

Priest in Charge Report to the Annual General Meeting

Bream Bay Anglican Mission District

This past year has been an extraordinary one at BBAMD. I am very grateful for the warm welcome that the congregation have extended to my family and me this year as we find our way along existing pathways and begin to create new ones. BBAMD is a remarkable place, and I am privileged to be associated with it.

This report will be organised along the lines of my perceptions of the key issues in the first year.

- The transition from LSMU to Mission District has not been entirely seamless, as the various groups and leaders learn or remember what it is like to work collaboratively with a priest in charge, rather than independently with a lay administrator;
- The renovation, repair, and management of deferred maintenance of the physical plants at both churches has been extremely challenging and time-consuming. It has drawn enormously—perhaps too much—on the volunteer good will and the financial resources of this faith community;
- There many people doing many things for the church and for the community; I am profoundly impressed by the number of people who put their hands up, or simply show up, and get things done;
- The relationship of BBAMD with the structures of the local community are only beginning to develop, and the possibilities of those relationships are just starting to emerge;
- Having done so much this year to address the legacy challenges of the past, we need now to begin to look toward the future, including community outreach, incorporation of new members, and particularly planning for the nurture of children.

Transition from Licensed Shared Ministry Unit to Mission District

The Anglican faith community in Bream Bay has stabilised and grown over the year, and people and groups responsible for leadership have grown into their roles. Over the past 20 years as an LSMU, different ministries of this church grew quite independent, and learned to function quite distinctly from one another. When I made my rounds of initial calls on most parishioners, I consistently asked each person 'Is BBAMD one church or two?'. Every person said, 'We are one church', but most agreed that we struggle to make that unity a reality. We are physically only twelve minutes apart, but it seems there are histories, habits, and even cultures that keep us separate. One of my highest priorities in my first year as priest-in-charge has been to emphasise that we are one body, with the advantage (and challenges) of two different church buildings.

The Committee of the LSMU evolved into the Parish Council and has met monthly for the last year. I am grateful to the members of the PC for meeting so faithfully and for the depth of commitment each person brings to the Council. I am deeply grateful to Essie Leech who serves as Priest's Warden, and Wendy Boyd who serves as People's Warden, for their wisdom and commitment to this church, and to Sally Haigh who took up the often-thankless job of Council Secretary. Still, there is some way to go, in my view, to evolve the PC from a group of individuals with strong opinions into a shared body of faithful people working to common Christian witness.

- There has never been a full meeting of the Council, since there has always been one empty seat from the number approved by the 2023 AGM, despite our efforts to fill it; therefore, I will request that the AGM approve a smaller body for 2024.
- An important activity of the Council has been to establish a *Handbook* for the Parish Council. All procedures, structures, and implicit knowledge have been written down and included in

this lengthy document (or collection of documents), from how to call a plumber, to who has keys, to financial operating procedures, and much, much more. This is a living document and will be updated regularly. It is made available to all Council members. The process of developing the *Handbook* has been very important, because new Council members (and clergy) do not know what they do not know, and we have discovered many things that are not commonly known or agreed. It has been an important step forward in transparency.

- One of my goals for 2024 is to work with the Council on how to prepare for and participate effectively and efficiently in meetings, how to manage disagreement and conflict, and how to structure transparency and accountability into the way BBAMD does its work. Agreeing on by-laws may support that.
- We are now more than half-way through a strategic plan developed by the PC last May, and that framework provides some direction and accountability. As we develop the next plan, structure ways to work more closely with Op Shop volunteers, and institute a more robust structure of committees that report to the Council, I look forward to the Council being a creative place where Christian life will be fully integrated into the business of the church.
- We also need to become more aware of how BBAMD relates to the Diocese: I have usually heard the Diocese perceived oppositionally or resentfully, but in fact the Diocese owns all the property of BBAMD, and the ministry we do here we do on behalf of the Diocese. That's the way the Anglican Church works, and it is what we signed on to. There are certainly ways in which Diocesan procedures could be significantly improved, but going forward we must find constructive ways to align ourselves and implement our relationship, with the Diocese.

One of the challenges of the Council in 2023 was the loss of its regular treasurer, but this loss in turn highlighted how reliant the church had become on just a few people to hold it together administratively. In the 2024 budget there is a line item to pay a treasurer who will manage the accounts of the Church and the Op Shop; this will allow the Council more control over its financial operations and reports.

Although the financial resources of an Anglican Church parish in the 21st century are challenging, for the most part it has always been so in Christian history. Nevertheless, much of the stress, anxiety, and tension in BBAMD has been about resources. It is important to be practical, but what our experience this year shows us is that God will provide the essential resources we need. It would be helpful if BBAMD stopped thinking of itself as a poor church: while we must be very careful with our resources, we are not poor.

Renovation and management of deferred maintenance

The long-deferred renovation of St Peter's Church was undoubtedly the focus of much of this year's time, energy, and resources. This has not in any way been a simple or straightforward project, and I acknowledge Wendy Boyd as the key person in making this project happen. Things we thought would be simple turned out to have many layers of complexity and bureaucratic challenges. We have certainly learned a lot. Even though at this writing we have still not restarted our worship in that building, I fully anticipate a successful conclusion and a safe, welcoming, and comfortable worship space for generations to come.

One of the first things I did after I arrived in March 2023 was to ask for help clearing out boxes of accumulated 'stuff' in both churches that seemed to have no immediate purpose. With the help of a great number of people we went through boxes, discarded rubbish, and there were many, many trips to the tip, just so we could move around (thanks to Ross Boyd and Ian Hanna). That clear-out uncovered a great deal of deferred maintenance at both churches. Since St Peter's was to undergo a

comprehensive renovation, our attention turned to resourcing maintenance at St Paul's. Through the generosity of the Anglican Mission's Hāpaitia Fund we received a \$10 000 grant and were able to address the many structural and cosmetic issues related to water and wind damage to the roof, walls, ceiling, and doors. My thanks also go out to the many volunteers (acknowledged below) who contributed considerable time and talent to making St Paul's as welcoming, safe, and tidy as it now is.

The good news in all of this is that it is done. There are smaller projects that remain, such as the west window at St Peter's, some rotting exterior boards at both churches, and new chairs at both churches, but the bulk of the major work is now complete. We need to take a breather and let the dust settle!

Many people doing many things

There are a few people who are doing many things at BBAMD. The talent of so many people have contributed to the impression our churches give first-time visitors. I want to acknowledge the dedication of Christine Anderson, Wendy and Ross Boyd, Norm Cave, Tony Fry, and others who worked to scrape, paint, hammer, and otherwise make St Paul's great again. These include (again) Christine Anderson, Wendy and Ross Boyd, Norm Cave, Ron and Kay Dixon, Tony Fry, Sue and Richard Hancock, Ian Hanna, Stephen Lea, Essie Leech, and Jack Prima for their work on St Peter's—and there may be others, so accept my apologies for not including them here. I also acknowledge our contractors and tradespeople who worked hard to keep to deadlines, and kept a careful eye on the limited budget.

I also want to acknowledge the Op Shop volunteers, both members of BBAMD and volunteers who are not members of BBAMD. The Op Shop is a valuable outreach of this church into Bream Bay communities, and to people just passing through who are in for a browse. This is a place that draws on the time and commitment of many volunteers, and I look forward to recognising them more specifically at a different occasion. My deep thanks go to Sue Hancock for her management of the Op Shop in 2023, and for her commitment to the Op Shop volunteers and the community. I acknowledge Sally Haigh who takes up the role for 2024. The relationship between the Op Shop and the Church parts of BBAMD is evolving, and becoming more closely aligned. The Diocese has always understood the Op Shop and the Church as one political and fiscal unit, and now it is time for us to do so in practical ways. One of those ways will be presenting a budget to the AGM that integrates the budgets of both the Op Shop and the Church ministries of the BBAMD. We have also come to some agreements with the *ad hoc* group of Op Shop volunteers on the sharing of Op Shop income which is reflected in the proposed 2024 budget. We plan to work with Op Shop staffers more closely and strategically in the coming months.

Among the many roles she plays, Lee Hanna has managed the complexities of health and safety at both church with skill and grace. She quite literally allows us to keep the doors open legally and safely, and we are all grateful to her.

I am profoundly grateful to the many unsung heroes of our worship services, including and especially the Sacristans who make sure that services are set up, cleaned up, and who tend to the linens and communion vessels of the churches. An especial thanks goes to Annette Herbert who is our fabrics expert; she has played a very significant role in caring for and restoring the altar linen and hangings of both churches. These heritage fabrics had fallen into a state of disrepair. My thanks also to liturgists, readers, intercessors, and sidespeople who ensure that our worship services flow along effortlessly.

I acknowledge with deep thanks the contributions of our musicians, Jan Pirihi, Richard Hancock, Wendy Boyd, Anne Connolly-Munt and Lachie McLean without whom our services would be less lively and uplifting. Much to the annoyance of some people, I have attempted to introduce a few new hymns into our cycle of hymnody, and will continue to do so as we welcome new people with new cultures into the church.

I am also very grateful to the ordained clergy of BBAMD, including The Revs Richard Hancock, Annette Herbert, and Jacky Ancliffe, who lead worship at both churches, Ranburn, and at homes.

Still, there are people work themselves to exhaustion, and then become resentful that they are not recognised more often or are asked to be accountable. 'I resign' is one of the most frequent refrains I have heard this year. It is my hope that we will be able to work more collaboratively with all our hardworking volunteers who support our community ministries and help people to set limits before they become overwhelmed, and find ways to have constructive but sometimes difficult conversations.

Relationship of BBAMD and the structures of the local community

There is a lot going on in our communities. One of the first relationships I developed was with the Waipū Presbyterian Church. So far that relationship has been limited to shared Good Friday worship, community advertising at Christmas and Easter, and informal conversations, but I hope that once St Peter's reopens we will be able to develop that relationship more effectively. We have also deepened our relationships with Holy Family Roman Catholic Church as we share worship with them at Lessons and Carols, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday as well as the World Day of Prayer.

I acknowledge and am grateful for the people who lead monthly Anglican worship at Ranburn. I have a regular visiting schedule with the Anglican residents at Ranburn. We hosted the KW Singers (who rehearse at Ranburn) at our Lessons and Carols service in December, and plan to host them on Palm Sunday. We are grateful to them and their leader Anne Connolly-Munt for the contribution they make to the music of our community.

I have met with the staff of the Bream Bay Community Trust and Kainga Ora staff who are developing projects along Peter Snell Road in Ruakākā. These are developing relationship which I hope will be mutually productive. I have also met with the Budget Advisor of the Whangārei Anglican Care Services. This is also a developing relationship. It is my hope that BBAMD may be a catalyst to bring together an array of community initiatives to develop an integrated system of social care in the region. Four violent deaths in our community in 2023 were all avoidable, and it is our responsibility to be part of the compassionate preventive response.

The violent storms at the beginning of 2023 highlighted the vulnerability of our coastal communities, and it is my hope to explore the use of St Paul's as a civil defence shelter as may be useful to the responses in our communities. This may require additional changes and upgrades to the hall and Pavillion at St Paul's, for which we can seek external funding.

Looking toward the future

Quite understandably BBAMD is acutely aware of its past, the key people who have played important roles in its development, and the ways things have been done. Equally understandably, people who have been long associated with BBAMD (and its predecessors) can feel unsure about change and evolution. Yet inevitably the church must evolve to meet new occasions and new duties. At the moment, for instance, we have no ministry for children. Such a ministry will be absolutely essential if

we are to attract families with young children to BBAMD. We will need people to explore and lead such initiatives, and the church will need to invest funding to this initiative.

We have developed our liturgical offerings to include more te reo at some services to make ourselves more accessible to tangata whenua o te rohe. There are more and more new settlers, particularly from Asian cultures, who are migrating to the Bream Bay area. This is an area which we have highlighted in our Strategic Plan but have not done much more yet. These are communities where we can grow our ministries. The Seafarer's Mission appears no longer to be available to us, but this was never a place of growth for the parish. Making ourselves available to new settlers is an area of growth for BBAMD.

Communications

Thanks to Shelley Couper we now have a BBAMD website which is regularly updated. We also have a BBAMD Facebook page which is active and updated at least twice a week. Older folks may dismiss such initiatives, but the question is not about whether they use these sites, but whether the people we wish to attract into the church use the sites—and they do. The business associations in Waipū and Ruakākā both have active Facebook sites, for instance, and since we are also active we have a visible online presence to those communities which are accessed by thousands of people. In February of this year we began the *Bream Bay Anglican* which is distributed online. At the moment this is a monthly newsletter, but my hope is that it will become more frequent and will have contributions from the various ministries and efforts of BBAMD. It is not only a communication tool within the church, but an outreach initiative that lets the community know what we are doing.

It is also worth noting here that we have new signage at both churches, the funding for which was donated by parishioners.

All of these things, and more, have occurred in the last 12 months.

There is a lot going on at BBAMD. It is important to note here that I am employed to work 0.4 FTE—that is, two days a week; that's really 1.5 days plus Sunday mornings. This time barely covers sermon preparation time, let alone rosters and pew sheets, pastoral visiting, community engagement, report preparation, and supporting all the other things we are doing. I have been working a lot of extra time in 2023 because this has been an important year. This is not sustainable. BBAMD and its Council has some careful thinking to do about what kind and how much ordained ministry leadership it wants. At my request the wardens and I have had a performance review at 3 and 6 months, and although that has not happened yet as an annual review (March is a very busy month!) it is my plan to request such a review in April. I will look forward to hearing what kind of ministry you want, and whether I am the right person to do it. It is useful to test a call from time to time to see what God has in mind for this place and for me.

Meanwhile, I am privileged to be here for now and to support the hard work, witness to the Gospel, and the many, many ministries that are going on in the BBAMD.

Respectfully submitted,



(The Revd) Mark Henrickson, PhD, RSW, MANZASW
Priest in Charge