

VISION DOCUMENT

CHRIST CHURCH LONGFORD PERTH ILLAWARRA



Christ Church
Longford

**That God will release the amazing
potential of our church family to fulfill
God-given dreams as together we extend
God's Kingdom**

CHRIST CHURCH LONGFORD/ILLAWARRA/PERTH FIVE YEAR MINISTRY PLAN



Led By the Spirit, We Move Forward

In this Ministry Overview we will explore Christ Church Anglican/Longford/Perth/Illawarra's mission and witness for the upcoming period of 1–5 years. It is meant to be a dynamic, living document that the Congregation will revisit and adjust regularly.

Introduction:

This vision casting document is the result of a very full Parish attendance and consultation at our Vision Casting Day. I want to gratefully acknowledge those of the vision casting committee and thank them for their input in refining, clarifying and ordering the main priorities. So, Ralph, Peter, Selwyn, Ted, Brian, Chris and the entire Parish Council, thank you. I wish to acknowledge especially the input, guidance and wisdom of Dr Ralph Barnes and Mr Peter Hoyle. They have helped, through continuous consultation, to shape this vision document as it was developing, and continue to work on the details involved with the sale of the property available, which is a vital component for the development and growth of Christ Church, Illawarra and Perth. This vision document is the result of a Parish committed to our future growth and mission. We acknowledge God in all things and for the blessing of His guidance through this process and for answered prayer. All glory be to God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Our Vision Statement

- **That God will release the amazing potential of our church family to fulfil God given dreams as together we extend God's Kingdom**

- **Impacting all people with God's love and equipping them to fulfil their destiny in Christ**

The mission is focused by our Vision statement. As followers of Jesus, we want to be a community that ***gathers*** and takes ***risks***:

- to receive and engage a diversity of people
- to celebrate life-giving worship
- to love and be loved
- to know and be known
- to serve and be served
- to learn, pray and grow together.

Trusting in God, we want to be people who ***scatter***:

- to live out faith in action

- to seek peace, justice and healing
- to share time, ministries and money.

Led by the Holy Spirit, we are continually **transformed** on this journey. Into the midst of this hope-filled vision we bring our history and our present day-to-day realities.

Past

Christ Church Longford/Illawarra/Perth have played an active and respected role in this community from the first settlement 1836. We have served the needs of the Congregation and the surrounding community in the past with mission to entire families (parents, youth, children and singles); ministry that we will refocus on for the future. Within that mix we will offer creative worship of God and the development of strong, faith-filled lay leadership.

Present Realities

Earlier generations who have settled the area are now seeking the amenities of seniors' housing and assistance. There is an increasing diversity of people in new housing areas, and the dynamics of Perth and Illawarra. There are also a growing proportion of folk who are economically struggling.

We are at a pivotal moment at Christ Church Longford/Illawarra/Perth. Our Vision statement reflects the reality, hopes and dreams of the whole Congregation, while leading us to new and re-energised mission initiatives. These must respond to the changing nature and demographic of our community, and our context within that community. The commitment of the Congregation to serve God and community in this time and place is as strong and vital as ever.

"Honour the LORD with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine."(Proverbs 3:9-10)

We have been good stewards of our resources and, with the proposal of the sale of property at Perth, our mission plan includes maintaining the present programme and developing new initiatives.

Stewardship is often associated with money and giving; resources with finances and facilities. This is partly true, however, true stewardship is how we care for all the resources the Lord bestows upon us. And the most important asset we have is the gifts and abilities contained within the body of believers. Yes, we need to take care of money and buildings, but do not think that is all that stewardship is about.

How we treat our wallets is indicative of how we honour God and His church. But how do we care for the call he gives us? How do we take care of His neighborhood? How do we take care of His gifts? How do we take care of His Word?

This characteristic of giving is a fruit that comes from the knowledge that all we have is God's, so we desire to take special care of it.

Focus of this Ministry Plan

This Ministry Plan seeks to outline a vision of God's call to Christ Church.

The Parish's strong Vision Statement, and the results of the process that led to that statement, forms the basis of the categories and goals suggested below.

Christ Church Longford/Illawarra/Perth is a Parish whose passions include Worship, Vision, Outreach, Music, Children and Youth, and Education. We value inclusivity, ministry of the Laity, good order, innovation, community mindedness, stewardship, Spirit filled prayer healing, and having fun together. We care about one another, support each other in life transitions and want to experience our faith being lived out in the way we treat one another. Our deepest desire is to continue to serve God in this.

As we work with the wider community, both near and far, we search to find what the mission

for a Christian community is. We bring a unique perspective which we believe is life-giving and we want to be able to freely offer what we have.

We want the Congregation to develop and grow as a 'movement of the Spirit amongst people' rather than a 'religious institution' or a 'service club'. When people first come to Christ Church they feel warm and welcomed by the wonderful Congregation. Therefore, the ministry of hospitality, which is highly developed already, needs to guide our actions and support all other activities and experiences. **There are Five Characteristics I consider vital to a growing congregation!**

The First: Uncompromising Teaching of God's Word

"How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Praise be to you, O LORD; teach me your decrees". (Psalm 119:9-12)

A healthy church will never sacrifice the integrity of the Bible, or water down its message. We do not have to hide the truth to attract people to the church. It is vital that the gospel of Christ is clearly expressed and clearly taught. Compromising to reach more people never works. A good "seeker" message will contain the gospel clearly presented so people who have never seen the inside of a church can relate to it. The service will not have Christian jargon. Rather, it will use stories, illustrations and analogies to expound the passage so they can 'get it'.

Churches fail when they lose their focus, especially focus on the Word! And of course it's OK to be creative and innovative.

The Second: Passion for the Lord

"But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I

want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead."(Phil. 3:7-11)

It has been my observation and experience that passion is missing in the wider church in a big way. We have become complacent. We must have hearts that cry out for intimacy with God, yet at the same time "fear" our Lord and Savior. To be a church that is following the Lord of the Bible we will be overflowing with gratitude for what He has done for us. We will desire to grow in our faith and knowledge of Him. Our passion will be enthusiastic and contagious to those around us; as individual Christians and as a body of believers who are practising what they are worshipping and learning what they are teaching. We are not a club; we are the Body of Christ. Being spiritual is the acknowledgment of who we are before a Holy God. This is fundamental. Being passionate is taking that spirituality and being joyful with it.

We may not be as emotionally passionate as the Prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, but we must be willing as a church to not only acknowledge our faith but live it with enthusiasm. We must have a love for the church we are going to. We must love the people who are there. Yes, there are times we may not feel very loving, as stuff happens. But we can learn and grow in faith and in love. A church is not to be a place for people to go out of obligation. It is not to be a place where the people wish they were someplace else. It is to be a place to come together with others who are lovers and doers of the Word. And it is to be a place to welcome the hurting, the people who do not want to be there, so they can catch your enthusiasm and passion. Because God so loved us...we are responding in that love. Do our hearts burn when we hear the Word of our Lord? This is passion for our Lord, this is essential for the healthy church.

The Third: Heartfelt Prayer

"Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."(John 15:4-5)

The previous characteristics plow the field and plant the seed so that this form of prayer can grow. We have to know God and His Word first. This will cause us to know the importance of worship. Learning about God and worshipping Him brings us closer to His presence and makes prayer become deeper and more alive. The second characteristic, passion, enters in from our growing relationship. Then the characteristics flow back to cause the previous ones to work better. Just as more prayer will cause us to be more passionate, better leadership development will make the first characteristics stronger and so forth.

The Fourth: Discipleship

All authority and power and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."(Matthew 28:18-20)

This is perhaps the characteristic that most churches somehow forget. It is the reason why the church exists. So why is it that so few churches actually have disciple-making as a primary ministry? For most churches it is something they think that they are doing, assuming that going to church on Sunday is discipleship. But it is not. Some churches throw it in as an afterthought, or may offer a class or something to the effect.

It is a problem for the non-Christian to accept a Saviour when they have to give up their rights, and it is difficult for the Christian to live a life that is truly surrendered and poured out to the sovereignty of God. Yet true discipleship cannot begin until we learn one important key aspect of life: there is one God and we are not it! That is, we have to yield to the Lordship of our God and not to the desires of our will. When we do this then the discipleship process can begin.

We make up excuses saying, "well people won't come, we do not have anybody to lead it..." We are not responsible for people coming; we are only responsible for obeying our Lord and doing it! We must follow out of obedience and mentor in a multigenerational lifestyle, caring for the total person. It will move us from just playing church to being a church.

The effective large church is a convention of smaller churches, the small group, where each of the members are being cared for by people who are being disciplined, who are being taught, who are being encouraged, and being led. And this is the formula that all churches should follow. Making disciples takes vision and the understanding of Scripture. It gives the church a purpose that forms leaders who grow other leaders– an outgrowth of their growth.

We are called not to just visualise discipleship, but to do it; not to just talk about it, but to do it. The effective church will take Scripture and the call of our Lord seriously then implement it.

Jesus, during His three years of earthly ministry, was discipling and equipping the disciples. This was where most of His time was spent. **He was focused on the teaching of the Kingdom of God, to see beyond their situation to the life to come.** With His teaching Jesus entrusted His church and world into the care of the people He taught. They were to replicate themselves to others. The idea was every believer is an equipper, every member is a minister, every Christian should be involved in the life and gifts of the body to influence the world. Small Groups plan to self replicate by finding and discipling people in their spiritual gifts.

The Fifth: Outreach and Missions

"Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God."(Psalm 90:1-2)

Evangelism is the willingness and the action of taking our love of God, and God's love for us to others, wherever they are. We are to proclaim Christ as the Creator and Redeemer of the world.

We are not responsible for the results, what we are responsible for is to overcome our fears and our objections and respond to our Lord's imperative. We must be able to see the potential and call that Christ has given us. We must see that the world does not know Him, our neighbors may not know Him, and the people next door to the church may not know Him. It is our task to patiently, tactfully, lovingly and with caring compassion show who our Lord is and what He has already done for them, and us . We have to see evangelism as a **privilege** and not a duty or chore. Our love for God who first loved us should be flowing over to those around us.

We cannot hide behind our theological thinking and say that if God is sovereign then we do not need to evangelise. They will come if He wills it. What is missing is that, through God's sovereignty, we are the means. He chose to use us to further His gospel. God does not need us nor does He have to use us, yet He chooses to use us. God works through the gospel message, through His Word and the power of the Holy Spirit. The power is not us, it is Him. We are merely responding to His service. Our Lord's last and most fervent command was for us to go and make disciples, yet it is always on the back burner. It must be the banquet feast to which we will invite others.

Small Groups, Life Groups

There is a significant absence of small groups in the ministry of Longford/Illawarra/Perth. This Ministry Plan calls for us to intentionally organise our ministry life into a Small Group Ministry format. This intentional structuring is meant to set an expectation and to invite people to gather in small groups.

Small groups are meant to be more than solely goal-oriented groups, but also to serve as another way of doing pastoral care within our Parish. Small Group Ministry refers to small groups both within the parish or organised and under the covering of the Parish. They can usually be 3–12 participants that agree to meet for a specific length of time around a shared interest. By following an easily facilitated small group meeting process, reflecting on the group's time together in terms of personal spiritual growth, connection to the parish church (if that is appropriate) and to the wider community, groups minister to participants and encourage ministry in a variety of ways.

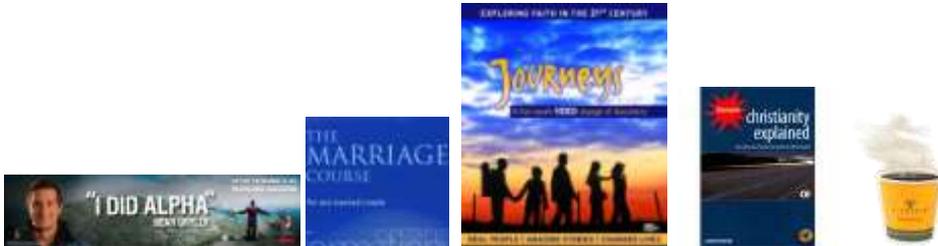
In order to ensure that the small groups represent the holistic vision of the Parish, there are 4 priority areas in which we will focus. These areas are:

- **Learning and Faith Formation**
- **Hospitality, Caring and Healing**
- **Worship and Music**
- **Mission**

Learning & Faith Formation

This area will include focusing on learning about theology, faith, ministry and traditional practices, with a goal of becoming 'informed' Christians. It will include current study ministries and will have a goal of offering learning opportunities on an ongoing basis so people at all stages of faith growth can find a way to 'enter' into learning and to enter into the Congregation.

These groups can include, Christianity Explained, Alpha, Journeys by Rob Harley and Life Tree Cafe material.



This area will include small groups focusing on hospitality amongst the people within the congregation, friendship with newcomers, caring with children and youth, caring within families, caring with adults – young, middle and older. Part of a Caring ministry is recognising our need for healing. This area will include current ministries such as Helping Hands, also grief recovery, Formerly Married, Marriage Course and parenting Courses.

We will explore various ways to reach out further by developing a strong healing ministry and will also include focus on our church family, including working to contribute to the financial well-being and physical plant of the church.

We will develop a ministry to and with families. This includes being a resource for families, both in the Congregation and the community, experiencing difficulties i.e. families with young children, and families at all stages who are trying to support and deal with physical and mental health issues and other challenges.

This is an expression of God's love for us working in the community of which we are part.

Hospitality, Caring and Healing

"One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" "The most important one" answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:28-31)

When we have a grasp of the magnitude of the love we received from our Lord which is totally undeserving, it should drop us to our knees. It also should cause us to assess how we are with those around us. If we see ourselves as undeserving and yet God is willing to love us, then we should do the same with others around us. To be willing to allow that love to flow out of us as well as in us. So when we are loving the Lord our God with all of our heart and with all of our soul and with all of our mind and with all of our strength; then, we will love our neighbor with care!

When people choose to join a church it is not because of the teaching or the worship or the programmes, it is because of the care. People may visit a church but they will only stay when your heart is after God's and when it is pouring out the love and care God has for us and for them! People will want to come to a church where they feel welcomed and cared for. People will leave a church more often because relationships have not been developed than for any other reason. They may give other excuses for it, but the fact is they left because they did not feel cared for.

Just ask yourself what kind of church would you like to be in. One that is loving and encouraging, or one that couldn't care less if you were there or not. Cults attract people because they know how to care and perhaps reached out to them in their pain and hurt. They may do it with bad intentions, but the people who are drawn are the ones the church has turned away.

In expressing the love of Christ we are to also be a Congregation welcoming gay and lesbian persons and all of any faith or culture.

Worship and Music

"I will praise you, O LORD, with all my heart; before the "gods" I will sing your praise. I will bow down toward your holy temple and will praise your name for your love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word. When I called, you answered me; you made me bold and stouthearted. May all the kings of the earth praise you, O LORD, when they hear the words of your mouth". (Psalm 138:1-4)

Worship that impacts and is authentic is not dependent on style but on the substance behind it. It is the passion and power that moves people's focus from themselves to a desire to please God, and praise Him. We can fully engage in God on the pipe organ, or have a full 100-piece orchestra, or have a guitar and keyboard. The style and instruments are not the key.

There are of course many different styles of music and as many ways to engage in worship. Today, more people are attracted to a contemporary praise band over the organ. But that does not mean the organ is bad, and we should stop using it. What it means is that we need to look at starting and providing a service that attracts people and worships God. i.e. at least two distinct services to appeal to more people.

Worship is not just music. It is a tool that we use to express our love and devotion to God. Worship also consists of reading Scripture, prayer, preaching and the sacraments. If we leave out prayer we are leaving out a vital component. If we are not using Scripture and only sing songs, we are not worshipping God with the best that He has given us.

Music is one component and tool we can use to express our love for Him. It has the power to move us emotionally which the other components may not. We are created as emotional beings and expressing our emotions in worship is important, as long as we do it with order and out of gratitude. Worship is about what God has done for us.

There are 5 main 'styles' that most of today's and yesterday's worship formats fit into.

There is 'Traditional' worship that incorporates hymns, choir or Psalter, and a formal order which each service follows. There are certain prayers, liturgies and parts of the service that are repeated each week. These services have an organ or piano and rarely would have any more modern instruments. They are established in tradition, follow Anglican traditional practices and Scriptural guidelines.

The 'Liturgical' High Anglican style is even more ridged. It incorporates formal hymns, readings from a prayer book or missal, robes and incense.

These first two styles have the distinction of a sense of majesty and honour to God; a sense of holiness that provides the worshipping congregation with the impression that they are in the presence of God. Generally younger people do not like this form because they feel it creates a sense of separation between God and us. The distance is too vast for them to worship. Hence the rise in the more personal affirmations of songs, "Here I am to Worship" or Hillsong "My Jesus, My Saviour" etc. However the traditional service can be just as impacting as a contemporary if the heart and passion is there.

The 'Praise and Worship' style has less formality and more of a free flowing, upbeat atmosphere. In the Anglican tradition it will incorporate some of the same aspects as a traditional service but be more personal. A sense of closeness is given to the congregation. Newer forms of music and instruments provide the tone. There may be multi-media used such as Power Point instead of hymnals.

One of the newer formats is the 'Seeker-Sensitive' service. What makes this format distinct is a more casual atmosphere than the praise style. It may have only a few songs with the addition of plays. The choice of songs tends to be secular, or secular songs re-written with Christian lyrics to create familiarity for the new churchgoer. These then gradually flow into more Christian music. This service is helpful as a cushion that softens the journey for people who are strangers to any form of worship service. These people may never have even set foot in a church and it allows them not to be culturally shocked when they visit. (Our baptism services should really be run as seeker services.)

With first-class musicians and worship leaders the congregation does not sing everything. This service is in fact "performance style". The visitor takes their place as if they were at a play or theatre. This is done deliberately to attract the unchurched who will feel more comfortable in a less formal, spectator setting. When this style is properly designed it gradually generates trust with new people and they can then be directed into small groups or other services with more 'meat'. One of the drawbacks to these styles is a loss of holiness and awe that the more traditional forms yield. But if the gospel message is presented in a way that is understandable a "seeker service" can yield tremendous fruit.

The last category is a 'Blended' style that incorporates two or more of the previous styles. This form is becoming more popular as smaller churches are sometimes unable to have more than one service. Accordingly they will create a combination to accommodate more needs in their congregation. These services tend to be more spontaneous with a hymn and then a praise chorus sung with an organ and band.

One style is not better than another. However some styles are better suited to a particular congregation at a particular time. Some people feel closer to God in a liturgical setting and others prefer the closeness they receive from a contemporary service.

This area will include small groups who wish to experiment with other forms of worship and/or music. It will include the formation of a Worship Committee, which will function as a small group with a focus on the Contemporary Service. The choir, which is a large group, has the same relational values as small groups.

Longford/Illawarra/Perth will develop a new worship service at a time during the week/month which works for younger families and 30–45 year olds.

Mission: Led By the Spirit, We Move Forward

As the Small Group Ministry evolves and grows we will welcome and expect members of the Congregation to suggest new topics, new approaches. We will, however, maintain our focus on achieving the key ministry goals we have set for ourselves. We imagine that each of these areas will include small groups made up of a variety of age groups. For example Sunday School classes can become small groups where the children work on a 'project' or a study in one of the initiatives listed in this plan. The same could be true for youth. We will develop the lay leadership needed for all these small group ministries to happen. **The group leadership will be foundational** and we will commit ourselves to providing training and equipping for those followers of Christ who offer to lead a group.

The Parish Council will develop a Financial Plan that addresses, among other things, the financial resources needed to implement this Ministry Plan. The Financial Plan will also address our decision-making and budgeting processes to ensure they are working towards the fulfilment of our Ministry Plan.

Throughout the year the Parish Council will work with small groups, outreach programmes, committees and staff to ensure that we are being consistent with this Ministry Plan and that we make progress towards our goals. As well as periodic reporting to the Congregation, the Parish Council will also ensure that we actively monitor the progress of the implementation of the

Ministry Plan. The Rector will ensure that this Ministry Plan is periodically reviewed and updated to reflect our progress towards our goals as well as the evolving needs, aspirations and callings of the Congregation.

Summary:

Learning and Faith Formation

We will put in place opportunities for people at all stages of faith growth to engage learning and faith formation.

Hospitality, Caring and Healing

We will develop a 'family' ministry which supports families to discover spirituality, build faith, as well as developing resources to assist these such as parenting groups and marriage support.

We will explore ways to publicly include and support gay and lesbian persons.

Worship and Music

We will seek to cater for 30–45 years olds, and will respond to their worship needs, including the development of music through a new worship service offered at a time during the week/month.

We will build on the strength of our music ministry as that is resourced, develops and grows.

Mission:

- 1. To reach into the wider community and be a “church without walls”**
- 2. To grow to 200 by 2015**
- 3. To greatly increase the families and the under 40 age group**
- 4. To be a financially sound parish**
- 5. To be relevant**
- 6. To be a multigenerational family**
- 7. To be a place where young people are drawn**
- 8. To become more efficient and professional, aiming for excellence in all aspects of operating as church**

Conclusion

Our Church community can become a place where real needs are met and where our gifts are used because of the teaching, worship and prayer that empowers people through the work of the Holy Spirit. We are allowing our church to become as it was meant to be from the beginning, not allowing our prejudice and fears to get in the way. Accomplishing this we will be a powerful force for His kingdom.

"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God-- even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."(1 Corinthians 10: 31: 11:1)

Glory is the expression of our love and gratitude, bestowing our best praise with splendour and passion. Because He first loved us...this is why we “do church”. When we have this in the forefront of our thinking and hearts we will do church well, as God intended.

The Reverend Edrick Corban-Banks, B.Mus; B.Theol; FTCL; LTCL; ASB.

Rector, Christ Church Anglican

19 July 2013

