

2011 Vicar's Annual Report For Holy Trinity Hampton

Believe it or not, this is my Ninth Annual Report now to the Parish since I became your Vicar in 2003.

It has in many ways been a year of consolidation with a great deal of attention being given to long standing issues of maintenance and a number of critical things have been done including the exterior painting of the Church, Vicarage and Hall. So I would like to thank the Wardens and Vestry and many others who have helped in the various Working Bees and in other ways to achieve a really good year in getting the grounds, pathways, storm water plumbing and the buildings in a much better state of repair.

Over recent years there has been a significant change in attendance patterns of parishioners – even those who once may have been Sunday by Sunday attendees. There are so many more demands on our time and our allegiances with work, family, sport, travelling overseas and weekends away that it is very hard to presume what size and makeup of congregation we will have Sunday by Sunday at both 8am and 10am services. However, our stewardship in offertory-giving has been generally excellent and we have almost kept up with budget forecasts for the year, and income from other sources such as donations and rentals has increased pleasingly.

The Sunday School has had an innovative, productive and exciting year and we thank the children and the teachers for their enthusiasm and hard work.

We have been blessed with several new families joining our Parish community over the past year and it is always wonderful to welcome new people and new families into our community and fellowship. However, due to less regular attendance patterns of many parishioners and particularly families, numbers at church Sunday by Sunday have not increased to indicate that we are a healthy, slowly growing Parish which I believe we are.

We have had several significant social functions and successful major focus worship Sundays this year and we look forward to continuing and expanding this tradition.

Earlier this year the Parish Vestry attended a workshop on being a Welcoming and Inviting Church and, as a Vestry, we found the Workshop stimulating and challenging. We decided that we would seek to grow in this very important area of our Parish Life and Ministry.

I preached nearly 3 months ago on this topic to encourage Parishioners to be an inviting people so that our Parish can grow and so that "Back to Church" Sunday in September would be a successful and worthwhile exercise. Indeed I think a number of you did make an effort to invite family and friends to come with you that Sunday and we had around 20 more people attend than we would normally have. This was an excellent beginning. It was clear that both adults and children did the inviting and some of our Sunday School children came with friends as well. It is important to train and encourage our younger generation to be inviting and welcoming members of our community.

This coming year of 2012 I would like to be a year of increased participation in and commitment to the process of being a fellowship of people who invite others to join with us in worship and social functions.

People in our wider community need relational groups to belong to and be part of. We can surround ourselves with constant activity and doing things but it is the important process of relating to and gaining the encouragement and support of community that is essential to personal and societal well being.

I'm sure we all believe we are a welcoming church and in many ways we are. However we need to be very careful Sunday by Sunday that we don't form little cliques before the service in the Narthex and after the service over coffee time and fail to engage and welcome any newcomers to church or those who don't as yet feel incorporated into the

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Parish Community. I have noticed that there is a growing tendency for those on side duty and welcoming duty to arrive much later than is ideal to do their duty. The sidespeople and welcomers should be the first people at church and make sure that they are available to welcome and enable all those who attend that day. I also encourage parishioners not on duty that day not to engage the welcomers and sidespeople in long conversations and general chit-chat as it is so easy for newcomers to slip by unnoticed and unwelcomed if the sidespeople are prevented from doing their duty by regular parishioners engaging them in chit chat and blocking the way to receiving worship books and a welcome.

Please all of us be aware of how we can help or hinder newcomers and less regular people to be welcomed and encouraged to participate in the worship and in the coffee afterwards. Be good hosts. Do not hang back and expect others to be and do what we all can and should do.

In Australia's last census (not the one this year as figures aren't out yet) it was noted that around 64% of people crossed the box that claim their religious affiliation was Christian. So it appears that just more than 6 out of every 10 people in your street, in your workplace, in your school, in your sporting clubs claim to be Christian. Now the interesting question is "Why did so many people mark that box when they didn't have too?" Was it just habit? or was it just an easy response? Or is there a God part in themselves that deeply and maybe subconsciously wants to be invited and nurtured? Why are so many of us afraid or reticent to talk about our faith and our involvement in a church community? We don't need to Bible Bash or be insensitively aggressive, but we can gently raise the issue and see where it leads. Afterall, 6 out of every 10 adults identify as Christian so they should not be antagonistic to the Christian ethos and message. So I want to encourage you to share and talk about your faith and church involvement more and to be an "inviting" Holy Trinity Community Member.

If everyone invited a friend, a family member, a neighbour, a work colleague to come to church over a 12 month period and they decided to come back and join on a more regular basis then we would double our congregation and presumably also increase our ability financially to do other more creative things. And remember that a reasonable number of our regular parishioners come from Brighton, Cheltenham, Benteigh, Moorabbin, Sandringham, Highett and even much further afield so we don't need to worry that people don't live in Hampton to invite them. People will travel substantial distances if they enjoy the fellowship and the worship and the Christian nurture of a congregation.

I encourage you all , especially for major occasions like Christmas and Easter, but also for Pet Sunday, Australia Day and Harvest Festival, Football Sunday and Back to Church Sunday to actively encourage and invite others to come with you. Some people will say "No". Some will say "Maybe" and not turn up. Some will have other commitments on that day. Be gently persistent. Invite them all again and continue to do so and, if they come once, don't believe you have done your duty! Encourage them and invite them again.

I would like 2012 to be the year of Invitation and Encouragement and Spiritual Nurture and Growth for Holy Trinity Hampton. If you have any ideas, or wish to offer help in any way to achieve this, please speak to me, or one of the Vestry.

Let's together be a growing, healthy, vital community of faith and fun.

I would like to thank very sincerely and appreciatively our hard working Wardens, - Tony Mayor, Glenn Adams and Richard Pennington – and the Vestry Members, as well as our wonderful Treasurer Martin Turner, our excellent Parish Secretary Jill Esplan and our organist Ian Keenan.

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Our deepest thanks must also go to our Sunday School teachers, our Choir, our Sacristans and particularly Kate Walker and Linda Barry, as well as all on our Ministry Teams and Rosters.

I continue to have a participatory and meaningful presence in the Holy Trinity Kindergarten. I am Chair of its very active Parents' Committee and it is pleasing to see the number of Kinder families who attend our Christmas Crib Service and have had children baptised as well. Complementing this, I take an active role on the Melbourne Anglican Early Childhood Services Executive Committee.

I continue active involvement in the Hampton Churches Ministers' Group, the City of Bayside Anglican Clergy Deanery Group, the Bayside4 Anglican Churches Meeting of Wardens and Clergy twice a year and several other Anglican Diocesan groups. I have also just recently been elected, once again after several years break, to be a Diocesan Clergy Consultant for Parishes undergoing a change of Vicar or Incumbent when their Vicar leaves or retires. This is an important role in enabling Parishes to know something about many Clergy they may not know anything about and who may be a suitable applicant for the Parish's needs.

I commend all the issues raised in my report for your prayer, reflection and action and I look forward to this coming year being a stimulating, joyous and inspiring one for us all.

God bless you all,

Fr. David

November 2011