

Overview

What I love...

I love the people who make up the Cathedral

I love our music

I love our new logo

I love our community vegetable garden

I love the courage of the vestry

I love the pragmatism of our parishioners

I love the worship events that welcome members of the wider community among us

Kia mua, kia muri: walking backwards to the future.

We look back and learn from the past in order to engage wisely with the future.

In this report we look back at 2024 – but as a bonus for this year's AGM report, I then offer some thoughts about what I see ahead...

Thank yous.

Some people are finishing their current ministry at our Cathedral:

Lawrence Yule... seismic committee chair; and Alison Thomson and Noel Evans, members.

Christine Scott... nominee to Napier Family Centre, now called Weave

Nik Krawchenko for his term on Vestry

Dale Meredith for her term on Vestry and chairing the property sub committee

Janine Melville... for Godly Play, known here as te wahi Atua

Lyndsay Browne... Treasurer extraordinaire

Looking back to 2024

Vestry minutes are promulgated on the noticeboard at the back of the Cathedral, so I won't repeat all that has been included in them. Rather let me bring to mind some highlights, or matters of significance for Waiapu Cathedral.

Safety is always a top priority for us: see Sue Myles' H&S report for some details. In addition, Vestry adopted a policy this year that we only open the building to the public if there are two of our people on site. When there is only **one person on site, the doors are to remain closed**. This will mean the Cathedral remains closed more often – always on a Monday and a Saturday, and often after 9.30am (when morning prayer finishes) on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Two people have been trespassed from the Cathedral in the last year (one had smashed a window, the other had stolen a handbag). A third person will be trespassed if they repeat their verbal abuse...

The **Diocesan Safeguarding** training was completed by many parishioners, and I am grateful for your positive response to this new requirement. On three occasions I took a matter to our Diocesan Safeguarding Manager, and I can report that the process works well. Our **Risk Management** strategy for the ongoing use of this Earthquake Prone Building includes a safety briefing at the start of all gatherings where visitors are present, and specific regulations about the use of the bell tower. My gratitude to those who use the tower regularly (archivists and bellringers) for continuing to follow the guidelines week by week.

Seismic Committee work continued in 2024 with meetings generally every month or two. See the separate report from our vestry appointed Chair, Lawrence Yule. This committee included +Andrew, Collen Kaye, Steve Orme, Noel Evans, Alison Thomson, Susan Wylie and me. It has reached the point where the work of the committee is work that belongs to the Diocese (and its Board of Trustees) rather than to the Parish. In dissolving this subcommittee of Vestry, the Parish therefore release Lawrence from his role and are pleased to offer his services to the Diocese for the continuation of this work. Alison and Noel have serviced this committee since its formation – with Susan and myself being late comers to the party. I am deeply grateful for the journey they have walked on our behalf. We now hand the relay baton on to the Waiapu Board of Diocesan Trustees (the building's owners) and the Diocesan Leadership Team.

Newcomers can find it hard to become part of a Cathedral congregation in any city, partly because we set out to offer a place of worship where 'casual worshippers' can come and go freely... so we don't like to pounce on people and sign them up too soon! My thanks to our People's Warden who has developed a ministry towards those who have recently joined us, helping introduce them to a few others and creating the space to hear something of their stories. Great stuff, Sue!

Inevitably we have offered more funerals than weddings and baptisms, but I was particularly pleased to conduct some **baptisms** by immersion. Our next **wedding** is on May 18th.

The **Cathedral Parish clergy team** comprises of Revds Christine Scott, Dorothy Brooker, Deborah Broome, Helen Jacobi, Howard Pilgrim, Jenny Beale, Mary Rowlands and me. Each of them has their own circumstances that dictate the amount of time and energy they can contribute to

Cathedral ministry, but I am grateful to them all for whatever they can give. We get together every month or two for mutual pastoral support and to share about Cathedral ministry. Dorothy would win the competition, if there was one, for the greatest dedication, commitment, involvement, etc. It was a delight to be able to ring her a month ago to check if she would refuse a new (second hand) car if God decided to bless her with such a gift. It's not often that Dorothy is speechless... 'Nuff said!

Special services: Holy Week – especially Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday... Pentecost with all the churches of Napier, Winter Deco, St John's Investiture with the Governor General, Advent, Blue Christmas, Nine Lessons and Midnight Mass, Earthquake commemoration, Art Deco... all of them were memorable, and demonstrated the teamwork of musicians, preachers, service leaders and liturgists. If it's been a while since you engaged with the **Paschal Triduum** (the three days before Easter) may I share with you that Dorothy and I remain staggered by how few people come to the Maundy Thursday service, in particular? I have never been in a parish where the Maundy Thursday service is so poorly attended. Why is that? The service is beautiful, moving, pivotal to our faith – and the next day is a statutory holiday. If you need help with transport, please let us know.

My thanks to our **preachers**... especially for evensong, and also during June when I was able to seize a month to visit Turkey and Greece and reflect on the biblical mission journeys that happened throughout those earthquake prone lands. Thanks not only to my clergy colleagues, but especially to the lay people who stepped up: Janine Melville, Jennifer Harris, Kate Hartland, Michael Morgan, Richard Harris, Roger Parr, Susan Wylie (and let me know if you want to be on the list this year).

Pastorally we began monthly services at Summerset in the Palms (Te Awa), while Dorothy has continued to guide our pastoral visitors, and take home communion to a range of our parishioners who are house bound. Mary and Jenny take most of our services at PA now, for which I am most grateful. My offering of pastoral care is sadly confined somewhat by the number of hours in the day, and tends to be triaged towards those who are in leadership positions, or those for whom their situation is acute or urgent. What I love most is having time to make occasional visits that are non-acute and non-urgent, so don't be alarmed if I come to see you! You are also very welcome to request a visit – the lead time is about two or three weeks.

At the recent Dean's conference we talked about Cathedrals that belong to the **Inclusive Church network, or the Safe Space Alliance**. Both organisations have a lot going for them – allowing people who may consider themselves to be in a minority grouping to check out whether a church is likely to be welcoming of them. I intend to raise these options with the new vestry once they have been elected.

I put a Synod motion about **amalgamating Napier parishes**. We have had one consultation, less than a month ago, and not yet heard any official feedback... it will come in April. More about that in the future section below.

Wider engagement has continued – with Napier Inner City churches; the wider Napier Ministers Association, the Diocese, and the other Cathedrals around the country. Beyond church matters we have continued to work closely with the Council, engaging in our civic role as a Cathedral.

Looking ahead: 2025 and beyond

I am certain that the Cathedral's faith community has a future. The way the community lives out its faith will need to be flexible, adaptable and dynamic. We know the building must change, because it is seismically compromised. The faith community will face changes too.

New Zealanders are constantly reminded that they need to save more for their retirement, and that it is never too soon to start saving. We also need to plan for our future, and that planning needed to start many years ago. Fortunately, it did! We have Permanent Funds, or Reserves, that our forebears carefully ring fenced and set aside, as part of planning for the future of the Cathedral. We have been forced to borrow from them in recent years, and the agreement of the day was that those Reserves would be repaid each year, over a ten year period. Clearly, we need to avoid borrowing more from those Reserves while we have yet to replenish them.

It seemed to your vestry that if we keep focussed on a five year plan, that our reserves will be imperative to our success. We know that the risk assessment on the Cathedral building advises us to move out by the start of 2028. Irrespective of which option the WBDT prefers for solving our seismic issues, we will need reserves to transition to a new Cathedral – whether that is a strengthened Cathedral, a boutique/mini Cathedral, or a brand new Cathedral.

When I arrived here three years ago I felt strongly that we should be open 7 days a week to engage with our community, to live out our mission and grow the parish. With such a small paid staff team, it needed volunteers to help engage with the members of the public – and we simply don't have enough volunteers. Neither can we afford to keep the level of staffing that we had three years ago because other expenses have increased. We have no choice but to make some radical changes to the way the Cathedral is financed or managed. The proposals of your Dean and vestry were too radical for the Diocese, and as an episcopal church, which respects the leadership of our Bishop, I acknowledge his directive that we are to produce a budget with a full stipend. Several other areas have been cut back to make this possible, and over the next few months there will be opportunity for adjustments as we find out what is realistic. It will be for the newly elected vestry to pay close attention to our monthly figures and monitor our progress. Flexibility is the key!

In glancing through reports from previous Deans of recent years, Helen, Michael and Ian all warned of unsustainability. This building was once 'state of the art', but is now better described as 'unfit for purpose'. The cost of strengthening it, bringing it up to code, and making it user friendly, are not only well outside our reach, but would then make it even more expensive to maintain. If the building were a person, some have suggested that person is at risk of bleeding to death – and the first thing to do would be to stop the bleeding. It's what you do to save life.

If an amalgamation of Napier parishes takes place – potentially just the Cathedral and Taradale - it would allow a consolidation of management functions such as administration and financial management. The protection of our financial reserves would ensure a degree of self-sustaining ministry for a Cathedral Particular, safeguarding the style of worship unique to a Cathedral, while the pastoral care of parishioners would come from the parish hub, wherever that might be. It's worth thinking about.

The Very Rev'd Di Woods, Dean