

The Anglican Parish of Coffs Harbour



VACANCY CONSULTATION REPORT



*Compiled from a Parish Review conducted by
Archdeacon for the South, Zoe Everingham
7th February 2022*

THE ANGLICAN PARISH OF COFFS HARBOUR – VACANCY CONSULTATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

I. Background.

The basis of information used in this Vacancy Consultation was obtained from the Parish Review which took place on the 7th February 2022. The previous vacancy consultation had taken place in April 2017. Comparisons of data have been included in this report where appropriate.

II. Participants:

21 people gathered to participate in this process as opposed to 38 in 2017.

There was a cross section of the community of faith represented.

The average age of those gathered was 70+, older than in 2017.

Those participating engaged thoughtfully with the material presented, working in groups of 4 or 5.

Whilst there were some differing opinions and viewpoints, the participants had a definite sense of belonging to the parish, its worship and its activities.

The focus of the consultation centered around four main areas:

- The Church NOW,
- The Church of the Future,
- Openness to change, and
- Skill sets of a new Rector.

CHURCH NOW.

The participants voiced their sadness and disillusionment at having lost their Rector after only two years of service and were fearful of the shrinking congregation during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Live streaming of services and delivery of recordings kept the congregation connected when the church was closed under NSW Public Health Orders. However, many people did not return to worship when the church reopened.

Participants described their parish as a monoculture with few families attending regularly. They feel resilient, tolerant and accommodating but also fragmented during this period of transitioning. They realise these are 'changing times' but also aware there is some resistance to change within the congregation. Despite these sad aspects, they remain grateful for the many blessings of their church, for the experienced people resources they have and they remain hopeful for the future.

The parish celebrates their connectedness to the diocese with a number of parishioners serving on Bishop-in-Council, Corporate Trustees, Building and Properties Committee, Bishop Druitt College School Council as well celebrating their connectedness to the Coffs Harbour community through Nursing Home visits, service

clubs, Hospital Chaplaincy, Ecumenical Council of Churches, pastoral visiting and the Op Shop.

Within the parish, they celebrate and give thanks for the following:

- Anglican Tradition – that St John’s has been a continuing place of worship for many generations and connected to something bigger (the Anglican Diocese and National Church)
- Variety of inclusive worship styles that involve lay participation including children
- Welcoming and inclusive community
- Committed experienced people
- Impact of pastoral care on the congregation’s sense of belonging and community health
- Social groups and the opportunity to share their faith in practical ways
- Prayer chain that underpins the activities and pastoral care in the parish
- Financial expertise

The participants described the strengths of their church as being:

- Number of active Licensed Lay Ministers who attend training regularly and provide experienced lay leadership
- Two vocational Deacons who were raised and called from within the parish
- Congregation members willing to help at church and community activities
- Talented Wardens who assist with administering the parish
- Strong connection to the Diocese and Bishop Druitt College
- Dedicated group of musicians who provide live music every Sunday
- Cursillo experience and involvement
- Welcoming environment

These things have all helped to enhance parish life.

The participants engaged in a conversation around the ‘7 Characteristics of a Healthy Church’ as advocated by UK Archdeacon Bob Jackson in *Anecdote to Evidence (2011-2013)*. Participants were invited to examine how healthy their parish was in relation to these 7 characteristics.

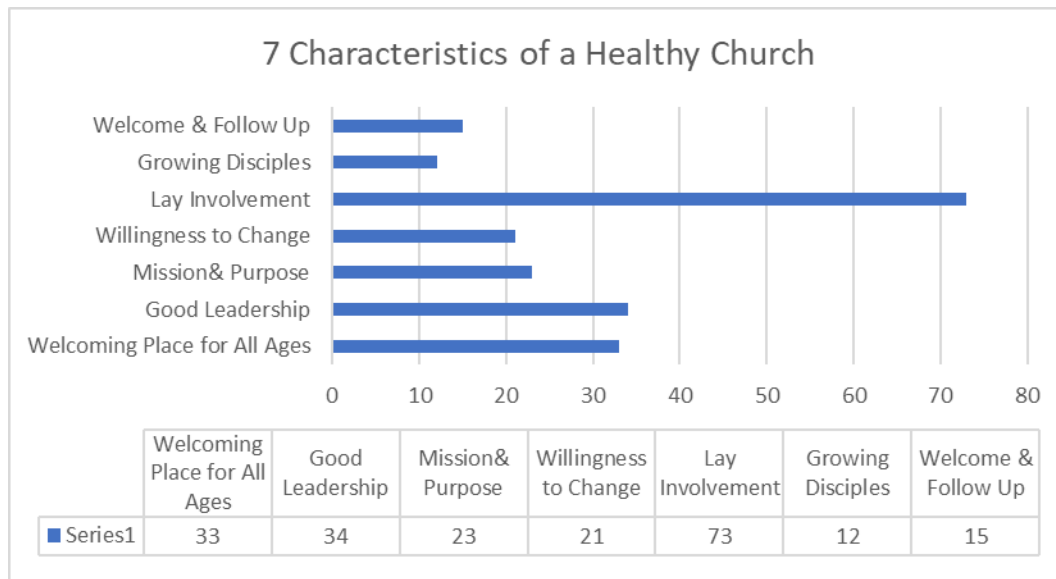
The Three **major** strengths in the Parish were identified as (in order of priority):

1. Lay involvement
2. Good Leadership
3. A welcoming place for ALL ages

Four **major** areas that needed attention (Growth Areas) were: (in order of priority):

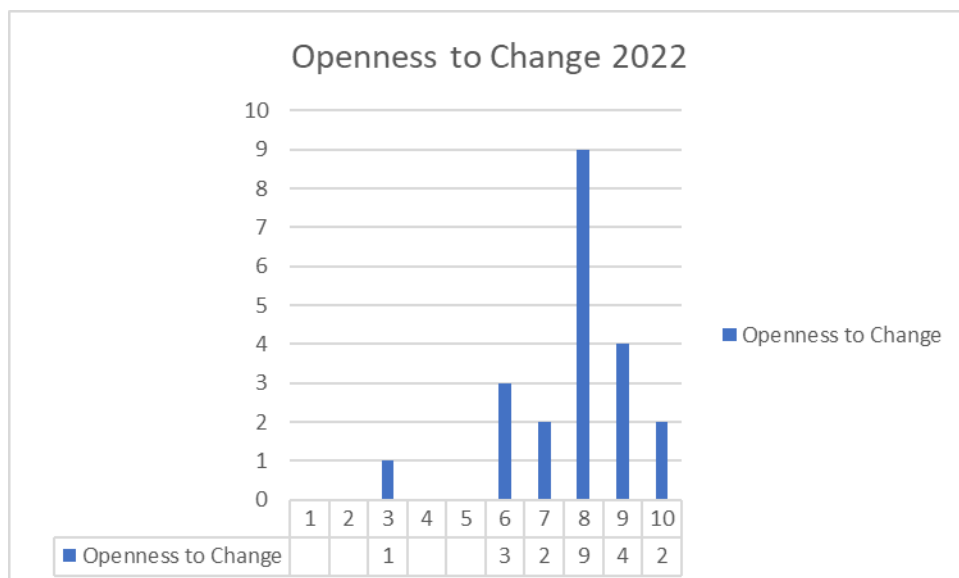
1. Growing disciples
2. Providing good welcome and follow up.
3. Openness to change
4. Establishing a clear mission and purpose

The parish had engaged in the same exercise during the Parish Review in 2017 and the result was very similar.

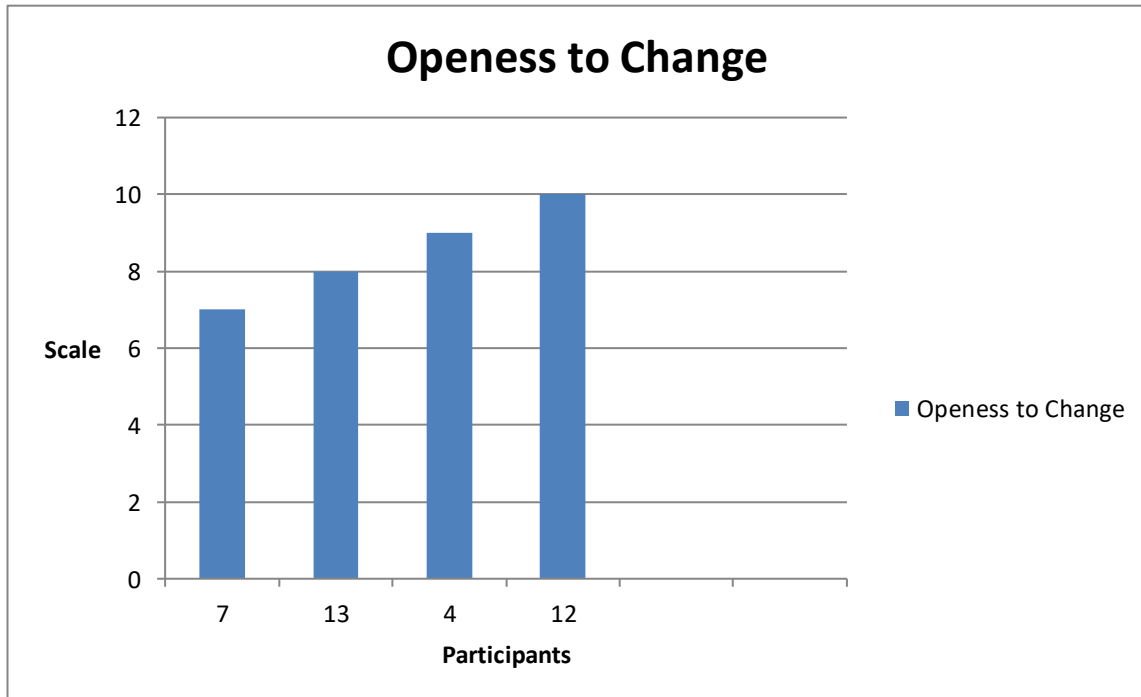


The participants discussed more fully their sense of growth areas. They identified the need for better communication between the administration and parishioners. They acknowledged the technical challenges that an ageing congregation presents with the associated lack of computer skills, as well as a decreasing energy level for engaging in faith when there is no clear vision for mission and purpose. The participants thought that the Parish Mission and Vision statements had not been reviewed for at least 13 years, although this assumption could not be verified.

As ‘Willingness to Change’ appeared as a growth area in both 2017 and 2022, the attendees embarked on an exercise to quantify their response. Each participant rated their openness to change from 1-10: 1 being totally resistant and 10 being completely open. The results indicated a decrease in openness to change with only 71% rating 8 or above in comparison with 80% in 2017. Clear communication about a proposed change and involvement in decision making was deemed important.



Openness to Change exercise completed in 2017



BUILDINGS AND BUILDING PROJECTS

The Parish of Coffs Harbour is located on 4 and 6 McLean Street with a total area of 2024 square metres. The parish precinct buildings include a well-maintained modern brick Church with a kitchen and outdoor entertainment space, Parish Office in an adjacent brick house, a hall that is due for replacement, Opportunity Shop and a rented weatherboard cottage. The parish give thanks for these important resources, especially the Op Shop which is now their biggest source of income.

After a number of years of research and planning to redevelop the Op Shop site, plans for the demolition of existing infrastructure and the building of a larger Op Shop, community facilities and Affordable Housing units through collaboration with an independent developer, were passed by Bishop-in-Council in 2021. These plans have caused division within the parish as some parishioners object to the loss of ownership of the infrastructure assets in exchange for strata title over the ground floor Op Shop space.

The development will provide the parish with a new larger Op Shop and community space while contributing to the provision of much needed affordable housing units. The third party developer will be responsible for organizing and funding the build and managing the rental units. The development committee consists of Bob Chambers, David Ford and Richard Dubois.

CHURCH OF THE FUTURE

It is clear from the comments provided in the *raw data material* that the parish has a common goal of growing the church, attracting and retaining young people and growing ministries that are centred around Young Families and Youth Ministry. One of their main visions is to hear again the “patter of little feet” and develop vibrant multi-generation worship.

The parish also desires to continue to support and honour its healing ministry to the aged and sick, hold healing services, while also being flexible in its outreach in order to provide for specific needs as they arise.

Development of practices to enhance their spiritual growth was important to the participants including the provision of bible and study groups, as well as stronger connections to the Cursillo movement, for example participation in Ultreyas.

The continuation of holding musical events at St John’s was seen as an important way of connecting to the broader community.

There was a sense that the Parish needed to embark on more strategic planning in order to clearly see a way forward; for example, the pattern of following a Parish Strategic Plan was not articulated during the consultation.

SKILL SET -LEADERSHIP

The raw data material overwhelmingly affirms the ministry of the LLM’s (Licensed Lay Ministers) as an integral part of the ministry team alongside the ordained clergy as representing the whole people of God. Between them, the LLMs provide a wealth of skills and gifts to bring to ministry, together with talented musicians, qualified accountants, lawyers and business professionals who support the administration of the parish.

The participants believed that a major focus for the next three years needs to be in establishing and growing its ministry to young families. They are keen to continue to work in this area including developing intergenerational worship.

As such the parish believes that they are looking for someone who is a:

- Energetic person with a long term commitment
- Innovative
- Visionary with an outgoing personality
- Patient, inclusive team player with good people skills
- Collaborative leader, enabler and facilitator who can effectively delegate
- Open communicator, audible and with good listening skills
- Family oriented shepherd of the people with a pastoral focus
- Prayerful person of strong faith with good sermon skills

- Encourager of small support groups and bible/study groups
- Person willing to connect with the broader community

This report has been prepared by:

The Venerable Zoe Everingham, *Archdeacon for the South*

Raw Data Material held in the Diocesan Office.