



VICAR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2015

This is my fourth Annual Report that I have presented to the Parish since my induction as Priest in Charge in June 2011 but my first as Incumbent. In February I celebrated the 10th anniversary of my Ordination into Holy Orders and my first as an Incumbent of a Parish what a year.

Kevin Giles in his book 'Making Good Churches Better,' states 'We often hear the voice of Jesus sending us into the world as individuals, but he sends us out because we belong to the community which confesses him as Lord. To be effective in Christ's mission we need to be part of a Christian community that sustains and nurtures us as individuals.'

As a church we are called to express the life of Jesus Christ, whose whole ministry was shaped by the conviction that *God so loved the world that he gave his only son. John 3:16.* As God's people in this place we are not only called to tell the good news of the coming of God's kingdom and to share in the work of the kingdom here on earth, we are also called to embody the presence of God's reign in human society by the way we order and expresses our life.

Therefore it is amazing to reflect back upon the past four years and how we have continued to express our life as a Parish since my induction, from our Building for Mission Program in 2014 to the development of a Pastoral Care Team to the establishment of the Lara Food Relief and Lara Youth Group just to name a few.



According to the New Testament, a hallmark of Christian community is the way we treat one another, whilst I continue to play an important role in the pastoral ministry of God's people, it is obvious that I cannot and should not do it alone. Caring for one another and loving one another is fundamental to our life as Christians. The gifts of the Spirit, (including the gifts of pastoral care) are given to all Christians. Due to this a Pastoral Care Team was formed, trained and commissioned in April to assist in providing coordinated caring support for ourselves and those in need. The Pastoral Care Team is still in early days and will need to continue development in how it will be expressed.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER CIRCLE

This is a mostly unseen but vital part of our pastoral care ministry and, we believe, highly effective. Our purpose is emergency prayer for parishioners, neighbours, our nation and for worldwide concerns.

I confidentially receive requests for prayer, for "all sorts and conditions," and pass these requests on to each member of our prayer circle. The form and style of prayer is determined by the individual prayer circle member. Those who for various reasons are not able to be active in parish life often find this a rewarding ministry.

MISSION ACTION PLAN: (MAP)

On April 18th the Parish Council gathered at Holy Trinity to begin the process of developing our Parish Mission Action Plan, a requirement of the Diocese. MAP differs from the Mission

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Group in that the MAP is the processes used to discern the vision and develop strategies to assist communities of faith to make disciples of Jesus.

Through the process of developing our MAP we will be able to carefully discern God's vision for us in our particular context so as to bring hope and direction. Through strategies that are derived from good data collection and analysis followed by wise planning and review we will be enabled to progress in our life of faith together.

MAP will empower us to build our community relationally and spiritually so that we can be more of who God intends us to be. It will assist us to discern God's vision for our parish. It will also help us to plan and implement effective strategies. For when a church takes time to discern God's call on its life it will end up doing a few things and doing them well.

To start the process in June over three consecutive Sunday we began with a sermon series on the Seven Marks of a Healthy Church (a healthy church is one that has been touched and energized by the presence of God so it reflects something of the good news of the wholeness made possible through the knowledge of God as revealed in Christ, by the Holy Spirit) which is the grid we will use to reflect our parish values and beliefs.

Mark 1: energized by faith: *rather than just keeping things going or trying to survive,*

Mark 2: outward-looking focus: *with a 'whole life' rather than a 'church life' concern,*

Mark 3: seeks to find out what God wants: *discerning the Spirit's leading rather than trying to please everyone,*

Mark 4: faces the cost of change and growth: *rather than resisting change and fearing failure,*

Mark 5: operates as a community: *rather than function as a club or religious organization,*

Mark 6: makes room for all: *being inclusive rather than exclusive,*

Mark 7: does a few things and does them well: *focused rather than frenetic*

To facilitate the process the Parish Council appointed a MAP Development Team which consists of Philip Starks, Annette Wendleman, Cynthia Roseburgh, Peter Jones and myself. The MAP team will be chaired by the Archdeacon Neil Hicks, and together will consult with the Parish Council and the wider Parish through surveys handed out at the Annual Meeting and special meetings to be held early in 2016.

An important principle to grasp is that real change is about changing the culture and spirit of a church, not just its programmes and activities.

The goal is to change, in some measure, how we understand and experience God how we relate to one another and how we engage with the world around us.

It means that, in considering where action needs to be taken, we should keep in mind changes in attitudes, values and priorities rather than simply organizational change.

Sticking at it is going to be important.

In our quick-fix, short-attention-span culture it is not easy to do that, but it is a sign of health.

PARISH STATISTICS:

Part of the preparation for our MAP is the gathering of information especially statistics. The 2011 Government Census stated that in Lara, 9,464 nominated that they were Anglican with Little River 71. In light of this it is imperative as a Parish that we develop and establish our MAP especially as we reflect upon our Parish statistics.

For the first time since my induction into the Parish in June 2011 our Sunday's attendance are down 10%. For example in my first year in the Parish as Priest in Charge our Christmas Day/Christmas Eve service attendance was 195 and this year it was down to 102.

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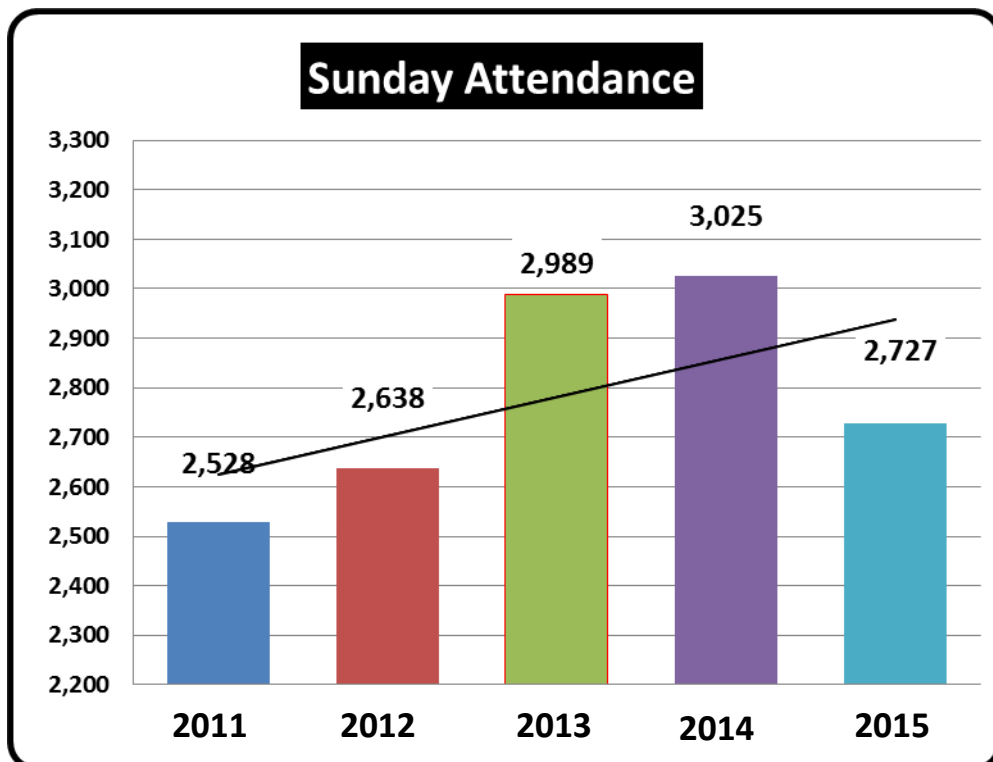
There could be a number of contributing factors to this. At the beginning of my ministry here people were coming to see the new face in town, plus this year alone there have been 8 funerals and at the same time we have experienced the coldest winter since the recording of temperatures. Yet, at the same time we have also had a record number of 15 Baptisms across both centres.

This year there have been 163 public services, 103 public Sunday services, both these exclude weddings, funerals, private baptism and services in residential facilities.

WORSHIP:

On the first Sunday of the month we have continued with the practice of themed services of Prayer, Praise and Proclamation at Holy Trinity, assisted by Kieran Murphy on the piano, with Holy Communion at Christ Church. Some themes have been Grandparents Sunday, Fathers' Day, Mothering Sunday, Sea Sunday, Sermon Series, plus ANZAC Day, a service for the Martyrs of Japan along with the annual Blessing of the Pets at Christ Church which continues to be an amazing service where great fun is had by all.

Our worship at Holy Trinity has also been enhanced on the fourth Sunday of the month with the very much appreciated assistance of the gifted musicians from the Lara Uniting Church. My personal thanks (Marian Couch, Judy Plowman and Alan Bradley) for their ministry to us. A necessary component of our ministry is to St Laurence Park where we have held 43 public services throughout the year. These services also includes services held by Philip Starks on the first Sunday and the fifth Sunday in the month in the hub at Costa House.



MISSION GROUP:

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This year is the second year of our support for Bushikori and in September at Holy Trinity Kelly Peacock from Bushikori spoke at our service where we presented her with our Parish donation towards the Bushikori Mission.

July once again is our Mission Month with a variety of Guest Speakers. Jeff Wild Development Officer from Act for Peace, Annette Wendleman on Mission to Seafarers, Mark Nidenko from the Bible Society finishing with Reverend Hugh Prentice from CMS Mission Society.

The Parish has also supported the Samaritan Operation Christmas Child, CMS mission boxes the Lara High School Breakfast program, Little River Primary School SRI material as well as the Op Shop who have continued their support of Nungalinga College as their nominated charity.

LARA FOOD RELIEF:

The Lara Food Relief which is coordinated by Helen Glare, continues to operate out of the Hall on a Monday from 10:00 am – 1:00 pm. The aim is to help individuals to manage during very difficult periods. Our program is not a regular source of food supplies. This program has received huge support from the wider Lara Community, through the Local CWA, Meredith Masonic Lodge, The Laureatetau Chapter of Beta Sigma Phi, Lara Community Bank, Lara Quality Meats and the Local Chemist.

This outreach ministry is continuing to evolve over the year as they have reached out to a number of individuals in our wider community, providing them with quality food parcels and guidance sometimes as a once off, and others on a more regular basis when they experiencing difficulties in meeting everyday demands.

PARISH OPPORTUNITY SHOP: Where every day is a sale!

The Op Shop continues to provide very affordable clothing, book, toys and bric-a-brac to our community under the management of Dawn and her team of volunteers who work tirelessly sorting through the huge volume of donations we receive. Whilst we are very thankful for the generous donations received from our Lara Residents, part of the difficulty is those items which we are not permitted to sell or are totally unsuitable for sale and need to be taken to the tip. At the moment we currently don't pay Tip Fees, thanks to the negotiation skills of Bill O'Brien. This is a time consuming and expensive job and we thank Bill O'Brien and Sam Keown for the removal of those unwanted items to the tip each month.

Dawn as the Op Shop Coordinator continues to do an excellent job and as such holds a key position within the Parish but the time will come when she decides to step down and plans need to be put into place now for the future operation of the Opportunity Shop.

Due to this in June the Parish Council and Wardens put in place a succession planning process for the Op Shop Coordinator, who would be required to work along-side Dawn as the current Coordinator as a volunteer.

The Parish Council entered into a significant loan which enabled the building of our beautiful Op Shop and associated facilities. The weekly repayments are such that it takes 33% of our average weekly takings to pay back the loan.

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STEWARDSHIP:



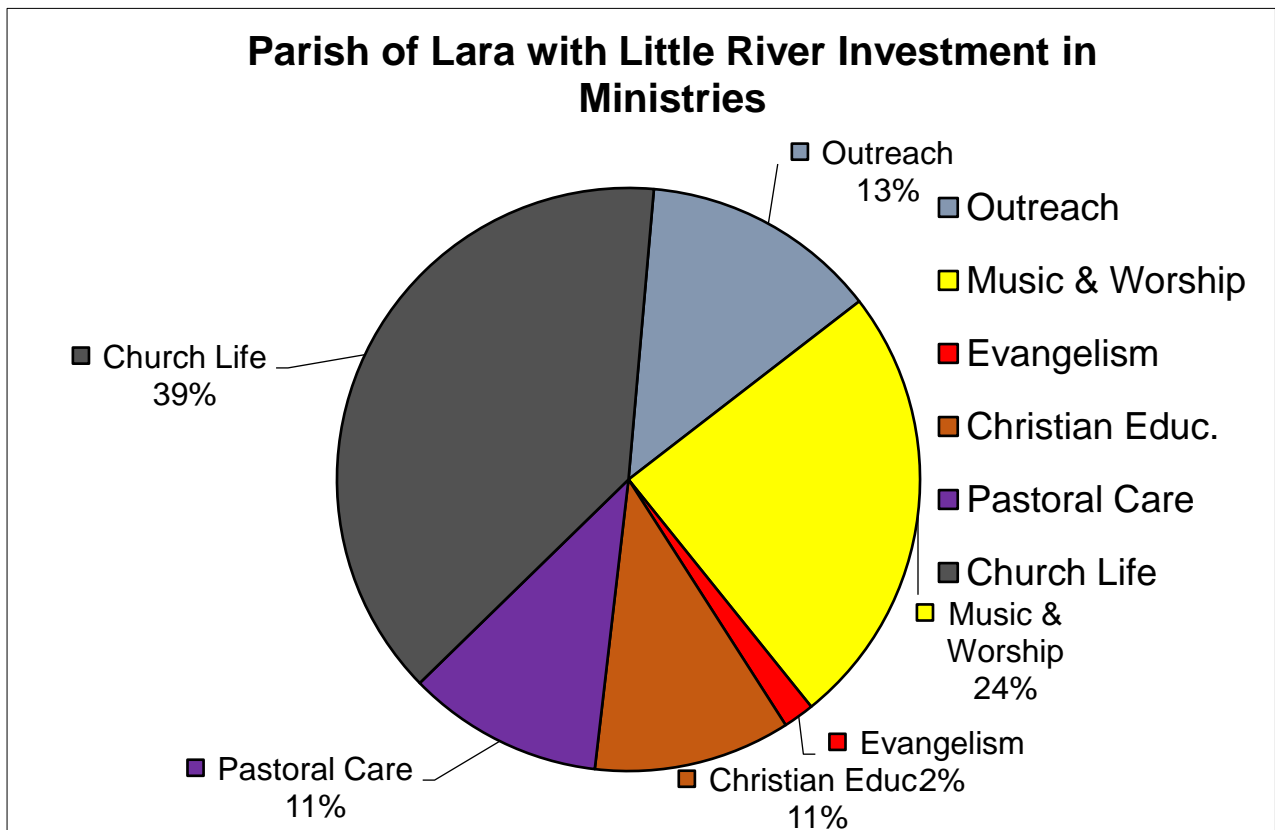
Cheerful
Let's Honour The Lord With Our Δ Giving

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:7

In the normal and healthy Christian life, everything proceeds from God's generosity, and everything returns to God in thanksgiving. Grace, generosity and gratitude: these are not optional extras of Christian living, but are at the very heart of it all. The Apostle Paul says giving is a joy, when it is a response to this free gift of God. "Each of you," Paul writes, "must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (II Cor. 9:7).

If we look at our Parish's expenditure for the year and allocate expenses against key areas of our ministry basically what we see (although some blur the boundaries of the definition for Op Shop which falls into at least two categories, Church Life and Out Reach). Church Life 39%, are (Social Committee, Op Shop, Craft Group, Parish Council, Synod etc.) Music & Worship 24% Outreach 13% (Food Relief, Book Club, and Op Shop).

Through this process we become more aware of how our giving is ultimately affecting peoples lives and making an impact upon our community.



S.A.L.T. SERVING AND LEARNING TOGETHER:

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Last October we commenced a 24 week, in-depth Bible study which covered both Testaments. The study was broken into three eight-week modules: each dealing with a different aspect of what covenant relationship with God means: **CREATING, LIVING and TRUSTING**: This study emphasised the biblical concept of covenant as a unifying pattern throughout the entire Bible. It underscored the unique relationship that God chooses with us as his people.

In **Creating the Covenant** we discussed the story of our origins in Genesis, the Exodus narrative, the teachings of Moses, the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, as well as other books from each Testament that focused on the foundation of Christian faith.

In **Living the Covenant**, we examined the practical challenges of faithful covenant life. In them, we explored leadership problems among trial chieftains, kings and prophets during spiritual and political crises. How the bible leaders looked for practical wisdom and guidance in the teachings of Israel's sages, the letters of Paul, and more.

Finally in **Trusting the Covenant**, we read from the story of Job, to the Hebrew exile, to the apocalyptic visions in Daniel and Revelation, we learnt how faithful love is at work in everything – to restore hope, freedom, and wholeness to our lives.

The writers of this study series were true to their word in that it was indeed an in-depth study as each week requiring quite a bit of extensive reading not only of books from the Bible but study notes, so as to be prepared for the group discussion. Due to this some of those who began the study fell by the way side along the way, which was understandable, however there were those who continued to persevere throughout the study.

LARA YOUTH GROUP:

Our society today is much less connected between generations. People relate more within fairly narrow age bands. The gospel calls us to reach out across these divides. Although technically the Lara Youth Group started at the beginning of the last term of 2015 school year and as such falls into next year's report, with the Youth Leaders Commission on the 4th October. I have nonetheless, been meeting regularly throughout the year with the Youth Leaders in a mentor relationship so as to establish the foundations for a youth group within the Parish.

However, there is a danger here of engaging in wishful thinking. Churches that have no one under the age of 60 years old sometimes express an ardent desire to have young people in this church. However, what they would actually like is for children and young people to join us in what we are already doing but staying quiet and attentive whilst doing so. They certainly would not want to change anything simply because children and young people were present. That would not be joining, just attending.

Moreover, if we see different groups as 'others' in an 'us/them' dynamic, then any incorporation will be partial. Although they find a place in the church, they will remain 'the others.' Churches that are able to embrace such diversity are more likely to grow simply because there are more doors through which people can enter the life of the church.

SOCIAL COMMITTEES:

Small churches naturally operate as communities though too easily as 'closed communities,' whilst large ones can easily feel like an organization. Not surprisingly, one of the characteristics of flourishing larger churches is that they make a considerable use of small

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groups. They have found ways of building the value of the small into the structure of the large, thus enabling them to operate as a community.

This highlights a vital function that our Social Committee performs in our Parish not only by generating valuable funds but also facilitating the development of relationships through the many functions that have been presented to the parish this year.

From the themed dinners, starting with the Christmas Dinner, to “Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines”, then our “Salute to our Armed Forces”, to High Tea, the CFA Christmas Market, selling the Survival Packs for the Air Show, the Book Stall at the Little River Market, the Vintage Clothing, Movie nights and the Op Shop Fashion Parade.

Also at Christ Church Little River the annual Shrove Tuesday Pancake Night was a great success. This is an amazing event on the Calendar of Little River, that sees the whole of Little River pulling together for this fundraising activity. Thank you to all who assisted on the night, from Jenny Cunningham spending the day picking strawberries, to those who assisted with in the kitchen with the dishes , with tea and coffee, to Ivan Fairchild manning the gate to the wonderful cooks of the pancakes and those who supplied and assisted with the toppings.

SRI (SPECIAL RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION):

Over the past year there have been a number of changes to the SRI program in our schools, were each SRI teacher having to undergo Education Department training before being allowed to enter the school to teach. Due to this the program had a late start and we didn't begin until the second term of the year, and then only at Little River Primary School. Once again as a Parish we have continued to support SRI program at Little River by assisting with the funding of the children's lesson material and the Partnership Program at ACCESS ministries.

This year, is the 70th anniversary of CCES (Council for Christian Education in Schools,) which is now trading as “ACCESS ministries.” The recent announcement from the Department of Education limiting the provision of SRI to before/after school and lunch times as from 2016, is from a historical point of view, not a new challenge. In 1872, SRI could only be provided to children after school hours with permission.

Dawn Penney the CEO of ACCESS ministries states, “One of the lessons from the past that we cannot and should not ignore is that we need to ‘understand the times’, to find our place and our voice amongst the cacophony of voices clamouring for attention. Then we need to speak clearly for the message entrusted to us all is too vital to be drowned out or lost amongst the noise.”

MINISTER ASSOCIATION:

Along with Deanery the monthly meetings with the local Lara Ministers is crucial as we gather together to pray and support one another as we ministers as God's people in our local context.

COMBINED CHURCHES LARA CAROLS:

For the Combined Churches of Lara, the Carols continue to provide an amazing mission outreach opportunity, one we pray that will continue to grow with the every expanding population of our community.

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Each year the Lara Combined Carols continues to grow and develop. Once again we were privileged to have the beautiful backdrop of Pirra Homestead through the generosity of L Bisinella Developments along with the amazing support of the Lara Community Bank, the Lara CFA and the Lara Masonic Lodge who once again assisted with parking.

This year we added a live nativity where families were able to participate by dressing in costume and take selfies with the animals. With a well-rehearsed Choir and guest artist with myself as the MC a great night was had by all who attended.

As I conclude my report it would be amiss of me if I did not thank you all for your continued love and support of both George and myself throughout the year and I pray that we as a Parish continue to minister and grow together as the people of God in all that He has called us to be, so that together we make His word fully known within the communities of Lara with Little River.

Many Blessings

The Reverend Shirley Littras
Incumbent
The Anglican Parish of Lara with Little River

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