

Parish Consultation Kempsey Parish February 1st, 2020

Led by Venerable Stuart Webb

Attendance: 15 parishioners representing all centres

Introduction

Kempsey is a small rural parish 10 min off the highway 30min north of Port Macquarie. The parish of Kempsey consists of four centres, Kempsey, Crescent Head, Bellbrook, and Frederickton. The central administration centre is at Kempsey. Kempsey also has a Hall and an Op shop. The Rectory is located within Kempsey centre boundaries.

Bellbrook service is held every 3 months- 4 local people attend. Crescent head is held every fortnight with an average of 20 people. Frederickton is the 1st Sunday in the month and averages 10 people.

Kempsey is every Sunday and averages 35 people.

The average age demographic is 75.

The Parish

In conversation, the parish is quick to celebrate its role in providing places of worship in its geographical location. The parish congregation strongly identifies as a place for spiritual reflection and love for Christ as expressed through our Gospel and in the sharing of the Eucharist. They represent a conservative/orthodox middle church Anglo-Catholicism but are open to fresh expressions of church and have done significant work towards a missional focus through their Op shop and soup kitchen. The parish feels it's 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 substantial 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'. There is an acknowledgment that under the previous incumbent an effort was made to try different ways of being a church but without any change in church attendance.

The Future Church and Change

The parish of Kempsey 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 still be able to maintain a traditional service at each centre. The parish also expressed the desire that they keep their focus on the Gospel of Jesus Christ and being places of prayer. The parish expressed a desire to see youth ministry and youth outreach to the schools. The parish is on the whole supportive of alternative worship services but some expressed concern that this must not come at the expense of pastoral ministry or providing traditional services for its existing older congregation. They expressed a hope that they would attract a priest with a family who desired to be involved in the life of the church.

It's important to note that in all the conversations around change and the future that they felt there was concern around the human capacity in the parish to engage effectively with new ministries.

Clerical

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

- Encourager
- Good communicator
- Good with IT and technology
- Comfortable providing both Traditional and contemporary service's
- Enabler
- Inspirational teacher able to break open the Gospel each week
- Compassionate
- Developed sense of personal care with effective boundaries
- Good delegator
- Aware of the challenges of living in a small rural context and the need for an external support network. (particularly for a single person).
- Willingness to engage indigenous population
- Tolerant and approachable
- Future congregation focused

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.

There was a belief that the person would need to be strong enough to stand up to some of the negative interactions in the parish.

There was a hope that even though bringing change that they would still provide weekly opportunities for Holy Communion in each centre.

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 would prefer not to have someone perceiving the appointment as a pre-retirement parish.