

Parish Consultation Sawtell/Bonville Parish February 15th, 2020

Venerable Stuart Webb

Attendance: 26 parishioners

Introduction

Sawtell/Bonville is a coastal parish 10 km south of Coffs Harbour. Sawtell also has a Hall and an Op shop. The Rectory is located within Sawtell centre boundaries.

Sawtell has two services each Sunday, a traditional service averaging 25 and a contemporary family service averaging 40. The average age demographic is 70.

The Parish

The parish celebrates its role in providing a place of worship in its geographical location. The parish congregation strongly identifies as a place for encountering God and sharing fellowship. They value a love for Christ as expressed through our Gospel. They represent a conservative, biblically orthodox Anglicanism with a high view of biblical authority but are open to a diversity of expressions of church person-ship within the biblically orthodox spectrum. They expressed an openness to a clergy person of charismatic, evangelical (gentle variety) and or Anglo-Catholic persuasions but not of the high church variety. There was an openness to embrace the potential for an immigrant clergy given the region's intake of refugees. The parish feels its great strengths are in the caring and loving nature of its members and willingness to engage with social welfare in the parish. The parish also believes that with its current financial assets it can sustain long term viable ministry in the region. The parish also believes the membership, although small, is deeply committed to the life and future of the parish.

There is also a growing fear for the future of the parish and a consistent theme of, 'we need to grow' and 'we need young people in church'. Some energy existed around the possibility of more connection between the two congregations.

Gaps

- Lack of youth under 16 and others under 60
- Limited financial capacity
- Decreasing human capacity
- Aged congregation makes it hard to keep younger generations
- Lack of cultural diversity

The Future Church and Change

The parish of Sawtell/Bonville expressed the belief that change was necessary if they were to survive as a parish into the future. It was unclear precisely what that change would look like, but there was an almost universal acknowledgment that it would have to engage with new ways of being and doing church. The parish expressed the hope that they would remain a parish known for its focus on biblical teaching. The parish also expressed the desire that they keep their focus on the Gospel of Jesus Christ and being a place of prayer. The parish expressed a desire to see youth ministry and youth outreach to the schools and a greater community engagement.

Clerical

In discussing the need for leadership in the parish the following keywords and concepts arose:

- Encourager
- Good communicator
- Comfortable providing both Traditional and contemporary services
- Enabler
- Inspirational teacher able to break open the Gospel each week
- Compassionate
- Tolerant and approachable
- Future congregation focused
- Effective at leading bible studies
- High view of biblical authority
- Family Orientated

There is a strong feeling in the parish that they need someone who is going to enable new engagements with the community and engage with young people. An acknowledgment that leaders in this day and age need to be savvy with social media and the new ways people connect. They believe they need a leader who will equip them for ministry in the world. The parish expressed a commitment to supporting the future leader appointed to the parish and the desire to embrace change as best they can. The parish expressed openness to clergy of any age or gender but their preference is for a person with a family.