



Friday 12 July 2024

Pastoral letter to the Diocese of Waiapu from the Bishop of Waiapu

*The desert and the parched land will be glad
The wilderness will rejoice and blossom*
Isaiah 35:1, 2

E te whanau a te Karaiti ki te Pihopatanga o Waiapu/Dear family of Christ in the Diocese of Waiapu,

Last week we held our Ministry Conference in Taupō where we were hosted by the Parish of St Andrew's with support from the Parish of Tauranga. The Ministry Conference gathered together licenced lay ministers, clergy, senior members of Anglican Care Waiapu and senior staff from the Diocesan Shared Services team. We gathered around the theme of exploring life blooming in the wilderness using Isaiah 35 as a piece of scripture for reflection. I presented the Diocesan Strategic Plan with an update from our shared work over the past 12 months and since Synod met to help develop the plan last year.

We face a challenging time in the life of our church as we all know and yet we also hold out the prospect of new life blooming in places of wilderness and carry in our hearts the joy of knowing God's love. In the conference we explored themes of the liminal spaces in life through which we can explore the depth of our spirituality and find gifts from God. We heard inspirational accounts of encounters with faith through the witness to God's love that have the power to unlock and transform our hearts and minds. We shared our collective thoughts about where we stand as we face into the metaphorical crossroads of our life as a church and move towards a time of realigning our efforts towards the mission of God's kingdom and God's sphere of influence in this world.

It was overall an encounter with the reality of our life as a church across the country, not just Waiapu, with a focus on the potential for new streams of life emerging in Waiapu as we work and minister together to see the flourishing of life for all, Oranga Ake o te Iwi o te Ao, as an outworking of God's spirit in our Diocese.

There is more work to be done on the strategic plan but already we are starting to see alignment across the Diocese by Standing Committee and the Waiapu Anglican Social Services Trust Board and Anglican Care Waiapu. This represents an exciting development and maturity in our life as a Diocese as we come together under one vision and strategy.

It also represents a large shift to move together. While we work on building the momentum around that change there will be more detailed communication coming to the Diocese around



the plan, how it will be worked out or actioned and what role each of the parts of our Diocese can play in the plan.

As a first step toward supporting the development of the plan I have made the decision to dissolve the Episcopal Ministry Team. As a result of this the Archdeacons will conclude their Archdeaconry roles today. They will each continue in their roles as the Vicars of their respective parishes.

I want to acknowledge the commitment and service of each of the Archdeacons who have responded to my request to serve in that capacity over the recent years; The Vens Bronwyn Marchant, John Matthews, Linda King, David van Oeveren, John Heberton, Nigel Dixon.

I also want to acknowledge The Rev'd Jenny Chalmers, my Vicar General, and The Rev'd Deborah Broome, our Ministry Educator, who as part of their roles have worked with the Archdeacons in this team. I'm grateful to God for all the good we have seen in one another and the good work and support that we have seen God bless through that team in the life of our Diocese. I invite you to join with me in recognising and acknowledging each of their commitments in these roles as members of this team.

Over the coming weeks I will announce the formation of an Interim Oversight Group who will help me to provide leadership across the Diocese and also enable the work of developing the strategic plan to continue.

In the short term if you have any issues that you would have otherwise addressed to your Archdeacon, please address those to my office where Sandra will be able to direct your inquiry to an alternate person who will provide you the necessary support.

I invite you to hold our Diocese in prayer as we continue to draw together the many parts of our life as Anglican communities living into our whakapapa and shared faith to bring about Oranga Ake o Te Iwi, o Te Ao, the flourishing of all people and the building of the kingdom of God.

With assurance of my prayerful support for you all,

Your servant in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Waiapu".

The Right Reverend Andrew Hedge,
Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Waiapu