

Review of Kapiti Uniting Parish

Date held: Saturday 9 March 2019

Review Team: Ian Harris LNIS Convenor, Barbara Halliwell LNIS, Peter MacKenzie
Presbytery Central

Process:

Prior to the meeting day, the parish had provided at our request the following documentation: Parish Council minutes of Oct 18, Dec 18 and January 19, the 2018 Annual Report, annual financial reports for 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18, the 2016 mission plan entitled 'Moving into the Future. Led by the Spirit'. These allowed us to gain some familiarisation with how the parish operates, its organisation and present day issues. We also received assurance via a check list that the parish has met its legal, financial, personnel and Health and Safety obligations.

On the day of the review we had meetings first with the Presbyter Rev Cornelia Grant alone and subsequently with Cornelia and 9 Parish Councillors – which Cornelia left part way through – and in the afternoon with about 45 members of the congregations of Kapiti Uniting Parish (KUP) who responded to an open invitation to meet with the review team.

Summary of Observations

The parish members have a lively and passionate spirit. At times comments were delivered firmly but without malice, reflecting clear thinking and concern. This is not a parish where members are passive.

KUP's mission statement - *to promote Christian faith and values in the communities of the Kapiti Coast* – reflects an outward focus which is supported by the large number and range of groups and activities which parish members are engaged in. Some members observed that perhaps this results in a weakness to nurture and support active parish members by all parish members; there needs to be more overt acknowledgement of what is being achieved.

The structure of the Parish Council was changed from early 2017, resulting in the formation of 8 'Project Groups' each with a convenor and a Parish Council representative. This has proved difficult to implement as there are insufficient people willing to become involved – several groups are without a convenor and/or a Parish Council representative. There is a roll-over term of 3 years. While this introduces new ideas and enthusiasm as new people rotate in, it does place strain on the organisation structure if there are insufficient people willing to fulfil the roles. Parish Council minutes note that some have voiced 'vociferous opposition to changes'. Some observed that the changes were introduced with insufficient discussion and too quickly. Given the implementation difficulties experienced to date, the present structure requires a review to simplify and streamline if it is to serve the needs of KUP and not in itself become a stumbling block.

The activities taking place at the 3 worship centres are many and varied involving parish members and people in the local community. These should be encouraged, supported and celebrated as an expression of local outreach/mission.

There are 4 church services every Sunday: United @9 and 10am at Raumati, 9:15am at Waikanae and 10:30 at Paekakariki. Cornelia takes one service and sometimes two (eg United @9 and Paekakariki at 10:30) other services are led by retired Presbyters in the parish and Lay Preachers. While this 'traditional' expression of Christian worship is still applicable for those who attend, it does place considerable demand on the few leaders. As Sunday worship attendance continues to fall in the future – a situation being experienced in the majority of parishes – we need to be exploring and experimenting what might replace it for people under 50 year of age. Such 'new expressions' need to be undertaken as far as possible in parallel with Sunday services so the church member community as an entity doesn't collapse and die.

Live music in support of worship is also a looming issue. What alternatives are being investigated?

An observation was made that 'we only see the minister once in 4 Sundays'. This is just a reality for a multi-church parish – and of Methodist Circuits! Good communication, Lay training and sharing of prepared material are required, along with the practical realisation from the Reformation of 'the priesthood of all believers'.

Messy Church operates once a month and draws in families who do not usually attend on Sundays. This is a good and commendable outreach and is regarded as such; it should not be seen as a potential feed-in to Sunday morning services.

We understand that the characteristics of the member-communities at each worship centre are different. This makes it difficult to attract KUP members to combined Sunday services and social events. We recognise that this is disappointing for the organisers of such events. [Perhaps this is an underlying symptom of the failure to fully resource the new parish structure?] This is a common experience in parishes with multiple worship centres. Instead of trying to change this, we would suggest celebrating the diversity of Christian expression in the three geographic communities – which are themselves different.

The "uniting" part of KUP should not be a goal of making all members into one group, but the celebration of all the activities beneath a governance umbrella. With the range of local activities already undertaken, the role of a 'central' body then becomes one of oversight, of Governance, supporting and encouraging what people are actually doing in the name of KUP within the overall strategic direction and values. Some activities are seen as best done under the umbrella of the whole of KUP eg the annual Fair and Thrifty Place.

Communications – or rather the perceived inadequacy of them was also raised by many in different contexts. This also is an aspect shared by other parishes. Communication, regular and using a number of channels, can't be overdone. It is especially critical when members predominately use different buildings. It is vital if the Governance functions are to be effectively exercised. In particular we heard about a lack of responses to letters, an irregular

presentation of budgets, financial reports and presentation of Balance sheets. Regardless of the specificity of these claims, the perceptions are real and need to be addressed.

What about communications within each congregation/building? It may be that the younger members wish to use other media rather than verbal announcements and pieces of paper. Much was made of the sharing/communication during the informal congregational meetings/gatherings at Waikanae and Paekakariki. Is this an aspect to be encouraged at Raumati?

Property and the issues that arise therefrom, always loom large for parishes not helped by rising costs, less local volunteer assistance and increasing legislative requirements.

We heard calls by some to close the Paekakariki building - and consequently one presumes – the worshipping community there. These were made on the basis of cost – though supporting figures were not produced in support. On the other hand, we were told that though there are few members (at Sunday worship), their impact on the local community is significant. We urge the Parish Council to consider all factors, not just finance, when considering the matter, so as to provide some certainty for the future ownership of the building and end any speculation. If effective outreach is being done, is this not something to be supported by the wider parish – and celebrated? What form of ‘new expression’ might be explored? If the building was to be sold, how would the present members be overtly supported to continue their outreach in the community?

We didn’t have time or opportunity to discuss finance, so our observations are drawn from the accounts presented at the AGMs in 2016, 2017 and 2018. We note a comment made in these Review discussions of a perception of a ‘no spend’ policy on property – though we note that necessary maintenance is being undertaken. To our reading, the accounts show a small decline in Income over the 3 years of approx. 3.5% (\$7,000 in \$190,000) and a similar increase in Expenditure excluding Depreciation resulting in a small surplus or deficit.

The annual Charities Returns show a somewhat different picture to that presented in the Annual parish report. The values to 30/6/16 reported to Charities Services in 2016 and as the previous year in 2017 are significantly different – as noted below. A significant value is the Total deficit. The values reported to Charities and those shown in the Annual Reports are as follows

Total Deficit for year to 30 June:	Charities Returns	Annual Reports
2016	\$33,489 (cf \$3,757 as reported in 2017)	\$20,791
2017	\$10,348	\$42,917
2018	\$22,057	\$22,057

The main differences in 2016 and 2017 appear to be a below the bottom-line inclusion of Capital Expenditure and Mortgage repayments in Annual Reports but not included in Charities Returns. These entries were omitted in both sets of figures in 2018. Are they included elsewhere or excluded? While we’re not suggesting any nefarious intent, how are

parish members able to interpret and make sense of them? Such year to year differences makes determination of long-term trends difficult/impossible.

With Operational Income and Expenditure largely balancing, the main financial issue would appear to be Net Current assets of some \$67,000 (after Liabilities) as at 30 June 2018. With inevitable capital requirements for building maintenance, upkeep and replacement equipment, this is barely adequate. The Council minutes make reference to a 'stewardship' campaign; we haven't heard whether any increased giving will improve cash flow, however this will not impact on the level of Current Assets. [On review the parish provided the welcome following update: 'The Stewardship Campaign has resulted in a positive response from Parish Members. In fact, Net Current Assets – Cash in Bank less what we owe – is approaching \$80-\$90 K by June 2019'.] Some trimming of costs should be considered to avoid operational deficits and so preserve the available capital. Perhaps funding could be sought to (partially) support the Youth and Family worker?

Recommendations/Challenges

Celebrations and acknowledgement of what is being achieved by parish members.

Organisational review. The corporate, top down model based at Raumati has not worked as well as intended.

A clearer separation between Governance and Management is recommended. We suggest:

- Consideration be given to more autonomy for the members at the three worship centres to fulfil the parish mission statement with their local building facilities and people resources through local congregational councils to oversee local activities ie Management.
- Member representatives from the 3 centres form the Parish Council to determine vision and policy and receive activity reports ie Governance. This would include identifying legislative requirements (in particular related to buildings earthquake strengthening, Health and Safety, Asbestos, Access for All) along with Finance – budgets and reporting, employment matters and the preaching plan (particularly for the Presbyter).

The 'traditional' Sunday services require a significant commitment of leadership and music resources. How can these be supported while reducing demands on scarce resources?

With steady or declining numbers at worship on Sundays, what new expressions of church will replace these. What can be tried while resources are still available?

KUP prides itself in its level of expenditure for its outreach and mission. What is its goal for the outreach and mission? Is it to increase Sunday service attendance or increase church membership or to engage in a spiritual conversation with the community? How successful has outreach and mission been? How is 'success' measured? How is what has been achieved communicated, celebrated and used to encourage those involved and members to continue?

How might communications be improved within the parish as a whole and within congregations using the worship centres? What new tools are required to communicate effectively with younger people?

Determine the future for the Paekakariki church building to end speculation and provide certainty for the members there. If the building were to be sold, is the congregation to be closed or what alternative arrangements are to be made for the members' mission to continue?

How can parish capital be increased to allow for future capital requirements to be met? We would recommend some increase in income and/or reduction in expenditure to maintain an operating surplus each financial year so as not to put further pressure on capital resources to fund deficits.

Finally, we would like to commend the work done by the Waikanae Congregation led by their Vision Team. Within the KUP umbrella they are attempting to turn statements into local actions that they intend to take. It's not a perfect document, but it is a start – the place where all journeys begin. Perhaps an example for other congregations to consider.

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15 May 2019