



Nelson Diocese

Synod Charge 2021

Kia ora Whānau,

I acknowledge you all for the aroha and mahi you carry to all the places God has put you. We've faced challenging and uncertain times over the last year, haven't we? But you have served the Lord faithfully, adapted to change and continued to make a difference across your communities in the name of Jesus. I've loved being part the team in this diocese and it's a privilege to be your bishop. Grace and peace from God be yours in abundance.

By now I hope you're all familiar with the three-pronged strategy of our diocese to Gather, Grow and Go. But as Peter Drucker famously said – "Culture eats strategy for breakfast". That is to say – we can have the most dynamic and well thought out strategy – but if our Culture as a diocese isn't as it needs to be – then our strategy will almost definitely end up frustrated and fruitless.

Our Culture as a Diocese is made up of all those things that we most naturally do and value – it's the stuff we do, the values we hold to and the posture we take when we're not thinking too hard.

For example as a Kenyan I don't need to think too hard about dancing, while for some of you it might be a bit of an effort aye?

So, if as a diocese we're going to faithfully flourish in this next season – more important than having the right strategy – is to make sure we're intentional about having a healthy culture.

And so today, I would like us to reflect on our diocesan culture and unpack what makes us who we are. In Creation we see the huge importance of

DNA - and how it is responsible for the qualities and characteristics that are passed on to the next generation. Our culture as a diocese is like our spiritual DNA – these are the qualities we will pass on. It's true - sometimes we can pass on unhelpful things. But today I would like to take the time to describe the sort of DNA and culture we need to be a healthy, thriving diocese - so we can cultivate and move towards fulfilling our vision... 'To be a growing whānau of disciples on an adventure to share the Good News of Jesus Christ in the Top of the South and around the world'.

I see our DNA consist of five strands – that weave and intersect through all that we do – to the point where they become natural and second nature to each and every one of us.

Those five strands being: Family, Adventure, Innovation, Truth and Hospitality.



To make it easier for us to remember them, they are ordered to form the acronym F.A.I.T.H. No single strand or value is more important than any other.

These five strands are both explicit expressions of what we believe to be important... but they're also put into practice in the way we do things. Like Jesus - they are both proclaimed and incarnated. Now, some strands are already very present in our current reality, while others are more aspirational and will require all of us to do intentional work until they become second nature. Each value also has a Te Reo Maori expression that goes some way to describing the heart of the culture of our Diocese.



Old habits die hard – most of us probably feel icky at the thought of not brushing our teeth at night. And new habits can be hard to set in stone – as most of us who have tried to change our diets or exercise routine can attest too. The same goes for our corporate habits. But good habits lead to good health! So let's be intentional about cultivating good habits as a diocese so we can become healthy and fit for the adventure ahead - and energised for God's mission.

Why are these 5 things so important?

- They Safeguard our DNA and history- Because while our strategies and models will change, our underlying convictions and values won't.¹
- They Sustain the kind of family we invite people to join.
- And they Shape our future, as we ask key strategic questions of ourselves – like “Why do we do what we do?” “What's most important to us?” and “What does success look like?”

It's these 5 values that today I am inviting and expecting you as Synod to keep me as Bishop accountable to. And I will do the same in return.

So let's dig into it:-

1. We cultivate a deep sense of belonging as a Family - Whanaungatanga

1 Corinthians 12:27, Paul uses the analogy of a body to describe the Church. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

¹ For more information about how churches and faith-based organizations drift from their founding mission see <https://www.amazon.com/Mission-Drift-Unspoken-Charities-Churches/dp/0764211013>

We believe that God loves all people regardless of age, culture, language or gender and these should not be barriers to belonging to the community of the church, the body of Christ. Therefore, we show respect for everyone, treat everyone with fairness, protect the vulnerable, show grace and work as a unified team.

Your turn: Take a moment and share in twos' around your tables the family values/rules/motto you grew up with or admire from other families.

What I personally remember as a family motto growing up is that everyone chips in. I have also observed with admiration the way some families welcome and receive guests and say goodbyes.

I wonder what behaviours you think would express a healthy family life in the diocese? Here are a few things I've observed with great appreciation.

- We speak honourably about each other
- We celebrate each other's joys and cry with those who mourn
- We call out bad behaviour (and initiate fire breaks?)
- Everyone chips in, there's no 'us vs them'
- Everyone has a place at the table and their contribution counts
- You don't leave the family when you retire or your role changes. So thank you +Richard and Hilary and many other retired clergy whom we've reached out to for help.

What if we asked ourselves – “who's missing from our family table?” And how can we better welcome families, young people, and those who are marginalised?

One of the inspiring examples of being family and cultivating this sense of belonging to the wider church is of a few folks from Nativity Parish who regularly go to Kekerengu in the Awatere once a month to support a small rural church community. I know of other folk from Greymouth & Kumara and Cobden/Runanga who have been supporting the folk in Reefton.

In Africa, we have this concept of Ubuntu- the idea that 'I am because we are'

And as the Whakatauki goes, Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini — My success is not my own, but from many others.

So I wonder what is something you can do to live out and nurture this kind of belonging in your own church community?

2. We embrace the Adventure - Mātātoa

We believe that God's call to mission is an adventure, where the Holy Spirit leads and empowers every member of the church to share the Good News in their sphere of influence. Yes it can be challenging at times – but it's not a burden that drains us, and it's certainly not boring!

Therefore, we are courageous, prepared, prayerfully discerning and open to all possibilities for mission and community involvement.

We are willing to go to the places no one else is going, to reach the people no one else is reaching with the Good news.

I've thoroughly enjoyed reading the Synod reports. I'm deeply grateful for the spirit of adventure I see in many across our diocesan family. For example the 'Nourish nights' that Courtnay has started in Kaikoura for people who have no interest in church but love nature and are open to be gathered around scripture, prayer, good food and poetry.

So many examples of adventure in mission mentioned in our reports. At a time when people say the Church is dying, I see people following Jesus into new places to share the Good News.

I think it's Christine Cain who said 'Life is too short, the world is too big and God's love is too great to live ordinary'. We are called to be a movement, not an institution; a voyage, not a harbour.

I wonder how many of you have experienced an adventure in your ministry - be it individually or as a parish - in the past year? Because if you can't recall any – maybe it's time you went out on a God given adventure sometime soon?

3. We seek to Innovate, learning to adapt and grow - Akoranga

We believe that God equips the church with leaders to inspire and empower God's people - so they can adapt to meet the challenges and opportunities in front of us.

Therefore, we invest in leaders who value being life-long learners, we encourage innovation, we remain teachable, we take risks, and we form structures that are light weight and low maintenance.

So we cultivate a posture of learning with others - other leaders, other congregations, other organizations. This posture of learning from others does not necessarily mean that the "other" is going to have the solution to all our problems, though we may discover some valuable things that will help us grow forward. My experience is that learning with others gives me more perspective and helps reveal my own blind spots. I seem to learn more about myself from observing others than I do just through self-reflection alone.

So we try not to make the same mistakes twice, we constantly ask if there's a better way, honestly evaluate how we are doing and acknowledge we might need to do things differently if we wish to get different results.

We welcome constructive feedback with an open and happy heart – because we are secure in the knowledge that our worth is found in God's love, and because we are eager to grow and improve.

We value the taonga of our past, but we are not prisoners of the models that have served us well in the past. As innovators we are primarily concerned with our God given mission – and so won't allow ourselves to get stuck pursuing models of ministry that consume our time, energy and money - without fulfilling our mission.

How many of you watch the Lego Masters TV Show? In a recent meeting, my chaplain Simon shared how Lego was stuck and was about to die as an organisation. A new CEO - Jorgen Vig Knudstorp - joined the company and turned it around by leading it to a place where they could innovate rather

than stagnate. Here was his motto: 'Blame is not for failure, it's for failing to help or ask for help'.

So across our diocese, people have been innovating.

Because of the constraints of Covid, we now have a number of parishes livestreaming and now the bishop can visit 5 parishes on Sunday morning, and he regularly does! Innovation? Even the Cathedral has screens! Thanks to Brad and the tech team.

And to our Reefton whanau – A special shout-out to you. You're not here - not because it's over, but because you see opportunities for mission in Reefton and want to innovate and reimagine mission in a new way.

4. We uphold the Truth in the Bible and in the Gospel of Jesus Christ as set forth in the Scriptures - Whakapono.

We believe that Jesus Christ is Lord of all and the head of the church, and through the Spirit guides the whole church into truth. We believe in the power of the gospel to transform lives, offer forgiveness from sin, bring freedom, hope and reconciliation.

We'll seek to share the truth in love as we follow our Lord, the "Word who became flesh and dwelt among us... full of grace and truth" (John 1:14)

Therefore, we nurture a movement of disciples who delight in studying, applying and teaching God's word, and how to live out this truth in word, sign and deed.

The Centre of Bible Engagement² study polled 40,000 people ages 8 to 80 to see how people were engaging in Scripture. As they compiled the results, they made a remarkable discovery they were not even looking for when they originally planned the survey.

The study indicated that when people engaged in the Scripture once or twice a week, there was little to no effect. Three times a week saw a slight pulse, a faint heartbeat. Something moved in the behaviour of the person

² <https://lifewayresearch.com/2021/04/30/the-key-to-life-changing-biblical-engagement/>

engaging in Scripture. The eye opener happened when Bible engagement reached at least four times a week.

There were profound differences discovered in the behaviour of people who engage the Scriptures at least four times a week and those who engage with Scripture less often.

The stunning findings included the following:

Feeling lonely drops 30%
Anger issues drop 32%
Bitterness in relationships drops 40%
Alcoholism drops 57%
Sex outside of marriage drops 68%
Feeling spiritually stagnant drops 60%
Viewing pornography drops 61%
Sharing your faith jumps 200%
Discipling others jumps 230%

The findings seem to hammer home the truth that engaging in the Scriptures at least four times a week makes a huge difference in our discipleship journey.

As people who love truth, I want to see people in our parishes reading the Bible regularly with someone. Can you help? Who might you open and explore the scriptures with in your life? It's not that hard – and you may be surprised how hungry people are for these simple and honest times exploring the bible with someone else.

This coming week, BTC in partnership with Latimer Fellowship will be running four evenings on Confidence in the Bible, Confidence in the Gospel. I highly recommend these.

5. We seek to respond to God's grace in Christ by being a people of blessing and radical Hospitality - Manaakitanga

I have recently been helped to understand Manaakitanga which is a key concept in Te Ao Maori.

Manaaki is core to a Māori sense of hospitality. It is literally the concept of lifting (aki) the mana of another. Mana is a deeply rich word. It is perhaps best understood as the spiritual essence of another person, worthy of respect and honour.

Mana is effectively a person's character that is evident to others; and a person's mana is ascribed to them by others, not claimed by themselves. To lift up another person's mana involves honour, generosity, service, hospitality, support, care—in short: blessing.

It is through such hospitality of Ruatara and tangata whenua that Samuel Marsden and early CMS missionaries were able to minister in these islands. That is why Ruatara is called Te ara mote Rongopai - gateway to the gospel.

Therefore, we honour our Treaty partners, show grace to other cultures, repent for past wrongs done, and steward our Taonga to bless future generations.

It was great to have the involvement of Bishop Richard Wallace of Pihopa of Te Pīhopatanga o Te Waipounamu and his team in the recent installation services at Victory and at the Cathedral. I would like to see this relationship deepen.

Hospitality means that we become like the Good Samaritan. That we're committed to minister to those who have been hurt, that we repent and make amends, even at great cost to ourselves.

Hospitality is an act of humility. It takes a willingness to challenge the culture that would see us pass by on the other side.

We live in a world where many are hurt, isolated and lonely. As Christians, we are broken by what breaks God's heart - the weak, those harmed by

others, those in despair and those who suffer and have no voice. We want our churches to be safe places where we're learning together what it means to be good neighbours. Where we look out for people, offer help, display random acts of goodness and kindness. Where we are famous as a people who embody Goodness culture.

This is something that we can only do in the power of the Spirit. Hospitality can open great doors for the gospel³ - the ultimate hospitality of God.

We are called to be channels of God's blessings, being willing to be used by God through outrageous generosity to bless a world needing hope.

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. Galatians 6:10

Growing up, my parents taught me something that has remained with me ever since. There is always room for one more. Our home was a place where all sorts of people felt free to come, some stayed for months and years. And yes, I found it challenging many times having to give up my bed for a guest but I'm deeply grateful for the privilege of seeing so many people transformed through my parents hospitality.

Recently we invited people who were not part of the diocesan leadership to join us at Leadership conference as part of our hospitality. Three of those present have now joined our diocesan family. People at NZCMS once told me, be wary of Steve when he says, "can we have a coffee." But that's a reputation I'm proud of!

³ In her book, the Gospel comes with a House Key, Rosalia Butterfield tells her story of being drawn to Jesus by the hospitality of her neighbours. Here is a short clip about her testimony <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kfYibfY6fQk>

Conclusion

So – will you join me – as a Diocese... in your parish... and in your household... to intentionally become a FAITH-filled people? A people where Family, Adventure, Innovation, Truth and Hospitality become second nature and are woven into our DNA for the benefit of future generations?

Because for this to happen – we will need to re-shape our conversations and personal interactions – as well as our vestry meetings and worship gatherings. And like being in a Waka – it will require all of us to bring our unique giftings, and play our part.

So let me finish with the words of Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York, who spoke recently at St Martin in the Fields about his dream for the Anglican Church: “...The best way to save the parish is to grow the Church. And the best way to grow the Church is to proclaim the gospel. And the best way to proclaim the gospel is to so live your life in Christ that the beauty and radiance that we see in Christ shines in our lives and makes a difference in the world...”

So may we together become a people who are known for being a healthy Family, with a love for God’s Adventure. May we gain a bold reputation for our commitment to holy Innovation, as we proclaim and embody God’s life-giving Truth. And may we become famous for our radical and generous Hospitality to all we encounter – the least, the last, the lonely, and the lost. In the strong name of Jesus. Amen.