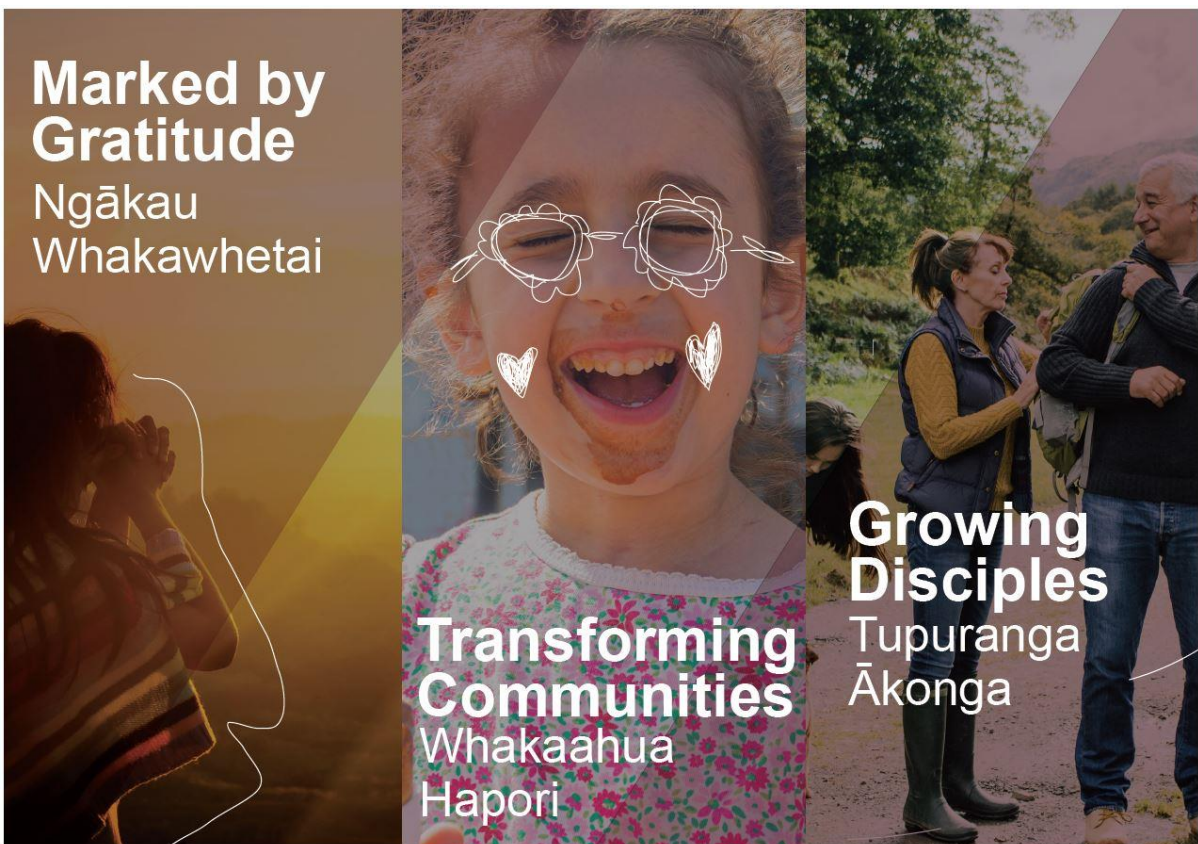


Reviewing Mission Inspiring Action

Diocese of Waikato & Taranaki

A family in God who are followers of Christ



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Overview

This document outlines the process by which a parish can explore its parish ministry and the congregation’s awareness of it. It is significantly derived from the work of Sheffield Diocese, further informed by the *Healthy Churches Handbook*,¹ and subsequently aligned with our Diocesan vision. In addition, you will note several references to the enormously significant Church of England investigation into church growth captured in the report, *From Anecdote to Evidence*.²

Our local process can be divided into three parts:

- Data collection (online survey)
- Data Analysis (extraction and summary of digital data)
- Delivery, decision-making, and action (presentation of data, assessment of critical work, and delegation of responsibility)

Data Collection

All data is collected via Survey Monkey from all parishioners.

An online survey gives people time to answer questions without the influence of other voices. It also means that data can be collected and analysed digitally. This saves an extraordinary amount of time both in preparation and presentation.

The survey is deliberately designed to press for a yes/no response. This can make people uncomfortable. Where people are not certain, or simply do not know, the answer should be “no”. This is important information because it helps the leadership team understand how well ministry is understood and communicated. Some congregations discover that their primary piece of work is simply communicating what they already do ...

¹ Robert Warren, *The Healthy Churches Handbook : A process for revitalizing your church* (Church House Publishing, London: 2004).

² You can read a summary here: https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/from_anecdote_to_evidence_-_the_report.pdf (last accessed Sep 9, 2020).

When a whole congregation is surveyed, they do not necessarily need to attend the presentation of results. This part can be limited to the Leadership Team and other relevant parties who are charged with making decisions. Nevertheless, the report should also be made available publicly.

Data Analysis

Data is exported to excel for aggregation and then converted into a report.

The data analysis allows for a summary of all yes/no questions as well as the text of any comments. The aggregation of data largely³ precludes the identity of any individual contributor. The report also identifies any trends that have surfaced and or particular suggestions/pieces of work that are consistently mentioned.

Delivery, Decision-Making, and Action

The report is presented in person to the assembly.

The presentation of this data can take as little as 60 minutes, but we recommend 90-120. Ideally, all those who are attending the meeting will have read the entire report in advance. Normally, each of the eight areas explored generate 1-2 specific pieces of work. In addition, we tend to find some broader trends that can be addressed globally (like communication) and some pastoral issues (current and historic hurt/conflict). Our recommendation is to:

- Categorise the SMART⁴ work and assign a small, self-terminating group, to execute the task;
- Identify the broader trends and determine whether they can be handled locally or need to be referred to a specialist; and
- Recognise any hurt/conflict and refer for closer examination (allowing for mediation/arbitration and resolution).

Some leadership groups provide regular updates to the congregation on what was identified and what is being done to address the opportunity. This helps people to make an ongoing connection between the matters they raised and the leadership team's commitment to transformation.

Diocesan Values

As a Diocese we seek to be "A family in God who are followers of Christ." We aspire to be recognised for a serious commitment to:

- Gratitude,
- Our growth as (and of) disciples, as well as,
- Our desire to transform and be transformed.

We are intentionally seeking to encourage and grow:

- Urban and rural mission,
- New generations (of all ages),
- Collaborative leadership.

³ In some instances even standalone comments can be attributed to familiar voices within a community.

⁴ SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-bound.

1. Belonging and Caring

"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." (Hebrews 13:2)

In *From Anecdote to Evidence* many churches attribute growth to a welcoming atmosphere - 'belonging and caring'. The most direct route to growth comes from members inviting and welcoming family, friends and acquaintances.

It is often said that people who attend a service of worship will decide within minutes whether or not they will come back. This is much more than a handshake on the door or a quick "hello" at the end of the service before we go off to talk to our friends. A cross look or "excuse me, you're sitting in my seat" translates to "go away, you're not welcome here".

Welcome and hospitality is not the job of a few people on the welcome team, it's the job of the whole church family. The quality of our welcome contributes directly to growth.

1. Please indicate your age demographic.

- 0-19
- 20-39
- 40-59
- 60-69
- 70-79
- 80+

2. We give a really warm welcome to our church and people want to come back.

Completely disagree



3. Does our welcome and hospitality help people to quickly feel comfortable and encourage them to come back?

- Yes
- No

4. Do we have an attractive welcome pack / welcome literature?

- Yes
- No

5. Are we good at spotting new people?

- Yes
- No

6. Does everyone in our church play their part in welcoming people and in helping them belong?

- Yes
- No

7. Do we build good relationships with baptism families, prepare them for baptism and stay in contact afterwards?

- Yes
- No

8. Do we help newer people find their way around church and know what various activities are going on?

- Yes
- No

9. Do our church members use every opportunity to invite family and friends along?

- Yes
- No

10. Do we notice if people stop coming and follow this up?

- Yes
- No

11. What is the one thing we could do over the next 12 months to make our church a place of greater welcome and belonging?

2. Worship

"When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognised him... They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"" (Luke 24:30-32)

To worship is to change. Worship opens our eyes and our hearts to the kind of encounter with God that changes our perspective then changes our lives. Parish worship, then, needs to offer all in our community an open and accessible route to such an encounter. Its first

concern is for transformation and its focus therefore should always be more mission shaped than simply church shaped.

Being intentional in your chosen style of worship is another factor linked to growing churches. "Style of worship and where a church places itself in terms of its theological tradition appear to have no significant link with growth, so long as there is consistency and clarity and the chosen style and tradition are wholeheartedly adopted."

Worship is our expression of gratitude to God for the gift of creation. Prayer is an integral part of the diocesan discipleship and growth strategy.

"True, whole prayer is nothing but love." (St Augustine)

12. The worship in our church is attractive, inspiring and inclusive.

Completely disagree Fully Agree

A horizontal grey bar representing a Likert scale. It contains four white square boxes, each with a radio button in the center. The bar is positioned below the text 'Completely disagree' on the left and 'Fully Agree' on the right.

13. Does our regular worship draw people into the presence of God?

- Yes
- No

14. Is our liturgy accessible and easy to follow? Does it draw in and engage those who may have never worshipped in a church before?

- Yes
- No

15. Is our worship child friendly with appropriate safeguarding in place?

- Yes
- No

16. Do we review the pattern and delivery of our worship on a regular basis to keep it fresh and transformational?

- Yes
- No

17. Does prayer play a central part in the life of the church and in our worship?

- Yes
- No

18. As a church are we using the Ten Days of Prayer ("Thy Kingdom Come") between Ascension and Pentecost (or some equivalent) to encourage and deepen the prayer life of the church?

- Yes
- No

19. In general do we challenge and equip people to make regular time for personal prayer and Bible reading?

- Yes
- No

20. What do we need to do over the next 12 months to further develop our regular worship and prayer life?

3. Nurture and Discipleship

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matt 28:19)

Christian growth and maturity don't just happen. Nurture and discipleship are core challenges for any church in every generation. Bishop Steven Croft wrote, "The starting point for re-imagining ministry for mission is the renewal of our understanding of our baptism, of our discipleship and of the ministry of the whole people of God." In growing the body of Christ, we are encouraged to rediscover a discipleship cycle of sowing – nurture – deepening. In *From Anecdote to Evidence* we discover that two-thirds of churches that said they offered encouragement and support through specified discipleship courses, ("preparing members to be a Christian witness in their daily lives") showed growth. Our day-to-day life and witness is central to our vocation. Christianity isn't just about church. Similarly vocation is not just about serving the church; it is about the church equipping its members to be disciples in the world.

"Being a disciple means that you are one who trusts in and follows Jesus Christ, growing in his likeness and committing your heart, mind, soul, strength to obey and serve him." (E. Stanley Ott)

21. Our church is a place where everyone grows and matures as a disciple of Jesus.

Completely disagree

Fully Agree

22. Do we regularly see people coming to faith in our church?

- Yes
- No

23. Do we have effective ways of helping people mature in their faith and their walk with God?

- Yes
- No

24. Do we have a strategy for offering the Gospel to those outside the church?

- Yes
- No

25. Do we have a regular nurture course for enquirers or new Christians offered at least once per year?

- Yes
- No

26. Do we support a culture which enables Christians to mature and deepen their faith (home groups, social acts of service, etc)?

- Yes
- No

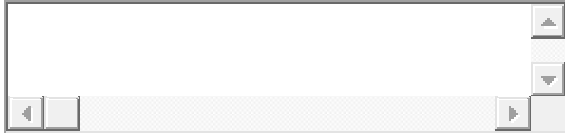
27. Do we help people talk about and live out their faith day by day, beyond the walls of the church?

- Yes
- No

28. Do we actively seek to identify and encourage people who God may be calling into licensed lay or ordained ministry?

- Yes
- No

29. What is the one thing we could do over the next 12 months to help people mature in their faith and sense of vocation?



4. Leadership, Collaboration and Growth

"It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil and struggle with all the energy that he powerfully inspires within me." (Col 1:28-29)

The Diocesan Vision and Strategy is a framework for growth, not a strait jacket. It sets a clear and compelling vision of the future but it is the responsibility of each local church to discern and make plans about how to make this vision a reality in each unique and diverse location. The Vision challenges us to find new ways of ministry for mission in a pattern that is sustainable in the long term and working collaboratively with other parishes and the wider body of Christ. The development of partnerships, and our commitment to collaboration, require our leaders to embrace and manage change.

"The calling of the ordained is not to do the work of ministry for the church but to enable and lead the ministry and mission of the whole church."

30. Our church is well led, enabling people to identify and grow their God-given gifts and talents.

Completely disagree Fully Agree

31. Are we committed in principle and practice to growing collaborative/shared ministry and leadership?

- Yes
- No

32. Do we have a clear vision for growth that is understood and owned by members of the church?

- Yes
- No

33. Is our church intentional in setting clear goals that move our vision forward?

- Yes
- No

34. Are we prepared to welcome and embrace change if change is required to make our vision a reality?

- Yes
- No

35. Are we committed to our wider church family outside the parish boundaries?

- Yes
- No

36. Is teaching on stewardship and Christian giving done annually?

- Yes
- No

37. Is there a moment in the year, or a gift day to pray about your budget for next year and invite people to review their giving to the vision of the church?

- Yes
- No

38. What is the one thing we could do over the next 12 months to develop and empower collaborative/shared ministry and leadership?

5. Growing Disciples

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. (1 Cor 12:4-6)

An ancient Christian writer called Irenaeus once said, “The glory of God is man or woman fully alive.” God not only calls God’s people, but also grants us gifts and abilities, which are not restricted or constrained by age, gender, or ordination.

God’s gifts are to be used in services, in our places of work, our home, and our leisure.

In *From Anecdote to Evidence*, research shows that lay involvement and good quality lay leadership is linked to growth.

This includes licensed lay leadership and those without formal training. The results also show that a church is most likely to decline if the numbers of lay volunteers are limited.

Making disciples is foundational to all of this, which is why it is central to our vision.

“If we want the church to grow we need to give priority to making disciples through the life of every local church (children, young people and adults.)” (Bishop Steven Croft)

39. Our church is a place where people grow their gifts and flourish and vocations are nurtured.

Completely disagree

Fully Agree

A horizontal grey bar representing a Likert scale. It contains four white square boxes, each with a radio button in the center. The radio buttons are not selected.

40. Do we encourage all our people to discern their gifts (spiritual and practical) and to have confidence in using them in the service of the Kingdom?

- Yes
- No

41. Do we have a clear plan in place to make and grow disciples of Jesus?

- Yes
- No

42. Do we have an on-going network of small groups to support lay people in their discipleship?

- Yes
- No

43. Do we encourage lay people to be actively involved in mission, ministry and leadership?

- Yes
- No

44. Do we regularly rotate volunteer service among a larger number of people?

- Yes
- No

45. Do we help our volunteers and lay leaders to get the appropriate level of training and support if they require it?

- Yes
- No

46. Do we support Christian discipleship in the world of work, including those in our church with leadership responsibilities outside the church?

- Yes

No

47. What is the one thing we could do over the next 12 months to help us to recognise and release more lay people as volunteers and leaders?

6. Numerical Growth and Transforming Communities

"...praising God and having the good will of all the people. And day to day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved." (Acts 2:47)

Being intentional in prioritising growth is another common feature identified in *From Anecdote to Evidence* of churches that are growing, numerically and in spiritual depth. Both go hand in hand. Just as growth in nature is a sign of health and vitality, so we welcome every sign of spiritual and numerical growth in the life of the church. If it is to happen, we have to be intentional about it, sowing the seeds so that God can make them grow. Always looking beyond the horizon of where we are now.

"The supreme key to reaching the West again is the key that [St] Patrick discovered ... if we pay the price to understand the unchurched, we will usually know what to say and what to do. If they know and feel we understand them, by the tens of millions they will risk opening their hearts to the God who understands them." (George C. Hunter, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*, 2010, p 130)

48. Our church is committed to growth.

Completely disagree

Fully Agree

49. Are you committed to growing the church?

Yes

No

50. Do we help church members to invite others to church?

Yes

No

51. Do we make the most of our major festivals, school services, civic services etc?

Yes

No

52. Do we build good supportive and ongoing relationships with baptism families, couples coming for marriage, and those we connect with through bereavement?

- Yes
 No

53. Do we have any specific plans to connect with and reach out to people as yet untouched by our church?

- Yes
 No

54. Have we given any thought to starting a Fresh Expression of church or finding a way to build church for those who would not readily join our existing congregations?

- Yes
 No

55. What is the one thing we could do over the next 12 months to grow our church numerically?

7. Contribution to transforming the Community around us

You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth."
(Acts 1:8b)

"You are the salt of the earth..." (Matt 5:13)

As Jesus ascended to heaven he promised his disciples they would receive the power of the Holy Spirit to be witnesses. Their witness would begin where they were in Jerusalem and would ripple out through Samaria and to the ends of the earth. Our mission begins in our local community – but it cannot finish here.

In *From Anecdote to Evidence*, growing churches were often actively engaged with those who might not go to church or are outside the existing community. "Looking outward is central to mission and many growing churches are those who engage with their local community, some providing social services (including debt counselling, and night shelters) along with some environmental projects were shown to have a positive impact on growth." Our own vision challenges us to connect with our community and God's world.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.
(Phil 2.3-4)

56. Our church makes a difference to our local community and at least one other community beyond.

Completely disagree

Fully Agree

A horizontal scale bar with a light gray background. It contains four white square markers, each with a radio button symbol inside, spaced evenly across the bar.

57. Does our community know that we are here; do we have a good reputation as a faith community?

- Yes
- No

58. Do we have a Mission representative and is she/he engaged with the community?

- Yes
- No

59. Are we involved with initiatives that make our community a better place to be?

- Yes
- No

60. Do you have a relationship with a local school?

- Yes
- No

61. Do we support any Christian agencies or mission initiatives in or outside NZ?

- Yes
- No

62. In general do we challenge and equip people to be witnesses to Jesus where God has called them to be and to bring the gospel to those who have never heard it before?

- Yes
- No

63. What is the one thing we could do over the next 12 months to help our church make more of a difference in our community or further afield?

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8. Child, Youth, Young Adult and Family

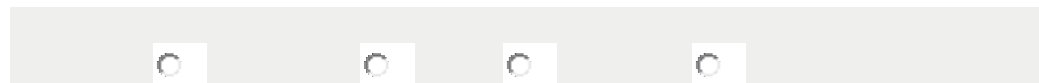
"People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these." (Mark 10: 13–14)

Sometimes our churches can be very difficult and inaccessible places for young adults, children, teenagers and their families. We have to address this if the church is going to replace the existing generations of churchgoers. We know there is an urgent need to focus on children, young people and their parents and a challenge to identify how the church can best invest in people, programmes and strategies which will encourage young people actively to continue exploring faith. Churches that offer programmes for children and teenagers are most likely to grow. Our Vision explicitly identifies children, youth, young adults and families as a key priority.

"Young people are not the church of tomorrow, we are the church of today!"

64. Our church is good at making children and young families feel welcome.

Completely disagree Fully Agree



65. Do we have worship services designed for young adults, youth or children?

- Yes
- No

66. Do we have youth programmes?

- Yes
- No

67. Do we offer family or youth camps or retreats?

- Yes
- No

68. Do we have a dedicated paid or voluntary youth worker?

- Yes
- No

69. Do we run events and activities that reach out to children in our community?

- Yes

No

70. Do we have opportunities for children/youth/young adults to explore Christian faith leading to baptism/confirmation?

Yes

No

71. Do we provide opportunities for young people to deepen and mature their faith?

Yes

No

72. Would you consider an all-age/family service once per month?

Yes

No

73. Would you consider running a Messy Church (or similar)?

Yes

No

74. Do you ensure that children, youth and young adults have a place to contribute to worship?

Yes

No

75. Are we building a good relationship with schools which connect families with the church?

Yes

No

76. What is the one thing we could do over the next 12 months to improve the way we engage with children, teenagers and young adults?