

The Anglican Parish of Ballina

Ballina and Lennox Head Anglicans



PARISH CONSULTATION VACANCY REPORT 2022



Compiled by: Archdeacon Kay Hart & Archdeacon Gail Hagon

AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE VACANCY CONSULTATION – ANGLICAN PARISH OF BALLINA

Participants:

Consultation held Saturday 30 April, 10am

29 in attendance

Average age 70+

Mixed male/female representation

Discussion tables in groups of 5/6

Notes:

- 15 of the 29 participants had engaged in a Vacancy Consultation process previously.
- There was representation from each of the faith communities in the parish: i.e. St John the Baptist Lennox Head; Wednesday Morning at St. Mary's Ballina, Sunday Morning at St. Mary's and Couch Church. The majority of those present worshipped at the Sunday Morning Service at St. Mary's.

Prior to the Vacancy Consultation a morning tea was held. Below are the main points of observations/comments that were made during this gathering time:

- Participants interacted well with each other;
- There was a steady buzz of conversation
- The ministry of their current Rector was valued and affirmed
- Some of those present expressed a concern that the role of Archdeacon had impacted on the Rector and on his parish based ministry.

THE VACANCY CONSULTATION

Welcome - led by Mr John Bryen, Parish Nominator and Churchwarden

Opening Prayer - Archdeacon Kay Hart

Explanation of the procedure - Archdeacon Gail Hagon.

The focus of the consultation centred around five main areas:

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

THE CHURCH NOW:

Those participating engaged actively in the discussion centred around **The Church Now**. It was evident from both the discussion and the raw data material provided that this is a parish that values its Anglican Tradition; prides itself on being able to offer high quality worship, and honours the place of music in the liturgy. This is not to suggest that the parish is not open to creative Anglican worship; the raw data material clearly indicates that there is a strong and genuine openness to explore diverse ways in which people might get together to explore faith, worship and spirituality. Those participating noted that there was a real lack of younger people who worshipped with them and felt that there should be more emphasis on establishing an intergenerational worship service.

Whilst the parish is passionate about Anglican worship it is equally passionate about embracing the social justice side of mission and ministry. They are keen to build upon and to explore other ministry and mission opportunities. There was overwhelming support for the 'Isaiah 61' project, 'Couch Church,' 'The Orange Van,' and the mission and outreach provided by their Op Shop and its band of 60+ volunteers.

Like many parishes in Grafton Diocese concerns were expressed about:

- The Implications of Covid19
- Ageing and declining congregations
- Recent flooding in Ballina & its neighbouring communities.

It was clear that those gathered felt like they belonged to a family in which members were using their gifts to ensure that Mission/Vision, Ministry, Maintenance, and Financial concerns were being addressed. They value themselves as a community of faith and are grateful for the many ministries that exist.

During the *feedback* session there was a strong sense that those gathered were part of a faith community in which they felt comfortable in expressing their viewpoint, knowing they would be heard and their contribution accepted; even if and when it differed from others present.

The main points articulated in relation to The Church Now were:

Worship:

- Services in the Anglican Tradition
- The ministry opportunities through Couch Church
- Being a Eucharistic Community of faith
- The celebration of major festivals
- Lenten and Advent Study Groups

Mission & Outreach:

- Isaiah 61 Project
- Op shop ministry and the number of volunteers involved
- St Mary's music programme
- Couch Church

General:

- Financially sound with viable properties
- Excellent resources
- A strong volunteer basis.

THE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE – Dreams moving forward.

It is clear from the comments provided in the *raw data material* that the parish has a desire to grow the Church so that it can be an inclusive place for *seekers, inquirers, and explorers* of the faith. Amongst the vast majority of participants there was a real desire, and a sense of urgency, to provide “all age” worship, one that reflects the language and the needs of people today. Some of the participants believed that this could be achieved more easily by networking more closely with Emmanuel Anglican College and the neighbouring parish of Alstonville.

As stated above, as well as the strong focus on worship by those representing the parish, there was also a strong sense that as the parish moves into the future it will need to continue to look for ways to *Be Christ* in the wider community through its mission and outreach endeavours.

The main points articulated in relation to **The Church of the future** focussed on:

Worship & Discipleship:

- Create a younger/broader Body of Christ
- Establish Intergenerational (All Age) worship
- Create appropriate gathering spaces for faith gatherings e.g. explorers, newcomers & inquirers
- Establish a greater diversity of worship styles so as to meet the needs of the faithful and of newcomers/seekers.
- Strengthen Bible Study Groups
- Build a stronger sense of Community
- Provide spaces for open communication
- Explore and build upon our skillset

Mission and Outreach:

- Grow the Isaiah 61 project
- Sharing of resources and networking with the neighbouring Parish of Alstonville
- Expand outreach opportunities
- Enhance music ministry

Those gathered named the main obstacles of living into their future dreams as:

- Ever ageing Parish – diminishing base of able volunteers
- Mobility issues around ageing congregation
- Lack of leaders to lead study groups – or to grow youth ministry
- Technological change
- Difficulty for some to cope with change

It was evident from the energy in the room throughout the Consultation process that the parish is in good spirits and there is a strong desire that things should keep moving forward during the interregnum period.

SKILLSET OF THOSE IN THE FAITH COMMUNITY

The *raw data material* shows that this parish strongly believes that everything they do and offer should be firmly grounded in prayer i.e. they are a prayerful community of faith. It was interesting to watch the participants name, affirm and honour the gifts that exist within the life of the parish. They feel greatly blessed by the amount of strong leaders, visionaries, managers, etc that participate in parish life. They are thankful that their buildings, finances and properties are well cared for and managed.

The main skills sets of the parish were identified as:

- Good strong lay leaders: e.g. teachers, visionaries, organisers, and those skilled in management.
- People of Prayer
- Capacity to welcome and to offer hospitality
- Able to offer a high standard of worship
- Willing lay folk to participate in all aspects of parish life
- Tech savvy folk – needed for outreach especially Couch Church
- Musically gifted
- Open to and able to network
- Practical skill base – maintenance
- Volunteers covering a variety of Ministries Op Shop, Orange Van, Isaiah 61
- Able to share their faith and their stories with others.

OPENNESS TO CHANGE

After a short discussion around 'Change' and 'Change management' participants were asked to name one thing that they would not change. The main results are listed below:

- Being a people of prayer
- The availability of the Eucharist
- Having the Church Open as much as possible
- An identified leader in the parish
- Ministry to the sick/housebound
- Friendship and the sense of belonging
- Relationship with the Community through outreach ministries (Op Shop)
- Having a Parish Admin person.
- Public reading of scripture
- Sunday Service

Those attending were also asked to rate their openness to change from 1-10: 1 being totally resistant and 10 being completely open. The results indicated that the vast majority of those present were strongly in favour of change. (*Raw data* revealed 3 voted 10. 6 voted 9. 11 voted 8. 4 voted 7. 1 voted 6. 2 voted 5 and one person was highly resistant to change and voted 1). In the discussions that followed this exercise it was clear that most participants wanted change and were open to it but that any change would need to be carefully and

thoughtfully introduced into the life of the parish. Our observations were that whilst it would be accurate to say that it was a small minority group that were resistant to change, we suspect that any introduced change may see them question their continued involvement in the life of the parish.

SKILLSET OF RECTOR

In looking to the future needs of the parish the main skillsets of the Rector were identified as follows:

- A leader who is able to lead a team, and able to be a member of a team
- Someone who understands the diversity of theological strands – and its language
- Able to facilitate intergenerational worship and activities
- A people person who cares for all age groups
- Encourager of the faith – especially in everyday lives
- Leads collaboratively
- Encourager and a facilitator – able to recognise and develop the skills of others
- Someone who can support the mission focus in the wider community
- Tolerant of differences
- Confident in the delivery of scripture
- An energetic person, with passion and vision.

Mr John Bryen concluded the process with thanks to Archdeacons, Kay Hart, and Gail Hagon; which was followed by a concluding prayer.

This report has been prepared by: Archdeacon Gail Hagon in conjunction with Archdeacon Kay Hart, Archdeacon for the North.

Raw Data Material held in the Diocesan Office