

## Welcome Home?

Our vestry has been considering what our church would look like if everyone really was welcome. So have our 10:45am worship leaders, and I am sure many others. Church as it is now, does not work for many. It works for some of us who come. It doesn't work for the many spiritual people outside our doors. What is our response to that?

One response is to become fearful and to hunker down. I understand the feelings behind this. Change is hard. It is painful and it is risky. Someone I know of says "You may not like change but you will like irrelevance even less."



In some ways you could say it's too late. The horse has bolted. But there are always second chances with the Lord – always. And it's his church – not ours.

So we continue to wrestle with what church should be. We wrestle locally and we wrestle nationally. The issue of blessing for same sex marriages divides the national church. Our Bishop and others have been wrestling with a way forward. They have come up with an interim report basically suggests that rather than having 'two integrities,' whatever that means, that a good way forward is to allow Bishops to say what happens in their Dioceses. The report also offers protection to clergy whatever side of the debate they stand on.

These are the recommendations from the report:

This report recommends:

- no alteration to the formularies of this Church

- enabling amorangi and dioceses to safeguard theological convictions within their episcopal units
- amendment of the declarations of adherence and submission to the authority of GSTHW
- allowing amorangi and diocesan bishops to authorise individual clergy within their ministry units to conduct services blessing same gender relationships
- providing immunity from complaint for bishops and clergy for exercising their discretion on whether or not to authorise or conduct services of same gender blessings
- providing recognising Orders of Consecrated Life to allow for those with clear theological convictions to have those convictions respected and protected.

Already push-back has been that the document is too compromising. Others say it goes nowhere far enough. If we don't compromise we will split and what will that say to the world? What will that do to God's heart? What will that do to Anglicans across our province of Aotearoa, Pacifica, New Zealand?

You can read the full report here <http://www.anglicantaonga.org.nz/Features/Extra/WG-interim>

Change takes a long time but it is inevitable. It seems to me, that the only thing that will prevail over division is God's grace worked out in humility and love together. Nationally and locally, irrelevance looms if we do not portray the love of Christ to our wider community.

'God shows no partiality.' *Acts 10:34 NKJV*

Tolerance is not just about agreeing to embrace our differences. It's about accepting the other person's right to believe as they wish, and to behave according to those beliefs. One of the great tests of spiritual maturity is our willingness to love and pray for those whose beliefs and behaviours are unacceptable to us. Instead of condemning people who err, we should see them the same way we see a blind man walking towards a cliff's edge. Our reaction should not be to condemn him, but to have

compassion and try to show him a safer route. Now let's be clear: compassion is not compromise. In the first century Jews looked down on Gentiles and referred to them as 'dogs' (see *Matthew 15:26-28*). But Jesus came and redeemed those 'dogs' and turned them into disciples. When Cornelius the Gentile summoned Peter the Jew to his home, Peter was reluctant to go. He explained, 'You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean' (*Acts 10:28 NKJV*). God was uprooting embedded traditions and opening up new opportunities for the Gospel. Peter continued, 'In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears him and works righteousness is accepted by him' (*Acts 10:34-35 NKJV*). Could it be that God wants to expand the borders of your mind for his glory? If you're open to it, he will bless you. -- *Word for Today from Radio Rhema on Friday 14/7/17*

*'Following Jesus; building community'* necessitates that we wrestle with what it means to be 'home' for those who are not welcome elsewhere. Wrestling puts us in an uncomfortable place.

A recent email from our people's warden included these words:

"The awkward, questioning space is definitely a growth space. Not necessarily easy, but exciting. The complete opposite of 'if you do what you always do you get...'"  
- Go St Dave!



Days of uncertainty help us focus more clearly on Jesus I reckon. They allow us to wrestle with what it means to be a Jesus follower. And that will push us, hopefully not kicking and screaming, towards building community; towards being a place where everyone is truly welcome.

Learning together in love,

*Susan*

**Staff team** - God is gracious in his provision for us. I'm delighted to announce that Evelin Epoi has agreed to take on the role of Acting Seniors' Team Leader, until Yvonne is back in the reins. Evelin is a very capable person who conveys great warmth and hospitality to all. Evelin won't be working as many hours as Yvonne did and her hours won't be the same every week. Evelin will be available for visiting, will oversee Lunch on the Hill, and take some home/rest home Communion. Thank you to others who have stepped up for some aspects of her role, especially Shiona with Tea and Talk. You can email Evelin on [seniors.onhill@xtra.co.nz](mailto:seniors.onhill@xtra.co.nz) or phone the office 544 8844 and leave a message if no-one is there.

I'm also pleased to announce that Owen Haring will be joining us again. He comes to us as a church member and a non-stipendiary priest. While he will participate in church life and ministry, Owen will not be Assistant Priest. (He is not an unpaid general gofer so it's not a free-for-all in terms of finding jobs for him). Owen is a very gifted man and will offer his gifts to our church in ways that suit this stage of his life and ministry.

Any queries about either appointment, please contact Susan.