

Vicar's Annual Report 2011

One of my favourite parables that Jesus told, is about the prodigal son. God has used this parable to speak to me over my life time, the most recent in my discernment as to my call to be Priest in Charge here in the Parish of Lara with Little River. During this time in my daily readings Simon Tugwell, the writer of one of the reflections, asked this question, "Are we ready to be the prodigal come home, welcomed with a party? Or are we going to insist on being the good boy, the elder brother, prepared only to do his duty, but not to celebrate the feast of love?" This spoke to me. Was I like the good boy, working as an Assistant Minister in a Parish, doing only my duty, and missing out on the feast of love? Did I need to step out in faith and trust in the God who calls and who also sustains? Did I need to become a Parish Priest, to join in the feast of love? Henry Blackaby in his book, 'Experiencing God' states "When God reveals what He is purposing for you to do; you face a crisis - a decision time. God and the world can tell from your response what you really believe about God. So on the 22nd June 2011, I stepped out in faith and was commissioned as your Parish Priest. So I now present my first Annual Report for the Parish of Holy Trinity Lara with Christ Church Little River.

Sunday Service:

One of the essential components of our life together as a Church is the expression of our love and devotion through our worship to God, as his people. With special thanks to the Locum ministry of Father David Patterson there have been 186 public services, 115 public Sunday services, both these exclude weddings, funerals, private baptism and services in residential facilities, with the yearly total of 2528 people attending all Sunday services. Christmas Day/Christmas Eve 195 people attended across the Parish and 115 attended Easter Day/Eve services. There have also been 22 public services held at St Laurence Park throughout the year.

In September we implemented a projected PowerPoint for the 8:45 am service at Holy Trinity, which I hope has enhanced our worship.

One of the worship highlights for myself, although it occurred in October which falls in the next Church year, has been the Blessing of the Animals at Christ Church where we had 29 adults, 14 children, a number and variety of dogs, a couple of cats, two blue tongue lizards, three guinea pigs, a cockatiel and one imaginary white chicken, called "chicken." This was a delightful service followed by a wonderful afternoon tea. This style of service provides an opportunity to demystify church to those in our community who seldom attend or have never before attended church services.

It is, therefore my aim that by February to have formed a group of people who will be committed to working as a team to develop a variety of alternative services that encourages an all age style of worship to reflect the demographic of our community. To assist this process I am proposing to change the service times at Holy Trinity to 9:00 am to make it more family friendly and to also have a Praise, Prayer and Proclamation service on the first Sunday of the month at Holy Trinity which lends to this alternative style of worship.

Book of Common Prayer:

This traditional service which is held on the first Sunday of the month at 5 pm at Holy Trinity has an average attendance of 4. I commend this service for those who remember and love the language of Book of Common Prayer and desire a more contemplative style of worship.

Midweek Service:

Although the mid-week services at Holy Trinity have a low attendance rate, for myself I appreciate and enjoy the opportunity for a more intimate style of worship. I recommend others to come and experience this for themselves.

Ministry Teams:

At the moment there exist within the parish a number of ministry teams, for example the Vestry, Parish Council, Op Shop, Building Committee, Prayer Circle, Sparkles, Social Committee, those who also volunteer at St Laurence Park and Book Club. It is my desire to

develop a further two ministry groups within the parish to assist with our ministry needs; these are a Pastoral Care Group and a Worship Committee.

The forming and the training of the Pastoral Care Group is one of the strategies of our Mission Action Plan with the goal of supporting the pastoral care needs of the visitors to our Parish Opportunity Shop. Although we are still waiting for further development of the Opportunity Shop to be able to implement some of our strategies such as a food bank it is imperative for the existing pastoral care needs of our clientele that we train and support those who are already extending Pastoral Care to those in need.

As previously mentioned my aim is to develop all age worship using the service of Prayer Praise and Proclamation on the first Sunday of the month at Holy Trinity. It is imperative that we form a Worship Committee to assist with worship and to also develop a Parish worship calendar for the year to include such days as Grandparents Sunday, Harvest Festival along with existing services of Blessing of the Pets, Back to Church Sunday and our Patronal Festivals.

St Laurence Park:

Another significant area of our ministry within the Parish is our ministry at St Laurence Park, in the Chapel of St Claire 9:30am on the last Thursday in the month, the Chapel at St Catherine's 11:00 am on the first and third Thursday of the month and 6:30 pm on the first Sunday of the month in the hub. I would like to take this opportunity to thank those members of our Parish who assist with these Chapel services, especially at St Catherine's and in particular Bill O'Brien for taking and leading the worship on the first Sunday.

S.A.L.T. Serving and Learning Together

This small group which has around seven members and meets on a Tuesday at 11am commenced in October with the aim, for seven weeks, of reflecting upon a book, by Selwyn Hughes on the Lord's Prayer, "Praying Jesus' Way." There have been a couple of others from the congregation who are also working through the study book in their own time, as they have work commitments through the day.

In Genesis 2:18 we discover that humans have been designed to be in relationships, as it states, "it is not good for the man to live alone. I will make a suitable companion to help him." "Human beings are made for community and togetherness. This distinguishing mark of true Christian fellowship will most likely not be rediscovered in large meetings, where the participants seldom have more intimate gatherings to complement these experiences." (Mallison 1989: 8)

Small group ministry is an essential component for the implementation of growth, both spiritual and numerical. The overarching goal of small group ministry is to build relationships; relationships with God, relationship with one another and relationship with the world.

Jesus himself understood the importance of group dynamics and to some extent utilized those forces in his ministry. In the small group of twelve disciples, ideas, attitudes and behaviour were changed.

Small groups can play an important role in helping each other hear and respond in practical ways to the needs of people within our community. Furthermore, small groups provide a very effective context for learning and growth in Christian maturity.

Therefore, it is my hope that this group will continue meeting during Advent and to also offer an alternative night time meeting for those who work during the day, and therefore have not been able to attend.

Op Shop:

The Op Shop continues to provide an essential component of our ministry as a Parish through its outreach to our community, not only in supplying low cost clothing especially to those who have been impacted by our economic climate, but also pastoral care. Not only does the Op Shop provide outreach and support to our community it also is a major contributor to the Parish finances which has enabled us this year to pay our full assessment to the Diocese without a Grant from the Diocese. However, this does not negate our own personal responsibility as the people of God to maintain our giving so that we are in a strong financial

position when we begin our property development in the New Year, especially when the Op Shop might be closed for a number of weeks.

Although in January the Wardens of the Parish will hold a special thank you BBQ for the volunteers of the Op Shop, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dawn Tessdale and her team of volunteers for the generous giving of their time and talents for the ministry they provide on our behalf, to our community and for the funds that the Op Shop contributes to the Parish which enables us to function as we do.

Social Committees

In my first week here in the parish on the Saturday night after my commissioning I encountered the fantastic work that our Social Committee does with the Karaoke night and later on the Op Shop fashion parade and the BBQ for Back to Church Sunday. The Beetle afternoon also provided a time of fun and frivolity for those who attended. I am looking forward with much anticipation to the spring dinner which will be held in November. We were blessed with amazing weather for the Christ Church Market Day, which was a great success, thanks to the hard work of our few faithful parishioners at Christ Church. I am still enjoying the jam though I have finished the tomato sauce. I very much look forward to experiencing the Little River School Fair and the Shrove Tuesday pancakes.

CRE

I have been blessed with the opportunity to continue to be a part of Christian Education in Schools by teaching grades 5/6 at Little River Primary School on a Thursday. Teaching in a country school is a delight; both the children and the teachers are supportive and wonderful and I am looking forward to the CRE Christmas celebration later in December.

Minister Association

One of the blessings of working in Parish ministry is ministering alongside other ministers from other denominations in our community. I have been very fortunate to be welcomed into the ministers' fellowship by Paul Downie from Lifeway Baptist Church who instigated the non-denominational prayer meeting in July, where we prayed for our Nation and our community. Paul and I have shared a cuppa and a meal together on a couple of occasions, so I shall miss his support and enthusiasm for ministry, as Paul moves from Lifeway at the end of November. We wish him many blessings in his future ministry.

Finally I would like to take this opportunity to thank the incumbency committee for stepping out in faith and choosing me to be your Parish Priest. I thank also all the wardens and both vestries for their support and also for their ministry to the Parish throughout the year. I would especially like to express my deep appreciation to George for his love and support, who to my amazement hangs in there with me through the ups and downs, not only of life, but also of ministry, even to the point of crawling under churches. Thank you.

May God continue to bless us as a Parish and our communities in the coming year.



The Reverend Shirley Littras
Priest in Charge
The Anglican Parish of Lara with Little River