Summary of Archdeaconry Meetings on Rural Ministry

Piako Maugatautiri, Waitomo, Waikato

Background and Diocesan Rural Day

31 July and 8 August 2021

Page 1 Summary of how we got here: parish visits, gathered diocesan day.

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Page 6 Bishop Philip: 7 supports for rural invigoration.

What we said in parishes and Te Kuiti ( for those who were not there☺ )

* God is alive and active through God’s people in our rural communities.
* We love God and we gather to worship and live as the body of Christ in our communities.
* There was a long list of all the activities we do.
* We are older communities and ageing with limited energy.
* Taranaki reps shared their experience and concerns that focused around not having support in ministry so that ministers felt exposed and under resourced.

We considered our context

* No one size fits all – people live in rural towns for different reasons, influx of people seeking a new lifestyle from Auckland, Tauranga, Hamilton.
* Some towns have rural related industries, support businesses; others are depleted.
* All rural parishes across the diocese reported housing crises, and growing poverty.
* Economic decisions in 80’s have changed in family patterns – younger families are familiar with debt and everyone working, limited time to do the basics. Older people have been there and done that. There are fewer people in church, fewer volunteers.
* ‘Rural’ practices have changed, rural towns have changed. Farming is targeted and rural people are reporting high stress levels.
* Changing populations are bringing mission opportunities.

Tikanga Pākehā Ministry Council on rural ministry

* University of Waikato research – in spite of population growth in our region the long term trend is down. Services are reduced, infra structure under pressure, a future of decline. Numbers of people living in poverty is growing.
* The situation is extreme for Māori.

**The Archdeaconry Map:** built with ministry units, resources, people, services and stipends.

**Cross parish groups** reviewed the Map

Using the information you prepared and the map:

* Where is God is leading?
* What patterns are emerging?
* Are there connections between units?
* Are there existing connections within towns?

Piako Maungatautiri

What is Church?

* We need to return to being a missional church, to restore this identity that we had from beginning of Christianity in Aotearoa.

Gather in home groups, then when these grow people look to gather and make a church.

Te Aroha gave an example of using the Alpha course – the church is currently closed (seismic issues).

God’s work in the world here and now

* We are all doing what as much as we can, some places struggle to fill Vestry and diocesan positions.
* ++Philip reminds us of the call to be people of reconciliation, partnership with Māori is happening in some places, Katikati gave a good news story.

Caution not to place extra burden on Māori to link into Pākehā ideas / plans, but to seek genuine partnership taking care about timing and discernment, God inviting us to walk humbly.

* We were reminded that ministers and parishes feel that they are really stretched and its almost too hard to add more and more things, cross cultural, cross geographical boundaries. Hard on limited resources.
* We have enough struggles in our own place; it is difficult to look beyond.

However there is evidence of local co-operation; no need to go further.

* We are isolated, we stand alone. This affects our soul.
* God is leading us towards solutions \*
* Housing is a problem; there are many lonely people who have come to NZ to work and are isolated *–*(*these realities were honoured, they have been recorded in the Te Kuiti summary)*

Ministry Provision

* Resources are stretched, it feels like we are moving chess pieces around the board \*
* For growth a large parish needs more clergy to serve.
* There is a huge gap in the South Waikato, who are blessed by gifted lay people willing to serve but clearly we need to do something (speaker from Bay of Plenty).
* Put units together geographically for governance, share skills and energy with more resources.

There are clergy who are already serving in different places and others who are willing to do this. Clergy sharing.

* A group of parishes sharing a minister, each paying a portion of the stipend and the minister spending a period at each church, ie one week a month at Tokoroa 10 am service next at another , maybe travelling between two churches with different times. The churches pay travel, stipend and provide hospitality on the Sunday. The minister to do Eucharist service, help support parish events and vestry meetings.
* Why do we want clergy?

Do we need ordained people rushing about giving sacraments? Is there another way of doing this better?

The clergy pool is pretty thin, are we going up the wrong ladder?

* Discern, enable and empower lay people in ministry. Lay people be permitted to minister, well taught so that they are confident.

Waitomo

Ministry Provision

* Is stipended ministry even possible anymore?

Can we look at shared ministry?

* We do need leadership for vision and going beyond maintenance.
* Can we create chaplaincy or missioner model released from ‘incumbent’ model?
* Can we expand who can lead worship and then train people to do this?
* Use of reserved sacrament – this needs to be clarified.
* Fund a youth position across boundaries. Fluid boundaries.
* Can we link with Māori, who already have networks that gather people, particularly young people?

Services on Sundays or other days / times

* Combined services across centres in the same parish..
* Shuttle from centre to centre.
* On-line options.
* Feed people – Messy Church, community dinners.
* Night Church : shared dinner, worship and discussion.

Administration

* Combined administration would be good to release us from that burden
* People would be released for mission
* This would turn our energy to mission not maintenance.

Shared ministry

* 4 parishes having ¼ time - 1 week a month: Sunday and Wednesday. Enabling a local team.

Community

* Use skills of the community for practical things that church people used to do.

Shop window

* Open days – church and diocese for people to see.

Waikato

Where is God leading?

Group 1

* Combined services across and between parish units, travel between them.
* We are a unique rural area because we are growing so we need to take our newcomers seriously. This is an opportunity for mission and service.
* Use resources to communicate with new people and make connections, Rhema bookmark with Biblical encouragement, church services and rural support network information.
* We don’t need money (although money is useful). We need help with our buildings
* We need to meet people as the first step for mission.

Group 2

* Have house churches (3 DM model of discipling); equipped to meet together in missional communities and join for celebration services.
* Stipended ministers are there to equip others to be Jesus.

Group 3

* We have changed the structure in three years. Our vision is to care for the vulnerable.
* Our priests equip and support the ministry and gifting of the people.
* Our vision is known and supported by everyone. We are a team.
* We found one person who could connect with the vulnerable, he saw Sandra, the visionary. He is equipped and supported, ‘a missioner’.
* Evangelism needs connection with people, have to find people who are connected and equip them. It’s not about the priest, he equips and enables the gifting of others.
* This needs vision, trust, and people who know we are 100% behind them and trust them to do it.
* Traditional services need to be subservient to mission, we don’t want to throw it out but keep this aside a mission focus.
* In line with the Bishop’s vision for the Diocese, discipling and transforming community, combining with other churches where there are things we do together – we take the lead and others join. Build relationships and trust, be relevant and honest.
* We are accountable for what we do.

Group 4

* Make liturgy accessible and pleasant so that when people come they can connect.

Share expertise in technology to make resources and equip people to use them.

* There are few priests so sacraments are a problem, what about the reserved sacrament.

Need a diocesan discussion on this, the rules were tightened a few years ago.

This would free up priests so they could do other things or have a day off.

* Lay ministers, we have lay people who are willing but don’t want the license, we know we need accountability in ministry, health and safety but we need to have ways to enable more lay ministry. It seems to be getting harder.
* Church in the community, gearing what we do to the needs of the community. Where there are literacy issues to use visuals, lay led with someone to do the priestly bits.

**Discernment: Parish Based Groups**

Consider your community and the possible futures

* What would be difficult for us?
* How could we prepare for these futures / changes?
* What qualities would these changes require of us?

**Waitomo**

**Difficulties for us in our places**

* Priests are already fully occupied in stipended parishes, can’t be lent elsewhere.
* The age of the clergy and people make change difficult.
* We are trialing worshipping with other congregations, it’s difficult to know where are.
* It is a challenge to manage the expectations that say that we will provide, how can we do this, and bring people on board to bring to a new future rather than put their backs up, so that they feel insulted and hurt, when people don’t realize the challenge and significance of what we are doing.
* We don’t want the elderly to think they are not important, everyone is important. How to meet everyone.
* Can we anticipate what church looks like if we are missional not defined by what we provide on Sunday morning.
* We are a ‘sent’ people, it is luxury to have a service, Christians elsewhere can’t do Sunday services, they have to meet around their lives.

Waikato

What would be difficult for us?

* Adapting to change: find ways to affirm the current congregation as we consider change, reassure them so that they are more able to adapt to changes.
* Enabling Anglicans to recognize that we are part of the Christian story with others, so that we can grow more confidence in the way we do things.
* Working out how to change our physical lay out to expand our options, we are constrained by the size and lay out of our buildings.
* Finding new leaders: people are happy to come and be part of things like Messy Church but not taking responsibility.
* Energy for people to reach others in the community.

How could we prepare for these futures / changes?

* Reclaim and recover Anglican celebrations that offer richness of our identity, be confident in who we are and connect with people in our community that appreciate that, as well as combining with others.
* Connect with other units by visiting and sharing worship, encouragement, networking.
* Include other people, find them and not try and go it alone.
* Build on our passions, facilitate more in the community, create more connections around community garden, games evening, food.
* Connect with outlying churches and support them connecting with their communities, possibly wine and cheese.
* The church is a place where the generations come together, older people losing touch with adult children and grandchildren, we can bring them to church that is open to everyone.
* In our place we have money, can provide affordable accommodation and so we can support community initiatives, we need to discern connections.
* As Māori we learn differently, we are kinesthenic learners and need to see and do.
* Take time to discern how we communicate with our communities that are right and relevant for each place and each person.

**What do we need?**

* We need greater support.
* We need lay ministers to step into roles traditionally held by clergy
* Specific training for lay ministry, different ministry tasks (W)

We considered Bishop Philip’s list of seven points supporting rural invigoration:

1. Building a culture of discipleship appropriate to our rural context.

2. Reconciling our history, building partnership with Amorangi & Iwi

3. Envisioning, enabling and equipping the ministry of lay people.

4. Effective training, support and resourcing for clergy and lay people in rural multi-church groups.

5. The simplification of governance and legal structures, the requirements for office holders and the need for administrative resourcing.

6. Addressing the burden of buildings

7. Facilitation of creative ecumenical and community partnerships