

Report of the Vicar, 2025

Mark Henrickson

On 1 March 2025 I marked two years in role as priest in charge of the Anglican Church of Bream Bay, although I had also been informally associated as a member of the church for over two years prior to that. That makes me a relative newcomer to the congregation, and I probably will always be the outsider, although I live in the community. There has been an enormous amount of change in those two years. The Anglican Church in Bream Bay spent twenty years operating as a local shared ministry (LSM), followed by nearly two years as a mission district. On 1 January this year, by fiat of the Diocesan Synod, we became a parish, and I became a vicar. It is important to note here that I am a 40%-time vicar, which means I am meant to work two days of a five-day week. Normally this would include Sunday morning and 1.5 other days: half a day would normally be for sermon preparation; semi-monthly deanery meetings, clergy conferences, required Diocesan trainings, and Diocesan Synod take time out of the parish but are still part of my role; I have attempted to call on every new member or potential member, as I see this as the core and joy of my work; and I have spent an almighty amount of time at the photocopier. In 2024 I worked considerably more than my allocated time, which has frankly been challenging. I have other professional responsibilities during the week, but as many of you have discovered I always answer my phone and emails related to Bream Bay at most times of day and night. I have had no leave this past year: my trip to China was a trip related to other professional work I do, and it was no holiday, you may be sure. This year, as our Council structures bed in, I expect to put clearer boundaries around my church work time, and may even plan leave.

Membership

Perhaps the most important thing on people's minds is membership. Your Council have put a great deal of work into clarifying the membership roll of the parish in preparation for our new status as a parish. The results of the parish 'census' together with the Diocesan Statistical Return were published in the March 2025 newsletter, and are summarised here:

- ACBB currently has 60 adult members, of which 45 are female, 15 are male
- There are 12 new members in the last year, which is 20% of the total parish membership
- In CY2024 there were four baptisms and two funerals

While we had a longer list of people on a membership list of several years ago, and our membership appears to have declined in the past year, many of these people did not consider themselves members of the church and asked to be removed from the roll. We now have a solid base of 'signed up' members. In addition, we have seven people who regularly attend who, for one reason or another, are not (yet?) members, and a shorter list of people who attend occasionally. In short, we are growing year on year. As new housing develops in Marsden Point and One Tree Point, and discussion are mooted about growing jobs in the region, the potential for parish growth is significant. In an increasingly disillusioned and secularising world, this is very encouraging.

In addition, the following 2024 information was extracted from the service registers and reported to the Diocese:

- Number of services: 64 (including seasonal services)
- Total attendance at all ordinary worship services: 1,537
- Total Acts of Communion: 1,134

A total of 113 volunteers (not unique volunteers) gave an estimated 7,071 hours to BBAMD.

Less encouraging is our giving profile. The Treasurer records 49 people who give to the church. Of these, 25 give by automatic payment, and the total annual amount that they gave in 2024 was \$26,996, or about \$1080 per giving unit per year. On the other hand, 24 people give through envelopes, and we received an annual combined total of \$1533 through these envelopes, or \$63.90 per giving unit per year (about a cup of coffee per month). This means that 25 of our 60 members (roughly 40%) are responsible for most of member giving. This presents a significant risk to the financial health and future of the congregation.

Since our automatic payment giving is 17 times as large as our envelope giving, it is unsurprising that we encourage giving by automatic payments, since giving is not dependent on service attendance. Our loose offering at services is \$1872 per year. Every member (and occasional attender) has been allocated a giving number to ensure that the accountants can process the charitable giving receipts in a timely way this year, and we strongly encourage all givers to use those allocated giving numbers, and to take advantage of the tax rebate scheme. We encourage all givers to reflect carefully when they make their decision about giving to the church.

Governance

Each of the stages of our evolution into parish status has been governed and guided by different Diocesan statutes and practices, and each has been marked by challenges which for the most part I think the parish has understood and is addressing. I want again to acknowledge the hard work of many faithful and committed people during the LSM years. In the LSM structure I think many people felt that they had an opportunity to take initiative and independently create and develop projects that they thought best, in the ways they thought best, but which lacked accountability. The Pavilion was added to St Paul's. There were a number of things that were not done, including most notably the major renovation project at St Peter's, and essential repair and maintenance projects at St Paul's; carloads and carloads of 'stuff' accumulated at both churches.

When I took up the role as priest-in-charge simultaneously with the evolution to a mission district, only some people in the ministry unit had experienced centralised clergy leadership with an active Council which was vested with decision-making authority and accountability. Our building permit for the renovations at St Peter's was about to expire, and we had not identified a builder. There were several different clergy and lay people who were actively rostered, and each had their own ways of leading worship. In the last year the Worship and Liturgy Committee has made important strides in standardising our worship, and ensuring that worship for the most part is consistent at both churches.

Some people were pleased with these governance changes. Some people found that evolution difficult, because it meant giving up individual autonomy to a Council, and there remained distrust of governance and its processes of accountability. The governance structures that the Council put in place—a hub-and-spokes model of committees that made recommendations to the elected Council, and the Council putting decisions into action—meant that fully independent initiatives and decision-making were no longer appropriate. I am aware of grumbling in some places about my trying to make this 'my' church, but in fact I have been trying to make this *your* church. I'm sure that members of the Council have grown weary of hearing me say that only by locating authority and initiatives in the Council, increasing transparency, and encouraging accountability can we become the kind of church community that we claim to want to be and make this a church of its members. In 2024 your Council adopted bylaws which govern its business. The Council is accountable to the members of the church, and particularly so at the Annual General Meetings. No one loves AGMs, but it is the way to ensure transparency and accountability. Council minutes are made available as soon

as they are approved, either on the rolling trolley in the narthex at St Peter's or atop the cabinet in the St Paul's Pavillion (my CV has also been in this folder for the last 18 months). Every member should be interested and know exactly where your money is going, and who is making what kinds of decisions on your behalf.

Governance changes have been made to conform the governance structure of this church to the statutes of the Diocese. People ask, 'who does the Diocese think it is?', to which we can only respond, they are the reason we exist as an Anglican church community. We are an extension of the Diocese. Participation in Diocesan structures is the way ministry units in the Anglican Communion around the world do their business. Other than on individual pastoral matters, I have taken no decisions independent of the Council and its committees, and I have conformed to Council decisions, even when I disagreed with them. That's the way the Anglican Church works. If we are unhappy with that process, standing for election to the Diocesan Synod provides a constructive way to be heard and to influence changes.

There are ways to strengthen governance. The Strategic Plan is the workplan established by Council. It is a way to establish priorities, allocate resources, and provide accountability to the Council. Progress to the Plan is reported at each Council meeting. The current plan runs through September of this year, although a number of items have been deferred because of lack of resourcing, either human or financial. We are in urgent need of a health and safety coordinator.

Finance

I have no financial authority of any kind: I cannot access or spend funds, I cannot make financial decisions, I cannot see church bank accounts, I do not know who gives what except occasionally for special and solicited gifts. Indeed, for the past year I have occasionally been surprised to learn that some bank accounts exist, sometimes with no parish oversight or accountability, such as when we discovered an independent Foodbank account which statements do not come to the Treasurer. It came as a surprise to some people that the Op Shop is treated as a church activity by accountants and the Diocese, which in fact it is, and a very valuable one to the church and the community. Over the LSM years, some people came to think of the Op Shop and the Church as separate entities, when in fact they are not, and cannot be. This past year we put a process in place where Op Shop volunteers, acting as a committee of the Council, make recommendations to the Council on charitable donations to community organisations, but it is the church Council that authorises those donations. That structure is working, and the Anglican Church of Bream Bay is one of the highest-ranking parish donors to organisations outside the parish in the Diocese. Whether that generosity remains tenable is a decision this AGM must consider. Last year the Council authorised a division of Op Shop profits evenly between the parish and the community. Whether this is desirable or sustainable is a decision the AGM must consider in budget discussions, particularly in light of the level of member giving noted above. We did no fund-raising for the church last year.

We now have our first paid treasurer who took up the role mid-year last year. We are still working with TML to provide meaningful financial statements and undertaking a major revision of the way we manage our finances. TML promised Synod greater local control of finances, but we have yet to see that. In light of the giving numbers reported in the Membership section above, despite that we are growing, we face considerable financial challenges in the coming years.

Property

Last year we closed St Peter's for six months for the renovation, and we reopened a transformed space on Palm Sunday, 2024. The interior of the church is open, flexible and the seating can be

readily configured to accommodate a variety of uses, including worship, performances, festivals and meetings. The creation and installation of a movable free-standing altar has added to that flexibility, brought the presider closer to the people, enabled people to see and hear more easily what is going on at the altar, and to make their communions without having to navigate steps. The installation of tabernacles of both churches gives presiders more flexibility and assurance that holy things will be stored appropriately. The independent Friends of the Organ group have progressed very significantly in raising funds for the new organ at St Peter's, and raised the profile of the BBAMD/ACBB by hosting a variety of different performances since the reopening. Discovering the source of the leak on the west window at St Peter's and the inexpensive fix contributed significantly to our budget surplus in 2024. Thanks to a grant from the Tindall Foundation we were able to purchase a new fridge-freezer (and associated electrical works) for the Foodbank. The front car park at St Paul's has been striped, which will significantly improve access for emergency services and overall safety at that facility. There are some outstanding minor but important repair and maintenance issues that remain at both churches, but thanks to the generous contribution of work, time and talent by Christine Anderson and her team, which includes Norm Cave who fashioned our altar and tabernacles, by and large both properties are whole and sound. There has been some discussion about how to improve the appearance of the main entry at St Paul's church, and how to improve the car park in the rear.

One of the decisions facing Council this year will be how to maximise the use of the properties of the church so that they do not merely remain expensive assets open only on Sunday morning. It is all very well to say 'make them available to the community', but someone has to manage that; someone has to take the bookings and ensure that health, safety, hygiene and alcohol guidelines are followed. I thank Suniti Fry for her significant contribution to that ministry. She is stepping back as of the AGM, and we will need someone to take up this responsibility.

Community

We have made some important outreach efforts in the community this year. Foremost among these is our Foodbank, led by Liz Rawhiti who took it up after Janet Woodward stepped back. I am tremendously grateful to Liz for her compassion, transparency, accountability, and forthrightness in the development of the Foodbank. Several innovative initiatives related to the Foodbank are under discussion at the moment, although it would be premature to say more about them in this report. If they come to fruition they will mean greater collaboration with other services, agencies and service users in the community, and a greater variety of services available through the Foodbank. The Foodbank is unique among our ministries in that a measure of success is that people use it less because they have access to greater resources in their lives. Assessing this is a challenge we will address in 2025.

Other significant outreach initiatives this year include our Blessing of Animals service in collaboration with Wandering Angels animal rescue; our interfaith Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, and Advent Lessons and Carols services with other churches in the community, our worship services and visiting at Ranburn, our participation in the Day of Prayer for Christian Unity and ANZAC Day commemorations at Waipū. Perhaps most prominent in our recent memories is our participation in the Ruakākā Villy Day Out, when a number of church members gathered with other community providers under a gazebo generously provided by Ray White Realty, and showed children how to plant seeds in small pots. We spent all day at Te One Reserve doing this outreach, and this established our presence in the community for some people who may not have even known we exist. While we haven't seen people flocking into our services from this initiative, I think we created a lot of community goodwill. Less successful, I think was our participation in the Waipū Highland Games on 1 January 2024, which is why we did not repeat the experience this year.

One of the things we do not do well yet is Christian Education for all ages, but especially for young people. I very much hope we will collectively make this a priority this year, but that will require widespread participation in any initiatives. Without offering Christian education it will be nearly impossible to attract young families and children.

Acknowledgements and thanks

I want to end this report with acknowledgements and thanks. First, I want to acknowledge the tireless work of Essie Leech, as Vicar's Warden and Synod representative. She has gone above and beyond every day for you, and this entire parish owes her a debt of profound gratitude. She has served as a source of wisdom and counsel to me, not merely as a sounding board, but as the voice of experience tempering my impatience. I want also to acknowledge and thank Christine Anderson, People's Warden, who has led a team of largely unsung heroes that have managed the repair and maintenance of our physical assets. We have already acknowledged Wendy Boyd who led the charge in overseeing the renovation of St Peter's, but since this is an annual report, I want to acknowledge her again. Sally Haigh leads our Op Shop and its team of volunteers, and is also our other Synod representative and has worked many hours to promote the Op Shop and its work in the community. My thanks also to James MacGee who served as Council Secretary, general *factotem*, and covering for Suniti when she is unavailable. Anneke Jochem is our first paid Treasurer, and I know that learning how the Diocese does its accounting, and how the Anglican Church does its business has been a steep curve for her, but she has managed it with professionalism and tolerance. Other Council members have led different initiatives throughout the year, including Peg Hills who managed the parish census, Suniti Fry who has supported our facility hiring, Danny Bridge who came onto Council late in the year, and Liz Rawhiti, whose work in the Foodbank I have noted above.

It is important to thank everyone who makes worship possible here at ACBB, including the Revs. Richard Hancock, Annette Hebert and Jacky Ancliffe, the sacristans, liturgists, readers, intercessors, greeters and sidespeople, hosts of morning tea and growers and preparers of flowers. Our worship services would be much poorer without the significant keyboard contributions of Jan Pirihi and Anne Connolly-Munt. There are many people in multiple roles here and I am grateful to each of you.

Summary

The Anglican Church of Bream Bay is growing, although the financial situation is fragile; attention to diversifying and strengthening our income streams will be essential. Our physical assets are in good condition, although there is still some minor work to do. Governance structures have stabilised; they will strengthen if everyone chooses to work within them, and be transparent and accountable to those structures and the membership. Worship is mostly consistent and standardised in the two churches. Our community outreach in 2024 improved, but there remains work to do. It is my personal hope that members will make Christian education a priority, although without widespread participation that will not be possible. Subordinating our individual expectations to the collective authority of the AGM and Council will be important as we seek to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ in Bream Bay. Paul wrote to the Christian community in Corinth:

For Christ is like a single body with its many limbs and organs, which, many as they are, make up one body. For indeed we were all brought into one body by baptism, in the one Spirit, whether we are Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and that one Holy Spirit was poured out for all of us to drink... Now you are Christ's body, and each of you a limb or organ of it. (1 Cor 12: 12, 27)