

Theology House 2020 Annual Report to Synod

2020 was not the year that any of us had planned. Our small team of Gareth Bezett (Director,) Heather Fraser (Administrator) and Sarah Dunning (Librarian) coped remarkably well with the disruption and adjusted our work patterns according to the Covid alert level system. Many of our more ambitious plans were deferred or scaled back.

Enrolments in the St John's College NZ Diploma of Christian Studies were strong, despite (or perhaps because of) Covid. As well as online learning via Zoom, we hosted 12 students onsite for a weekend intensive, including some from outside Christchurch Diocese. This programme continues to be available to Anglicans without tuition fees.

Our 2020 Lenten study *Life in the Garden* written by Rev Dr Tom Innes and Dorothy Innes was a huge success. We gained many new customers as the word spread about the quality of this publication. Only 100 remain unsold. Like so much else Covid disrupted Lent study groups around the world but I know a number continued over Zoom and other group deferred their study till later in year.

We had three excellent scholars for our winter preaching and seminar series "Theologians in the Cathedral." The two referenda held alongside the 2020 general election provided an excellent opportunity for some public theology. Together with Christchurch Transitional Cathedral, we hosted a pair of seminars with incredible line-ups of experts which were livestreamed. Likewise, we hosted a faith and science seminar for Ice Week which arose from the Cathedral's partnership with Antarctica NZ. We value our ongoing relationship with the Cathedral highly and our thanks go to Dean Lawrence and the team. Over 200 people attended these events.

We experienced a significant up-tick in library memberships. We are fortunate to be well-funded for new acquisitions and we continue to update the collection with a mix of current scholarship and classic resources. A particular focus is on New Testament resources including Koine Greek and Second Temple Judaism.

Theology House's finances continued to benefit from strong investment performance. This was despite a significant market downturn in the first quarter as the extent of the pandemic started to become known. The subsequent rebound more than made up for these losses. Our operational budget is funded from investment returns and grants from the St John's College Trust Board.

The major focus for 2021 will be the move, with the rest of the Anglican Centre, into Central Christchurch. I'm hopeful that our new location will generate more foot traffic and increased utilisation of our services, including the library. We continue to look for ways to support theology students (regardless of denomination or programme of study) within the diocesan boundaries. There is strong demand across society for Te Reo Māori classes and we are actively pursuing options.

The Theology House board comprises: Rev Dr Meg Harvey (Chair,) Rev Stephanie Robson (Deputy Chair,) Rt Rev Dr Peter Carrell (Warden,) Peter Hart, and Silvan Danuser. Rev Cameron Pickering was appointed in April 2021.

Gareth Bezett
Director

May 2021