

The Anglican Parish of Lismore



LISMORE
ANGLICANS

PARISH CONSULTATION VACANCY REPORT 2023

Compiled by: Archdeacon Kay Hart and MSO Reverend Sally Miller

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

Participants:

Consultation held Saturday 8TH July 2023, 10am

33 people in attendance.

Average age was 70 + with a good mix of gender representation

There were 8 discussion tables, with 5 or 6 people per table

Notes:

- 17 of the participants had engaged in a Vacancy Consultation process previously.
- There was representation from each of the faith communities in the parish:
 - St Matthew's Dunoon
 - St Andrews 7.30 Sunday,
 - St Andrews 9.30 Sunday
 - St Andrews Wednesday
 - St Andrews Thursday (Morning Prayer)The majority of those present worshipped at the Sunday Morning Services at St. Andrew'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 VACANCY CONSULTATION

Welcome - led by Robert Weatherby

Opening Prayer and Overview of the Day - Archdeacon Kay Hart

Explanation of the procedure – MSO Reverend Sally Miller

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 most of the discussion tables believe that Lismore Anglicans have a solid core of people willing to 'do', to participate in leading worship as part of the liturgical or music team. They see themselves as welcoming, supportive and prayerful in their support of others.

The 'doing' also extended to volunteers that participate in the Welfare services that the participants placed high value on – the local Soup Kitchen they support, emergency food through the Parish Office, Home Communions, and significantly for their area, their parish involvement in Disaster Recovery Teams as well as the Op Shop, and their annual Christmas Shop.

The parishioners have a strong sense of positivity about their volunteers depth of capability, and willingness to work together.

The participants also valued the diversity to be found in their worship styles, and the special events through out the year, such as Pet Blessings, Bethlehem Revisited.

The Church's online presence was mentioned numerous times as something to be supported.

Like many parishes in Grafton Diocese concerns were expressed about:

- Aging and declining congregations
- Financial issues
- The ability to maintain their IT and online presence.

It was clear that those gathered felt excited and encouraged about who they are right now. There were times they appeared to be surprised by their unanimity on items.

During the *feedback* session there was a strong sense that those gathered shared opinions about the strengths and inclusivity really featured in every group.

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

Worship:

- Diversity of worship styles
- Positive about their lay leaders, and music teams.
- Importance of the special occasion services.
- Anglican Identity

Mission & Outreach:

- Op Shop
- Soup kitchen
- Emergency food
- Home communions

General:

- Welcoming and inclusive community
- 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 build on many of their existing ministries, creating stronger links between the parish and the Preschool, and Mainly Music families.

There was also a strong sense that the parish wanted a closer connection to the broader community. This was articulated as ‘being a Christian cornerstone for the Lismore community’

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

Building connections with everyone, especially other churches.

Integrate the online community more with our mainstream worship , finding ways for the online community to participate in the worship, through readings or intercessions.

Encourage more young people and families

Much closer connection with the Mainly Music and Pre-school families

Examine our flexibility of worship times and styles

Enhance our music for worship

Use the beauty of the church aesthetic for the community

Growing spiritually – through small groups and reflections on the readings in the bulletins

Worship & Discipleship:

- Increase Bible Study Groups
- Create greater structure around music and worship teams
- Build stronger connections both within existing church groups and the wider community

Mission and Outreach:

- Deepen connections
- Advertise activities and presence more
- Intentional connection and interaction with online community.

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

- Aging congregation
- Smaller congregation
- Finances
- Lack of people experienced in technology
- Hearts and minds need to be aligned to move forward together
- Resources: money, skills, people, infrastructure
- Sunday trading, sport, other distractions
- Natural resistance to change
- People are unaware of their gifts
- Attitude to offerings by new members (we’ve always done it **this** way)
- Leadership gaps.

It was evident from the energy in the room throughout the Consultation process that the parish is generally in good spirits and there is a strong desire that things should keep moving forward during the interregnum period. There also appears to be encouragement and support for those who are taking leadership at this time.

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 lay participation (LLM's servers etc) and leadership skills
- Online streaming.
- Management skills of parish council. Administration
- Catering
- Fellowship, the wide variety and collaborative groups
- Capacity to respond to changing circumstances well (energetic response to this)
- Strong 'can do will do' approach
- Faithfulness.

The skills currently missing were identified as:

More people with technical skills

Succession planning – the capacity to train up and pass on skills

Musical skills – in addition to what exists already

People with trade skills

communication between congregations (story sharing)

Two few 'skilled people'

Enablers – people who enable and encourage the skills (or let people have a try...even if it doesn't always work to start with)

spin doctor – someone to engage with our wider community, to tell the story and encourage connections.

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:

- Different styles of worship
- Rites and rituals
- Egg and lettuce sandwiches
- Rich tradition
- Anglican identity even though its evolving
- Physical presence
- Morning tea

- Service times
- 7.30 music, indeed anything to do with the 7.30 service.
- Core things of worship, bible readings, communion, intercessions (style can change)
- Openness to embrace new ideas
- Current programmes (can add but don't take away)
- Pews
- Down to earth way of doing things – informal and relevant to who we are
- Core theology
- Welcoming attitude
- Music – especially bell ringing
- Emergency and outreach programmes
- Contact with combined churches
- Dunoon

Many groups mentioned not changing Anglican ethos and identity, they were however open to growing and developing their understanding of Anglicanism, and worship. This could be applied to many aspects of their community life; most parishioners are open to adding and adjusting most things... with some parishioners reluctant to change the 7.30am service time

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.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
				5	2	3	11	7	5
									33

In the discussions that followed this exercise it was clear that most participants understood that change in some things is needed, and they want to be open to it but that any change would need to be carefully and thoughtfully introduced into 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 complete list of the parish's hopes for a new Rector is listed in the raw materials.

The most common response was that they want someone who listens, can delegate, teach with enthusiasm and with well developed pastoral skills.

It was also noted that they would need to be technologically savvy. Parishioners made mention of communications skills, notably the ability to communicate well with the wider community, in their preaching, and in their planning – so everyone knows what is happening. Interestingly 'fun' and 'sense of humour' were mentioned several times as an important trait for the new Rector.

Many participants also noted that the person may need to be experienced in running a large parish.

One table summed their thoughts up as:

'Capable of aligning our hearts and minds to a shared vision, to lead and grow our congregation spiritually and in discipleship and in confidence to reach out into our wider community'.

This statement echoes many of the other points listed in the required skill sets.

Robert Weatherby concluded the process with thanks to Archdeacon Kay Hart, and Reverend Sally Miller; which was followed by a concluding prayer.

This report has been prepared by: Archdeacon Kay Hart, Regional Archdeacon of the North in conjunction with Reverend Sally Miller, MSO.

Raw Data Material held in the Diocesan Office

.