.

The benefits of Ministry with Young Families are the opportunities that will be available for younger generations to connect with God’s church in ways that they can relate to, and times that are conducive to them, as well as greater chances to find opportunities to serve in new and creative ways.

1.3.3 Centre for Spirituality

A significant connecting point with people beyond the church today, who are open to exploring the meaning and purpose of life, will be the church’s ability to offer events and centres of practical spirituality. These may include opportunities to explore and experience mindfulness, meditation, retreats, quiet days, contemplation, wellness, wholeness, social interaction, book discussion, faith and justice, public forums, spirituality training, coffee shop ministry, pub church, all in an environment that offers and reflects Christian spirituality.

With a growing number of people training in spiritual direction or companioning in the North Coast, the parish can establish a Spirituality Centre as a place of contact for those who acknowledge that they are “*spiritual but not religious*”. Such a centre will need to be coordinated, marketed, and engage others on sessional or event basis to provide the necessary skills and leadership.

Benefits include:

- a. practical ways to respond to God’s call to go into all the world and make disciples;
- b. providing opportunities for a variety of people from both the Senior’s Ministry and Ministry with Young Families to become involved in and support outreach ministry with their gifts and skills; and
- c. offering a variety of entrance points for people to explore faith, hope and love.

1.4 Recommendations

It is recommended:

- a. that the Parish agrees to developing a model of Mission and Ministry for 2020 and beyond that establishes:
 - i. Ministry with Seniors
 - ii. Ministry with Young Families
 - iii. A Spirituality Centreas proposed in “1:3 New Options for Mission and Ministry”; and
- b. that Bishop Murray and the Presentation Board be requested to seek a Parish Rector who is called and capable of recruiting and leading a team to facilitate the Mission and Ministry model into the future, as proposed in 1.4 (a).

*Because we believe we are called by God to be a church in mission,
this paper is for our prayerful consideration.*

Reimagining Church: *shaped for mission*

How might the church respond
to the changes in our culture?

What is the future of the church?