

# Dunedin Cathedral of St Paul Review

## February 2015

In February 2015, the Reverend Peter Beck, former Dean of Christchurch, was asked by Bishop Kelvin Wright to conduct a review of the Cathedral's ministry based on terms of reference developed by the Bishop. Over a week, Peter held confidential one-on-one interviews with 38 people invited by the Bishop and agreed to by the Dean, representing a cross section from within the Cathedral community, the Diocese and the wider Dunedin community.

The terms of reference for the review were as follows:

'The Cathedral occupies a strategic site in the Octagon, and is uniquely placed to be a flagship of the soul: the place which spearheads the missional direction of the diocese. The Greater Chapter has instigated this review because of concerns at the ongoing financial problems of the cathedral and the perception that these issues are hindering St. Paul's in living up to its potential. Further, the cathedral community itself has, from time to time suggested that as it has a distinctive diocesan role, the diocese as a whole bears some responsibility for helping the cathedral in the exercise of its ministry. This review should be seen as a first step in the diocese picking up that responsibility.

'The purpose of for this review is, therefore, to identify and analyse the strengths and weaknesses of St. Pauls in order that coherent plans for the future development of the Cathedral can be better effected. The intention is to better focus the energies of the Diocese and the Cathedral community so that St. Paul's may effectively promote the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the ways which best takes advantage of its extraordinarily privileged siting in the heart of Dunedin City.

'There is already a diocesan policy in place requiring all clergy to undertake a regular ministry review and an instrument to effect this policy has been prepared. The ministry of the dean, along with those of other senior clergy would be amongst the first to be reviewed, and it seems timely to advance, slightly, the timing of the dean's review in order that it may complement this review of the Cathedral. '

The Dunedin Cathedral of St Paul was built to the Glory of God and as such stands to witness and to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This review of the Cathedral's mission and ministry has been centred in prayer and in a desire to be open to God's will and guidance.

The primary purpose of the Church is the worship of God. The Anglican Communion as a whole subscribes to this five-fold mission statement:

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth -

Each interview followed the terms of reference topics and questions. As the reviewer, I am very conscious of the deep concern and care each person interviewed has shown in sharing their

thoughts and insights with me, and in their desire to see the best outcomes for the ministry of the Cathedral and the Diocese. The following is my digest of these contributions:

### Cathedral life

*a. Pastoral care. How is pastoral care carried out? By whom and to whom?*

The majority felt that pastoral care was inadequate and that since the retirement of the Revd. Claire Brown, it had seriously diminished. There was a real concern that the older shut-in members of the congregation were not getting adequate care. It was largely felt that the Dean, as the sole clergy person on the staff, is more reactive than proactive in pastoral visiting. It was pointed out that Deans in the past had not necessarily seen pastoral visiting as a key priority for themselves in view of a Dean's many priorities, but they usually had other part-time or non-stipendiary clergy to take on this role. The Parish Life Committee has developed a geographically based pastoral contact plan, but despite their concern and commitment there does not appear to be enough people and energy to meet the need. Other clergy have reported that they have had to pick up pastoral care issues of Cathedral parishioners as these were not being met by the Cathedral.

**b. Worship**

*i. Services Is the schedule of services adequate for the current congregation? Are the worship needs of the diocese served? Does the cathedral provide opportunities for worship by those outside its own community?*

Most of the people interviewed who are current parishioners felt that the worship was of a high standard and reflected what traditional Cathedral worship should look like. The choral tradition was seen to be well served indeed. However the attendance at the Choral Eucharist has dropped considerably and few come to Choral Evensong.

Some felt that the style of services lacked a sense of engagement of heart and mind in wholehearted worship of God. These felt there was a need to energise the current worship style and to explore different styles of worship which included more congregational participation and reached out to a younger generation. The Jazz service was seen as good example of what could be done on a more regular basis.

Some felt that there was an insufficient welcoming presence for visitors and new-comers to assist them in feeling being part of the worshipping community. Cathedrals often have many visitors and have the challenge to 'create a community on the hoof'. It is hoped that the new liturgy booklet might help meet some of the needs of these people, but nothing can substitute for the the inobtrusive warmth of welcome that can be offered before, during and in hospitality after worship.

Most felt that civic services were ordered well and enjoyed by visiting dignitaries [such as the Mayor]. These services tended to follow a set pattern. For some this was absolutely fine ['don't fix it is it ain't broken']; others looked for more innovation and the provision of new and alternative forms of worship to attract new-comers and non-church explorers.

There was less enthusiasm for Diocesan services, which also followed a set pattern. Most of those interviewed who attended them felt they lacked a sense of life and energy in worship, with what seemed some times to be last minute planning.

- ii. **Music** *Is the choir functioning well? What is the range of musical tastes being catered to? How well does the music of the cathedral contribute to the overall missional aims of the Cathedral?*

All without exception rated the choir highly and praised the work and enthusiasm of the Music Director who works closely with the Dean. The fact that a youth choir is being brought to birth was seen as a very positive step forward.

The choice of choral music reflects traditional Anglican cathedral practice with some interesting modern inclusions which are appropriate for a choir of this standard.

Some parishioners looked for more congregational participation in the liturgy, and the inclusion of other musical forms and styles.

A more rigorous appraisal of the overall missional aims of the Cathedral today and for the future needs to be carried out before it can be determined how the music of the Cathedral fits in such aims.

- iii. **Preaching and teaching** *Is the cathedral's role as a source and exemplar of sound teaching and compelling preaching being fulfilled?*

With only one priest on the staff the bulk of preaching is done by the Dean. Most felt that this is his greatest strength. For many the sermons are intellectually and theologically satisfying. Clearly sermons are well thought out and delivered. The Dean's weekly 'Thinking Through the Scriptures' on Wednesday afternoons, while lightly attended has been appreciated by those who can meet at that time and regularly resource his sermons which link often to issues of the day. As with all preachers, the Dean's style and approach while respected was not to everyone's taste. Some looked for wider breadth of preaching which reaches out more to young people and a wider community.

c. **Finances**

- i. **Current status** *What is the current financial state of the Cathedral*

The issue of finance is one of the main factors in prompting this review. In order to have as clear a picture as possible, Ginny Kitchingman, the Diocesan Accountant was asked by the reviewer to prepare as accurate a statement of the Cathedral's financial position as was possible, and which was irrefutable. This document was circulated to those taking part in the review. Noone interviewed disputed the statement, though some did not necessarily believe that the Cathedral was in a crisis situation yet ['a slight improvement in interest rates will sort things out'] There was some agreement that if nothing else comes out of this review, the statement of financial position in itself made the process worth while, because at last it was clear.

For there is no doubt that there has been a considerable fog surrounding the cathedral finances for many years, and there was and is disquiet over the lack of transparency in financial management. Under the current finance committee there seems to be a greater willingness to face up to the implications of the financial statements and to work more closely with the diocesan finance team to sort out the various trust funds and their purposes and limits.

However the Strategic Plan 2011-2015 [see appendix 1] does not provide any really proactive proposals to improve the financial situation other than what appears to the reviewer to be more of the same, largely unsuccessful measures.

*ii. **Stewardship.** What plans are in place for increasing the current financial base?*

The Cathedral worshipping community is ageing and declining. It would require a massive injection of new and younger members to lift the level of financial income to be an effective part of resourcing the Cathedral adequately. The stewardship programme outlined in the Strategic Plan 2011-2015 is lack lustre and highly unlikely to arrest the decline even amongst the current community.

There are some parishioners who are loath to increase their financial giving until they see signs of renewal and growth. The stewardship challenge is but a symptom of the overall malaise of the Cathedral which as discussed later needs facing courageously.

*iii. **Funding sources.** Where does the money come from? Are these sources adequate? Are they under threat? Could they be expanded?*

The Diocesan Accountant's financial statement gives an increasingly clear picture of trust funds available to the Cathedral. These funds are mostly tagged to specific aspects of the Cathedral's life and in particular the fabric. As the financial fog has been clearing it has been found that capital funds have been 'raided' over the years to meet operational costs. This has left a substantial debt to these funds which is slowly being repaid.

There doesn't seem to have been a strategic and visionary approach as yet to explore other funding options. Such potential options, including a regular diocesan grant to assist in enabling the specifically Cathedral role of St Paul's parish, or indeed a grant from the City Council towards the contribution that the Cathedral makes to the life of the city, are dependent not just on the financial viability of these bodies to give support. The question has to be asked as to what value does the Cathedral in its present form and style of ministry add to the diocese and city or indeed to other potential funding supporters, and how this value could be deepened.

*d. **Administration** How is the Cathedral administered? Is this system well run and adequate for its purpose?*

The restructuring of the Greater Chapter and Chapter is seen by most as a positive step forward for the future. Initial meetings however were fraught and exposed some serious conflict issues that need to be confronted. It is early days, and trust needs to be built and a willingness to work together needs to be enhanced, to be open and transparent. There is a

perception of particular interest groups which do not necessarily work for the good of the whole. This appears to be part of a spiritual malaise which has afflicted the Cathedral community for a considerable time and which will be discussed later in this review.

In terms of day to day administration, the administrator is employed part time for 15 hours a week. She clearly has more work that she can or ought to be expected to deal with in this time. She is liked and respected by most for her dedication and commitment to the task.

The Director of Music is also employed as 'Curator of the Arts'. This includes encouraging, managing and booking events in and for the Cathedral, producing the weekly news sheets, website management etc.

There are some stalwart folk who are deeply committed to help in keeping the Cathedral open, managing the shop and being on rosters that cover the usual areas of a parish's life. However their numbers are dropping as people age.

#### **d. Building**

##### *i. Maintenance Are the buildings well maintained?*

Day to day maintenance of the buildings is felt to be adequate, though major restorative work will be required before long and there are insufficient funds from trusts to meet these costs. Some of the maintenance is done by volunteers, none of whom are getting any younger. With the centennial in 2019, there could be an opportunity to embark on a fund-raising programme for the restorative work if there is sufficient human resource and seeding finance. At present funding is being sought for a Conservation Plan and Condition Report.

Recent work in the kitchen area at a cost of \$50,000 seems to have been inadequately thought through as to its use and value for purpose. This highlights for the reviewer a lack of coherent and transparent planning, strategising and decision-making. Hopefully the new structure will address this.

##### *ii. Development Are there plans to develop the site to make best use of the opportunities presented by the Cathedral's position in the city?*

There appear to be few specific or visionary plans and strategies to develop the site to make best use of the opportunities presented by the Cathedral's position in the city. Ideas are floated and have been it seems for years. 'When all is said and done, there's a lot more said than done'! There are few proactive relationships or conversations with community groups, the City Council, arts bodies, universities, other churches, tourist organisations etc. to develop a coherent and practical vision and plan. My understanding as the interviewer is that heritage and Arts staff of the DCC are keen to have such conversations.

##### *iii. Seismic Issues.*

The whole Church faces a massive issue in terms of the cost of seismic strengthening. This in itself adds further impetus for some radical prayer and thinking as to what the future church might look like. Being 34% of the building code, the Cathedral has a little time to explore how it proposes to address this issue.

**e. Staffing**

- i. *Dean The dean is the leader of the cathedral community and his ministry affects and is affected by every aspect of this review. While it will be impossible to review any aspect of Cathedral life without making some reference to the dean, a more comprehensive review of the Dean's ministry will be carried out close to this review.*

As indicated, a ministry review of the Dean is being conducted alongside this review of the Cathedral. His 360 degree review is part of the programme of the diocese to review all clergy on a regular basis. It is intended to discover 'where [the] minister is doing well, and identifying the areas for support and further learning.'

Many spoke highly of what they saw as the current Dean's strengths as a writer, preacher, theologian and liturgist.

Inevitably as the spiritual leader and 'Chief Executive Officer' of the Cathedral, the contributors to this review of the Cathedral had various opinions as to how effective the current Dean is in terms of the ministry demands made upon him in what is realistically a significantly such an under-resourced operation as the Cathedral is.

- ii. *Other staff. How do the cathedral staff work as a team? Are the cathedral's staffing needs being adequately met?*

The Dean, DOM and Administrator see themselves as working well together as a team considering the constraints of time and demands they have on them. There is no doubt that the staffing is inadequate to meet the demands and even current aspirations of the Cathedral and growing its future.

**2. Relationship to Diocese**

- a. **Parishes** *How is the Cathedral perceived by the Diocese? How does the cathedral connect to the regional centres and to rural Otago and Southland? How well does it fill the tasks inherent in its role as the Mother Church? How well does it integrate with the Diocese's plans for development and change? How is the ministry of the cathedral integrated with those of the parishes and other diocesan institutions?*

As with many Cathedrals the relationship with the wider diocese is problematic. Many felt that the parishes are indifferent to the Cathedral and are more than busy enough with their own ministries. Apart from the regular traditional Cathedral events such as Ordinations and the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols, where the choir is much enjoyed by many, there is little feel of the Cathedral as 'the Mother Church' of the Diocese. The occasional visit of the choir to parishes was applauded, and the Dean would be welcomed, if he had been able to come. But overall the connections were seen to be luke warm and half-hearted both on the side of the Cathedral and the parishes.

Some felt that it would enhance both the Cathedral and the Diocesan connection if the Diocesan Office was re located on the Cathedral site.

Again clearly there is a need here for some rethinking and visioning of the role the Cathedral might play in the future of the Diocese and whether or not the Diocese has a responsibility

to assist in resourcing the Cathedral in its role as Cathedral. In other words as alluded above, how can the Cathedral be increasingly valued as an integral part of meeting the Diocesan mission objectives? To get excited about this might well engage the whole Diocesan Anglican community in a very worthwhile conversation focussed on achieving real outcomes.

- b. Bishop** *What is the cathedral's relationship with the bishop? Are there ways in which this relationship might be strengthened?*

Most parishioners would like to see more of the Bishop. There was also a feeling that the relationship between the Bishop and the Dean was somewhat strained, that they needed to face this and build a more functional working relationship

- c. Agencies** *What is the relationship of the Cathedral with those diocesan institutions with which it has historic connections, notably St. Hilda's Collegiate School and Anglican Family Care?*

The relationship with St Hilda's has in the past been a plank of the school and Cathedral's life. Some of the school's services are now held at St John's Rosslyn, with the end of year service remaining at the Cathedral. Some felt that there needed to be a greater sense of cohesion and that more was needed to be done to provide worship that engages the girls where they are at and draws them into an appreciation of the particular ambiance of the Cathedral. The tours that the Dean has given for groups of the girls have been appreciated.

Several people looked for a closer relationship with Anglican Family Care suggesting that they be based at the Cathedral.

- d. Province** *How does the Cathedral connect with the national church, and how does it connect with our tikanga partners?*

No one had a particular view on this, which is interesting in itself!

- e. Relationship to City** *How is the Cathedral perceived by the city? How well does it integrate with those institutions with which it has had particular historic connections, notably:*

In a Presbyterian City, the Anglican Cathedral stands in one of the prime spots at the city's heart. Together with First Church and Knox it is a guardian of the soul and spirit of the city. For the sake of the city, let alone the Church, this role is essential to be maintained in some form or other into the future. The Cathedral is seen to have a significant role and potential as a tourist attraction and as a venue for arts and wider community events.

The Civic Services at the Cathedral were seen to be a positive and important link that the Cathedral has with the city. In recent years there has been added a number of services for particular organisations and city events.

Several of the interviews explored how the Cathedral could be more integrated into the life of the city and the Octagon. It is a beautiful and yet imposing building which some see to stand aloof at the top of its steps. Several people talked about ways in which the physical

connections between the Cathedral and the Town Hall could be enhanced as part of an overall enhancement of the Octagon which might draw the Cathedral more warmly into that environment.

The Cathedral does not appear to have been particularly pro-active in engaging with the DCC heritage and art staff. Some see huge potential for a partnership between the City Council, community arts and other community groups in exploring how the Cathedral could develop its role and usefulness as a magnificent centre for the community and spiritual hub 'where things happen'. As the value to the city is demonstrated so the DCC might see how it can assist in resourcing these activities.

## **University**

Most people interviewed felt that the relationship with the university required more proactive conversations and engagement. Some saw All Saints as the University church from an Anglican perspective, but that there could be synergy in a shared ministry both towards the University and in utilising the resources of the university through the Cathedral for the city.

### Direction

- a. **Planning for the future** *where is the Cathedral heading? Where should it be heading?*

Virtually all the people interviewed believed that if things continued on the present track the Cathedral was in a progressive decline which could in the view of some lead to its closure. Some clearly thought that doing better at what the Cathedral is doing now would turn things around. Many looked for more vigorous and pro active leadership to raise enthusiasm and to be open to the dynamic guidance of the Holy Spirit. These believed a more radical approach was needed which included a wider conversation with the whole Diocese and other stakeholders.

### Conclusions

- a. **Spiritual malaise**

What became very clear to me as the review progressed is what I would call a spiritual malaise within the Cathedral and its community. Several of those interviewed spoke of this without being prompted by me and that this dis-ease goes back many years. From these interviews and from the stories of the past and indeed present, there appears to be a pattern of relationship conflict of a particularly nasty variety which seems to be systemic in the Cathedral culture. Some of these relationship conflicts have been very public, some continue festering and undermining the possibility of a healthy and functional community.

Theologians such as Walter Wink and other social analysts of group behaviour acknowledge that groups and communities over time develop a particular culture and spirit which becomes for good or ill the defining energy of the community/group. Wink called this the 'angel of a community', in this case the 'angel of a church' [in reference to the book of Revelation where John addresses his comments to the angel of each particular Church].



St Paul's itself is starkly beautiful and imposing. Some find it somewhat over-powering and intimidating. It is not easy to discern a welcoming presence, and yet the potential for a healthy and warm embrace has to be there. Wink's trilogy on 'The Powers' is a thorough examination of the 'principalities and powers' which impact on our lives, and which can all too often undermine and distort a healthy community. I have attached a copy of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Chapter of the second book in the trilogy 'Unmasking the Powers' [See appendix 2].

**I believe that unless this spiritual malaise is addressed it seems highly likely that the ongoing disfunctionality in relationships will continue and so undermine the future potential of the Cathedral's ministry.** We are the Church of God and prayer is our weapon against all that separates, injures and destroys. My view is that the 'angel of St Paul's' has to be unmasked and confronted in order to release and enable the creativity which is being held back. Such a challenge requires courage and a willingness of all the who care about the Cathedral and its life and ministry to pray and work openly together for the good of the whole. At the west end of the Cathedral there is a notice board which has on it a Diocesan Prayer:

*O Lord, who has not stopped forming us since the hour of our beginning  
Who has come among us to save us from ourselves and teach us to love;  
Who dwells beside us and within us and below us and above us.*

*Give us grace to think again.*

*May we know the joy of true discipleship;  
May our relationship with you and with each other be real and deep;  
May we have the courage to give our best for the least.*

*In the name of Jesus our Lord*

'The Healthy Churches' Handbook' by Robert Warren published for the Church of England by Church House Publishing is a useful resource in any process the Greater Chapter might want to put into place to examine and heal the spiritual malaise of the Cathedral. As a taster, attached is a particular section of the book [see Appendix 3] which has a process for analysing the health and profile of a church, identifying the angel, and developing an action list for the future.

**b. A radical appraisal of the Diocese and the role of the Cathedral in the Church of the future.**

What these interviews have shown is that the challenge and dilemma facing the Cathedral is as much that of the Diocese as of St Paul's. Indeed it is about the future of the Anglican Church in this country and in many, particularly western, countries. Statistics show that overall our traditional parishes have ageing and declining congregations. Many dioceses because of financial circumstances are appointing clergy on reduced stipends and hours to such parishes. They provide an important 'duty of care' to faithful churchgoers of many years. But is this the way to revitalise the Church for future ministry and mission?

The situation at St Paul's Cathedral is an opportunity for the Diocese and the Cathedral to work together. Indeed it could be said that it forces both to face the possibility of letting go of much loved

paradigms of what we have been as Church, and indeed what the Cathedral has been, as we seek God's will for His Church in the future.

Some of the options which have been raised in this review and which are but a taster for lateral thinking that could go on in the next few months as the Diocese and Cathedral reflects and develops a strategy for the future of its Cathedral are:

- Continue as currently with the hope that interest rates will improve and the Cathedral will be able to pay its way and increase staff.
- Close the Cathedral and move the Bishop's chair to one of the other inner city parishes.
- Make it the Minster Church of the Diocese with a team including the Bishop located there guiding the mission and ministry of the Diocese and City
- Invest entrepreneurial skills and energy into the leadership team of the Cathedral in order to build a partnership with the DCC, other churches and faiths, arts and social service agencies and other stakeholders, so that the building is widely seen, acknowledged and valued as a whole community asset whose governance, management and costs are shared, while an open and inclusive spiritual heart is maintained at its core.

In exploring any of these and other options a very useful resource and reference book is 'Flagships of The Spirit: Cathedrals in Society', edited by Christopher Lawrence and Stephen Platten.

**c. Addendum**

It has been a privilege to be involved in this review. I suspect that its findings are not going to be much of a surprise to many. Alongside the Ministry Review of the Dean I hope it can provide some impetus for a stimulating and energising debate open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and leading through the grace of God to the most amazing and yet unknown outcomes!

May the love of the Lord Jesus draw us to himself; may the power of the Lord Jesus strengthen us in his service; and may the joy of the Lord Jesus fill our hearts.

Peter Beck  
Christchurch  
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