

Ministry Educator for the Diocese (DME)

2019

I recently celebrated my one year anniversary as the Diocesan Ministry Educator and looking back over that time I can say it has certainly been intense and varied. As I write this report from my home, we are all still in lockdown level 3. There have been many losses. Some friends and family members have had work hours reduced or lost jobs altogether. Church buildings are closed and some Sunday services are hosted platforms like Zoom or YouTube. We cannot farewell those who have died with funerals or celebrate life's milestones as we would want to. We stay in our bubbles. So many changes... but I wonder if like me you have also found that these strange Easter days also offer us a gift; a liminal space in which we can re-evaluate our ways of being in the world as God's beloved people. I suspect my second year will be very different to the first...

The members of the Diocesan Ministry Team (DMT) of which I am one, are funded through the St John's College Trust. Education is at the heart of my role although it takes many forms. Boundaries Training is one feature. All those with a Bishop's license are required to complete the Boundaries course every three years. A new programme has been created and work is underway to create a database to ensure no one falls through the cracks. Four courses were held last year.

In addition to Boundaries Training I have organised and led or co-led several other training events this past year. With the help of Theology House I hosted Justine Allain-Chapman's visit to Christchurch. She gave a fantastic one day seminar exploring her PhD work on resilience. While Tom Innes was the acting director of Theology House he and I hosted two preaching workshops that were especially memorable for the good humour and high levels of engagement of those who participated. One was in Timaru-Marchwiell and the other in Amberley. Interestingly, the preaching workshop that was planned for central Christchurch was cancelled due to lack of interest.

I have also been working in collaboration with my Methodist and Presbyterian colleagues to develop resources and a programme to help church leaders grow fruitful congregations. We piloted the programme with a Methodist church and are currently working with a pioneering group of mostly Anglican church leaders.

One particular highlight for me last year was being guest speaker at the Arrow Leadership Training week held in Auckland. This inspiring programme brings together young leaders from all over the Christian scene in New Zealand. It has also been very helpful to connect with my Ministry Educator colleagues around New Zealand. We are collectively AMEN (Anglican Ministry Educators Network) and meet together formally twice a year and other times in between for the purpose of providing mutual professional support, sharing resources and experiences, and working on shared educational goals. The members of AMEN are all members of TPMC where we work together with bishops and other national representatives to develop educational strategies for Tikanga Pakeha.

Out and about in the Diocese I have been involved in several parish consultations and vestry quiet days and been a guest preacher. Behind the scenes all the members of DMT have a part to play planning and running Clergy Conference. Our guest speakers in 2019 were Dean David Rowe and Esther Grant. I am a member of the Senior leadership Team (SLT) and on Theology House Board. Together with Lynette Lightfoot, I help Susan Baldwin, our Director of Post Ordination Training, with post-ordination development Fridays (PDF). These monthly gatherings are for the recently ordained. I also work with Jenny Wilkens, our Diocesan Director for Ordination, as we meet with those who are exploring a sense of call to ordination. Those who apply to St Johns College Trust for scholarships to fund their studies are required to meet with me so that it is clear how their programme of learning will bring benefit - give back - to God's church in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Clergy undertaking study leave or post-graduate study by distance usually look to the St John's College Trust to fund them. Many people in our Diocese currently benefit from St Johns Scholarships. There is also funding available at a diocesan level to help meet the costs of occasional learning opportunities. In fact, 2019 saw the Lay Training Fund and the Clergy Professional Development Fund completely spent - which is great! It is hoped that those who have benefited from these grants will apply and share their learning in ways that bless others.

More dauntingly, it was my job to complete the diocese's application for St John's College funds (which pays for the DMT, DDO, DPT, educational aspects to the bishops role, and more...). In 2019 we asked for a significant increase in funding and the Trust granted our request. Thanks be to God.

Stephanie Robson May 2020