

## **Regional Consultation – A Future with Hope – Planning for the Future.**

**Theme for 2008 - “In 2008 – we go forth in faith and hope and love”**

### ***1. A Future with Hope:***

Three years ago Bishop John Noble introduced “A Future with Hope” as a way forward in terms of mission and ministry within the life of the Diocese. Before I arrived people were keen to know if I was going to maintain Bishop Noble’s vision. At various gatherings I have reaffirmed my strong commitment.

Listening to people across the Diocese I have sensed that some are looking for an “end product”. It is my understanding that “*A Future with Hope*” is about process as well as being about “end points” which lead to further growth. In the Christian journey we come to certain points, and we open ourselves to the guiding hand of God so that we move on in the service of our Lord.

In 2008 I invite parishes and agencies to respond “in faith and hope and love” to their mission and ministry looking to 2008, 2011 and 2015.

As Christians we move forward in faith. It is important that we spend time as individuals and parishes (and ministry units) seeking the will of God. A bishop I served under before I came to the Diocese of North Queensland said at an Easter Vigil, “If you are where you were spiritually twelve months ago when you renewed your baptismal promises you have cheated God”. As a Rector of a Parish my immediate reaction was this is a bit harsh, but there is truth in this expression.

Christians are people of hope.

Christians are people who love God with their heart, mind, strength and soul, and love their neighbor as themselves.

“*A Future with Hope*” calls us to address the four traditional areas of Christian ministry and mission – *Worship; Nurture or Christian Education; Pastoral Care and Outreach.*

Before addressing each of these four areas, I want to stress that Christianity is about belief. Christianity is also a way of life, living life according to the love of God and the teachings of Jesus Christ. It has been said that Christianity is 24/7 or “Seven whole days, not one in seven” to quote the hymn. In the August edition of N.Q. Chimes I quoted David Otis Fuller, “If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?” It is a good question, and one parishioners and parishes alike, should ponder.

In considering how we can live the Christian life as individuals and as ministry units, some questions to consider under each of the headings are:

- ***Worship*** – giving God the worth that is due to God.
  - Do people prepare for worship? (I think this is an important question. There has been a move from people seeing themselves as parishioners to

consumers, so worship is viewed sadly as a “commodity” rather than praise, confession, thanks and giving God the honour due to God.)

- Is our worship inspiring?
- Does the preaching challenge us?
- Does our worship nurture us?
- How does our worship sustain us for our ministry?
- Is provision made for new comers?
- Is there regular teaching on the importance of worship, the structure of our liturgy and the way the Scripture readings are organized?

- ***Nurture or Christian Education***

- How are the faithful fed?
- How do we reach out to those who are enquiring?
- Are the Scriptures connecting with people’s lives?
- Is prayer a regular topic of discussion and is there support for people seeking to address their prayer life?
- Are people being helped to share their faith in the various contexts of their lives, home, work, recreation etc.?

[There is a range of studies to assist parishes from six week Lenten studies; studies of various books of the Bible; EfM – a study in four parts, each section requiring one year of group learning; various certificates and diploma studies as well as various resources to assist people in the daily reading of Scripture. Please contact either myself or the Ministry Development Officer.]

- ***Pastoral Care***

- How do we respond to pastoral needs in the parish and community?
- Who resources this need?
- Do we work as a team or do we leave this ministry to someone else?

- ***Outreach***

- Do we expect people to come to us or are we resourcing ourselves to reach out to others?
- Is our parish welcoming [I know a priest who often says there is a world of difference between being friendly or welcoming? Friendly is offering a cup of tea and just saying hi. Welcoming takes constant effort. It requires follow up for several weeks.]
- In reaching out to people what do we have to offer them?
- How can we promote our strengths?
- Are we open to learn from people?

A key question in all this is, “Do we have the will to address these issues? A story goes that there was this station owner out West who was sitting in his rocker on the verandah. One day a salesperson comes along and tries to sell him a book that addresses ten ways a property owner can improve their property management. Eventually the station owner

says, "I know of twenty ways to improve my property, but the question is do I have the will?"

So I invite parishes and ministry units to spend time considering these questions and others you can think of, to develop ministry strategies for the next year, in three years, and looking forward to five years time asking:

**What are we doing well in each of the four ministry areas? Ask yourselves why it is this ministry activity is going well? What are some of the key factors that we can build on?**

**What areas do we need to build up within each of the four ministry areas?**

**What do we need to place on hold for the moment? [This is because we do not have either the physical or spiritual resources at this present time. Please remember, no does not mean never.]**

An important question is how will we communicate these insights to the community of faith. Communication is vital. It is important to ask ourselves how well we communicate.

Related to these three questions are:

- Who will promise to undertake what, when?
- What resources are required?
- How will the parish or ministry unit review in twelve months time?

Yes, as North Queensland Anglicans we believe we have a future under God and so let us move forward in "faith and hope and love".

*A Future with Hope* is an exciting process as well as being a challenging one, as we give thanks to God for the ways we have been Church in the past. There are many blessing we can build on. We are called to address the four areas above in conjunction the issues raised in the booklet, "*Time to Grow – doing church differently*" in how to be the Church God is calling us to be in 2008.

May God bless each one of us as we move forward in "faith and hope and love in 2008" and beyond.

**Bishop Bill.**  
**All Saints' Day, 2007.**

P.S. I thank Fr. Ian for his "Reflections on the Hill" this week. Please see over.

(Like the previous article, I've pinched it from Rowland Croucher's John Mark Ministries website at <http://jnm.aaa.net.au/articles/20233.htm>

### **A Missional Church ...**

- is a collection of believers acting together to fulfil God's mission.
- is one where people are rediscovering what it means to be Jesus' sent people.
- is individuals willing and ready to be Christ's people in their own situation and place.
- knows that it must be cross-cultural and adopts a missionary stance in relation to its community.
- will be engaged with the culture without being absorbed by it. It will become intentionally indigenous.
- understands that God is already present in the culture where it finds itself.
- is about the nature of the church and how it relates to God.
- will seek to plant all types of missional communities.
- believes that how the gospel is embodied in our community and service is as important as what we say.
- understands the power of the gospel and does not lose confidence in it.
- will align all its activities around the mission of God.
- seeks to put the good of their neighbour over its own.
- will give integrity, morality, good character, compassion, love and a resurrection life pre-eminence in what it does.
- practices hospitality by welcoming strangers into its community.
- will see itself as a community or family on a mission together.
- will see itself as a representative of Jesus and will not dishonour his name.
- will move beyond superficial faith to a life of supernatural living.
- will be desperately dependent on prayer.
- will be gathered for the purpose of worship, encouragement, supplemental teaching, & training.
- is orthodox in its view of the gospel and scripture, but culturally relevant so that it can engage the worldview of the hearers.
- will feed deeply on the scriptures throughout the week.
- will be a community where spiritual development is an expectation.
- will help people discover and develop their spiritual gifts and will rely on gifted and available people for ministry.
- is a healing community where people carry each other's burdens and help restore others gently.
- will require that its leaders be missiologists.