

# A Vision for the Anglican Church Southern Queensland



## Introduction

The Mission of the Church is the Mission of Christ — to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God, that is.

- 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 pursue peace and reconciliation;
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth;
- To worship and celebrate the grace of God; and
- To live as one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

This statement and these 'Marks of Mission' remain the central mission of the Anglican Church Southern Queensland (ACSQ). It is why we exist.

During the course of 2020, the Diocesan Council, the bishops and senior leadership team asked themselves these questions:

- What is our vision for ACSQ over the next five to 10 years to advance the mission of the Church?
- What are the values that we want to engender within ACSQ to establish the type of culture that will help achieve that vision?

The key outcomes of the various discussions over the course of 2020 were brought together in work on a vision and on values and culture. Five key focus areas for ACSQ were identified, each with specific goals and actions.



## Vision Statement

The Diocesan Council has adopted this Vision Statement:

*Flourishing faith communities: proclaiming and serving,  
worshipping and learning.*

The following provides some explanation and colour to the Vision Statement.

### Faith communities

*I am the vine, you are the branches.  
Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit,  
because apart from me you can do nothing.  
John 15:5 (NRSV)*

A faith community is created whenever people gather together, with Jesus and his mission as their focus.

Faith communities are committed to living out the Marks of Mission set out in the ACSQ Mission Statement.

The phrase 'faith communities' captures the variety of ways people connect with and belong to the Anglican Church in Southern Queensland. Faith communities are found in parishes, schools, aged care facilities, youth communities, mission agencies, hospitals, prisons and many more places. Our faith communities are Christian and Anglican and are open to all who wish to engage with them.

### Flourishing

*They are like trees  
planted by streams of water,  
which yield their fruit in its season,  
and their leaves do not wither.  
Psalm 1:3 (NRSV)*

*Flourishing: to grow well and be healthy* — [macmillandictionary.com](http://macmillandictionary.com).

The nature and location of a faith community will shape what it means for it to flourish.

*Flourishing* points us back through history and reminds us that the way of Jesus is life-giving and compelling, even in the most difficult of times. It reminds us that Jesus and the Gospel have the power to draw communities together to do remarkable things, to make change, to bring life and to renew and revive people and places.

**Flourishing reminds us that our communities must be alive and also bring life.**

Some of the following characteristics may mark flourishing faith communities. They are communities which:

1. Have Jesus and his mission as expressed in the Gospels at the centre.
2. Are making new disciples.
3. Have porous boundaries welcoming all to come and see and belong.
4. Reflect the make-up of their surrounding community (i.e. age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic).
5. Are sustainable in practices, leadership and finances.
6. Are energetically engaged with their local communities and the wider world.
7. Are intentional learning communities.
8. Are always in the process of renewing themselves and their focus on mission.
9. Have many effective leaders, both lay and ordained.
10. Focus on the whole mission of God.



### Questions for discussion:

- Which of the characteristics of flourishing faith communities listed above do you identify within your community?
- As you reflect on your faith community and the characteristics of flourishing listed above:
  - Where do you see your faith community flourishing?
  - Which characteristics might your faith community need to work on?
  - What would help your faith community flourish?

## Proclaiming and serving, worshipping and learning

The Marks of Mission open for us the breadth of activities that faith communities undertake. Summarised in the words ***proclaiming and serving, worshipping and learning***, these activities are at the heart of flourishing faith communities.

The Mission of the Church is the Mission of Christ — to **proclaim** the good news of the kingdom of God. Proclaiming Christ is central to the mission of faith communities. This involves not only preaching the Word of God but also proclaiming God's love through acts of worship and loving service.

**Worship** is at the heart of every faith community. Worship brings us before God as an expression of our love and devotion. Through worship we are reminded of our purpose, reenergised for our mission and renewed in our communion with God and our community. The work of a faith community is grounded in worship as an act of humble listening and obedience to our call.

Grounded in worship, faith communities are called to **serve** those near, in the local community, and those far away, throughout the world. Faith communities exist not for themselves but for the service of others as they participate in God's mission in the world. Service requires faith communities to listen, to be present and to be in deep relationship with those they serve.

Faith communities are composed of people who seek to be disciples of Jesus. A disciple is at heart a person who is engaged in a life of **learning**. This intentional learning extends beyond the scriptures, theology and the tradition of the church and engages the whole world in which we live. Faith communities seek to learn about their settings in order to serve more humbly.

### Questions for discussion:

- Which of the four activities is your faith community strongest in?
- Which of the four activities does your faith community struggle with?
- What goals does your faith community have to grow as a:
  - worshipping community
  - proclaiming community
  - serving community
  - learning community

## Why Values and Culture?

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the Banking Royal Commission focused heavily on the importance of culture in managing the risk of "bad" behaviour.

A good culture goes much further than managing negative behaviours. It contributes to productive and life-enhancing positive behaviours that in turn contribute to achieving organisational goals.

The values of an organisation are a pointer to its culture, although there is always a risk that lofty values are not actually embodied in the culture of an organisation.

In the context of a church, some would argue that the life of a church and the behaviour of its leaders, staff and members should be governed by "Christian values".

What is difficult about this broad statement is:

- The statement is not very specific and ultimately is complex.
- Often there is disagreement as to what those values are and what behaviours express them.
- Increasingly we employ staff for whom Christian life is unknown and they have little idea of what it means to be a Christian.

The challenge for ACSQ is to establish a culture that serves God's mission and does so through adopting values that our people understand well, support and against which they are prepared to be accountable.

In a broadly based and complex organisation like a church, this is not a simple task when considering the multiplicity of stakeholders and contexts.

However, the risk of not establishing clear values and acceptable behaviours and promoting a culture of positivity and accountability is to fall into what some refer to as a culture of "blame". In such a culture people don't accept responsibility and accountability, protect their own positions and do not work together toward a common goal, and blame others or "the system" or another scapegoat for problems, difficulties or failures.

Clearly establishing the culture and values allows leaders to make decisions that are in line with or explained by those values, including around key policies, such as safety and dealing with poor behaviour, or misalignment between a person's behaviour and the organisation's goals.

Most importantly a positive culture and values can give people a sense of alignment and purpose that increases engagement.

The Diocesan Council has established aspirational values for ACSQ:

#### **We aim to be:**

- **Faithful** — steadfast in love for God and each other and steadfast in purpose to undertake God's mission.
- **Imaginative and creative** — being intentional about reforming culture and traditions for God's world.
- **Courageous** — to risk new things and, where necessary, to make bold decisions.
- **Authentic** — being genuine and confident in living and speaking about what we believe as followers of Christ.
- **Comprehensive** — being welcoming and respectful of a broad range of ideas, people and approaches, and open to dialogue and learning.

#### **Questions for discussion:**

- Where do you find these values expressed in your faith community?
- Which two values would help your faith community flourish the most?



## Key Focus Areas

An enabling vision leads to action. Diocesan Council considered what might be the critical action areas to realise the vision of Flourishing faith communities: proclaiming and serving, worshipping and learning.

Five key focus areas have been identified. Each area has some key goals and each goal has a number of actions. These actions include current projects.

As part of this work, Diocesan leadership considered the work of Susan Beaumont on leading in liminal seasons.<sup>1</sup>

Liminality can describe the evolving state of an individual, place, organisation, or institution — anything stuck in the neutral space between an ending and a new beginning. Sometimes, liminality takes decades, generations, or even centuries to resolve. When an entire civilisation or society moves into a prolonged liminal state, this is a liminal epoch. Many believe that civilisation is in a liminal epoch right now. Beaumont argues that the Church is certainly liminal.

Liminal times require leaders who can practice presence. Such leaders help people to manage their anxiety and embrace the freedom of not-knowing. The liminal leader is deeply connected to God and the soul of the institution and helps individuals and groups to embrace the liminal state for as long as it takes to get clear about identity and to discern new pathways forward.

There are four bodies of organizational work that help people stay productively engaged during a liminal season:

- **Deepening Group Discernment.** Communal discernment is an attentiveness to the movement of the Holy Spirit that over time generates a shared sense of God's intention for us. A liminal leader helps rediscover these core practices and reconnect decision making with the soul of the institution.
- **Shaping Institutional Memory.** In liminal seasons we tend to glamorize our glory eras by creating thin narratives about how wonderful things were "back then." Or we censor our memories to block out experiences of pain and shame. Memory-shaping helps the organization to remember true stories from the past that can help heal past wounds, teach important values for the present, and shape a hope-filled future.
- **Clarifying Purpose.** Determining what is ours to do is at the heart of the liminal experience. The leader must help the organization determine what is worth preserving, what can be released, and what must be adapted. This requires framing a meaningful purpose centred on four basic questions: Who are we? Who are we here to serve? What do we stand for? What is God calling us to do or become next?

- **Engaging Emergence.** Eventually, liminality gives way to resolution. Communities reorient themselves; it is natural for coherence to emerge out of chaos. But emergence can't be forced or managed. Many traditional management activities can suck the life out of emergence. Instead, the leader must nurture a climate of disruption, innovation, risk-taking, and synthesis.

Based on an understanding of this work, Diocesan Council has shaped the key focus areas to allow flexibility for ACSQ to clarify purpose and to engage emergence in this liminal time.

The key focus areas and goals are summarised below.

## Key Focus Area

## Goals

---

### Comprehensive Anglican identity and purpose

Articulate, celebrate, and share a distinctive ACSQ approach to a comprehensive Anglican identity and purpose.

---

### Energising and mobilising ACSQ people

Establish and sustain a comprehensive leadership development program so that we have the capacity to grow flourishing faith communities.

Leverage the collective energy and capability of ACSQ's people so that we have increased resources to advance all aspects of Church life.

Develop a framework and support for clergy wellbeing and development.

---

### Flourishing Parishes and Faith Communities

Foster missional communities which are accessible, sustainable and strategically placed across the Diocese.

---

### Engagement with each other and the wider community

Engender a sense of belonging to the whole of ACSQ across parishes and other mission agencies, schools, early childhood services and community services.

Participate in the marketplace of ideas on key justice issues.

Orientate faith communities outwards in service to the wider community.

---

## Stewardship and sustainability of resources

Steward our resources to grow our effectiveness in mission in sustainable ways.

---

### Questions for discussion:

- Having read about the five key focus areas:
  - How are these currently being fostered in your faith community?
  - How might they be fostered in your faith community?
- Considering the vision statement and values above:
  - What might be key focus areas for your faith community?



## What does this mean for ACSQ?

Our Diocesan leaders will be talking more about the vision, values and key focus areas. These will guide decision making about various activities of ACSQ.

At Commission level, each Commission is invited to identify where it can contribute to achieving the vision and what role it has to play in discernment and what emerges. There are already specific projects underway that involve each of the Commissions and their own strategies.

Every parish, school, and agency is invited to consider what it can contribute to realising the vision and living the values, and to develop its own mission action plan. Every faith community can help us all to discern the movement of the Holy Spirit that over time generates a shared sense of God's intention for the Anglican Church in Southern Queensland.

