

The 2009 Annual General Meeting

The Rector's Report

Introduction

I suggest you read the Wardens and Treasurer's reports first. These are short and to the point. My report is lengthier narrative about how these things developed over the last three years. 2008 was not an isolated event – it was an outcome of the planning that began in 2006.

When I arrived just three years ago I surveyed the life of the parish, the age of the congregation, the state of the finances and, after listening to the parish leadership - it was clear that an urgent renewal process was required. Our estimation was that this had to be initiated and up-and-running within **18 months**.

We were able to do this, because of the willingness, natural talent and professional skills of so many parishioners. We may have been small in number, but rich in vision and desire to go forward. The difficulty was that such a rapid change was over-and-above what was normal for an average parish. I am thankful to the parish that they trusted the Wardens, the Parish Council and myself.

The Stages of Change & Renewal

1 WORSHIP (FIRST PHASE)

The Sunday Eucharistic worship was updated:

- Using a wide diversity of music and liturgy resources by the use of worship copyright licenses.
- Production of seasonal and festival mass books
- The style of the sanctuary was made simpler by removing all superfluous furnishings.
- The church was cleaned and partially redecorated, thanks to the generosity of a parishioner.
- The length of the Sunday worship was brought back to 60 minutes without a sense of haste or of loss.

2 ADMINISTRATION

The mode in administration was renewed by:

- The size of the Parish Council was reduced to a 9 members, which proportionate to the size of the congregation.
- Areas of responsibility were delegated to Teams.

Not all of these have proved successful, but core ones have worked hard and well

These are:

1. Leadership Team (priest, wardens treasurer)
2. Pastoral Care Team (rediscovering around 20 homebound parishioners)
3. Promotions and Events (increasing social events and vital funds)

3 NORMAN PARK (PHASE 1)

One major concern was the viability of the Norman Park centre. Was it possible to grow the congregation, which, apart from a few exceptions, was also an aging one? Despite:

- Advertising,
- new signage,
- holding social events and fund-raising activities over a period of 18 months
- advertising through a new web page

It was apparent that this was not going to happen.

Key factors were working against it, which we are all now familiar with are:

- Location,
- Accessibility & parking
- Three other Anglican churches in close proximity.

A painful decision was made to stop regular Sunday worship – and though this was rationally understandable – it hurt on a much deeper level.

However, at the time it was the intention of the Parish Council to build up the numbers at Camp Hill and then return by planting a new congregation. This was not to be for several factors.

4 DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES in SUBURBIA & THE PARISH

It was obvious that our part of Brisbane was changing. The long-term residents were now retiring, going into aged care or needing medical attention.

Older residents were being replaced by young married couples with small children.

This demographic change seriously hit the parish over the last 12 months. Around 20 elderly parishioners, who were fit and able 2 years ago, suddenly experienced ill health and infirmity.

The weekday mass ceased. We were fortunate that we had begun the renewal in worship to meet these new circumstances.

5 RENEWAL WORSHIP (SECOND PHASE November 2008)

After a lot of planning with an advisory team helping the Rector we started a new service aimed at young families. The principles adopted was that:

- it was to be a PowerPoint service – no books
- Modern music
- For all ages
- Accessible to new-comers to Christian worship, as well as regular parishioners who desired a new form of worship.
- To be a Eucharist to keep in line with our Catholic tradition of Anglicanism.

I believe we can say that this experiment has been successful. We have tweaked the service to improve it and to change the music style that is more accessible. I believe the new service is of equal quality as the Sung Mass. However, it is not for everybody, but parishioners have a clear choice of the liturgical style and music.

Though we experienced a serious drop in numbers attending worship, because of illness and infirmity we are showing signs of recovery. As was anticipated, we needed a renewal to survive – we acted in time.

6 NORMAN PARK (PHASE 2 June 2008)

Certain circumstances, that came to notice of the Parish Council, made it obvious that we needed to be proactive in closing the Norman Park centre.

- It was also obvious that reasons for stopping regular worship at Norman Park were always going to be a force against it ever being a vibrant centre.
- The Parish Council debated this for a period of three months.
- Informal discussions took place with various Diocesan leaders, which confirmed our understanding of the situation.

- A letter in June 2008 was sent to our Regional Bishop outlining a proposal for the closure and sale of Norman Park and a request for funding to renew Camp Hill. The Bishop gave his support and permission to take this further with the Registrar of the Diocese.
- A letter was sent to the Registrar/General Manager and a formal request to the Archbishop.
- The Archbishop has accepted our letter and has put into place the processes of the various Diocesan Commissions to examine the proposition and make recommendations to the Diocesan Council for action. We now await the results.
- A delay in the final process is expected as the Bulimba parish may use the NP church whilst their own undergoes some serious renovations in the middle of the year

One key element in the request is an advance of \$50,000 against the sale to begin our next stage of change and renewal.

The Future

THE NEXT STAGE

1 If we receive funding against the sale of Norman Park, we have some key areas that need immediate attention for Camp Hill.

- i. Professional advice in a marketing strategy to raise our profile and to assist us in understanding the local community and its needs.
This is to assist us overcome our back-street location
- ii. Architectural advice to modernise:
 - the church building, furnishings, toilets,
 - improve disabled access & disabled
 - better arrangements for a crèche and facilities for mothers with babies
 - new parking plan.
 - A suite of rooms for a new sacristy, parish office, meeting room, Rector's study.

Many of these items are not radical. It is to provide what is the accepted standard for a metropolitan church.

2. COOPERATION WITHIN OUR AREA.

Part of our original strategic planning was a recognition for a partnership with the other parishes in the Deanery. Initial plans and discussions were proposed with a lot of the work being provided by Damien Colbert. Unfortunately, not enough parishes were committed to this plan for it to be workable.

However, it remains a conviction in the Leadership Team that some form of local partnership to share skills and resources is essential.

Our Regional Bishop also has a desire to increase the missionary outreach in our part of Brisbane. Through his good offices we may soon begin to explore this possibility with neighbouring parishes and institutions.

Other Events in the last 12 months

1 MIRIAM NYRENE

Miriam has now completed 2 years with our parish. The parish has worked well in training her and expanding her experiences. A special vote of thanks to Robyn Elliott and the Field Committee that

gave her vital encouragement and advice. We saw Miriam's strengths and experiences expand and flourish. I think we can be proud of our part in her vocation.

Miriam also brought her own insights and skills, along with her husband Don, in area of the environment. Miriam also gave good pastoral care to many. We wish her well.

2. GREG LOUMEAU

The developing of a vocation continues in Greg, who will be ordained Deacon on 21 February and comes to us officially on the first Sunday in March. Already Greg and his partner Lauren, with their children Lucy and Tamika have made themselves at home in the parish. We wait to discover skills and experiences Greg will bring to enrich our parish life.

3. SOME THANKS

There are so many reasons for thanks and I apologise now if some are not included:

- Bishop Geoff Smith and Archdeacon Ken Suddick for their continual encouragement, advice and support. Also for Bishop Geoff's visit and the giving of confirmation. Archdeacon Ken for chairing the meetings about the closure of Norman Park.
- The Wardens Alistair and Damien and the Treasurer Lyndal - for their many hours of work in administration and accounts. For being a think-tank and always questioning 'Why?'
- Janelle Read, Robyn Casey and Wayne Elliott, plus spouses and those dragged in for the Events and Promotions Team. A great effort that contributed to our finances being in the black.
- The Pastoral Care Team: Viv Cowie, Rita Singleton, Rose Richter and Ellenor Neave who visit our elderly and take them communion - and for Rita posting them the pew sheets, with extra notes and cards.
- To Viv and her membership of the Camp Hill Primary School chaplaincy committee.
- Val Burton and the choir, which maintain a high standard of music for the Sung Eucharist. Amazingly, we now have 5 musical settings for the mass! Our hymns and songs, through 4 copyright licenses, come around 15 hymn books, plus many other resources.! Val's attendance of the Royal School of Church Music in England, NZ and Australia enables is to have the latest in music.
For Val in her printing of pew sheets and publications.
- To my wife Catherine, who, through many years of teaching teenagers, helps in selecting modern music for the PowerPoint Family service. Her cakes on Sunday morning which are always appreciated.
- Pat Bowmen and John Wood who keep a watch on the care of the Norman Park Church
For John Wood is his many tasks of repairs at both centres.
- Despite their busy lives this Team works hard for the parish. They give many hours of work on behalf of the parish.
- Viv Cowie, Robyn Elliott, Pat Bowman for their washing of the linen for worship.
- Wayne & Robyn Elliott in their setting up of morning tea, and (with Robyn Casey and Pat Bowman) cleaning it all up.

This not everybody, or every task – but to everyone – “Thanks”.

This is a great parish and with prayer, strategic planning and renewal there is a hope and future for our working for the Kingdom. In all things Christ's name be praised

Fr Martyn