

Vestrylink – Number 5 – July 2020

Dear Parishioners

It is probably inevitable that events of the past two weeks need some processing by all in the parish.

We would like to further explain and expand on the Chancellor's rulings and our rulings, which were summarised in Vestrylink – Number 4, dated 30 June 2020.

These are the rulings of the Chancellor of the Wellington Diocese on some of the motions. The Chancellor, Mr Tony Hill, is the legal advisor to the Diocese and the Bishops of Wellington. The Chancellor is the appropriate authority to rule on matters of church (Canon) law. At Diocesan Synod, which is the AGM of the Diocese, the Chancellor sits at the table with the Bishops to advise them and Synod on matters of procedure and the legality of motions if that question should arise. The Chancellor's rulings are decisive. Canon Law is the accumulated wisdom of the church on how to govern itself. It goes back hundreds of years and evolves with time. There is a high level of overlap in its core across the world.

Concern was raised about the validity of some of the motions, so they were referred to the Chancellor for a ruling. His rulings follow verbatim and are in quote marks and italics.

No 3

"That any decisions to be made by Vestry affecting the basic direction and future of the mission unit only be made after a full consultation process has been carried out."

Motion 3 Chancellor's Ruling

"The role and responsibilities of Vestry are outlined in The Diocesan Mission Units Canon DC-15 (the Canon). Section 21 states that the Vestry is the governance body of the Parish. Section 22(1) outlines specific elements to which Vestries are primarily called. This includes to discern, articulate and be committed to the mission and vision of the Parish, to lead Parish congregational change where appropriate and to observe best practice in governance. Section 22(2) notes that best practice governance includes working co-operatively with the Minister and others to whom tasks are delegated and taking responsibility for overall stewardship and good management of Parish property.

Motion [3] attempts to curtail this role in a manner that is inconsistent with the responsibility conferred by the Canon. There is wisdom in consulting appropriately from time to time, but it is not required in the manner required by the motion. Leadership requires that decisions are made. The Canon gives that role to the Vestry. The appropriate response if the Parish members are unhappy with the Vestry is to vote them out at the AGM. It is also appropriate for the AGM to "give direction or authority to the Vestry to proceed with some matter of strategic or financial significance to the Parish." (Section 16). It is open for the Minister and Wardens to jointly rule that this motion is out of order (Clause 16, Schedule 3)."

No 5

"That a Special General meeting of the Mission Unit, chaired by a person independent of the Mission Unit be called within a period of two months from the date of the AGM to be followed by further meetings (chaired on the same basis) at least every six months to address matters of concern or interest to parishioners, in particular the reinstatement /restoration of the church and hall."

Motion 5: Chancellor's Ruling

"A Special General Meetings (SGM) may be called by 20 persons on the electoral roll in accordance with clauses 62 and 63, Part 7, Schedule 3 of the Canon. Upon receiving the appropriate notice such a meeting must be called within 28 days. The provision is clear that a meeting can be triggered on this basis. The mechanism is not designed or intended to be used to set up ongoing meetings. The requirements must be met for each SGM. It is open to the Minister and Wardens to jointly rule that this motion is out of order."

No 6

“That this Mission Unit shall adopt the practice before removing a name from the electoral roll of making proper enquiries about that person. This will include an approach by the wardens or the vicar to the person involved to discuss the proposed removal. Exceptions would be in the cases of death, shifting away from the area and having no ongoing contact, or a request being made for removal from the person affected.”

Motion 6 Chancellors Ruling

“The process for removing names from the roll is outlined in clauses 24 and 25 of Schedule 3 of the Canon. Before the Vicar and Wardens remove a name (the conditions of clause 24 must be met) the matter must be referred to the Vestry for approval. Motion [6] is inconsistent with the Canon and it is open to the Minister and Wardens to rule the motion out of order.”

No 7

“That an item entitled “Any other business” be added to the Agenda for the Annual General Meeting of the St Alban’s Mission Unit on Sunday 28 June 2020.”

The Vicar and Churchwardens jointly ruled the matter out of order because of the provisions of clause 15 of Schedule 3 Part 1 of the Parishes Canon which reads:

Matters of general business

15 - Matters of general business must not be raised at the annual general meeting unless—

- (a) the person wishing to raise the matter gives written notice of it to the Minister or a Churchwarden (with a brief description of the issue) not later than 8 days before the date of the meeting; and*
- (b) public notice is given of that matter not later than the Sunday before the date of the meeting.*

16 The Minister and Churchwardens jointly may rule that a matter notified under clause 15 is out of order.

The purpose of this provision is to provide a level playing field for all attending an AGM. Everyone then knows what items are going to be discussed and can be prepared. This motion seeks to circumvent this provision and is therefore out of order.

Intent vs Effect of the Motions

There is a difference between Intent and Effect. We understand that the *intent* of these motions was to provide more opportunities for people in the parish to talk more, communicate more, listen and discuss. The *issue* with the motions ruled out of order is that together they have the *effect* of

- expressing a lack of confidence in Vestry to carry out its governance role and
- constraining vestry from freely carrying out its governance role.

This before Vestry members are even elected. At an AGM, the parish elects a Vestry and entrusts the governance of the Parish to Vestry. What and how Vestry does its work is laid out in the Diocesan Mission Units Canon 15.

Listening

In the lead-up to the AGM, Vestry listened very carefully to the proposers of the motions, to understand what their intent was. We listened and sought to work with them and after Vestry met and discussed the learnings, we wrote on 5 June 2020 to the movers and seconders of motions 1 to 6. The letter set out Vestry’s undertaking as follows;

“ Considerable time was spent in reflecting on the summary [of the meetings with the proposers], in prayer and in discussion on how we could move forward together. Resulting from this, Vestry has decided to implement changes to the way the AGM will be held and to how we listen to and communicate with, one another. Some of these changes will become apparent once the new Vestry is elected. Other changes are more immediate.

Rev’d John has decided to hold a separate AGM at 10am on 28 June rather than embedding it in the service. A communion service will follow at 7pm that evening.

Bishop Justin has been invited to be with us for the service on 21 June with a korero to follow. This korero will provide the opportunity to talk about the property redevelopment and the Diocese’s response.

To increase opportunities for information sharing, Vestry has decided to hold a quarterly korero and to invite leaders of missional activities to provide regular briefing updates. Newsletters, Pew sheets, Vicar's letters and Vestrylink will all continue.

The role of People's Warden will become more structured, with parishioners invited to bring their issues to the People's Warden, who will report to Vestry through a designated agenda item at each meeting. Parishioners can then be assured their issues are heard at the parish's highest governance level.

By implementing these initiatives, Vestry aims to foster an increased sense of belonging amongst parishioners, through heightened awareness of what is happening within the parish and through further opportunities to listen to others and to share views and concerns.

With everyone's co-operation and willingness to compromise we are confident parish unity can be increased."

The above information was also communicated in Vestrylink Number 4 dated 30 June 2020.

It was hoped that as the intent of motions 1, 3, 5 and 6 had been met via the above communications, and that as motions 2 and 4 were directly satisfied through release of the RedC report and the Bishop's korero, the motions might be withdrawn prior to the AGM. However, this did not happen.

St Alban's Redevelopment Plan

In the last couple of weeks, you may have been confused by a rumour that the St Alban's Redevelopment Project has been stopped. This is not the case. The project is on Pause, not on Stop. When Bishop Justin spoke to us on 21 June, he indicated the Diocesan Council regarded St Alban's as a fragmented parish. He challenged us to heal relationships and restore unity by developing a strong and united culture. Being able to push GO on the Redevelopment Project is going to depend on us making unity a priority. For this to happen we have a choice of either:

- a) go forward and mend our relationships, or
- b) let the hurt / resentment go on.

The worst possible place to be spiritually is to hang on to past hurts and resentments.

Let us unite by going for option a).

Yours in Christ

Vicar and Churchwardens

July 2020