

**Acting Dean's Report
to the Waiapu Cathedral Parish of St John Annual General Meeting
22nd March 2026**

I began my ministry as Acting Dean mid-May last year. The bishop asked me to take up this role for a period of at least twelve months, to support the Cathedral parish during a time of transition and to offer some stability to parish life. As such, my role has not been to initiate major change, but rather to nurture our community life and to encourage us in our shared calling.

As a Cathedral parish, our work is to worship God, share the good news of Jesus Christ, and to care for people both within and beyond church life. Put another way, it is to make known the love of God.

When we review parish life, we can all too easily focus on what we do not, or cannot, do. Today, however, I want to affirm who we are as a faith community and to celebrate our life and ministry together.

Having served in around thirty parishes, I can say with confidence that this is one of the most stable, viable, and vibrant faith communities with which I have ministered. It is also a diverse community. A parishioner said to me recently, "We come from such different spiritual backgrounds, yet we meld together." I hope this parish never loses that quality, for it reflects a distinctive gift of Anglicanism.

This Cathedral, the "mother church" of the diocese, is not dying, nor are we merely surviving. There are signs of growth, and the statistics support this. Attendance on ordinary Sundays, as well as on special occasions, has increased – something that does not always occur during times of change and uncertainty, as several parishioners have observed.

Underlying our parish life is a strong core of deeply committed parishioners who give generously of their time and talents. This is expressed in many ways: greeting at the door; polishing silver and brass; caring for sanctuary linen; supporting those in need within and beyond the parish; preparing and serving morning tea; offering hospitality; assisting with financial and property management; arranging flowers; managing communications; leading worship; reading the Scriptures; and offering the Prayers of the People.

There are also the Waiapu Walkers; children's ministry and care; Pins and Needles; study groups; sound system operation; bell ringing; and ministry within rest homes and retirement villages. Added to this are those who share their love of music with us – the Cathedral Choir, the Young People's Choir, and other musicians, including the Cathedral Strings. It is an impressive list, and there are undoubtedly ministries I have failed to name, but you take my point.

While our Vestry is not as large as it could be, it is a highly effective group. We work well together, share our faith, and enjoy one another's company. We are blessed with two very committed Church Wardens, Graeme West and Sue John, whose gifts complement one another. I am also grateful for those in leadership roles, particularly our Director of Music, Anthony Tattersall; my clergy colleagues, Deborah Broome and Dorothy Brooker; and the group of so-called "retired clergy" who continue to minister in valuable and caring ways. I also wish to acknowledge our Parish Administrator, Charlene van Eeden – thank you.

In reflecting on all of this, I am reminded of the Māori saying that asks, "What is the most important thing in the world?" and answers, *he tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata* – it is people, it is people, it is

people. People, their relationships with one another and with God, are our primary concern. If we lose sight of that, we lose sight of who we are called to be as Church.

I delight in the worship that takes place here, from our smaller midweek services to those held on Sundays. I also notice the number of people who stay for coffee afterwards, and the vibrant conversations that so often follow. Then there are the countless visitors from around the world who step through our doors – some to stay for worship, some to light a prayer candle, to sit quietly, or simply to talk about something on their mind. Being present so that the Cathedral can remain open at these times is a vital ministry, and one I strongly encourage.

As the Wardens note in their report, Vestry has been mindful of our call to offer hospitality. Under Jan Martin's enabling leadership, we have been exploring ways to strengthen our ministry of welcome, seeking to "treat everyone with generosity and friendship." This is significant work, and I encourage you to take up the opportunities that will emerge from this and to consider how you might contribute actively. A handout regarding this is available.

While people remain our primary focus, I'm aware of questions surrounding the future of this building. As you know, earthquake strengthening is required, though when that will be undertaken remains uncertain. Responsibility for that decision lies with the Waiapu Board of Diocesan Trustees, who are the legal proprietors. Nevertheless, we have a real interest in the process.

In response to the Government's announcements last year regarding possible changes to strengthening requirements for earthquake-prone buildings, the Bishop has advised as follows:

"While we don't think it will make any changes to the standards to which the building needs to be strengthened, we do think that it is likely that we will have more time for development and a greater ability to use the Cathedral to its full capacity before strengthening is complete. At this stage this means that we are confident at being able to continue use of the Cathedral prior to any strengthening development work being carried out."

And so we continue to use this Cathedral. What we can't say, at this point, is how long this will continue before renovation work begins.

As for my ministry among you, this comes to an end on the 31st of May, after which I will serve as Interim Priest-in-Charge of Taradale Parish. Bishop Andrew has advised me that he is very actively working on a replacement appointment and hopes to be able to enter into discussion very soon with the Wardens, Vestry, and clergy team.

I'm grateful for the privilege of serving you over these twelve and a half months as Acting Dean. And to you all, for what you do and give – for your service and ministry – and most importantly, for who you are – for being my sisters and brothers in Christ – I say: *Thank you God.*

The Very Reverend Alister Hendery
– Acting Dean