

**St Simons Church Kaleen**

**PARISH REVIEW**

August 2016



## INTRODUCTION

With the agreement of the Parish Council of St Simon's Kaleen, the Rector Rev Paul Cohen approached Tempo Strategies to conduct a Parish Review. The purpose of the Review was to reflect on and take stock of the life of the Parish, including the Dreams that emerged from earlier Parish planning and to enable parishioners to provide feedback to the Rector regarding his ministry and leadership.

A Parish Survey was administered in July 2016 (both online and hard copy) and 46 parishioners completed the Survey. The results are summarised in the attachment to this report and were provided to the parish at the Review workshop conducted on Sunday August 28. About 40 parishioners attended the workshop facilitated by Lynette Glendinning, utilising table group discussion and plenary report back in which small groups discussed issues and reported back. This document summarises the outcomes of the small group and workshop discussion.

The results of the survey indicate very high levels of satisfaction with the life of the Parish, the Rector and the focus on connecting with the wider community. Most that completed the survey have been at St Simons for over ten years and recollect the difficult times that this Parish has experienced, including with former rectors. For them the past three years represent stability and cohesion, which provide a platform for further outreach and growth.

## WHAT AREAS DO WE NEED TO NURTURE OR PAY ATTENTION TO?

Remaining a loving family and providing pastoral care for one another is comprehensively regarded as an important strength to nurture. A community life marked by thankfulness and inclusion where people are able to (but not pressured to) contribute are attributes people want to retain.

Most table groups identified reaching out to others in the local community as the most important area needing attention. For some this is primarily an important area of ministry, for many it is critical to growth. A particular need identified is to lower the demographic age of the church community in order for the parish to be sustainable in the longer term.

Table groups identified a range of options to grow or reach out, including through programs such as *Mainly Music*, which involves young mums as well as developing services targeted at families with young children. Some would like to consider ways of involving young people and adolescents in the life of the parish other than through a traditional youth group, which may be difficult to sustain.

Others reflected on the need to consider how to better connect with local communities and households, noting that this may involve additional training or skilling up of people. Another group considered that 'perhaps we need to do church differently –even though it may make us uncomfortable'.

It is clear that people want to grow and reach out but lack the confidence or clarity as to how best to do this. Developing a shared focus and approach for outreach will require leadership, discernment and investment in building capability.

## HOW WILL WE REACH OUT?

Having heard one another's responses to the areas needing attention, table groups were asked to come to agreement on one or two proposed ways of strengthening parish life and outreach. The majority of table groups identified the opportunity provided by Kaleen High as the best option to

focus outreach efforts. In order to take this option forward, the Parish needs first to assess the needs and readiness of the School and determine what services or support the Parish may be able to offer. The Rector informed the workshop that he has received clear signals from the Principal that Kaleen High would be interested in pursuing opportunities to work with St Simons. A number of potential approaches to connecting with young people at Kaleen High were suggested, including providing breakfast, offering mentoring conversations and adopting existing school-based outreach programs such as the *Shine* program for girls and the *Strength* program for boys.

Other suggestions for outreach included:

- Continue to progress **the Dreams**, noting that these succeeded where there is a Coordinator backed by a team with strong support from the wider parish community
- Nurture and grow **new small groups**, rather than simply growing or strengthening existing groups
- Make this a space where families who are struggling are welcome – bring people here

In this discussion it was clear that not all participants are aware of the number and current status of the Dreams and it was suggested that Parish Council has a role to assess their viability and to communicate more clearly their progress.

## TAKING THE PARISH AGENDA FORWARD

While the suggested approaches to outreach need to be owned by the parish family, there is a distinctive role for the Parish Minister in taking the suggested approaches forward.

When asked what parishioners expect of the Rector in helping to take the agenda forward, participants affirmed that Paul needs to keep encouraging, continue to communicate and report back and also to take initiative where needed to find Coordinators for the Dreams and in particular to help progress the Kaleen High Dream.

In closing the workshop, the Rector thanked all for their participation and affirmation, and undertook that he and Parish Council would further reflect on the detailed Parish Survey Results and how to strengthen communication between Parish Council and parishioners. He will also disseminate the Survey summary provided at the workshop to the wider parish family.

## Survey Results

- Strong agreement on health of parish community
- People agree that parish is focussed on service and mission in the broader community
  - not clear how effective that engagement is with broader community
- Dreams provided shared direction
  - people not clear if Visiting /Listening /Kaleen High are implemented
  - people are not clear if Dreams have delivered desired outcomes
- Good leadership of the parish – both Paul and the Parish Council



## What's Working Well

### PARISH COMMUNITY

- loving family
- welcoming
- cohesive, connected
- confident in one another
- fellowship – breakfasts and services



## What's Working Well

### MINISTER

- strong leader and motivator
- committed, generous, trusted
- positioned us well (navigated rectory etc)
- great Minister, well supported, hope he stays



## What's Working Well

### CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORSHIP

- worship services and biblical teaching
- prayerful community - parishioners empowered
- fruits of the Spirit – attracting some new people
- groups connect us – most are involved
- Sunday School
- Dreams provide focus / achievement
- Reframe and this review



## What's Working Well

### ADMINISTRATION

- well organised and utilised facilities – sound system
- financial planning and reporting

### OUTREACH

- Mainly Music
- Bread Run
- we are reaching out and can give money



## Areas of Concern

- none (14)
- lack of young people / greying of churches in general
- Lack of sufficient new people / young families for a sustainable future
- some services can be long, late and very casual (?reverence)
  - could be better structured
  - preaching variable
- pastoral care for 'unusual' people



## Areas for Improvement

### YOUNG PEOPLE AND OUTREACH

- how to be relevant to / reach unchurched
- engage more with local community
  - social
  - needs
- youth program
  - sad to lose
  - focus on high school/college (Kaleen)
  - focus on young families



## Areas for Improvement

### SERVICES

- increased structure and discipline
  - start/finish on time
  - structured shorter sermons
  - reduce distractions
- more variety and creativity in liturgy

### COMMUNICATIONS

- Parish Council to communicate more on issues, outcomes and progress on Dreams



## Areas for Improvement

### PARISH LIFE

- more discussion time in smaller groups
- review/update and realise the Dreams
- build a hall; upgrade the kitchen and foyer – with increased income
- Reframe, more preparation for evangelising
- more men in viable leadership

