

Growth started with a prayer

The northern outskirts of Brisbane is booming, so it is no surprise that The Lakes Anglican Church has enjoyed steady growth.

The parish began out of a vision for an Anglican church to be established in the region by some devoted parishioners who prayed and believed God was calling them to establish a parish in North Lakes. Archbishop Phillip Aspinall was supportive and the first service, sponsored by the Anglican Parish of Redcliffe, was held on the 9th of July 2006.

Priest in Charge at The Lakes, The Rev'd Dan Berris has been Priest-in-Charge since January, 2012.

Focus Magazine: An analysis of the Annual Return data has revealed that the number of worshippers in your parish has grown over the last three years. What is going on?

Dan: Growth in our church is a combination of many factors. We have a greater online presence for people to find us. We have encouraged church members to be invitational. We work hard at caring for newcomers and making them feel welcome (offering to get them a drink, introducing them to other members, inviting them back for a meal after church). It would seem that as we take greater care of those God sends, we are finding a greater amount of people are coming our way.

We began to continually reiterate our Vision, Mission and Values. Through sermons, pew sheets and discussions. We looked at our ministries (any newly beginning and existing) and asked whether they align with our Vision, Mission and Values? We produced pamphlets and booklets for newcomers to get a feel for these things that make us unique as a local church and an Anglican Church. This was a lengthy process to take people through. It continues to be something we must continually reiterate and find creative ways to express within the life of our church.

Focus Magazine: What do you see as the three most important contributing factors to your growth?

For current church members to be passionate about their faith and share this with others – *where they are – not just at church!*

Work hard at fostering a desire for church members to care for everyone who does come

to our church - believe that God has sent them to us for a reason!

Ask God for a Mission so big it requires church members and those God sends to our church so we can accomplish God's Mission together

Focus Magazine: Have you run introduction to Christianity/disciple programs? Have you found them successful?

We use Christianity Explained for Baptism families and Alpha for those exploring Christian faith. Our study groups use questions put together from sermons as a way to help people unpack sermons in a safe environment where they can ask deeper questions. We also use other Christian Formation programs.

Focus Magazine: What advice would you give your brothers and sisters in other parishes?

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We need to ask – *“What does our church look like through the eyes of those we would like to come? Are we being realistic as to whether what we offer appeals to certain groups of people?”*

Let's become comfortable with who we can connect with and just as importantly, who we cannot! Perhaps we have outdated (or no) online presence, signs reflect a ratty street presence, churches are filled with mismatched decorations, ministries are poorly planned or



The Rev'd Dan Berris, Priest in Charge at The Lakes

we're using church worship music and clip art from the 1970's.

Let's ask yourselves – *“Have we become stuck in a rut of some sort? Who would we like to see in our church and why? What would they think about who we are just by looking at us? What are we prepared to change so they might want to become a part of our community?” It's about asking ourselves better questions – then asking again – is that the most important question we need to be asking?*

A word with a veteran

Phyl Bailey has been worshipping at The Lakes for ten years.

Focus Magazine: What keeps you worshipping at The Lakes parish?

Phyl: The enthusiasm and friendship of the people.

Focus Magazine: Have you noticed any positive turning points in the life of the parish? What were the turning points that can be attributed to the PP? What are the turning points that can be attributed to the lay people?

The start of two services for the people who liked or were used to a modern service and then when we became one service that the majority enjoy. This was mainly due to Father Dan involving all of us in what was happening and listening to all.

Focus Magazine: What has helped you grow in the faith?

Going to Bible study and becoming more involved in our community.

Focus Magazine: What three things could be improved?

A building etc but this is now being done and I think with a more permanent home we

will be able to do a lot more not only for the congregation but for the people of the area.

Thoughts of a relative newcomer

Fiona Semenoff has been worshipping at The Lakes for nearly a year.

Focus Magazine: What drew you to the parish and what has helped you stay?

Fiona: Upon returning to North Lakes after living overseas for a couple of years, I was searching for a new Church Community that would become like a second family; and also a place to serve our community through connecting with like-minded Christians.

A friend had spoken highly of Father Dan Berris, and The Lakes Anglican Parish. From the very first day I attended the church, my family was made to feel very welcome. There is a very real sense of family within the parishioners, and invitations were quickly offered that enabled us to feel at home.

I enjoy the blend of the traditional and contemporary features of the Sunday Service. I feel very blessed to be able to receive Holy Communion every Sunday, while also taking away great messages from Rev'd. Dan's sermons.

Indeed, my favourite time of the week is the several moments of PEACE we enjoy during our Sunday Service.

I also admired the very strong sense of leadership within the church. From the outset, it is clear there is a strong fatherly figure at the helm.

There is a genuine attempt to allow every Parish member to have an equal and respected voice to contribute in areas of interest or talent of each individual.

Focus Magazine: What is the growing edge of your life? How does belonging to the church give you life?

The growing edge of my life is to live each day, at home and work in a Christ like way. This truly can be challenging, and as I have learnt, it can be harder to live in this world as a Christian than a non-Christian.

I have always considered myself to be a good person, and I come from a family with a strong link to the Anglican Church. That makes me a good Christian right?

However, being a member of The Lakes Anglican has made me truly see the difference between being a good person to being a faithful, obedient Christian.

Attending The Lakes Anglican Church has breathed life into me and my family in a way I never imagined, but had really hoped for. After a very difficult time overseas, our family needed a lot of rebuilding and repairing. Within the safe arms of the parish, we have healed and grown in our faith.

Learning to pray in a truly respectful and faithful way has also opened my heart, mind and life to new ways of experiencing the world. Likewise, attending weekly Bible Study has given me a greater understanding of the word of God.

I also believe that God has put me into this Parish to help 'stretch' my growing edge. My faith and belief in God has become a very deep and vital part of my life.

Focus Magazine: What prompted you to start attending? Were there any teachings that you found particularly helpful?

I have been attending church for some time now, however the commitment to making church and the parish family a daily part of our life, really began once I started attending The Lakes Anglican. There are several members of our parish who have become like family to me, and we enjoy spending time together either at Church, bible study, socialising or serving. The time I commit to my faith is not a chore,

on the contrary it is such a joy.

There are several teachings and sermons that have spoken to me, however completing the Alpha course this year has really ignited my interest in the study of the bible, the history surrounding the times and life of the authors of the bible.

Focus Magazine: What three things could be improved?

- A physical place for worship that we can call our own. On a selfish level, it is nice to have a sacred place to go when you need a safe place to pray. From the perspective of our parish, it would give us a place to provide service and outreach to our community.
- A greater sharing of self from each and every Parish member.
- Great offering of education in a way that reaches youth/ millennials. For example, I would love to see a Bible Study group suitable for teenage children.

The Lakes Anglican Church

Location: Major City

Size: Small, 50 to 100 attendees each Sunday

Key Points: Encourage church members to be invitational. Work hard at caring for newcomers and making them feel welcome (offering to get them a drink, introducing them to other members, inviting them back for a meal after church).

Key Points: Ask – "What does our church look like through the eyes of those we would like to come? Are we being realistic as to whether what we offer appeals to certain groups of people?"



The Lakes parish held a Messy Church in 2016

