

Diocesan Theologian

The central purpose of this role is to encourage theological study and reflection among both clergy and lay people throughout the diocese. Within the constraints created by the essentially self-funding nature of the enterprise, this purpose is expressed in four ways:

1. Diocesan calls on my time. These include attendance and input at clergy gatherings, on special projects initiated by the bishop, and supporting parish clergy and others who call on my expertise. During the past year, notable contributions have been a study of Luke 11 during the 2013 clergy conference and a presentation of the biblical concept of marriage for the gatherings in each region and also within the Waikato diocese.

2. The Waiapu Academy website. My weekly Preparing to Preach podcast on the www.waiapuacademy.org website seems to have met a real need among both clergy and lay preachers around the diocese. This is now into its second round of the three-year lectionary cycle, which has eased my workload a little, but there are still plenty of “gaps” to fill from interruptions in the initial cycle of production, mainly due to periods of interim ministry undertaken in parishes. I also receive requests to publish other study materials online, and hope to expand the website to do so before long.

3. Theological Seminars. My provision of weekend workshops and other opportunities for theological learning in parishes around the diocese in the first two years of my role was widely valued, especially among lay people. Opportunities to continue such seminars in the three years since then have been mainly limited to the parishes in which I have undertaken interim ministries, but I welcome further invitations for parish-based theological workshops, on evenings or weekends depending on travelling distances. Topics already offered include: the nature and development of Faith; Trinitarian theology; Mission in the New Testament; principles of Biblical Interpretation; the history of Anglican theology; the theology of Creation; biblical principles of social justice; and my Quests and Questions study series. Other possible topics are only a simple request away, and I am keen to collaborate with others in pursuing their own special theological interests as scholars and teachers.

4. The Theological Library. When I came into this role, I offered to donate my theological library of about 1500 volumes to form the basis of a diocesan theological library. This was supplemented by further donations from other scholars within and beyond the diocese and is currently shelved in a back room of the cathedral, with limited accessibility. It has recently received a further substantial donation of books from the estate of the Rev Dr Godfrey Nicholson, formerly teaching at St John’s College. To turn this valuable collection into a functioning library resource for scholars and preachers will require some further administrative resources and more housing.

I continue to believe that opportunities for ongoing theological education for both clergy and laity are essential if we are to adapt to the present and future challenges of our shared mission.

Rev. Dr. Howard Pilgrim