

Feedback Summary – Section 6 OTHER COMMENTS

Do you have any other comments to make regarding the challenges faced by your church or by the diocese generally?

The gospel is preached clearly but for some people it seems that, that is where the commitment for further meeting stops

- 1) There is a perceived view that some ministers in the diocese choose their vocation for an easy life. Jesu told us to take up our cross and follow him - 24/7.
- 2) The diocese must be more examining of prospective candidates for ordination. It is a lifelong vocation, you either have the gift from God or you do not. In the pass standards have been lowered since it's hard to attract vocations to the bush.

We continue to pray that the LORD will increase our number and bless us with members who are truly the body of Christ who will worship Him in Spirit and truth as regenerate believers.

Wonderful, and helpful, to see the diocese being intentional and strategic about our approach to mission and ministry.

The Covid years have challenged much of what we do; it is now time to reset and be more considered and intentional about how and what we do.

Diocesan support has been mixed. The abrupt withdrawal of trust funds changed the context of ministry at all levels. Legal advice to the Parish did not agree with the Diocese and the action of the Diocese has provided an environment of lost trust which endangered any effective ministry. The parish is reliant upon shared faith, commitment, and love between us to go forth in the name of Christ, but it has been hampered by the actions of the Diocese

I think the church needs to be open to many and varied activities to allow people to feel comfortable within.

See previous comments. The gospel will survive. We have to be true to who we are as God's people. It is slow and beautiful work. Whether the model we have as church is the right one is one of the BIG questions facing us. The people we have like what church is. The people we need to welcome not so. How to marry the two. We have an evangelist in one church. He is young and hardworking, with a sound theology but there has not been an uptake of young people. Why? Where are they? What would get them asking questions, of being hungry for Christ? It is not down to one person to effect change but one young person and a group of oldies is not making change. And then how do we measure this? We do not know how people are filled with the Spirit. We don't not know many times how people's lives are changed, enriched and expanded. The widow's mite comes to mind.

No, however congrats on this effort - most professional and relevant.

The church is seen as fairly irrelevant to the community

We the congregations need to encourage all people to come to know and accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour and to uphold all who have always been faithful until circumstances make participation difficult. We need to encourage all to have connection with the congregation at all times instead of forgetting those who have trying, or difficult circumstances be it long or short term. Communication is lacking in the. Congregation except for those few who are able to assist the clergy in their direction of leading.

Love the Lord

Our next coming generation, if we don't get more families to believe in Jesus then we won't have any congregations in the future.

I admire the tenacity and faithfulness of our Bishop and his staff.

Aged congregations in many centres.

Loss of faith by the general public owing to historical events, both personal and financial and the related repercussions.

The general feeling that small parishes are not important.

The difficulty of attracting ministry, and the apparent lack of available ministers.

The reticence of church members to extend themselves to fill positions within their parish - often related to the ageing congregations.

The lack of Chaplains in many schools.

The main challenge is to continue to service the older parishioners, whilst holding services that encourage younger people to come again.

Challenges are many as backdrop is of attendees only - often including non-residents

we are a committed spirit filled church but have difficulty in moving that to outside of our doors

Does God need there to be an Anglican church in every place? I don't think denominations were/are in God's plan for the church. But we should ask, "Are there people who don't know Jesus that we as Anglicans have a unique way to connect with?" We are the default religion for those who don't belong to another church. Can we use that to reach people? One recent census showed 11000 people in Dubbo who said they are Anglican. The church might have had some contact with about 500 to 1000 of them. Who and where are the other 10000 or so?

Challenges: Our church: The congregation is quite elderly and we have not been successful in attracting younger people and families to our church. This is not just a church problem - many of the secular organisations around town are facing similar issues.

Our church and diocese: Lack of clergy to fill vacant positions and work on outreach programs.

I know people are seeking truth/God/a Saviour as much or more than ever, but I don't think inside our Church walls is where they intend to look! Hence, the emphasis on outreach and doing things differently is crucially relevant to our church/diocese.

Thanks for collecting this data and I pray it moves His Kingdom forwards

Without the active ministry among children and young people over the last six years our Parish was headed for an inevitable slow death. Things have changed under the current Rector. So we are a two-speed operation. A cynic might describe the ministry to us older people, including myself, as mere palliative spiritual care. But palliative care is far from a worthless thing. Many of these older people are the product of an earlier age not given to a vibrant evangelical faith in their younger days; the church leadership has a big responsibility for that situation. But now in their seventies, eighties and nineties they are not going to be easily or willingly reprogrammed. Even for myself, once active in evangelism as a Beach Mission Leader, a founding father of the Black Stump Youth Festival, (for 5,000 people each October), and a missionary in Africa, I am simply not going to be out and about trying to win strangers for Christ. For one thing, my circle of friends are largely Christians, and the rest made up their minds long ago about the church, and about the claims of Christ, about which they may actually care to know little.

Bishop Mark has clearly set about an evangelical overhaul of the Diocese, and that is both a necessary and very good thing. It is not so much the survival of the Anglican church that's at stake, though most older church members see that as the critical issue, but the need to have an effective continuing Christian ministry reaching out to the not-yet believers of western NSW. But there needs to be great care not to write off the long-held devotion to Christ and the loving witness in the wider community of the traditional Anglicans who have been the church out here for 150 years. The appointment of clergy and other leaders to churches in the Parishes needs to recognise this two-speed challenge. And the words used to describe our various ministries need to be encouraging and challenging WITHOUT being judgmental.

And then, of course, there is the whole question of trying to sustain effective ministry in small communities of declining populations. Can we in all conscience simply abandon them and close churches?

We need regular services at ideal times that are welcoming to the 'unchurched' and those moving here from another diocese. Currently, we cater for an aging population who want to be comfortable in their traditional worship with no view to the future. Some Anglicans new to town migrate to other churches that offer a more substantial spiritual diet and have a service that exhibits a joy to worship and praise God.

Our parish has suffered in disunity and chaos for a number of years

My family and I attended the Orange Evangelical Church opening day yesterday. After leading services for eight years at Holy Trinity Orange and yesterday's family service I led having the grand total of ten people, I have finally come to the realisation that Holy Trinity Church can't compete. We were making gains in our family ministry and trying to attract the community to our contemporary services pre-COVID... but we have not recovered...OEC have 800 members, 200 of which are children and now the newest, greatest facility known to Jesus. I live within a five-minute walk and concede that we have been defeated.

We are at a point of change and our rector is well placed to spearhead change in terms of the passage in Acts. It will take time!

In Orange, we need to connect regularly with the parishioners of St Barnabas. This is the older church. Holy Trinity is the Gothic drama queen, with an ageing population. Our children aren't coming back to the church, although some of our grandchildren are "interested". Their detachment is often secular, but generally their parent's loyalty is not enough.

Most people in Orange don't even understand the differences between the Evangelical Church and the traditional church, and there is no discussion about the conservative, misogynistic behaviours of the Evangelical church, with its "evangelical " reputation but highly conservative views. The Evangelical church identifies as Anglican, but how can the traditional Anglican churches identify as different, and how can they build congregations by doing that?

We do need to develop a better system of following up new people who appear at our services.

I really feel that Holy Trinity & St Barnabas Churches need to be more united and involved together with more social and spiritual interaction. I don't think we will see growth in our churches until this happens. I am happy to discuss this issue further in confidence.

we 'structure' all the same. is this needed?? yes, church and bible study. but why always church on Sundays, and go 'home'... and bible studies time is focussed on word, but this leaves not relationships 'enough' I'd say... none really. can we start habits of coffee with a few before church? or lunch regularly after?? or social sewing. Etc

I am very excited about the direction the diocese is taking. I am also very thankful for the faithful teaching of the word in our Parish. One challenge is people not really understanding the true nature of the body of Christ - when one part is missing, the whole body suffers. There is a sense of "what can church do for me?" And if I don't get what I want, then I'll go somewhere else. There is also a general unwillingness (or anxiety?) to change from known traditions.

I also believe people are thirsty for the word and are desperate for hope. In a part of the stat that has felt quite hopeless over the past years (fires, drought, covid, plagues), people are looking for something more.

The challenges are many, but so are opportunities. Properties are old, tired. We need to be bringing the person of Jesus into our daily conversations and seeking to read God's word with others.

Need to ensure that the fact the Anglican faith is a broad church and has many worship styles which need to be provided in rural areas where people are not able to attend a service of a style preferred.

Perhaps the church has become too institutional, but it may be naive to assume we can mimic the first century church. These are very different times.

There seem to be small green shoots appearing around our Diocese which appear to be the result of our Bishop with his regular and personal contact with the Diocese and the clergy working to collegially with him

There will be many challenges, but I think a a standout for me would be growing our congregation given the small population of our town.

In smaller churches the passionate people are often the ones running the show and perhaps have little time to spend on developing relationships outside the fellowship. Maintenance instead of outreach is the order of the day.

That's about it we just have to get past the negativity of the Media who look for and dramatise past failings we need to promote the love of the Lord who cares for and loves us all no matter who we are.

As many of our church members are elderly, it is difficult for some of these things to happen in our church. Attendance at bible study groups, prayer groups, church services, hospitality & attending events may be difficult for some due to covid, weather conditions, ill health & immobility. Others are generally very committed to the above wherever possible.

I have heard about how in another diocese people coming for baptism are required to attend an Alpha course, so they understand what baptism and Christianity is all about. This has resulted in some young people coming to know Jesus and making friends with people in the group their own age. Maybe this is something we could look into. We hear about people bringing children for Baptism, but we don't see them in Church.

Unity difficult to bring in or get younger folk to mix with older parishioners so different same thing all over the world

I feel at times our minister is stretched to the limit with all things involved in ministry and not supported enough by the diocesan leadership, if the minister needs a short break who is there to step up. Yes, we have wardens and a couple of pastoral assistants who can offer morning prayer and a sermon but in my opinion formed our many years of attendance people prefer to be able to receive the sacraments also on a regular basis.

We are doing our best. Just need to reach out more!!!

God grows His church. we cooperate by removing as many obstacles as we can to allow God to do his thing. Mark 4. The growth parables. I have seen Natural Church Development (NCD) work well.

Getting younger generations to realise the importance of a life in and with Christ

There certainly seems to be a strong movement in some sections of society away from any commitment to the Christian way of life. To me this has slowly grown over the many years of my life

The financial debt, past issues & numerous old buildings in need of repair, add to the responsibilities of being part of this congregation.

I admire that there are 6 services to suit the lives & availability of people - each congregation being unique. I am grateful for the people who are committed to prayer, serving one another in practical ways & worshipping God.

Some structures in the Anglican Church are a hindrance to church growth and discipleship. The structure has disciplined people to be passive and dependant on Clergy. So much energy and money go into buildings. I am concerned that my involvement with the church is going to, (in time when more oldies die), land a burden of buildings and non-essentials in my lap. I hold back because of this.

The change in leadership is already making an advance in attendance and commitment

The biggest obstacles I see for us, and our faith today is relevancy and tradition. Is what we do in church and how we do it relevant to the younger generations. Much of what is done in church is "tradition" and not necessarily asked of us to do by God when we meet together. The prayer book is a rich source of prayers and Bible reading and teaching but if the way we present and use it is "boring" to the non-churched person of what use is it. Many of my comments may sound and in fact be negative, I am trying to be honest and up front. I want to see revival and I want to see an outpouring of the Holy Spirit and for all to know the deep deep love of the most awesome loving caring and generous God we have.

We're at a crossroads, with younger men being ordained Deacons great opportunities lie before us, somehow, we need to share the vision of our parishes and diocese more effectively with the people. There has been growth in this new season, we must continue to fix our eyes on Jesus and just why we meet each week, why we've been called to love one another and share Jesus. In His Words from John 17, " "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. - John 17:20-21 NKJV

Once again, I say, only the Holy Spirit can bring revelation and passion for Jesus into the hearts of people, His ministry is sadly neglected and not welcomed in so many ways.

Current team leaders need to delegate and let others help and organise things and not feel as though they have to do it all themselves. And allow the holy spirit to work during the service

The problems in the Middle East and today's attitude to Religion in general represents a massive challenge to the churches throughout the world.

Our Church is facing challenges with our two services. Traditional and Contemporary. We are not really one Church family. This is so very sad. We all embrace God as our saviour but the fragmentation is damaging. Those who attend the Contemporary Service are not lesser Christians because of how we view our journey with God as the focus. We are often made to feel that this is the case.

Young people even those with parents and grandparents who attend church do not seem interested in religion or church attendance. They observe the traditions of baptism, marriage and funerals but not as personal commitment. Also Sunday sport and lack of religious education such as Sunday school outside regular church services has affected child participation that previously led to faith and regular attendance

We live a hostile world, for various reasons the church has lost a lot of social license. Reaching new people in the community is difficult and takes time and commitment. Because of the past reputation of the Bathurst Dioceses visitors or people moving to the area from Sydney tend to look elsewhere to worship. Until Covid hit we travelled to Lithgow to worship because of the good bible teaching there. The previous Bishop of Bathurst had pushed evangelicals out of ministry here.

The challenges we face are an elderly congregation and unwillingness to change

What does the diocese of Bathurst do? How does it benefit the community at large who doesn't know what a church does or even what a bible is? We are lost, the clergy are tired. I think some of them are unsupported while those who appear to be in favour are lauded. This is evident in the sermons on YouTube. Why is it that Kevin Simington and the Bishop are the only ones who preach? Where are the rest of the clergy? have they not been asked to preach on video or are they unworthy. It would be great to see a wider range of style. I would be great to see the preachers who do preach, show their authority by wearing a clerical collar.

Some of our people put their lives on hold during the court case, although we must thank God that it is over, and those same people put their personal assets at risk as well. This needs to be recognised, they should be thanked for their sacrifice. It has been forgotten and when things are forgotten they can happen again. Please don't put anybody in that position again where they become personally responsible for debts of others.

There is a difference between preaching on and encouraging church members to tell others about God's grace and practically helping/skilling up church members to actually do it, especially at the many different stages of an individual's life and faith journey

Wouldn't it be great to have all the answers? I think the worst thing that ever happened was the changes in society where shops went from closing of a Sunday to being able to trade every day and lots of them all night.

We sorely need more communication with each other within our parish. This can include fresh pages on the bulletin boards in the foyer.

If finances permit it would be so helpful to receive a regular Diocesan e-Newsletter including news of mission agencies and even short book notices.

We need to be happy to risk doing things that might go nowhere: trying things out. We also need to collectively figure out what things God has drawn to our attention, and then make some kind of intelligent, spiritual response to those things. What I mean by this is, not just that; yes! we don't have people joining us regularly—but what other things has God put on our 'body life' heart?

Then, we also need to be aware of those whose gifting and personality sensitivities might get bruised by a thing called a 'Strategic Planning' process. The way/mood and context in which this proposal and its language is used will probably be the maker or breaker of it. Without us as a church seeing these things and prioritising and owning them together there won't be deep participation in the response to the problems facing us. So, for me there's a priority question... if we are to avoid the mistake of either being overwhelmed or trying to fix everything at once we need to have a sane estimate of ourselves before God and go from there. I would suggest that it needs to an overall long game with some 'short term achievable things' along the way.

I feel there are numerous challenges The first in relation to evangelism however I believe that we are progressing significantly well in first establishing a close and mature group of believers who greatly enjoy spending time together. This should be enticing to unbelievers....so a "place to belong" should be embraced and should be an enticement for others to come along. I think it would be great to link up with the Council "Welcome to Bathurst" event and introduce our church family. Sound production, voice projection - various practical issues need to be addressed ...and some one on one "between congregation members could relieve our pastors from being overly burdened.

We think that church leaders should show that they are ministers of religion by the clothing they wear. The Archbishops of Sydney are not readily recognised as ministers of religion and are restricted in their attitudes towards the general population. Why are women in some areas not promoted to positions of power in the church. People of unorthodox sexual orientation are not readily accepted.

Challenges:

1. General lack of faith amongst many "non - churchgoers"
2. Aging congregations
3. Diminishing population
4. Failure to adapt and engage younger people
5. Competition from other interests

I think that we are very irrelevant in terms of how our service is run and the hymns sung etc... I think the minister is working on change which will occur very slowly and to be fair I may be a square peg trying to fit into a round hole.

Locals don't generally respond to handouts, advertising etc. They do respond well to personal contact; the difficulty is finding time to make and sustain these contacts. There have been some good contacts made through car wash events, the local show, swap meets etc, these relationships are developing. The challenge for the Church is to continue to create events where these type of contacts and relationships can continue to develop to the point where they will lead to a commitment to Christ.

We have been very involved in the Parish and the Diocese over many years but unfortunately involved in the Supreme Court Case after which we have been denied any opportunity to participate at any level. We still attend a service every week but although we enjoy fellowship with other parishioners, we get no encouragement from the leadership. My wife and I hand deliver the weekly pew sheet to some 40 families each week and my wife is involved with the AWA. We and our daughter attend a weekly bible study with three others. Such is the atmosphere in our services, we are too embarrassed to invite our other family members or friends along. Our involvement in the Parish goes back many years before our present rector and although he and his family have been invited to our home on a number of occasions they have never been. To me unless this attitude changes and there is a focussed and coordinated pastoral care program, our parish will not improve.

We need you, Mark, to hear from God and lead us clearly yet compassionately.

those without a Rector must find great challenges that the others of us don't have or don't have to such a degree; I believe the Bishop's electronic sermons have been very encouraging (and challenging) to many in the diocese. Many of us seem to be at a loss to know how to encourage younger families/people to join us.

I think there should have been a sixth point listed-That they met the needs of others. We need to have a wider vision. There is so much need in the world, i.e. a world needing to know Jesus. We need to support missionary work. There is a need to support, various ministries outside our parishes, CMS, Anglicare, Anglican Aid, Bush Church Aid, Prison, Fellowship, Youth for Christ etc. "Where there is no vision, the people perish"

Our short time here allows us to provide only a fairly light shadow of what is or is not going on. Thank you.

My comments are based upon all the church services at St John's, Mudgee, not the specific service I focus upon in ministry.

Our small congregation is very ageing and find change difficult and challenging from the old ways. Strong personalities and past hurts sometimes stand in the way of moving ahead.

I feel people these days do not have time for church. I also feel the church has let people down in some ways although this is often used as an excuse for not getting involved. They feel they control their own lives; some think they do not need God.

Amazingly when there is a crisis, people turn to prayer.

I believe we need to be fed so our faith grows, however I hope that even though some do not attend church, they still believe.

We need to maybe look for different ways to reach out. I do believe, as said earlier, that online church was good for teaching but of course not fellowship

Our background is Presbyterian/Uniting so found following the Prayer Book etc a bit daunting at first. We hesitate so to suggest streamlining the service as a lot of our church family are old & have been brought up with ritual etc & it means a lot to them. However, ritual can be daunting to new people coming.

I sincerely hope good can come from these surveys as the thought of our church doors closing is unthinkable.

An aging community, getting young families involved in a small town where another church has a great children and youth programs, people not seeing the relevance of the church even when they believe in Jesus, comfort and safety in things staying as they are.

Comparing Cobar St Pauls to the Church of Acts 2: 42-47

The last Minister to live in Cobar was Ken Foley in 2002 for a short time, 20 years ago!

We are a very small elderly group (6-7) most with health and mobility issues but have survived for many years with a monthly service, usually Holy Communion, from a visiting Minister or a LLM leading a prayer service when available.

We are limited in our ability to meet, pray together or reach out to our town.

Opinion: We need a leader.

Cobar needs a young, enthusiastic Church leader, preferably male with wife and children, to reside within the town, to be a visual and vocal presence and to be involved with the local community and with his effective outreach work, the Holy Spirit and many prayers hopefully St Pauls Cobar will grow to be similar to that in Acts 2: 42-47

change is hard

Lack of clergy and difficulty in attracting young people. Competition from sport and other social events deemed more relevant than worship at church.

Dare I say aged congregation? But I see change happening, we just need time with our present Shepherd, and I fear we may not have that. In God's amazing hands we leave it....

Engaging with the wider community. Being an "active" presence in the community. Activities organised and / or promoted by the church which will help to break down some of the barriers and establish trust.

We need to have sermons on revival not salvation. The church needs, as you Mark believe, that there has to be a stirring up of our faith. We need to move beyond being only able to drink milk and to move onto something more solid. They need to be challenged to look much more deeply as to why they believe what they say they believe. They are now living in what I call a nice Christian club.

I have found a variety of ways of talking about God. I do it not as part of a program but as a part of who I am. Who I am must lead people to believe that what I believe is so strongly held by me that I have no wavering of belief? Without even appearing to appear so I am now revealing, to a much younger man, a lapsed Catholic, the faith that I hold. I do it in love because I respect the man. He raises the matter of God and Gods' role in our lives. I believe that he will continue to raise the matter. Our very brief conversations regarding God are done with humour, which is the best way. I told him today that God can do anything. But I said it in a humorous manner so that he could accept such a strong statement about God. He has been hurt by his church, so I tread lightly. I have no idea whether there are others at the Cathedral who do the same and I don't know because they don't talk about it.

We are the only church remaining in Cumnock. When we ran out of funds, the community bailed us out (literally) with massive fund-raising on our behalf when they thought we would have to close. So, they want us, but only worship with us on special occasions.

Some years ago, our Anglican priest molested some local children. At least one regular attender (whose daughter was molested) ceased to come. People in a small village have long memories - it is still an issue here.

The Anglican Church is the only church remaining in Cumnock. Unfortunately, we have failed to pick up worshippers from the Catholic or Uniting congregations. However, the majority of attendees are newcomers from non-Anglican backgrounds. There is a huge spectrum of wealth, education and prior worship experience within our congregation - often more men than women. It would be good to be able offer greater variety of services to better cater for this diversity.

When strategic plans are formed by church leaders and their congregations, it is most important that the progress be communicated in all key areas that have been identified. People need to be taken along the journey.

Strategies and leadership responsibilities need to be identified and known. Flow charts can be helpful.

When a new church group is forming, it takes time and much prayer to discern what direction God is leading. It is most important that time be given rather than rushing. It is vital that those with visionary, creative ideas are supported by the administrators- in order to produce the plan God has for our local churches. The intercessors must be part of this effort as they discern the way forward. In this way God's will can be shown and all people can see their roles and gifting.

When people feel valued as opposed to overlooked, they increase their commitment to each other and ultimately to God. Belonging, and having a sense of purpose means building the body of Christ. The eye cannot work in isolation to the face, nor the foot without the leg.....

May the Lord bless you as you continue His work here in this place.

The people have a faith, but many of us are retirement age or older. Many have a busy life with family, work and other organisations. There is good soil. Maybe inserting personalised messages from a range of people across the diocese could bring connection, especially, sharing of specific prayer needs and answers to prayers, so we all share the burden, and all celebrate and see God actively moving across the diocese. Members Visiting churches across the diocese could bring closer ties.

Most people find no reason to be giving time and money to an outdated, hierarchical, male dominated institution unless members of that institution are seen and recognised for their social justice, humanity, kindness and generosity to others.

We are struggling financially because of lack of parishioners over too many centres Possibly need to centralise to one main church in Parish, reduce costs and try to grow the church community by spreading the gospel with younger parishioners .

Because there was no ability to attend the church building due to COVID people have got into the habit of staying home and watching the sermon on-line.

The same as most places, I suspect. As for the Diocese,

Mainly our challenges are due to an aging congregation - we just don't have an abundance of energy. We need a minister who can focus on things such as Bible study, prayer groups, fellowship for young people. At the moment we are great supporters but not leaders. Of course, the biggest challenge would be having the money to pay for this!

Survival

Our congregation is now mostly elderly and where our actions were once strong, sadly our strength in body lets us down. We do have an outreach to the community in a monthly afternoon tea, but COVID ended them. We do plan to recommence however in the coming future. Further outreach is through our actions and encouragement of others