

THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS (part 2)

(Friday morning)

6.

A te whanau a te Karaiti
Naumai, haere mai
Haere mai!

A warm welcome to this year's synod. This is the first session of our fifty-first synod and our last for the second millennium. It is also my tenth as bishop of Nelson. At each of our synods I have reminded you of a number of essential things that we must take cognisance of as we gather like this and I do so again as we have newly elected representatives among us.

As we gather together we need to remember that

- Jesus Christ is the Head of this Church. He is Lord. It is His Church before it is ours. We are part of His body and this means we are family.
- We must listen to one another carefully, treating each other as sisters and brothers with loving respect.

Acknowledging these things we can expect God the Holy Spirit to move among us, inspiring and guiding us in all that we are seeking to do.

Once again we welcome to synod those from our sister churches and denominations in the city. Their presence reminds us that together we are called to bring people to a living faith in God through Jesus Christ. The task belongs to us all. We cannot do it in isolation or alone.

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THE CHURCH IN THE NEXT MILLENNIUM (Continued)

The theme of this year's synod, as I mentioned yesterday evening in our Cathedral, is The Church in the Next Millennium. It is my hope this morning that we might dream a little about what shape our church and the diocese might take and then look at the appropriate steps to make that dream a reality.

LOOKING BACK

To help us in our endeavour we need to reflect a little on the past. The story of our small diocese over the past nine years is really quite remarkable. We have pulled back from the

serious decline seen in the main-line churches in our nation and the West over past decades.

In the first year of my episcopate we dreamed together of a renewed Church and something of what that renewed Church would look like in the years to come. There is no doubt that we have seen much change in our diocese over those years. Some of that change has been painful and some of it has been very exciting as we have worked together, following what we believed to be our Lord's leading.

The Decade of Evangelism

In my mind there is no doubt that we are in a healthier position than we were. Officially, this year brings us to the end of the Decade of Evangelism, called for by the 1988 Lambeth Conference of Bishops, however for us it must be never ending.

The shape of the Anglican Communion has changed dramatically over the past ten years and while the Church in the West has remained somewhat static, the Church in the two-thirds World has grown at a phenomenal rate. At last year's Lambeth Conference the moribund Western Church was deeply challenged by the vibrant younger churches to remain faithful to Scripture, to biblical standards of behaviour and to be bold in its proclamation of the Good News.

Breaking open the Time Capsule

It is true that most churches and denominations found their "style" or sank their roots during a particular time in history, be that hundreds of years ago or simply a decade ago. They were sensitive to what was happening around them. They read "the signs of the times" they knew how to respond to people's spiritual hunger and meet the real needs of the community in which they lived. Their reputations grew, their numbers swelled and they saw results. And then nothing. Having found what worked for them and the society in which they lived at that moment in history, they stuck to it. They stayed the same, while the world around them changed. They developed the philosophy "if it isn't broken, then don't fix it"! Many churches became "time capsules" - a little bit of yesterday set aside to remind today's world what it was once like. The very genius, the very thing that got them adventurously started and that made them so successful back then has now trapped them in a time warp. This could be said about any section of the Church.

We need to remember that though the Gospel remains constant, methods have a "sell by date" even if it is still a long way off. We must learn to jettison ways of doing and saying things that may be meaningful to us, or that we are simply sentimentally attached to, but now no longer communicate adequately the relevance and the life-changing nature of the gospel to those outside our church community. We should be as outward looking as Jesus was. We need to be on the look-out for new and more effective ways of saying and doing things. This is not preaching a new gospel, far from it, it is simply seeking ways to communicate the true gospel effectively without giving conflicting messages.

The other day a Nelson radio announcer told a joke. It was quite funny. It went something like this: the sign on the church's notice board read; Sermon this morning: "Jesus Walks on Water". Tonight: "Searching for Jesus". Perhaps more poignant were

these two signs on the gates of one of Canada's cathedrals, "the Anglican Church welcomes you" and "these premises are protected by guard dogs." What sort of message are we giving to people out there.? What sort of a Church are we portraying?

What about us?

As a diocese, we have become much more intentional about mission and growth and although the Decade of Evangelism is closing we must keep on keeping on! It is very easy, especially after seasons of growth and renewal, for churches and congregations to plateau and tilt towards nostalgia.

The changes that have taken place in society around us have often thrown the Church into confusion. In recent history we have not always coped well with such changes. The Church's unique message has, relatively speaking, remained constant but it has struggled to communicate with relevance that message to a changing world. Although it must be said that there are parishes which have been experimenting with some radical and exciting initiatives for reaching out into their communities. (See appendix 1)

Numerical growth

We give thanks to God that we have seen a turn around from the decline in worshipping numbers of previous decades. Most of you will be aware that the Nelson Diocese's church attendances have grown steadily through the 90's reaching a peak a couple of years ago with an increase of almost 44% since 1989, thus addressing a 20% loss through the 80's. In some parishes this growth can be seen as nothing short of phenomenal. In others we continue to struggle. However, over all, we have now plateaued, the easy gains have been won, although this year again there are some hopeful signs.

Spiritual growth

Spiritual growth is much harder to measure, never-the-less I believe we have been experiencing a raising of the spiritual temperature in many of our congregations and I find that very exciting.

To what do we owe this remarkable change of circumstances? We have been prodded, poked and dissected by both local and overseas "experts". We have been written about in books and journals by others and a number of factors, spiritual and practical, have been cited. Some are saying that we have, size and percentage-wise, arguably some of the youngest and most academically qualified leaders of any diocese in Aotearoa / NZ. But of course that does not necessarily bring growth. We have a great team of leaders both clergy and lay. They are all intentionally, biblically oriented, they are hard working and they want to glorify Him. Though none of us are perfect and some are perhaps more gifted in certain areas than others, you really are the most wonderful group of people to work with and I count it a tremendous privilege to serve you and all our people as bishop.

However It is to the Lord of the Church we must direct our gratitude. To Him be the glory forever! He is Lord of the Church!

The size of your dream: mundane or sensational?

Let us never stop dreaming. A healthy church dreams. The size of that dream is crucial and a sense of expectancy is important. What is your dream? What is mine?

Most of you know I have a penchant for Winnie the Pooh whose wisdom I have shared with this synod on more than one occasion.

One evening Pooh and Piglet were taking a stroll together in companionable silence. Finally Piglet breaks that silence and asks a very deep question. "When you wake up in the morning Pooh what's the first thing that you say to yourself?" And Pooh predicably answers, "What's for breakfast?"

He then turns the question back at his little friend and says, "And what do you say, Piglet?" To which Piglet with great expectation replies, "I say, 'I wonder what exciting thing is going to happen today?'"

Don't you love that? Small expectations yield meagre results. A church can choose a "breakfast dream" or an "excitement dream". Is it time for our diocese and our parishes to re-examine its vision and to ask, "Is it a 'breakfast' dream or an 'excitement' dream?" Are we ready to dream again, or better still to continue the dream? Let us not inadvertently slip back into a maintenance mentality simply to survive. Dreaming and planning is the healthier option.

Deepening the commitment

As leaders, clergy and lay, we must be especially clear about, and committed to the purpose of the Church. As those dreams become more defined, will we commit ourselves more deeply to them?

Martin Luther King of "I have a dream" fame also said this: "At the end of the 20th century most of us will not have to repent of the great evils we have done, but simply of the great apathy that stopped us from doing anything." If we really take on board Jesus' dream for His Church, we will have to be equally committed to both evangelical witness and compassionate service, the great inseparable twins of the Christian Faith.

The new millennium gives us a tremendous opportunity for a fresh start. Billy Graham once said: "Every generation is strategic. We are not responsible for the past generation, and we cannot bear the full responsibility for the next one; but we do have our generation. God will hold us responsible as to how well we fulfil our responsibilities to this age and take advantage of our opportunities."

It's here that we must be in partnership with our young people. At virtually every synod I have encouraged parishes, and especially the leadership, to listen to and dialogue with our young people. Both diocesan and parish youth workers have been working hard. We are beginning to see real results in a number of places. This year we had a Winter

Camp with almost 170 teens present. It was a tremendous occasion. But more needs to be done.

Our youth leadership is seeking ways to provide meaningful worship experience for our under twenty-somethings. Creative measures are being experimented with and explored to connect with youth both inside and outside our church communities. They need our support and encouragement if our diocese is to have dedicated lay and ordained leadership in the next millennium, let alone congregations. Our young people are a gift and a resource from God. The future is theirs. Will we encourage them, stand by them and listen to them?

Recently Our diocesan Youth Workers have undergone a review and there was an overwhelming response of support from across the diocese for this vital ministry to continue. Please remember that when we come to discussing the budget.

LOOKING FURTHER BACK

May I remind you very briefly of the four essentials of the Spirit filled community (the Early Church) that we considered together last night in the synod sermon. Four essentials that I believe apply not just to the next millennium, but to any millennium and without which the Church will not survive. Four essentials that can help create a healthy Church fully engaged with its Lord and the world in which it is called to live and serve. Here they are on the over-head projector screen.

THE MARKS OF A SPIRIT FILLED CHURCH ACTS 2:41-47

A <u>Studying</u> Church	“Apostolic Teaching (V42)
A <u>Caring</u> church	“The Fellowship” (V42)
A <u>Worshipping</u> Church	“The Breaking of Bread and the Prayers (V42)
An <u>Evangelising</u> Church	“The Lord added to their number” (V47)

These are the marks of a biblical Church.

LOOKING FORWARD

I have invited five people to join me in this Synod Address. I could have asked any one of our vicars or pastors. I could have asked any number of our lay leadership. But I have chosen five clergy to share with us, for eight minutes each, their dreams for their parishes and our church over the next few years into the third millennium.

Listen carefully to their dreams and their hopes. Link what they are saying with the biblical material I shared with you last night. Take notes if you wish, but you will be given the full text of the synod sermon and this morning’s address, including what these five will be saying. After morning tea we will be breaking into groups to discuss what we have heard.

Buller, a small town in a geographically large parish - Andrew Hoggan
(Appendix 2)

Greymouth, a medium sized parish on the West Coast - Robin Kingston
(Appendix 3)

Awatere, a rural parish in Marlborough - Martin Harrison
(Appendix 4)

Blenheim, a large church with special reference to young people - Richard Ellena
(Appendix 5)

A young leader with a long ministry in the next millennium - Peter Judge-Mears
(Appendix 6)

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

Having heard these presentations and acknowledging that parish life is a key to vibrant healthy Christianity, we must realise that it is really only part of the methodology we use to be the people of God. It must be remembered that **the Church is bigger than your dream and larger than your parish.** We are to be a voice to the world.

A Voice to the World

It would be a mistake to think that everything that the Church does or seeks to do should be able to be measured in terms of numbers. Very few of us I think believe that, but often in practice that is the way it appears. Although numbers are very important they are not the only ways of measuring spiritual health and vitality.

Certain things that the Church needs to do, and must be involved in, can appear to have little, if anything, to do with numbers attending Sunday worship. I believe that this was recently illustrated in a comment made by Prime Minister Jenny Shipley when interviewed by the Challenge Weekly. Asked the question, "How important do you think the role of the Church is in New Zealand?" She gave a response that was not only interesting but showed considerable perception. Here is her answer "The role of the Church is crucial in not only providing spiritual leadership for our people, but also providing a consistent set of statements that reinforce the values that the Church represents"

She went on to say that "...one of the great things the Church provides in any nation is a clear set of values and principles against which people and the legal system can test their judgement. One of the great risks in the modern world", she said, "is that the Church is more inclined to be politically correct than politically courageous." Now, how true is that? The Hikoi of last year, the Church's opposition to casinos, its concern for the inequalities appearing in our communities today and our Church leaders' statement on East Timor make that assumption at least arguable.

However, too often the Church is inward looking and appears to give evidence that it is only interested in its own life. Has it lost its nerve in the community, outside its hallowed precincts? Is it true that it is more inclined to be politically “correct than politically courageous?” The New Testament not only encourages us, but demands that we speak out on issues that bear upon the well-being of the society in which we live. Especially those issues that have to do with morality and poverty. It is essential that our diocese and individual parishes do not lose sight of this important role of the Church. As we seek to be obedient to His commands, let us not abdicate these issues to others. Let us be courageous!

I think this was well expressed recently by Archbishop George Carey when outlining his vision for the new millennium. (July 1999, Notre Dame University, USA). He is very optimistic about the Church’s involvement in public life. Speaking of the Lambeth Conference last year he said, “there was little sign that the 750 bishops of the communion were fearful of the future or had fundamental doubts about the place of the Christian Faith in that future” He went on to talk about the West having to face three overwhelming realities: the intellectual climate of our culture; the global economic inequalities and the misuse of our world’s environment. Things Scripture sheds much light on, maybe not always in specific terms, but certainly in principle.

These realities of course should be tackled at local congregational level but they must also be tackled by all Christians of every denomination, holding hands together in an attempt to speak, not with fragmented whimpers, but with a strong united voice to the world in which we live. We need to give more thought and energy to the role of Church in society.

Archbishop Carey insisted that the language of right and wrong still had a future, but argued that much of current moral discussion in the West is based solely on “pleasing oneself” and lacks courage.

I am not denying that Christian faith has a lot to do with the individual and his or her own response to the living God, but it must not end there. We are part of a redeemed society. Nowhere in Scripture is Christian faith a solitary or individual thing alone. The Church is to be seen as a “body” made up of many members, but it is one body. Too often the Church has bought into the secular concept of individualisation, of “pleasing oneself”. “If it pleases me then it must be OK” and we forget others and that we are stewards of all God has made.

Dr Carey gives examples of where we must speak out; he says, “in such an environment marriage may cease to be seen as a permanent commitment and be viewed as a temporary convenience. Sexual abstinence may become not a positive choice but a form of failure. Abortion may be seen not as a deeply complex moral choice but as the simple exercise of a woman’s rights.” These issues and many others demand that the Church speak with a united voice rather than isolated Christians crying out in the wilderness.

Yes, of course the Church as a parish, as a local expression of the body of Christ, is extremely important, but, it is not the only face of the Church that the world needs to see. In the new millennium I pray that we may be a diocese made up of vital communities of Christians and also able to speak unitedly to the world in which we live, on matters of national and global well-being and importance.

I believe we have an exciting future ahead of us. I hope you sense that too. The future is as bright as the promises of God. Jesus said “I will build my church” and He invites us to work with Him.

The Cost

We serve a God who never changes but who constantly changes things. In the days ahead some of us will be taken out of our comfort zones. Yes, we will have to cope with change. We will have to stand up and be counted, especially in areas where biblical authority is challenged and even flouted both within the visible Church and within the society in which we live, and that stand may not make us popular in some quarters. We will need to have nerves of steel and we will also have to be loving and generous, negotiating in those areas concerning non-essentials, but uncompromising in those that are core to the Christian Faith.

We stand at the threshold of a new millennium, nothing short of a renewed Church will be able to meet the challenges that face us. My dream is that the quiet renewal that we have been experiencing over this past decade will continue, gaining in strength and volume, pleasing Him and not ourselves. Let us determine to be all that God wants us to be.

Kia Kaha!

Be courageous.

Kia ora ano tato! God be with us.

APPENDIX 1

Innovative ways of reaching out, some examples:

1. The Cathedral’s Parish Nurse Scheme

This is an exciting initiative. Elaine Tyrrell, a registered nurse, is heading a pilot project in the Cathedral parish. Her mission statement succinctly tells it all. “As a Parish Nurse I aim to support those in our Faith community to make informed decisions about their health, integrating mind, body and spirit.” Other parishes are showing interest in this scheme. The stories of lives touched through this prayerful, sensitive, caring ministry are very moving. You might be interested in talking to Elaine about this much needed ministry.

2. Bishopdale’s Thursday Night Service

Sunday night services are hard going for most parishes, with few exceptions. With many people working on Sundays and with a belief that perhaps Sunday evening would

be better spent having family time in preparation for the week ahead, Bishopdale launched a Thursday night service. People are turning out for teaching and worship.

3. Buller's Beer and Bible

A group of men meet over a beer (or lemonade) and a Bible passage printed on a sheet of paper. They meet in the local pub! This has raised more than an eye-brow, it has raised some interest when fellow patrons realise what is going on!

4. Grey Valley Golfing!

Reefton is one of our largest parishes geographically, with worship weekly, fortnightly, monthly in at least seven or eight centres. It is a vicar's nightmare! What do you do when Sunday (late morning and afternoon) is golf day? Do you wait for them to turn up at church? You might wait forever! Go after them. It has been mooted that the Vicar join the Golf Club and have a service at 5 pm in the Club House. We look forward to hearing about what will happen at the nineteenth hole!

5. More and more of our parishes, especially in rural areas, are talking seriously about the biblical concept of unity.

Golden Bay, Awatere, Greymouth, Mapua, Wairau Valley and Picton and others are, in some cases, not only doing Alpha together but having regular opportunities to worship together with other congregations of Christians in their locality.

APPENDIX 2

Buller, a small town in a geographically large parish - Andrew Hoggan

TRANSFORMED TO BE A TRANSFORMING COMMUNITY:

It's wonderful to dream. This morning I limit my hopes and dreams to the town of Westport because that is the brief I have been given.

If I were asked what my highest hopes were for the church in Westport, before I answered I would remind myself that hopes and dreams are possible because God can do abundantly far more than we can ask or even imagine.

In my most optimistic, even ambitious moments, I dream that the Church in Westport would have a positive, dynamic and shaping role in the life of the community. I long for the day when the churches are full. I long for the day when our civic, community and business leaders take their cue from the church, as the Church itself takes its cue from Jesus.

Too ambitious? Not when the Church has been invested with the authority and power of the risen Lord. I believe that that makes the Church, potentially at least, the most influential and dynamic body of people around.

So I dream of the day when the community takes the Church seriously and looks to the Church not just to pick up the pieces if there is no one else around. I look towards the day when the Church is involved in shaping what happens in the community. I can't see why the Church has to stand on the periphery of the real world, pleading in vain for permission to come in.

But as I dream towards the future, and the hope that the community would invite the Church's involvement in the community, I ask myself this question: Why should Westport take the church seriously?

With that question in mind I want to share how we are trying to build towards credibility and the kind of environment where God's power can be seen and therefore God can be glorified.

1) Seen to be one: Visible and unified.

To be credible and effective we need to be a visible, unified Gospel community. How we become a distinctly Gospel community I will look at later focusing on one area that I believe will impact every area of Church life.

But first visibility and unity: The way we are seeking to build credibility and move in power in Westport is by fostering unity across the denominations, and unity that is public. The towns churches are working together in three ways.

i) Worship:- We have started a monthly Sunday evening service that will alternate around the churches. The hope is that as we pool resources, we can together offer the best we can in the realm of worship and give evidence that we are one, thereby negating two criticisms of the Church: disorganisation and disunity. The offerings from these services are channelled into the Bible in Schools programme so that there is an inbuilt mission thrust.

ii) Outreach:- Apart from the Bible in Schools thrust, the Anglicans, Apostolics and the Salvation Army are currently doing a combined Alpha course.

iii Community Involvement:- The most recent and exciting opportunity for the churches to present a unified front is in the various initiatives that are taking place in the community.

The Minister's Association is now called the "Council of Churches". We have a representative on the newly formed "Youth Action Task Force" looking at the needs of youth in the Buller. We also have a representative on the Skills Development Programme that is to be launched early October.

This is an initiative of the "Delleca Group Council" and "WINZ". The aim of this project is to equip and find employment for 15 - 25 year olds noting that between 1986 - 1996 there was a 28% reduction of this age group in the Buller and the trend is increasing.

Both these areas are crucial and strategic because the Buller has been identified as the most disadvantaged rural community in the South Island. It has also been identified as one of the top seven regions in New Zealand where the youth are most at risk from suicide and self harm.

It is important we get out there as a unified Church and say “hey we are around and we want to help make a positive difference”. There are exciting opportunities for the Church to have a say in shaping community initiatives.

But as opportunities arise it makes the second and main area that I want to talk about vital. I now want to focus on one area that I believe will, above all others, build and sustain the Church as it seeks to make a positive difference.

2) Seen to be distinctive: A Gospel Community shaped by Biblical Preaching.

That area is biblical preaching. Its vitally important because as we seek to shape the community we ourselves need to be shaped. I have already shared with you some of the opportunities that the Church in Westport has been given to serve the community. But as I look at the scale of the problem I could easily give up, that is if I was looking purely to human resources.

Biblical Preaching will Raise Spiritual Expectation.__

Biblical preaching is needed when we think of the massive task that faces us because biblical preaching will raise the spiritual expectations of the congregation. What I mean is this. As I hear about what God has done in the past, I am then better able to hear and believe and work towards what God wants to do in the present.

As I grow in my understanding of the greatness and power of God I am better able to look beyond myself and my present circumstances. And don't we all need that kind of encouragement? Biblical preaching will raise the spiritual temperature of the congregation.

The next result of Biblical preaching is not often talked about but it is crucial if we are to build a mature Christian community.

Biblical preaching teaches us how to read and interpret Scripture.__

As biblical preaching models the process of interpreting and applying Scripture the congregation are week by week, month by month, year by year, equipped to study, understand and apply Scripture to the unique choices that they face every day.

Biblical preaching helps us to think and perceive in a Christian way so that we can grapple with, and witness to, the fast changing and increasingly secular part of the world that we live in.

The bottom line is this.

In a country that largely rejects, or is ignorant of the Lordship of Christ, the Scriptures that were written to a pre Christian world are more, rather than less, relevant and needed in our Post Christian land.

Allow me to quote Dr John Stott, a well known Anglican leader, from his book I believe in preaching.

“God is light; God has acted; God has spoken; and God has caused his action and speech to be preserved in writing. Through his written word he continues to speak with a living voice powerfully. And the Church needs to listen attentively to his Word, since its health and maturity depend upon it. So pastors must expound it; it is to this they have been called. Whenever they do so with integrity, the voice of God is heard and the Church is convicted and humbled, restored and reinvigorated, and transformed into an instrument for his use and glory.” (Stott. p133)

As I dream of the Church having a positive, dynamic and shaping role in the life of the community, the shaping of the Church community becomes paramount, therefore biblical preaching takes precedence

Let me again quote some encouragement's from John Stott.

Where there is division, biblical preaching will help build harmony.
Where there is superficiality, biblical preaching will help build maturity.
Where things are stagnant, biblical preaching will initiate ministry.
Where things lack direction, biblical preaching establishes authority.

Transformed to be a transforming community.

The apostle Paul said “I am not ashamed of the Gospel it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith. I believe that biblical preaching transforms the hearer. It is interesting to note that in Ephesians Paul assumes that through the voice of Christian teachers the voice of Jesus is actually heard. “Surely you heard of Him and were taught in Him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus” Eph 4:21 (in Eph 4:21 there is no preposition before the him, therefore it should read you heard Him)

John Stott puts it this way, “it is as if Christ were teaching about Christ.” You could say that the living Word indwells the faithfully proclaimed word.

In my most optimistic and ambitious moments I dream that the Church in Westport would be taken seriously by the community. As people see what God is doing, I long that they would commit themselves to the Community of Faith, and of course to the Living God.

I long for the day when the churches are full. I long for the day when our civic, community and business leaders take their cue from the church as the Church itself takes its cue from Jesus. Unity and Christian maturity are crucial.

When the churches work together, when the churches are undergirded by biblical preaching I expect things to happen.

Let me finish by saying that the things that I have shared this morning would be a vision that I would have for any parish. The only distinctly small town advantage is this isolation and size makes community, networking, and influence more of a possibility.

I want to dream big as we enter the new millennium. God can do abundantly far more than I could ever hope for or imagine. Praise the Lord for that.

APPENDIX 3

Greymouth, a medium sized parish on the West Coast - Robin Kingston

DREAMING FOR GROWTH (Moving from a 200 size church to 350 within 4 to 5 years)

What we have now.

We have seven weekly services providing an average attendance of about 210 on an ordinary week; of whom about 14 have come twice. We have good facilities, with three church buildings, the largest of which has an appropriate crèche, hall and meeting rooms. Over the years we have developed a large team (maybe 50 or 60) of biblically literate lay people, using Bethel Courses and EFM. Many have also been trained in leading worship, running home groups, preaching and praying for healing; having used the Parish Growth Consultant quite extensively. We have nine active home groups and an EFM study group, and we are running our seventh Alpha Course with 18 participants. Despite all this, our total attendance remains reasonably static. New converts and transfers from outside the district just balance those dying or leaving Greymouth.

Dreaming for the future

1. Praying

I long to see the parish become soaked in prayer. Partly this will come through the monthly prayer sheet being used more extensively by parishioners. We need to find a way to meet together with other passionate prayers, so that there is a corporate parish prayer meeting weekly that has real life to it. Especially we will encourage each of the Home Groups to have one or two aspects of the parish life for which they are particularly responsible to uphold in prayer weekly. We will become far more intentional about prayer ministry within each of the services.

2. Developing a new service on Sunday morning.

I want to take our popular 10am blended service with an average attendance of 115, and develop it into two services. The first, at 9am, would be a traditional style, NZPB communion service with 3 or 4 hymns. The second, at 10.30am, would be a family communion in a relaxed style with contemporary music. I believe a number of people who are experimenting with church again, and are aged 45 plus, prefer a more conservative, recognisable service. I also believe that many under 45 prefer a relaxed, fairly informal style of service. Trying to hold the two together in a blended service is missing too many potential new Christians, or those who could find the roots of their faith again.

3. Co-operating with our neighbours, Cobden-Runanga Parish, more creatively.

Their vicar has just started helping with at least one Sunday service weekly. This could perhaps become a Thursday service as well. This makes the proposed extra Sunday morning service less burdensome. Our assistance to them would be in the form of lending equipment and materials as required.

4. Developing our monthly evangelistic outreach event.

Together with the Baptists, we run a monthly "Soul Reason" multi-media presentation in the Blaketown Rugby Club Rooms - aiming at those in the 20-40 age range. We want to expand this to have a second event called "Alive", run by young people, and aimed specifically at teenagers. This will give a deliberate ministry and mission focus for our young people.

5. Taking the best of the Catechumenate System.

Try and have alongside most new Christians an appropriate buddy who will meet together at least fortnightly for about an hour. This will help both the disciple and the discipler.

6. Initiating and running a number of Community facing and serving groups.

These would include such topics as: divorce recovery, grief, parenting skills for those with teenagers, kids 'n coffee, Living Waters programme, craft group, aerobics, parenting skills for those with under 5's, and others we haven't thought of yet. To do all this we need a much bigger pool of parishioners. One way of doing this is to join up with another Christian fellowship with similar aims and visions.

7. Becoming a Community Church by joining with another fellowship.

We are doing a number of activities together with the Baptist Church at present. These include our "Soul Reason" outreach event held monthly, weekly youth work, some Sunday School combined activities, and organising Parenting with Confidence Seminars. Maybe it is possible to share our 10.30am Sunday Service so that we free up some leadership for the community groups. Perhaps we could join together, with the Baptists selling their property and moving onto our site so that it is a joint venture. That way we could erect some purpose built rooms and hall that meet the needs of these various new groups.

8. Helping to provide Lay Preachers for congregations in surrounding areas.

Already we are servicing Kumara which is 20 minutes away with a weekly Sunday morning service. In the near future we may well be asked to assist in a similar way for Ahaura and Ikamatua which are 30 minutes and 40 minutes away. Depending on what happens with staffing at Reefton, it is possible that there could be some input from Greymouth. However, would love to see someone working virtually full time in Reefton and the Grey Valley on a reduced stipend, providing we can keep finding such dedicated souls.

9. Developing low key discussion groups for outreach.

We are needing a number of morning coffee groups and evening coffee groups that enable small groups of 3 or 4 folk to gather to explore the Christian faith. These would be pre-Alpha groups. They would be low-key events that allow heaps of discussion, and with a little bit of input on some of the basics of the faith. These would be places for developing friendships. Some would be short term events of perhaps 6 weeks. Others could be a year or more in length.

10. Encouraging the growth of Home Groups or Care Cells.

Almost everyone who is growing in the Christian Faith is involved in a group. We want to see 75% of regular parishioners in a group that meets at least fortnightly - preferably weekly. I'm wondering if we can't use the present enthusiastic AAW groups to become a combination of Home Groups and fellowship Groups. They already know each other. Our afternoon group of 35 members could easily form two or three groups that meet weekly, and combine together for a fellowship AAW meeting once a month.

APPENDIX 4

Awatere, a rural parish in Marlborough - Martin Harrison

THE AGRI-CHURCH IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

Introduction

Rural ministries have a future in the new millennium. It is a future laced with challenges which will see the rural church moving with the times while remaining closely linked with the people who make up the rural communities. For God cares about the human race including the nearly 2000 people who live within Awatere, not to mention every other rural community. Therefore, we must positively face the ever increasing challenges of the future. Things are moving fast. A generation ago a farmer needed to look after 1000 breeding ewes to make a living. Today the farmer needs at least 3500 and in another generation the prediction is they will need 7000. Farmers are having to run faster and faster just to stand still. Despite all it's promises, technology is sabotaging the future of the average farmer and many other walks of life today; whether it is coal mining, coastal fishing, office & factory work or teaching and the like.

If the rural church, or for that matter the Church per se is to make ground in the new millennium we must enter the swirling waters of turmoil that the changes in technology bring to people's lives, resisting the temptation to seek refuge and security in holding on to the past.

Where is the Church in all this?

Traditionally the district has owned the rural church for it's hatches, matches and dispatches. Through it some people seek to maintain the glow of yesteryear but yesteryear's embers will fade and turn to ash unless the fire is stoked up. If the church wants to take seriously the commission to take the Gospel to all people we must not settle for a long slow death. We must be pro-active, presenting the Gospel in meaningful ways within our environment. We in the Awatere are seeking to do this and in no way do I want to set ourselves up as experts but as a way of earthing the challenges we face I want to tell you four brief stories about people our church has got alongside

The struggling farmer

Take the struggling farmer who 16 years ago, with the aid of a mortgage, bought the then economic family farm but, when unforeseen government and economic pressures occurred the farm income dropped. To make the farm pay, Bill went out contracting and as time went on became increasingly dependent upon this income to survive. The straw that broke the back was the 97 -98 drought with its devastating effects and the result - a financing stock firm told him to sell the farm.

The drought with its resulting pressure, has brought into the open what has been simmering under the surface, as farming (as it has been known in the past) has become less and less profitable.

The challenge for the rural church is to get alongside the farmers as they hurt and to be a listening ear.

In the future we will have to be involved in more and more social work, pointing farmers to agencies that can provide help. We can share with them the experiences of others and pray with them. As we experience their pain, we pray and hope that they will meet Jesus. This is but one farm in the Awaterre. The current figure is that 7 - 10% of farms in Marlborough will be forcibly sold. Meanwhile we understand 50% of the farms in the district are on the market. Bill's not a church goer so it was a great joy to me to see him in church for the first time this Christmas. And recently when he heard we were painting the church roof he turned up to help

The modern farmer

Farming definitely has a future. A new breed of farmer is emerging. They are agribusiness people seeking to move with the times and be on the cutting edge of farming practice, cranking up production, increasing the size of their holdings and using aggressive management. In the future we will see more and more use of genetic engineering and bio technology. Farmers must be careful. As they gear themselves up and go for it, they make themselves more vulnerable to breakdown. I could tell you stories of family properties farmed in ways dad never thought possible, or farms making major advancements in genetics, or farms that have, over the years, increased land area by 400%.

Anne came into farming with the expectation of growing a business. She was hungry to learn and develop new methods to maximize the returns of farming. Having searched for the right farm she set about developing her farm into a model that is in tune with her land and the economic pressures. In time she married Dave. They spend much time recording so that everything can be questioned and analyzed. Hard choices are tackled head on with a business mentality. They are a type of farmer who expect nothing from the government and believe that if they can't do it they should get out. The church's first involvement with this couple was to marry them some six years ago. For a number of years following there was no more contact. Now, with three children, the link has firmed and we now see them regularly, normally because of the prompting of their eldest son.

The challenge for the church is how do we remain relevant to this new breed of farmers?

Will we as a rural church ask questions about what we do and how we do things in the same way as they have had to do on their farms?

Daily, the farmers strive towards getting it right. Do we do the same in the church or do we settle for near enough is good enough and pacify ourselves with the comment, "well that's all you can expect from a rural church"?

The life style blocks

As farmers struggle and land prices remain unrealistically high, more and more farmers are being tempted to carve off blocks of land. This has brought an influx of people into the district best known as the "life stylers". They are the ones who buy 10 - 20 acres seeking to build their dream. They come in search of a better life. But, as many have found, such an endeavour is expensive in more ways than one. During the week they commute and work outside the district and during the weekend they work flat out on their block.

The "life stylers" can easily remain strangers to the surrounding community as they have little spare time to interact with it. The average turnover time of a life style block is about two years as dreams are not realised.

The challenge for the church is how do we interact with people who have little time and who come and go frequently?

Township

Rural townships have also witnessed massive changes. The farm workers are almost a thing of the past.

In the 80's social welfare actively encouraged people to move out into the rural townships because of cheaper housing and rentals. There is an increasing number of unemployed and beneficiaries, even though many people commute to Blenheim for work. Basically there has been a socioeconomic upheaval in many rural districts.

As a church we are seeking to meet the challenge this change brings by moving what has traditionally been the "farmer's church" towards a church that reflects the whole community, actively reaching out to both farmers and townfolk.

One of our major focuses is to build community, adding to what is already there and creating more. If you like, seeking to reclaim the hub of that community.

One family in the township is the Lewington family. Both parents are reformed alcoholics on the unemployment benefit. I first met them through the local school and then through the fire brigade. We were able to link her into a craft group that we run for women and then into an alpha course. She began attending our "Woman at the Well" meetings, a group designed to facilitate social interaction and spiritual refreshment. Her prayer was that her husband would come to church. We all know that God answers prayer but to encourage you, I can tell you that her husband came to church on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day and saw the church in both traditional and contemporary mode and has since become a Christian.

Into the future

The stories that I have told are typical. Each picture makes up part of our community in which we seek to witness for Christ. I believe if we are to effectively do this we must continue to move with the signs of the times and prayerfully consider how to respond so that we may present the Gospel in relevant and meaningful ways. The move to an interdenominationally based community church has done much to further the Kingdom of God in the rural sector.

Is the move to go interdenominational a challenge that your rural church should consider?

Rural NZ is in the middle of a revolution which is changing the face of the communities that we know. How will we, the rural churches, speak into this situation? Many people see the rural church as a dying institution, one which is quietly fading away leaving a legacy of nice old buildings which can be converted into homes.

But it does not have to be like this.

If I was to tell you this egg was designed to fly, would you believe it? Yet that is exactly what God created it to do. In time, with the right conditions, a chick would peck its way out and learn to fly. It is too easy to think we are only small scattered rural churches and that it is all too much of an effort. But we dare to dream that we can, with God's help, reflect God in his fullness in rural New Zealand. It may seem impossible at times, but we need to remember all things are possible when we seek and rely on God. (2Cor. 12:9-10; Matt 19:26)

We in the Awatere Christian Joint Venture believe it and continue to seek new models in order that we might carry out the mission God has for us. We want to be known as Christ's body at work building the Kingdom of God in the pasture that God has led us to.

The mission of the Awatere Christian Joint Venture can be summed up as building God's kingdom by building community within community. We are encouraged as we follow and watch what the master Shepherd is doing in the lives of the people we love.

APPENDIX 5

Blenheim, a large church with special reference to young people - Richard Ellena

A VISION FOR YOUTH

Four introductory comments that I guess I'd like to preface my thoughts with.

I don't believe that the vision for youth should be any different to the vision of the church.

And that's the challenge that faces us – how to work out the vision so that it's relevant and effective in the very unique and changing culture of youth.

Secondly: I am the senior pastor of a larger church and the working-out of our vision for youth will look very different to that of a smaller church – not better, just different. I need to add however, that young people feel less isolated in their faith when they find themselves in a larger group of contemporaries who share the same faith.

Thirdly: I'm in my late forties – a classic 'boomer' and feel rather presumptuous standing up here giving a vision for youth, as if I have all the answers. I don't, but I do have a passion to see Christianity presented to young people as a faith that's worth exploring, a spirituality that's worth believing and a life that's worth living.

Fourthly and finally: Nativity doesn't have the answers any more than I do. But I believe that we are asking the right questions and, under two years of Rebecca Burgess's leadership, have begun to crystallize our thoughts. And that's the basis of this presentation, together with input from one of our assistant youth leaders (David Plant); the synthesis of many books and magazines; and my own dreams.

Rather than offering a six-point plan to effective youth ministry – a popular trend nowadays in church preaching and teaching, I would like to offer six key questions. Questions that a church with a passion for youth will need to seriously consider as it heads into a new millennium.

Jesus challenged his followers to observe the 'signs of the times'. We need to heed his warning because the future is upon us, and the stakes of advancing the Kingdom of God have never been higher.

Question 1: Who is our youth vision targeting?

Much of what has traditionally passed for youth ministry has been a discipleship program for the youth of 'churched' families, knowing that an active youth program is one of the features that will attract parents to a church. In this common scenario, the hidden agenda – and therefore the 'target' of the youth ministry is not the kids, but the parents.

Secondly, there is a very distinct difference between ministry to ‘Christian’ kids – that is young people from ‘churched’ families - and non-Christian kids.

Young people are looking for hope, acceptance, and love. They are searching for an authentic spirituality that speaks into their lives and their issues, but there is a huge barrier called ‘church’ that stands between ‘churched’ kids and non-christian kids, making it very difficult to minister to both groups at the same time.

‘Churched’ kids are both weary and wary of any talk about spirituality or Christianity because they directly equate it with their experiences of church. If their experience has been of a rather predictable, pretty boring liturgy on Sunday; of a professed faith that seems to have little impact on their parents’ lives and family relationships on the other six days of the week then, no matter how much Hillsong you introduce, or charismatic fervency you generate, it’s all pretty ho-hum and the degree of cynicism is quite high.

A survey commissioned by young people at Willow Creek Community Church showed that we have a long way to go to change the next generation’s perceptions about Christianity. ‘It is old, traditional and behind the times. If it was caring, it is not anymore. Now it is just trying to bring in money, and young males in particular, see the church as pushy, uniform and dead.’¹

Non-christian kids, on the other hand have little or no knowledge of ‘church’ – it’s simply a big building down the road that they are not too sure if they want to go inside because it’s unknown territory. But these young people are desperately interested in spiritual reality and search for it in everything from seances to sex. They are so open to hearing the Jesus alternative, but the bottom line is – don’t tell me. Let me see it and feel it.

It is critical that we be honest with this first question. Is the primary focus of our youth ministry aimed at holding the parents or to discipling the kids, and if it is to the kids – which group?

Question 2: What are the unique characteristics of this young generation?

Young people today see the world as bruised and broken. They are the first generation not inheriting a lifestyle superior to that of their parents. There is a lot of anger and resentment that is expressed in other ways.

They feel alone. This is different from feeling lonely. Aloneness is being in a crowd and being unable to connect with people in a deep and fulfilling way.

They feel abandoned. They hold you off at arm’s length because they are worried about being abandoned and hurt in the same way their families treated them.

They feel alienated. They have a deep need for reconciliation with other people because of the conflict they have experienced in their lives.

Many young people feel estranged from family, community, God and often from self. They don’t have a lot of faith in institutions – political, religious or financial.

For young people today the question isn’t “How can I get ahead?” but “How can we get along?”

At home and at work they value community over conquest. They find fulfillment in friends and family and not career. Doing things as a team is important. They would rather do things

¹ Inside the soul of a new generation – Tim Celek and Deiter Zander

together than have any one of their own peer group elevated above the others. They date in groups, dance in groups, shop in groups. The era of the individual has ended. They are waiting longer and longer to decide on a career and satisfaction, not money, is the driving force.

Perhaps in summary it could be said that among young people today there is a great hunger for belonging; an all-out quest to make families work when they finally take that step; and an ongoing search for truth and spiritual fulfillment. What a great opportunity to minister into their lives. But how do we go about it?

Question 3: What sort of worship will attract young people?

The answer to this question is going to be totally dependant on the answers to the first two questions, but two things have become clearer to us at Nativity:

Introducing the latest Hillsong number, or the occasional guitar number will not, of itself, attract and hold youth.

The blended service, we have persevered with for so long, that seeks to have something for everyone is proving to have nothing for anybody, when it comes to the interface between Generations 'X' and 'Y' and the boomer generation.

In a recent edition of 'Leadership magazine'² the author described a service that is on the cutting edge of worship to a new generation.

He writes: 'Alternative rock proliferates in an atmosphere conducive to Gregorian chant. Candlelight illuminates the sanctuary while high-tech LCD projectors display poetic song lyrics and glimpses of medieval art (downloaded from the internet).

Denim-clad worship leaders address God in King James language ("Thy, Thou, Thine).

Wine is served from common cups. Communion alongside grape-juice.

Liturgical snippets borrowed from Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy entwine with Protestant pietism and charismatic fervency. Some dance while others kneel.

The practice of community is highly encouraged through group prayer alongside the practice of silence.

In accordance with post-modern form, there are no rules. Anything is allowed provided it feels "authentic"

Question 4: What sort of ministry will respond to the need to belong?

We have found that the key is in a relational youth ministry – a cell-based youth ministry where an honest, open atmosphere of trust can be established; an atmosphere in which young people can feel safe to explore issues of life and faith.

Small groups offer young people the chance to feel connected to their peers in an intimate relationship. It fits in with their grass roots orientation of being part of a team.

It also meets the needs of those young people who are still processing Christianity. Being part of a cell of care fills some of their relational needs in a real and relevant way. They may

² Spring 1999 – Article 'Post-contemporary worship
by Daniel M. Harrell

not believe in God yet, but they really like being part of some thing they can identify with. It gives them permission to belong without yet believing.

These CareCells live the life of faith described at the end of the 2nd chapter of Acts.

They are CareCells that can come together for celebration – for worship

Question 5: What will help young people believe?

In terms of making Jesus relevant to youth, 45 minutes of staring at a talking head in a church service is not going to do it. But neither will a multimedia extravaganza on its own. What young people are looking for is not something to entertain them, but to engage them.

The power of Testimony:

One of the most powerful agents for change is life–on–life sharing, what Leighton Ford calls, the “power of story.”

Storytelling is like church ‘unplugged’. It is low tech, high touch. Everyone’s story is worth listening to and learning from. In this setting we can communicate how God’s story intersected with our story. Young people want to hear of the reality of God, but more than that, they want to see us:

‘Walk the talk’. They need to see authenticity in our lives, seven days a week.

Because of their experiences and the world they have inherited, young people today can identify with the suffering of Jesus. Isaiah 53:3. The cross is a powerful testimony and symbol for them, but only remains so if our lives back it up. They are not going to listen to our words, as much as they are going to observe our lives.

So it is strategic to develop a relationship with young people and the thing that will speak most powerfully is the way we live our lives. “Do we really act out what we say we believe?”

Question 6: Is it ministry to youth or ministry of youth?

This is probably one of the most important questions for us to face as a church. So much youth ministry, like so much ministry full-stop, has been directed at youth rather than radiating from youth.

Age was never a barrier to God. Mary, the mother of Jesus was probably only in her teens when she was called by God, but it is an issue with us.

I can’t think of a greater joy than sitting in a celebration of authentic praise led by youth; to receive communion that has been consecrated by someone in their teens whom God so obviously has his hand on. To be part of a community where people’s ministries are recognised and released no matter what the age.....

Yes. I have a dream also.

Six questions that radiate from a vision for youth.

Maybe its appropriate to say that when young people come into a church they’re only asking one simple question: “Do you really want me here!”

APPENDIX 6

A young leader with a long ministry in the next millennium - Peter Judge-Mears

I HAVE A DREAM: THE CHURCH IN THE NEXT MILLENNIUM

Introduction

I was born on the 8th of March 1970, but like most Anglicans I went to church in the 1950s. I wore sensible clothes and sang sensible hymns. Then the Baby Boomers, my parents' generation, took a hand in what goes on. And they changed things, they challenged things. They introduced informal services and sang new choruses. And 20 years later, we are still singing them.

Now a new generation is placing significant demands on church as we know it. Known as Generation X, it refers to those born after 1965 – the children of Baby Boomers. These are the youth we are attracting in our youth groups. These are the young couples and families that many of us are missing in our churches.

As a member of that generation I feel quite keenly the need to reach them. And I have a dream. A dream of a church that interacts with my generation, that transforms my generation and that relates to my generation.

1. A Church that interacts

Bill Hybels once commented that when he went to church it was like a time warp to the 1950s. He spoke of wanting a church where people are in the same year inside the building as outside. That is a dream I share.

To do that we need to be a church that interacts with the culture of Generation X visually, musically and verbally.

i. Visually

We need to interact visually in that my generation is one that has been raised on technology and therefore has little tolerance for what is out of date. Obviously few churches have the financial resources to own their own data projector. However, we do need to ask whether we have ever gone beyond the simple black and white overhead. We need to look at options of colour and style.

Gen X live in a world of chaotic images. Like the images of the TV commercial that flash and change. We need to tap into this.

ii. Musically

We need to interact musically.

Music is always one of the most sensitive topics when talking about the church, since what one generation wants tends to drive another from the room. We do, however, need to make sure that we are picking up on modern song writing. I would encourage every one to have a listen to the sorts of things that are played at Winter Camp.

iii. Verbally

Lastly we need to interact verbally, since much of what we do is a vocal activity.

One of the most profound symbols of modern thinking is the TV remote control. With it I can turn on the TV and flip from channel to channel in the time it takes me to move my finger half a centimetre. When I see something I don't know, that show has about thirty seconds to grab me or it is gone. That is an attitude I bring into church. I cannot help it. It is the way the rest of my life works. Instant gratification or a new choice.

For those leading services, and particularly those preaching, you have thirty seconds to get me. If you use that time telling me what series we are doing, my brain will switch to food, sport, people I want to talk to and so on.

I dream of a church that is up to date visually, musically, and verbally, where peoples' interest is grabbed, a church that reaches Generation X because it is able to interact with it.

But my dream does not stop there. If it did, it would end up a sorry excuse for a church.

2. A Church that transforms

The culture of Generation X needs more than interaction from the church, it needs transformation.

i. Transforming a "me" generation

We are in an age where choice abounds and is demanded. That choice does not only exist in the market place. With the battles that have been fought over ethical issues, Generation X can find no trustworthy authority beyond their own desires and life only has meaning when those desires are being met.

Surely this is something we must transform. Christians must be followers of Christ first, and then place the needs of others beyond their own. That is a long way to take a Gen X person. We need to be careful that what we do does not in fact reinforce that self-absorption.

Many songs we sing are all about me. “I want to...”, “I will...”, “My Jesus...”, “I love you”. Sure they are about our relationship with God, but they focus on MY end of it. We need to make sure that we are taking people’s eyes away from themselves and focussing on Jesus.

ii. Transforming a “now” generation

Alongside the obsession with gratifying desires comes the idea of instant response. I know what I want and I want it now. History has no meaning. The future is fundamentally unknowable. Only now matters.

Christianity has its primary focus on two historical events: Jesus’ death in the past and his return in the future. This poses something of a problem. If we want to grow Gen X Christians, then we need to be clear and uncompromising about the God who reveals himself in history.

iii. Transforming an anti-authority generation

Perhaps the most challenging characteristic of Generation X is that it sees authority as meaningless and is cynical of anyone in authority. The X-files captures this: The truth is out there, but trust no-one.

Yet we say that Jesus is Lord – a title of supreme authority – and that when we look at the scriptures we are seeing what God thinks about issues and that what God says is not negotiable. If we do not show people what the scriptures are saying when we preach then in the end what we say is based on our own authority. They may well follow us but in the end, when we fail them (as we will because we are fallen), their trust in us will fail. We must show people the God who remains faithful and the word that lasts forever.

I dream of a church that not only interacts with Generation X, but also seeks to transform it. To bring it to a mature faith that moves them on from the self-absorbed, immediate and cynical attitudes that prevail.

So how do we do that?

3. A Church that relates

The answer is that we need to be a church that relates.

i. Getting out the church door

Authority is meaningless. Institutions are suspect. People in Generation X see the local church as a service-provider, much like a funeral home. If you need it, it is there but otherwise you forget about it. If we wait for them to come to us we will be left standing. The only way we are going to make an impact on this generation is if we walk out our holy doors and mix with the heathen!

The gospel is about a relationship. The key to reaching people now, as always, is in building relationships – not strategies or structures. It is talking to people, befriending them, sharing the gospel with them.

ii. Lay, not clerical

The minister cannot do that alone – in fact he or she is the most handicapped in this task since the very fact that they are a minister means that they have an agenda and the cynicism of Generation X will come right to the front.

It *is* important for the minister to be building relationships since it is on these that any authority will be built, but when it comes to evangelism, the best people are the lay people.

iii. Discipling

Someone once suggested to me that everyone should have a Paul and a Timothy (someone who is growing them and someone they are growing) plus one more: a non-Christian who they are building a friendship with. I dream of a church of such people.

Conclusion

As we approach the next millennium, I have a dream. I dream of a church that interacts with my generation, that transforms my generation and that relates to my generation. Will you share in my dream?