

Rector's Report

Providence over Purpose

This year Lower Mountains Anglican (LMAP) has been yet again so blessed by the way God has chosen to work as his gospel has been proclaimed, people have come to faith, new members have joined our church family, a few have been promoted to glory having run the race of faith - and mission and ministry endeavours have been started or grown.

Yet, alongside those blessings, of course, comes hardships and we have equally experienced some of those pressures this past year – sicknesses, folk moving away, marriage breakdowns, burdens that have hurt, and tensions arisen in the course of doing the mission and ministry.

We need also to be mindful of those who have been hurt by those world-shaping events which have impacted so many over this last year, including the Bondi Beach Shootings, the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, and the more recent Middle East Crisis.

God, in *his providence*, has given his steady hand of sovereign direction and guided us according to his plan asking us to lean on him in faith and find *our purpose* in what he does through us – as blessed or as problematic as that might appear.

Every year has a different flavour to it – and usually that is shaped by the endeavours which take the most time, energy or brain space. For me this past year I have been reminded, over and over again, of four key endeavours:

- **The Priority of Proclamation** – the key reason why we gather in any form at LMAP is to see Christ proclaimed and people saved.
- **The Problems of Property** – having travelled now two full years through a process of a building redevelopment, we have seen the risk of being all consumed by this project, yet the importance of having the space to do what we do in this part of the world.
- **The Persistence of People** - especially our leaders who do the heavy lifting when it comes to pastoral care. There are so many in our church who have used their God-given gifts to serve the gospel and his people.
- **The Power of Prayer** - for it is our fundamental expression of reliance on God in *all things*, that we put *all things* before him.

It is these four key endeavours which I will use to structure my Rectors Report this year.

The Priority of Proclamation

What defines us as a church is *our purpose* – that we *gather to proclaim Christ*.

What I mean by that is this: What uniquely defines us as a church – is that we get together to put Jesus Christ before people in way that other groups of people are not exclusively aiming to do. We are not a school, sports association, political party, business venture, hospital or social gathering (as important those groups might be, even the Christian ones) – we are a church. We want all people to have the opportunity to place their trust in him and enjoy eternal life - and so we proclaim him unashamedly (Rom 1:16).

We must know and keep front and centre, that if we are not resolute in the priority we have to proclaim the gospel, then we are but a poorer version of what someone else in society is already trying to do.

We reach out in *mission* to those who don't yet know the extraordinary gift of the gospel. And we disciple in *ministry* those who do know the cost of this gospel gift – that God would give his one and only son, not only to save us, but to adopt us into his family (Gal 3:26-28).



Gathering to Proclaim Christ
by serving in *mission & ministry*
To cultivate *mission* and *ministry* by the saints to the glory of God
(Mark 10:43-45; Rom 12:1; Eph 2:10)

I am thankful that this year we have been able to start **SeekLIFE** and have seen members of our church family join together with those who are willing to check out Jesus. This five evening, intentional, get-together is all about proclaiming Christ.

It will lead into what will be called **ExploreLIFE** – which will run like a Discussion or Growth Group for newcomers over three terms. Putting Seek LIFE and Explore LIFE together means those who come will have the opportunity to work through Luke's Gospel in a relaxed setting and get to know others as they settle into faith.



We also started a **New Gathering at Blaxland at 4.30pm** on Sundays in October last year. The inspiring group of members who have been part of this new church plant have been an example to the rest of our church of what it looks like to step out in faith with the aim to gather to proclaim Christ.

I am thankful for the careful work, under God, that Paul Hallam and the teams involved have put into bringing these new endeavours from mere possibilities into reality and hope that many will accept the invitation to take part.

This past year we have also started two new **mission partnerships**.

With the retirement of Neville and Kathryn Naden from BCA, LMAP began a new BCA partnership with **James and Charly Boardman in the Parish of Kelso** (Diocese of Bathurst). Under Neil Atwood's direction, and with help from David Thompson, the aim is to help Kelso with remote 121 discipleship, occasional musicians for a new gathering, some gathering leading, Kids Spots and preaching help, and depending on how the Mt Riv Redevelopment goes – some of our excess equipment may be offered to Kelso to help them fit out their ministry spaces.



Proclaiming Jesus at Uni
to make mature disciples of Him

- Evangelise
- Encourage
- Train
- Send



We also have a new Mission Partner with **Campus Bible Ministry (CBM)** at the **University of Western Sydney** which started at the beginning of this year. Their efforts to proclaim Christ to Uni students is something our Parish Council thought wise to support – and with so many past and present students at LMAP from UWS, it would appear this is a good partnership.

Another new endeavour that started this past year, and on behalf of the Western Region happening at LMAP - is **the a-GAPe Challenge** program for school leavers who are looking to be trained in leadership in their local church. Last year we had 5 pioneers (4 from our church) and this year there are another 5 trailblazers (2 from our church) taking part. The participants pay an amount for the training and the Western Region Council have seed funded over two years. This is the way that we have employed Gail Oakey as the Coordinator and Jared Bartlett as Administrator, each a day a week. A highlight last year was sending the cohort to Bingarra for a country mission before they returned to help out in mission at our Holiday Club and a School Free day at Leura Anglican.



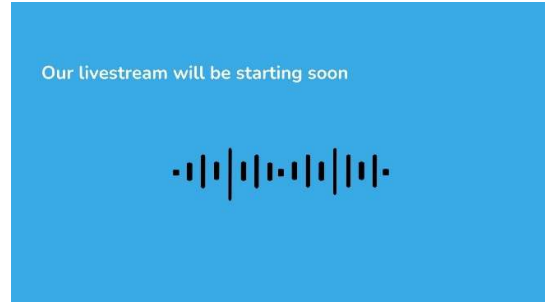
Mission and ministry is not only about starting new things or growing existing efforts – for there are times when despite best intentions, some endeavours run their course and the time comes to close them down. I am very thankful for the **Junior Jivers** ministry which has been running over the last few years led by Helen Rivers. At the end of last year, the Junior Jivers team made the call to finish up. To all who were involved in Junior Jivers, thanks for the way that you held out Jesus before little ones and their parents or carers using songs, activities and stories.



Looking ahead into this year and beyond – a focus will be on being more intentional in the way that we collectively **welcome newcomers**. A church family is only as welcoming as any one person. When a newcomer checks us out and is ignored by any one member, then the impression that leaves is that we are all unwelcoming. And yet I know that the heart of nearly all our members is to embrace and be encouraging to all who come. So we are doing some work in this space to help us greet, welcome, introduce, follow up and settle newcomers into our church family.

Another change for the year ahead is to our **Live-stream Ministry**. Since before Covid we have been live-streaming our Sunday Morning Gathering at Glenbrook - most recently our Glenbrook 10.30am gathering. On a Sunday we have had around 15-20 join us online and some as far away as New Zealand, Tasmania, South Australia and parts of NSW. I am told that

on average, by Tuesday when we take down the live-stream recording, there are around 60 views of our gathering. Our live-stream, like our website, is a *virtual front door* as we are 'checked out online' by those interested in what we are doing. For that reason, our live-stream experience (which will never be as warm and friendly as meeting together in person), needs to be better.



Starting after Easter, we will be moving the live-stream to the Glenbrook 9am Gathering for various reasons, one of which is that we have more people at 9am willing to serve in this ministry. It will still be possible for anyone to watch the full gathering anytime after that until Tuesday Morning when it will be removed and the Bible Reading and Bible Talk will be edited and placed on *Church Central Online* – where our Bible Talk Library sits.

If you are reading this, please let us know that you are with us online. We want to be able to care well for you, even if not in person. Time for a chat?



And looking even further forward, into 2027 and 2028, as part of our Strategic Plan, the aim is to start another **new gathering** perhaps in Mt Riv or Warrimoo, while continuing to support and grow our existing congregations. May I ask you to commit this endeavour to prayer.

The *Priority of Proclamation* – means making sure that what we believe at heart is what we profess with our lips, so that all will know that Jesus is Lord. (Rom 10:9-10)

The Problems of Property

This second endeavour this year, which has consumed so much energy, and at times created so much frustration, are the numerous property matters. Our properties may only be tents in which we meet, but they are very important tents for it is in our buildings that we do so much across the year. Property (and the financial decisions that go with that) are two of the key briefs of our Parish Council and this year they have been very busy.

With the new gathering at **Blaxland**, adjustments to the building including signage, lighting, technology and the removal of the external fence, have been key changes. The result is that a space that has been so good for ministry is now even better, open and inviting.



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Our **Glenbrook** building has hit that point where regular things are starting to break and some items have needed upgrading. Thanks to a generous donation, the Sound Desk was replaced this year, and the office has been rearranged which created another meeting space for groups. The water feature in the hall which came about during in the last heavy downpour has meant more work in repairs.



But of course the big property news from this year has been the redevelopment of **Mt Riv** with the addition of a new multi-purpose hall. It was at this meeting last year that I was able to announce that we had gained the DA approval to start the build. I was hoping that at this AGM I would have been able to say that the new Hall was open and running. Not quite.

I want to recognise the superhuman efforts of John Russell and Stephen Tolhurst who have shouldered the lion's share of guiding this project for the past two years and Ken Phillips who has been handling all the certification requirements and tells me that we are very close to getting occupancy. None of us, including me, fully understand the stresses that John, Stephen and Ken Phillips have managed, to get us to this point in Phase 1 of the redevelopment. We need to be thankful to God for these men.

Given this has taken so long, things have cost us more than we had planned or hoped for but we are very close to completing Phase 1 of this project. Depending on the cost, the plan is to move straight into Phase 2 which is renovating the existing auditorium so that we can expand the adult meeting space. David Thompson has graciously agreed to step into the Project Manager role for Phase 2. He is currently getting revised quotes for what is required.

The Cheerful Giver (2 Cor 9)

One of the key reasons why we are in this wonderful position under God is thanks to the generous donations that have been given from across the parish toward this redevelopment project (including some very large one-off donations) as well as regular giving to the **Growth Fund** which has been used to seed fund both the employment of new Ministry Team members (including Julie Haddon and Josh Schroder) and to underwrite the Phase 1 building project.

But allow me to say this from 2 Corinthians 9 (read in the AGM). The Apostle Paul gave thanks to God for the enthusiasm and support which he experienced from the Church in Corinth (8:16). They were eager to help, beyond the boundaries of Corinth (9:1-2) and he recognised their generous financial gifts toward the mission and ministry of the gospel (9:5). He encouraged them to be cheerful givers and to give with their heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, as would be pleasing to God (9:7-8).

I am not the Apostle Paul, we are not the church of Corinth - but I do think we can resonate with the gratitude which Paul expresses in 2 Corinthians 9. Over this last year, the members

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of our church have cheerfully given for the normal mission and ministry endeavours of our church. On top of that you have given towards the Mt Riv Redevelopment. Several have given specifically to the Growth Fund. And then with 2026 in mind you have pledged for this year an amount that made it possible for the Parish Council to offer ministry positions to both Julie Haddon and Josh Schroder.

I give thanks to God for you.

Paul wrote:

“He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God” (2 Cor 9:10-11)

Thank you for the part that you have played financially in funding what we do at LMAP. My prayer, similar to what Paul says here to the Corinthians, is that your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God – by many, and for generations to come. (2 Cor 9:11)

The Persistence of People

The third endeavour to mention is the *Persistence of People*.

It is our leaders who do the heavy lifting in our church family. Often unrecognised, they are the ones who are preparing Bible studies each week (in kids, youth or adult spaces), they are prepping to lead our gatherings, writing lesson plans, choosing songs or running band rehearsals, making crafts or inventing activities, managing rosters or planning menus, creating visuals or setting up tech, mowing lawns and cleaning our buildings. So often these leaders are doing what they do in behind-the-scenes kinds of ways. Our Pastoral Care is largely directed by the thoughtfulness of what these leaders arrange.

Your persistence, driven by the cause of the gospel is one of the reasons why I want to be part of this church family doing what we do under God for his glory. Please keep doing this – you are involved in the most noble of causes and your indescribable gifts exercised, help paint a picture of the indescribable gift that God has first given us (2 Cor 9:15).

May I say to the outgoing **Parish Council** including our Treasurer and Secretary – thanks for governing us well through a season of growth and change this past year. You have kept your eyes on the main thing being Christ, and yet you have pushed and challenged so that together we are accountable and hopefully wise in the decisions that we as a church make.

Parish Council and Synod Rep's





To the **Ministry Team**, those who I have the privilege of working alongside and respecting as colleagues – I love that I can also call you friends. I am very thankful to God for the fruitful and effective ways that you use your God-given and different gifts. I am especially thankful for your spouses and families (including mine) who stand by you in the cause for the gospel. LMAP is not a quiet sleepy place and so you move quickly,

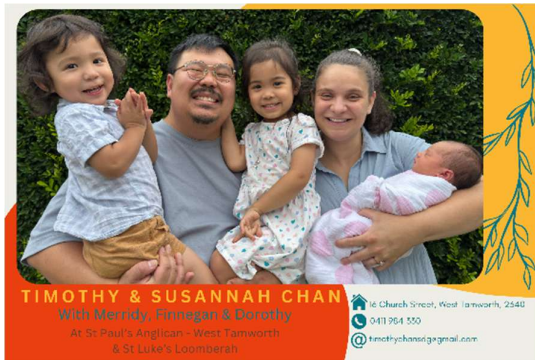
patiently, and flexibly under various reasonable and (often) unreasonable expectations, as the gears change and the seasons unfold.

If I might make quick mention of a few special cases.

David and Liz Swan, this year marks their tenth year on the Ministry Team at LMAP. What a gift the Swan family have been to our church family. Thanks for using your gifts to grow us in Christ.

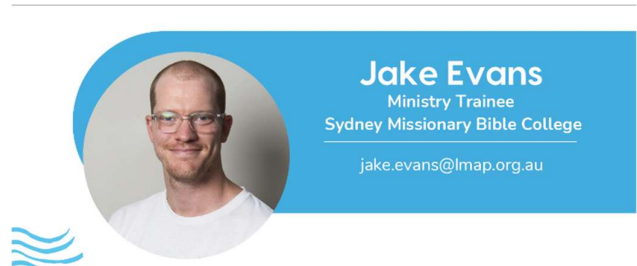
Trevor and Linda Oakley, we have not seen much of the Oakleys this year because they have been serving as the Locum for St Tom's Cranebook while they have been searching for a new minister – we are thankful for the important role they together have played.

Julie Haddon and Josh Schroder, it is a joy having you on the team formally and I am thankful for the ways I have already seen you teach and disciple people. I am looking forward to what that will look like going forward.



The recently ordained **Rev Tim and Susannah Chan** who joined us last year are now entrenched at West Tamworth – it was a pleasure to train with this special family.

Jake Evans, I am thrilled that you have started at SMBC this year and are now training again at LMAP. Welcome. May we be a church family who trains you (and **Liv Bush**) well for gospel mission and ministry.



And I would like to make special mention of **Helen Brown**.

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Helen in an honorary capacity, for several years, has been looking after the administration of our special projects and occasional gatherings like Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals, School of Ministry registrations and more and often helps with particular one-off matters that need attention. We are very thankful for the reliable, gracious and efficient way that she held so many special strings together for what we do.



The Power of Prayer

And finally, the *Power of Prayer*.

One of the great privileges of being a child of God is that at any time and in any circumstance, we can call out to God by prayer, petition, with thanksgiving, and present our requests to him (Phil 4:6). To know that we have a heavenly Father who has promised that he will listen, has to be a comfort and an assurance as we travel through the days that he has numbered for us and as we do the good works which he has prepared in advance for us to do (Eph 2:10).

Over this past year we have prayed – individually, 121, in our Growth Groups and ministries, at our Mission Prayer Nights and Combined Growth Group nights, and in our congregations. May I encourage you to make sure you are in some kind of setting where you are able to pray with others – to give thanks to God, to plea for the salvation of those around us, and to care for the needs of those in our church family.

To give some particular direction in this space, I want to suggest a prayer for us collectively and individually to pray often this year. For in all that we do, our first step should be to pray. Our second step should be to rest in what God chooses to do in response.

Here is the prayer:

Dear Father,

Help us to gather to proclaim Christ, and please use every LMAP member to play a part in bringing 20 people to faith in Jesus in each of our ministries and congregations across the year. To your glory. Amen.

Please pray this prayer with me. Not for our own sake, but for the sake of the many around who are lost and might be found through the efforts of the members of this church family who boldly yet humbly hold out Jesus to those whom God chooses to save. For it is *his providence* which sits over *our purpose*.

My friends, I love serving alongside you for the cause of Christ.



Ken D Noakes - Lower Mountains Anglican Church

Gathering to Proclaim Christ – serving to seek, connect, grow and send

March 2026

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Elected/Appointed to positions for the Year ahead:

Parish Council

Wardens – Glen Taylor, Mat Oakey, John McConville, Kevin Dodds, Andrew Grima, Karen Laurence-Rogers, Tony Cox, Luke Tolhurst, James Gribble.

Parish Councillor - Neil Guinery, Alix Madden, Stephen Tolhurst. Guests to the Parish will be: Helen Brown (Secretary) and Howard Whitehouse (Finance Officer).

Synod Representatives – David Mitchell, Hugh Chilton, Ken Noakes.

Parish Nominators – Sandy Morrison, Stephen Tolhurst, David Thompson, Judith Field, Howard Whitehouse.