

The Waitara Path

So friends we've been reminded about the path that Paul was led down,
And earlier we've heard about the path that Catherine has travelled upon,
And so it's time to think about the paths that people in our district are taking,
or more accurately
It's time to think about the path that God is providing our neighbours
through the ministry of our church.

Let me remind you all of the mission that we have here at Waitara Anglican
It's printed on the front of your bulletin,
there at the top so you always know where to find it:
*Our mission, is to build a community from many ages and cultures
that helps people meet Jesus, trust Jesus and grow more like Jesus.*
This statement sums up why we exist,
it's the purpose that all our energies are directed towards.

It's a statement which we believe has stepped right out of the NT,
it's basically a restatement of the great commission in Matthew 28
go and make disciples of many nations.
It's a statement that we work-shopped with staff over a few meetings
and also at a couple of congregational meetings that we held.

Having a mission statement is great!
But things get a little trickier
when we start to think about how to make sure the mission is achieved.

Now earlier this year at our Annual general meeting
we resolved to not have a Parish Council in the traditional sense.
We still have three wardens, and technically they are our Parish Council
But we haven't added to their number with elected Parish Councillors.
Instead we resolved to appoint a ministry committee
to meet with me and the wardens to discuss ministry matters.
This group has met a number of times this year
and I've started calling the group the *ministry think-tank*.
The members of the *think-tank* include me, Belinda Stewart, Colin McKay,
David Cameron, Karen Sowden, Chloe Long and Catherine Field whom we
met earlier on.

I set the *think-tank* a single task:
come up with a strategy to help us get somewhere with this mission.
We read a couple of books about church strategy,
and they suggested that a good church strategy
will be based upon providing a pathway
for people to become disciples of Christ.

We saw with Paul and we heard from Catherine
 that becoming a Christian and growing as a Christian is a process,
 and a church strategy will identify this process
 and seek to arrange it's ministries to help this process.

And so as the ministry think-tank was thinking about all this,
 we realized that our mission statement already articulated a type of pathway
 our mission is to see people meet Jesus, trust Jesus and grow more like Jesus.
 And we thought "Why don't we make that the framework of our strategy"

And so let me introduce and illustrate the Waitara Path
 (We were going to call it the waitara way
 but the primary school already has something called that)

Imagine a path that winds its way between three villages.
 The first village is called "meet"
 the second is called "trust"
 the third is called "grow".
 This is a path that many of us have walked before,
 and it's a path which we invite others to walk on too.
 In fact those of us who have walked this path already
 are pretty well suited to be guides for others,
 we know what's ahead and we know the tricky bits

The point of a path is that you never stay still,
 you move from one position to another.
Our goal as a church community is to help others navigate this path.

People might join us at different points in the path.
 They might join us not knowing anything about Jesus,
 so we'll lead them to meet him.
 Some might joining us already knowing Christ and so,
 we'll walk with them as they grow.

We did think that perhaps there's another element to this path
 and that's what happens after the village of "grow".
 We imagined the path splitting off into different directions.
 As people *grow* they might decide to *go* and repeat this process elsewhere.
 Maybe in Africa, maybe in Darwin, maybe in another part of Sydney.

So that's the Waitara Path. What are we going to do with it?
 Well, this concept is a useful tool
 in helping us evaluate any new ministry that we might consider

We've recently had some meetings with Anglicare
 about their mobile community pantries. Here's a picture of one,

and what happens is this truck full of groceries turns up at church
and provides heavily discounted groceries for people in need.
Anglicare provides the truck full of groceries,
we provide a team of six volunteers for an hour and a half once a fortnight,
and members of the community come
and are helped by this partnership between Anglicare and the local church.

Belinda Steward is investigating whether we can get council on board
and if you are interested in helping with this, then speak with Belinda.

But whereabouts on the Waitara Path would this sit? *Meet, even before Meet*
And before we commit to this, what should we ask ourselves,
according to the Waitara Path?
How can we encourage those who come to not only meet Jesus but to trust him?
We shouldn't do this if the only thing it does is provide cheap groceries.
It's exciting, but we want to do it thoughtfully and in a way that helps our mission.

Another way in which we can use the Waitara Path
is to assess the ministries that we are already conducting
If you're a ministry leader, listen up because this affects you!

We're about to ask every ministry in this church
to assess themselves against this path:
Growth groups, children's ministries,
we'll even ask this of our Sunday services.
Whereabouts on the path does your ministry fit best,
and what opportunities are there for you to move people to the next village?

So a growth group leader might look at this and say
"Well, we're helping people grow,
but I wonder whether we need to think more about encouraging people to *go*.
An ESL leader might say to themselves
"We're helping lots of people to meet Jesus,
but are we helping them *trust* Jesus?"
And so soon we'll have a template ready for leaders to use
as they assess where their ministry is at.

Hopefully the result will be a church that sees many people making this trek.
One day I'd like to see many different streams walking this path together:
a children's stream,
groups of people of the same language taking this path
I'd like to see church full of seasoned guides
who know a thing or two about helping people make this journey.
This is how we're going to start thinking about our work,
and under God we'll see our mission start to bear fruit.

Maybe it's better to say we'll *continue* to see God bearing fruit.

While we do want to improve what we do
we shouldn't suggest that no good things are happening at the moment.

We have a great staff team who are committed to God and committed to you,
and over the last few years
we have sought to increase the number of days our staff have worked
and so this means our budget has also increased each year.

The good news is that our giving has increased over this period,
but not to the extent that we need without a special appeal each September.
So our plan is to not create any new positions
further to the ones we've created over the last few years,
and to allow our regular giving time to catch up to our aspirations.
In the meantime there is a financial gap we need to fill,
so that we can continue and improve upon what we're doing at the moment.

Our wish is to *fine-tune* our ministries according to the Waitara Path,
Not to *close down* our ministries for lack of funding.
Our desire is to *fine-tune* how our staff spend their time,
Not to *dismiss* our staff because the money isn't there.

So over the next few weeks we need to raise \$25,000 dollars in extra income,
so that our staff team can get on with the job
of helping all of us navigate the Waitara Path.
Will you consider a one-off gift to help us secure the team we have
so they can start to implement the first steps of our ministry strategy?
Please consider this, because we have a path that's worth taking.
Our Bank details are on the back of your church bulletin.
Direct deposit is fine with *Waitara Path* in the description.
Alternatively a separate envelope labeled *Waitara Path* in our offertory bags.
The path is set, help us take it.

Matt Morrison, one of our student ministers, will now lead us in prayer.