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**ANGLICAN SCHOOLS: FAITH COMMUNITIES?
EXPECTATIONS AND TENSIONS**

Introduction

I am grateful for the honour of giving this keynote address. I am unashamedly committed to the notion that Anglican Schools should be Faith Communities. The organizing committee for this conference invited me to speak on the topic of Anglican Schools: Faith Communities? Tensions and Expectations *Awith the clear flavour of your views as a Bishop within the Church who is actively involved in Anglican Schools@.*

I am a regional bishop within the diocese of Perth. Archbishop Peter Carnley is the diocesan bishop, and I lead one of the four regions of this diocese, the Northern Region that comprises the northern and eastern suburbs of Perth. There are thirty-six parishes, numerous Anglican Homes and six Anglican schools within the Region. The northern corridor is rapidly developing with new housing estates, and within the next fifteen years there will be a new satellite city of about 50,000 at Yanchep-Two Rocks, about twenty kilometres from this conference site. I can foresee three more low-fee Anglican Schools being developed in this Northern Region in the next fifteen years.

I am the foundation chair of Peter Moyes Anglican Community School, a Fellow of the Council of Guildford Grammar School, and a member of the Anglican Schools Commission in Western Australia. I have attended the past two conferences of this network because I am convinced that Anglican Schools are vital components of the mission of the Anglican Church within Australia. Indeed, I would go further, be bolder.

Centres for the transmission of Christian Faith

I maintain that the core business of Anglican Schools is not just education. The core business is value-added education, that is, education for the whole person that flows out of experience of Christian faith and practice. My understanding from ASC school principals in Perth is that parents enrol their children at our Anglican schools in order to give their children *>Christian values=*. Values do not stand on their own; they are the by-product of beliefs. Thus, our schools are given the opportunity of opening up in a thoughtfully respecting style the Christian Faith to the students entrusted to us.

Further, I would assert with Bishop George Browning that Anglican Schools may well serve the function that the monasteries did as the Dark Age engulfed Europe.¹ That is, Anglican schools will become the centres for the transmission of Christian Faith and Anglican thought in a society that dissipates its public voice of religion, and embraces the lone voice of the secular individual.

In *Habits of the Heart* Robert Bellah introduced the world to Sheila Larson, who described her faith by saying, *AI believe in God. I=m not a religious fanatic. I can=t remember the last time I went to church. My faith has carried me a long way. It=s Sheilaism. Just my own little voice.* @² This gave rise to the widespread use of the term *ASheilaism@* as the real American religion - Ajust my own little voice@, as the only authoritative word to people=s lives. This is the ideology of autonomy.

¹George Browning in his welcoming remarks to the Ninth National Anglican Schools Conference, Canberra, April 7, 2000.

²Quoted in William Willimon=s *Pastor*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 2002, p.203.

Paradigm shift

My observation is that the church, generally, and the Anglican Church of Australia, in particular, is on the cusp of a paradigm shift in being the church. Already structures that have served the church for well over a thousand years are either under duress or collapsing, as is the case in many rural areas of Australia. I fear that church might become an urban phenomenon, and that in the rural areas of Australia there might be disconnected community house-church expressions that will eventually implode. However, that is another story for another place. It well illustrates that significant structural change is upon the church, even if the news of such change is unwelcome.

We forget our own history as a church. If we do not know our own history, how can we deal with the future? Part of our history is to realize that *Athe church has no predetermined institutional pattern. Its structures follow the structures of the society in which it takes root. We tend to forget that this is precisely what happened in the great evangelistic periods of Christian history, when the church adapted itself to the world it found.*³

My perspective is that of a bishop who is seeking to position an episcopal region at the outset of the third millennium to be as effective as possible in its mission and ministry. As I survey the present scene, and listen to the prophetic sociological voices, I am conscious that the church has planned more from the perspective of the 1950s than for the future of 2010. The parish system has become idealized, as if it is the only way to be the church; it is deeply implanted in our psyche.

There are parts of Melbourne, for instance, where one can stand on a ridge in the inner eastern suburbs and see the spires of Anglican churches gracing the skyline only a mile or two apart from each other! These may have functioned well, prior to today=s exaggerated use of the car, but nowadays they are like competing discount outlets, cajoling a shrinking number of professing Anglicans to enter them for an hour or two on Sundays.

The northern suburbs in Perth offer a visible embodiment of the varying theories of town-planners as to what effects community. We moved from the traditional rectangular street scape to the spaghetti configuration of endless cull-de-sacs, back to street scapes that back onto small green areas. However, as you drive along the road that acts as a northern distributor, Marion Avenue, you encounter wave upon wave of housing that seem to merge into one another, even though there are discrete suburbs. There does not seem to be any obvious or natural centre of community in these oceans of suburban sprawl.

Natural community

The experience of community happens in locations of natural gathering such as Shopping Centres, the modern secular cathedrals, traffic jams (which are infrequent in Perth), and schools. Schools, especially fee-paying schools, have created an expectation of community from the very values that these schools inculcate. Parents are even prepared to undertake service to the school, to attend school functions, and to permit their children to undertake out-of-hours curricular activities. In other words, these schools receive from parents and students many hours of freely given time, much energy, and

³ Victor De Waal, *What is the Church?*, SCM, 1969, p.68.

develop a felt-sense of community. The school is a life focus for students and their parents.

This felt-sense of community is evidenced in adults who suffer withdrawal symptoms when their last child graduates from a school and in the loyalty of Old Scholars= associations, and even in weddings being celebrated in School Chapels, despite the continuing numerical decline of weddings in Australia. These are, in my view, all indicators of an experience of significant community that has provided people -parents and students- with a major fulfilment of human need, the experience of inclusive community.

My observation of suburban development is that it is difficult to create community. Indeed, from the church=s perspective, establishing what was once the typical suburban church is not feasible, if a vibrant, financially viable congregation is to be established. Within the Northern Region there are instances of an imaginative structural form of evangelism that the diocese of Perth initiated in the 1990s in response to the 1988 Lambeth Conference=s declaration of the 1990s as a decade of evangelism.

The concept was exciting. This initiative was launched without noticing the change of life-style in suburban Australia, and without a recognition of the congregational financial and size requirements that could service an establishment capital indebtedness of \$270,000, as well as operating costs of about \$75,000 per annum.

Much research into the dynamics of congregations that has been released over the past decade asserts that sustaining the typical parish model requires a congregation of about 150 adults who are all financially contributing to the parish in its capital debt repayments and to its recurrent costs. The reality is that the size of the majority of congregations within Australia, and even within the United States, is 75 or less!

At the present moment this diocese has a capital debt in its parish development budget of about one million dollars. I know from my pastoral dealing with parish councils that the level of capital debt has been a real, disheartening burden, especially if these parish plants are located in mortgage-belt areas. In fact, much of my time in the early part of my episcopate in this Region was spent in renegotiating bank loans, and contracting part-time clergy appointments to these financially strapped parishes, as well as seeking to invigorate their sense of purpose and mission within their humanly needy suburban contexts.

My chief impression of some of these parishes established in the 1990s is that they are not able to attract community, given that most people=s experience of community is relational rather than geographical. A clear sign of the saturating effect of this predicament is the plateauing of membership of these congregations. Usually there is about seventy or less people at worship on Sundays, far less than are needed to pay for the infrastructure, both physical and human, that the parish model of being church requires.

In 1996 I was in a professional development programme in North Carolina sponsored by the Alban institute where I learned that newly established congregations in the United States were unexpectedly plateauing at a membership of ninety. I deduced from this that the plateau phenomenon would be evident in Australia, and that the numerical level would be lower, given the difference in the religious cultures.

As I absorbed the situation of this northern region when I took up my position in March 1998, I became convinced that we had invested in a limited growth model that was accumulating unserviceable debt at the local level, and that we had reached a point where diocesan finance would be saturated by attending to the existing debt levels, rather than being made available for new church

development, especially as the suburbs continued to roll out northwards.

I am also convinced that in terms of capital works and physical infrastructure, the Australian church has been living beyond its means for a considerable time. For instance, our school and church buildings are highly under-utilised over the entire week. As a church we cannot afford to have such under utilisation of such costly infrastructure.

My thinking has been galvanised by searching for a means to increase the effectiveness of the church's mission and contact with society, as well as to build upon naturally occurring forms of community. For my interpretation of the observation about newly established suburban parishes suggests that these do not generate, in the main, sufficient depth of community to be self-sustaining nor penetrate the surrounding localities.

Sustaining resources for life

Further, the spiritually precarious nature of our society suggested that there is an urgent need for our students to explore meaning, theology, and spirituality and to be given sustaining resources for the major transitions they undertake over their lives as students. I am delighted that some schools are integrating Peter Vardy's five-strand approach into their curricula. However, I am still disturbed at the very low productivity ratio, if I might be economically crude for a moment, of the number of students passing through our Anglican schools, to the number of young Anglican adults in our churches.

I wonder whether this is the case because church and school have operated as discrete, distinct entities, occasionally meeting on formal occasions, but without a natural placenta in place whereby each might live symbiotically with the other. In other words, we have had for a very long time the school teaching religious content and the church being invited to celebrate worship, but without the skills being provided for real engagement with theology by students, nor for parameters being set in place for experience of God.

Of course, perversely, this same criticism applies to parishes, which have on the whole failed to offer resources for spiritual growth other than the bare minimum to keep Christians alive spiritually. This is a major issue for concern given the current questing of our society.

In relation to this question, the social researcher Hugh Mackay has observed, (and this is a rather long quote),

A few years ago, I conducted a social research project in which we invited Australians to talk about their beliefs. The clearest message to emerge from that study was that Australians believe in the value of belief, even if they don't actually believe anything else! This is an age of disbelief. It is a time when Australians envy those who hold passionate views; those with strong religious faith; those who seem to know what to believe. Several times in that study people commented on the pleasure they take in seeing little groups of people standing on the footpath chatting to each other outside church on a Sunday morning: 'Isn't it nice to know that sort of thing still goes on,' they would say, even though they had no intention of joining in.

'I wish I believed in something' is more than a dream; it is an audible cry of despair. Perhaps it's the inevitable cry of a society in transition, especially a post-modern society. This is a time when certainty is being replaced by uncertainty, because that seems like a more appropriate response to the erratic and unpredictable turn of events.

We are living in a culture of doubt and scepticism that arises from our sustained embrace of materialism and, perhaps, from the twentieth century's unbalanced preoccupation with the rational.

But here's the irony: the very uncertainty that characterises the post-modern era will lead, inexorably, to a season of renewed faith.

After all, doubt is the engine of faith. Belief entails uncertainty. Meaninglessness is uncomfortable for us, so it is natural for us to search for meanings that will help us make sense of our lives. Hence the growing (and sometimes bizarre) interest in spirituality, as opposed to religion, in the midst of an essentially secular and

materialistic society.⁴

This state of the nation suggests to me that we should offer in safe environments -and schools are still considered such an environment - the opportunity for exploration of this meaning dimension. Now this is where various ingredients or factors are forged together in order to produce the kind of faith community that I desire to see, and for which I have set up parameters in this Northern Region.

I was encouraged in this thinking by reading Charles Handy. In his The Hungry Spirit, Handy reflects,

ASchools are charged by society with multiple functions, which is one of their problems, but they are the only safe practice grounds for life that we have. They are, for that reason, precious and protected places, but they need to be clear about the implications. The economic historian RH Tawney, returning to Britain after the catastrophic experience of the Great War and what he called a world of graves, asked for education that was >generous, inspiring and humane= to replace an existing system that was >neither venerable, like a college, nor popular, like a public house, but merely indispensable, like a pillar-box=. He decried an approach that was narrowly utilitarian because of its >spiritual crassness= and declared that >only those institutions are loved which touch the imagination=. We have still to create those places in most of our societies.@⁵

We have three parishes within our low-fee schools, and one that works closely with a school, although it is presently resisting co-location. Any new parishes will be co-located from the outset in the preliminary school structure. The Perth Roman Catholic Education Office has functional designs in its primary schools that allow for the siting of a parish community within the primary school facilities.

In fact, in one of our embryonic parishes, Ellenbrook, we are the guests of the local Roman Catholic primary school.

Imagination

A fundamental requirement even to begin the development of schools as faith communities is an imaginative act. Sadly, imaginal cramp⁶ is a reasonably common condition in the church, causing much pain and restricted creativity. The congregation presently resisting co-location suffers such lack of imagination. It operates as a small church in a burgeoning area that is full of young families, and with one of the highest concentration of single parents in Perth.

Educators too are required to make this imaginable leap, for they also can hold on to images of schools that belong to yesterday. Again Charles Handy makes a provocative comparison that schools might lag behind what society needs, given that they might be *>designed by people from a world that used to be, for a world that will be no more, rather like our armies, which were always well trained*

⁴Hugh Mackay, *Three Australian Dreams* in The Melbourne Anglican, September 1999.

⁵Charles Handy, *The Hungry Spirit*, Arrow, London, 1998, p.209.

⁶Simon Tugwell, *Prayer - Living with God*, Veritas Publications, Dublin, 1974, p.16.

for the last war.⁷

That imagination is critical in leaping to new understandings of what seem like intractable problems is made very clear by Don Watson in his recollection of Paul Keating's famous *Redfern Speech*.

Watson writes in his biography of Paul Keating *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart*, *The first principle of the Redfern speech was that the problem (the dispossession of Australia's indigenous people) could only be solved by an act of imagination.*⁸

First, the imagination to seize a vision, to embody that vision, and to make it work. Imagination is required in the leaders, both in church and school, if a new paradigm of being a faith community is to be allowed to emerge and develop. In addition, there is a primary requirement of commitment to the mission of the Anglican Church. After all, the schools are schools of the Anglican Church or schools in the Anglican tradition. They are not schools spawned by McDonalds nor any other free enterprise group. It is imperative that schools recognise that they are a constituent part of the mission of the church, that they share in the *raison d'être* of the church, and are not an attachment for their own reputation and marketing purposes.

Secondly, there are a series of recognitions that must be accepted if we are to evolve effectively seamless faith communities located in our schools. That adjective *seamless* resonates with the growing appreciation of the need for a holistic approach to most enterprises. It suggests a systems understanding of organizations. Few, if any, enterprises are totally discrete, unaffected by other bodies.

Seamless communities

A school is now understood to be composed of a variety of communities: students, staff, parents, friends, the Council and its generic body, such as the Synod of the diocese. The vision of schools as faith communities looks upon these bodies as a seamless community, all-interdependent, each deserving attention from the school.

In respect of faith development and nurture, it is a matter of non-segmentation. That is, the great theological enterprise that lies at the heart of any Christian community ought to be made available in attractive and imaginative forms to the entire seamless school community that constitutes the potential, if not actual, faith community.

Let me offer two examples.

I am indebted for this first example to Canon Frank Sheehan of Christchurch Grammar School in Perth whose capacity to reach out to and engage with the seeker for meaning in this city is quite marvellous. I have attended some of the evenings Frank has mounted under the auspices of the Centre for Ethics at Christchurch Grammar.

Along with others, usually younger than me, I have, for example, explored the themes of that stunning

⁷Ibid, p.228.

⁸Don Watson, *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart*, Random House, Sydney, 2002, p.289.

film *American Beauty*, listened to the influences upon Louis De Bernieres in his writing, attended to the wondrous poetry of Bruce Dawe, and been taken into his view of the world. All this is amazing stuff, given that most others present were not the usual patrons of Sunday worship. Yet I also know that when Sunday services are celebrated at Christchurch chapel the congregation are those who at this time are unlikely to frequent local parishes. Yet there are implicit, if not explicit, labour demarcations softly sizzling in the background about such worship services.

There is a view around that if the congregation is not seated with a parish church it is *not* a congregation. An additional requirement to imagination is an injection of prophetic fortitude!

A second example was an imaginative endorsement of secular Fathers= Day. Jonathan Joyce, the chaplain at S. Mark=s Anglican Community School, organized with the school=s Head of Primary to have a Fathers= Day Primary worship celebration at which four fathers spoke about the joy of being a father. Two hundred and thirty fathers attended the service! Then the children cooked breakfast for their dads, and played games with them. This took place on a Wednesday morning, with working fathers prepared to give this time to their children.

As marvellous as this event was, I wonder whether the fathers who participated recognised that this was the church undertaking this celebration, given that it was the chaplain (the priest) who was the centrepiece of it? Or did these fathers conclude that this was a great school initiative; even though worship had been central in it, without them realizing that this was an experience of church?

My point is that we have intentionally and systematically to work hard at the mindset of our public to effect the transfer of >school= to >church=, especially whenever worship is involved. This is both a perceptual and educational issue that requires us to assist people to leap over limiting segmented and mutually excluding concepts.

Even more basic than imaginative undertakings that bridge church and school, I think, are matters like the ability of leaders to take risks, to accept generous offers from those already further along this development, to move beyond accepted past practices, and to imagine a different configuration of church as well as different forms of delivery of Christian formation.

However, there is a culture of resistance. This is normal and not diabolical. Anyone who is experienced in change management will appreciate that *resistance* is always the first response to change. No organization willingly embraces disequilibrium. And change always causes disequilibrium.

The potential for theological reflection is as rich as there are human beings. The grist of being human is the substance for theological reflection, and as Hugh Mackay indicated *'I wish I believed in something' is more than a dream; it is an audible cry of despair. Perhaps it's the inevitable cry of a society in transition, especially a post-modern society.*

For instance, our schools have large numbers of parents entering and negotiating mid-life, which begins at about 35. This is a turbulent psychological period, when many people go off the rails, as it were. There are huge possibilities for the faith community to offer descriptions about the process of mid-life, and especially the urgent sense of spirituality that it spawns.

Christian formation

My sad observation is that I see little Christian formation in such a vital area, right on our doorsteps, being offered from our schools, and indeed, from most of our parishes. The rise and number of book and film clubs in the community suggests that such activities could be open to theological reflection as much as literary or cinema appreciation. One film reviewer has observed that people attend the cinema not so much as to be entertained as to understand their lives. I consider that the opportunities for practising theological reflection, for exploring the sense of meaning, is only as limited as are our imaginations.

Or again an issue that Margaret Throsby explored on ABC Classic FM on November 6th last year with Dr. Michael Carr-Gregg, the precarious lives of adolescents. Michael Carr-Gregg made this

observation that we in church and school must take to heart:

There was a marvellous study in 1987 of over 12,000 young people in the United States by Michael Resnick. He was trying to figure out what made them resilient, because some of them lived amongst groups of pervasive social adversity.

What he found was that having a charismatic adult was one thing. Having a sense of connectedness to your school was very important. Having spirituality or a sense of the sacred was also seen as very important - lots of other protective factors and if you have got enough of them, then we can get to a point of resilience.

Resilience being?

Resilience being the ability to bungy-jump through life -that you recognize that bad things happen all the time to very nice people but you can supervene these circumstances and come out ahead, that the losses we have in our lives don't just take, they can also give.⁹

Yet these possibilities for theological reflection are generally not pursued. Why is this the case? Is it imaginal cramp, as I have already mentioned, or are there more structural elements inhibiting the development of faith communities?

I believe there *are* some structural issues impeding this imaginal shift.

I consider that the therapeutic model has captured the ordained ministry of the church. I suggest that a good case could be made for this claim. Somehow ordained ministry lost its sense of self and role in the late 1960s in that first blood-rush of secularism that accompanied the cultural upheaval of the 1960s, when teenage culture first dethroned the soporific Sunday and captured the marketplace.

Ordained ministry sought to regain prestige and place through its association with the medical profession. Hence, the introduction of Clinical Pastoral Education and a therapeutic model of ministry (and of being the church) that still have great influence. Of course, a marriage with medicine in order to gain prestige and professional respect might now seem to be tendentious.

However, this pastoral imagery has saturated the church, and forged the model of ministry in the style of a helping profession. This transition lost some of the deep aspects of ministry, such as theological reflection, exposition, spirituality and apologetics.

Much school chaplaincy is of the pastoral model. I would call for a more intentional formation model where the exposition of theology is taken seriously, where apologetics is practised in respect of the issues generated by the culture, and where real experience of Christian practice is offered.

In support of this plea, I appeal to the insights of theologian George Lindbeck in his book *Nature of Doctrine*. Lindbeck said that most of us, because we live in a society indebted to the thought of philosophical liberalism, consider religion as a matter of Aexperiential/expressivism@. That is, we think of religion as an institutional means of expressing our personal, inner, innate religious experiences.

⁹Michael Carr-Gregg in an interview on ABC Classic FM, November 6, 2001.

However, according to Lindbeck, becoming an adherent to a religion is much more like learning to speak a language. Becoming a Christian is somewhat analogous to learning French. Just as it is impossible to learn French by reading a French novel in an English translation, so it is also impossible truly to learn Christianity by encountering it through any translation, like the language of self-esteem or one's feelings. We have to learn the vocabulary, inculcate the moves and gestures of this faith, in order to know the faith.¹⁰

This suggests to me that we are about developing a counter-culture that is not premised on the social determination of AI think for myself@ - an externally imposed social determination. Therefore, the learning climate that Anglican schools provide is that of faith. The constituents of faith are to be offered intentionally and thoughtfully in the complete approach by the school. In other words, the school becomes an expression of a faith community. And clearly, chaplains have a highly symbolic role in such a textured community, as the primary foci of the most important pastoral act of a faith community, worship.

Becoming a Christian is more about formation than simply education. The affective as well as the cognitive life has to be formed with values, mores, norms, customs being absorbed so that the perceptual world that Christianity generates is holistic, that is, it includes the whole person in loving God and neighbour.

This is the same as any other culture socialises. Although a dominant culture, such as western consumerism, is surreptitious in that it seeps into our thinking without activating any critical assessment. Given that Christianity is now a cognitive minority, Christian belief is more likely to be critiqued as much by its adherents as by its numerically greater opponents. It is not likely that any faith community that is developed in such a public place as a school could shield itself from vigorous inspection and critique. That, of course, is to be welcomed, for debate in the public sphere is of benefit to all concerned, and resists any potential collapse into a belief ghetto.

Thus far, I have set out my vision for schools as faith communities with the particular trajectory of schools embracing parishes. I want to desist from such discrete terms, >school=, >parish=, as I consider them to be unhelpful in thinking about the development of Christian community in a society that has few naturally occurring instances of community.

Current situation in the Northern Region, Diocese of Perth

May I remind you of what we have developed thus far in this northern region of the diocese of Perth?

We have three parishes co-located on three school sites, with one in protracted negotiation with a school that was built after the parish had been established in a boutique building with a great sea view.

We have a commitment to develop new parishes within schools, either feeder primaries or K-12. I am encouraging the notion of school chapels reaching out through the provision of Sunday worship services to families who are beginning to explore Christian belief and commitment.

We operate two models within the seamless community of faith that we are pursuing. The model at John Septimus Roe Anglican Community School at both campuses (Mirrabooka and Beechboro) has the Parish Priest and Chaplain as the one priest. Thus at Beechboro which is a campus of 380 primary

¹⁰ George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine - Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1984, pp.16,22.

students, the chaplain is the parish priest of S. Bede=s, Beechboro.

This parish was founded twelve years ago with initially part-time stipendiary appointments. There has been a rapid turnover of priests, due mainly to the part-time nature of the appointment.

Consequentially, the congregation has not grown beyond about thirty adults. Now the focus is on the families of the school community as the most immediate source for congregational outreach and engagement.

The chaplain/parish priest is able to develop initiatives that engage with issues detected from within the school=s extended community. There is more direct integration, cohesion of programming, and reinforcement of parish strategies through this seamless understanding of the school as a faith community.

In the more complex environment of Mirrabooka, the same model operates with the parish priest/chaplain operating as a team leader for assistant clergy and clergy in a network of adjacent parishes that form part of the natural catchment of John Septimus Roe School. This arrangement has brought significant integration of resources, eliminated wasteful duplication of parish programmes, and provided team collegiality in low socio-economic areas that have proven difficult for the church in mission.

The parish priest/chaplain writes of another joint initiative between the school and the parish:

When the parish of Nollamara/Mirrabooka moved to St Paul's based at John Septimus Roe Anglican Community School inadequate provision was made for a space for parish activities beyond those held in the chapel and a small foyer attached to the worship area. This made for many difficulties in conducting day and night time meetings and programmes. As part of the growing relationship between the parish and the school, and in recognition of the dual role of the clergy between both communities (which incorporates them into the student support team and the parish ministry team), there is to be a substantial redevelopment of the parish rooms area. This will be a facility for student support services and parish ministry. It will provide office space for clergy, specialist staff and psychologists, interview space to be shared by these staff, and a common meeting space (divided by a folding wall) which will be shared by parish and school. This redevelopment begins in November 2002 and will be totally funded by the JSRACS.

Much imagination is emanating from this model, which will grow with the employment of chaplaincy interns next year. This particular instance of the model is a lighthouse for the Northern region, given the church=s past incapacity to create sustained faith communities in blue-collar areas.

The model at S. Mark=s School with Whitfords parish has a distinct parish priest and school chaplain, with each having had previous experience of the other=s role. This arrangement requires a good collaborative arrangement, high levels of trust, intentional communication, and professional mutuality of ministry. These are requirements that extend most clergy, given the lone-ranger culture of Anglican clergy.

Families have joined the parish from within the school community. There are crossover ministries that occur such as a Mother=s Group, preparation of children for early admission to Holy Communion, confirmation, and events, such as Christmas carols.

The distinct roles of >parish priest= and >school chaplain=, contribute (I sense) to the dichotomous thinking in the mind of the public that school and church are two entities. This is a needlessly unhelpful dichotomy.

Change Management

In managing and maintaining such significant transitions in the evolution of schools as faith communities, I have been greatly helped by the insights of Ronald Heifetz in his book, *Leadership without easy answers*.¹¹ This is a masterful summary of change management. Change management is

¹¹Ronald Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1994. See especially p.248.

not the substance of this address. However, some pertinent observations about skills in change management that enable the movement to seamless faith communities include:

- § a clear and continuous articulation of the vision to the point where you think that you are a continuous cassette loop
- § developing a sufficiently strong coalition of supporters who become the critical change agents,
- § empowering the creative change agents who might not have much natural power in the structures,
- § turning up the heat for change to happen
- § attending to the resisters and developing strategies to lower the level of resistance
- § identifying potential and actual saboteurs

In other words, a lot of energy and persistence is required as well as good negotiating skills. But such requirements are demanded of all transformational change, whenever a new culture is being developed.

One very useful exercise that I arranged in order for all involved in developing a seamless faith community required the senior staffs of the schools and the parishes concerned to meet together in a consultation in order to begin to appreciate each other=s culture, and the potential misunderstandings that were all too possible. Dr. Tom Wallace from the Anglican Schools Commission in Perth designed and led the consultation.

This consultation surfaced underlying misperceptions and named lack of knowledge of the two cultures. Work after the consultation did progress mutual understanding, although in this, as in other arenas, the practice of forgiveness is not as frequent as might be helpful!

Issues that emerged were:

- § Schools are diverse ethnic communities with students from a variety of faith (and non-faith) backgrounds. They deal mainly with young people although there are significant relationships with parents.
- § Schools must remain sensitive to the diversity of cultural and faith backgrounds of students and cannot assume they have an interest in, or commitment to Christian Faith
- § Schools are large and complex corporate entities which are highly structured and where members of staff have clearly defined tasks. High levels of accountability exist and the pace and pressures of work are fairly intense.

Such consultation with formalised mechanisms such as *chapel management committees* that include representatives from the schools and parishes, or the licensing of chaplains as associate priests in the parish with automatic membership of the parish council, or the provision for the parish priest to be a member of the school council should be ongoing, for personnel inevitably change and their replacements need to be socialised into this new culture. Of course, the new culture itself is not initially fully determined.

Constraints

I turn now to constraints that have had to be negotiated.

(i) Socialisation

The first constraint is a conceptual constraint: such an arrangement is new. The depth of socialisation into past structures of the discrete separation of school and church cannot be underestimated. This change into a seamless faith community is a new culture, requiring strategies that attend to the residual power of a past, persistent strong culture. I recall a warning that in initiating transformation change, victory is often called far too early.

In addition to the natural resilience of a past ingrained culture, whenever there is significant stress in

the new culture, regression to the old culture becomes a greater possibility. Naturally in such a systemic change as is the reformulation of school and parish into a seamless faith community, there will be stresses and strains.

The mournful longing for Egypt that characterised the liberated Israelites is still a pre-eminent feature in most religious institutions whenever the stresses emerge in any new venture. And, of course, I have had to listen to this, often-legitimate irritation at unforeseen consequences of actions taken in the former paradigm, impacting upon the constituents of the new paradigm. However, perseverance is both a wonderful gift and a desire of prayer!

(ii) Commitment of leaders

Another constraint is the degree of commitment by the leaders of the school to the mission of the Anglican Church. If such leadership fails to sense that the work of the school is part of the broader mission of the church, the energetic and sustained development of a seamless faith community is likely to be impeded. A bishop cannot assume that all leaders in Anglican schools share his passion for the mission of the church. This is an area that does require sensitive negotiation, working to a shared vision, and the development of resilient levels of trust by all parties. One has to forge good, open communication.

(iii) Deployment of clergy

A centrepiece in the effective functioning of a seamless community is the deployment of the parish priest and the chaplain. Personnel selection for these roles is critical, and is an interactive process between Principal, Bishop, and parish nominators. This is more complicated than a usual chaplaincy or parish appointment.

I consider from experience thus far that I would employ a professional in the field of workplace agreements to ensure that those appointed as priests in the seamless faith community were well briefed on the position specifications, and were able to negotiate with one another amenable working relationships. I have employed in one situation a work place mediator to enable those involved to understand each other better and to establish harmonious working relationships and styles.

I am not surprised that I have had to undertake this contractual arrangement, given the very traditional pattern of priestly formation, and the power dynamics intrinsic in the assumption that a priest is a lone operator. This latter is technically known as *clericalism*, and it becomes public in the behaviour of clergy acting as if they owned the church. Naturally, in the notion of solo practitioner there is not an understanding of joint tenancy, as it were, so conflict or abrasion is usual. We have not been good at developing clergy teams.

This acknowledgement is quoted by opponents of what I have set out to achieve as an intractable reason for not pursuing team leadership. However, in so many dimensions of the community, teamwork is fundamental and essential. Teamwork in the church is possible too.

A further constraint at present, but one which with careful selection procedures can be greatly reduced, is the small number of clergy who have the capacities to straddle such a seamless community, both from the perspective of the school and also from the parish within the school. I apologize that I move into the dichotomous notions of *school* and *parish*, but I do so only to make the point, about the particular attributes required in clergy who will minister in this new arrangement. They will need to be gifted clergy indeed.

We are beginning more systematically next year a programme of employing school leavers to work as chaplaincy interns in order to attract and groom potential ordinands for this new theatre of ministry. There are dynamic, attractive young Christians who do have the capacity, given the more tribal nature of teenage culture, to work collaboratively without having to overcome inherited generationally conditioned work practices. In this arrangement, such interns will be encouraged to begin university theological subjects, whilst working in a team environment, located initially at John Septimus Roe Anglican Community School.

(iv) The theological literacy of teachers

A further constraint is the theological literacy of most teachers working within Anglican schools. I think, despite the industrial sensitivities, that it is possible to develop a professional development programme that would ensure that teachers undertake the study of theology in order to be able to reinforce the value system of our schools, and thus work in an integrated curriculum towards the desired outcomes of our parents.

Accountability

The implementation of a seamless faith community situated in a school does necessitate a renegotiation of pathways of accountability for the clergy concerned. We are reflecting on this, although if the trust relationships are good and hearty, then the principals concerned, bishop, and school principal, ought to be able to provide a pattern of accountability that is neither competitive nor enervating.

An appreciation of systems theory is crucial, I think, in the practice of a seamless faith community. Indeed, I would argue, that it is prior to being able to make the imaginative construct of such a community. The daily work of a chaplain will make it obvious to any school leader that students are not discreet, neat autonomous units, but part of a vast system that reaches into families, into staff relationships, into the culture of the school, and into the wider influence of the external culture of society. Therefore, it makes sense, to me, to recognize the extent of these systems impacting upon our constituents, to perceive the economy of ourselves operating as a system rather than as segments, and to embrace the notion and practice of a seamless faith community.

A momentum towards such seamlessness will grow from the kind of society that the present day students will generate as they more stridently influence the nature of our culture. For these teenagers live a different form of community than those of preceding generations of Australians.

We operate largely as autonomous beings who connect when necessary to achieve usually our social purposes. According to the forecast of Hugh Mackay, the current generation of teenagers will implement a belonging to one another based not on utilitarian requirements but on the need for stabilized identity. This is how Hugh Mackay depicts this new culture that, I consider, simply reinforces the move into seamless communities, in our case, seamless communities of faith.

They are the generation who, having grown up in an era of unprecedentedly rapid change, have intuitively understood that they are each other's most precious resource for coping with the inherent uncertainty of life.

Their desire to connect, and to stay connected, will reshape this society. They are the harbingers of a new sense of community, a new tribalism that will challenge everything from our old-fashioned respect for privacy to the way we conduct our relationships and the way we build our houses. The era of individualism is not dead yet, but the intimations of its mortality are clear.¹²

Conclusion

My perspective is that of a bishop seeking to position the church in its response to the divine command to be on mission within a rapidly developing spread of new suburbs that absorbs our resources. I am excited by a new paradigm that marries holistic education with the natural theological enterprise of the church and with the ever present needs of human beings seeking meaning, purpose and identity for themselves. I recall one of the great 1998 Lambeth Conference aphorisms that *>mission is how God loves the world=*.¹³ I would see this enterprise of seamless communities of faith as an aspect of this mission and a disclosure of God=s love.

¹² Hugh Mackay *One for all and all for one: it=s a tribal thing*, in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, July 13, 2002.

¹³ The Official Report of the Lambeth Conference 1998, Morehouse Publishing, Pennsylvania, 1999, p.121.

I believe that although any new enterprise or culture produces tensions, the opportunities before us both for the communities we serve and for the church in its mission, in the formation of schools as faith communities, far outweigh the tensions. I think that such seamless communities of faith will be a major component of the mix of models that the church develops as it contextualises its ministry in the next decades.

In 1999 the General Synod of the Church of England accepted unanimously that church schools stand at the centre of the Church's mission to the nation.¹⁴

My point is that seamless faith communities located in schools are not a Perth, nor a Brisbane phenomenon, but are far wider: an international phenomenon, as the church adapts itself to the demands of greater urban mission.

¹⁴ Robin Greenwood, *Transforming Church - Liberating Structures for Ministry*, SPCK, London, 2002, p.22.

Appendix:

Full text of the quotation from Hugh Mackay at p.4.

A few years ago, I conducted a social research project in which we invited Australians to talk about their beliefs. The clearest message to emerge from that study was that Australians believe in the value of belief, even if they don't actually believe anything else! This is an age of disbelief. It is a time when Australians envy those who hold passionate views; those with strong religious faith; those who seem to know what to believe. Several times in that study people commented on the pleasure they take in seeing little groups of people standing on the footpath chatting to each other outside church on a Sunday morning: 'Isn't it nice to know that sort of thing still goes on,' they would say, even though they had no intention of joining in.

The same reaction occurs when you ask Australians how they would feel about a society in which the Church played no role at all: they hate that concept, even if they have no personal connection with the Church, because they identify the Church with the maintenance of an admirable system of beliefs and even, in some cases, with the maintenance of a strong moral code. For some people, the belief in the value of belief is connected with a half-formed sense that 'there's something out there'.

More generally, though, it's the expression of an intuitive sense that our present state of unbelief is deeply unsatisfactory; that all this uncertainty about what to believe and how to live is adding to our sense of uneasiness.

'I wish I believed in something' is more than a dream; it is an audible cry of despair. Perhaps it's the inevitable cry of a society in transition, especially a post-modern society. This is a time when certainty is being replaced by uncertainty, because that seems like a more appropriate response to the erratic and unpredictable turn of events. It is a time when the framework of a moral code - and the foundations of organised religion - are being challenged by those who believe in a more flexible approach, supported by the twin pillars (if you could call them pillars) of subjectivity and relativity: Whatever feels right is right; whatever feels good, is good; everyone is entitled to their own opinion; nothing is certain any more, so go with the flow. Keep your options open.

We are living in a culture of doubt and scepticism that arises from our sustained embrace of materialism and, perhaps, from the twentieth century's unbalanced preoccupation with the rational.

But here's the irony: the very uncertainty that characterises the post-modern era will lead, inexorably, to a season of renewed faith.

After all, doubt is the engine of faith. Belief entails uncertainty. Meaninglessness is uncomfortable for us, so it is natural for us to search for meanings that will help us make sense of our lives. Hence the growing (and sometimes bizarre) interest in spirituality, as opposed to religion, in the midst of an essentially secular and materialistic society.¹⁵

¹⁵Hugh Mackay, *Three Australian Dreams* in The Melbourne Anglican, September 1999.