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## Report to Ministry District Committee, 29 August 2010

Over the last three months life within the Ministry District has been steady. There have been no baptisms, weddings or funerals in which I have been involved, though there have been a couple of initial inquiries about weddings in 2011 – at Port Vincent and Edithburgh, and sadly we farewelled Di Cook at Minlaton. Di was a great servant of the church and will be sadly missed.

In July we celebrated St. Christopher's Day at Curramulka, with Port Vincent agreeing to cancel their service and travel to Curramulka. It was a great day and I would like to express my gratitude to Port Vincent for their flexibility and willingness to share in the life of other parts of the Ministry District.

The Trinity Certificate has continued with the group involved having just commenced the final unit of that certificate. They will have completed it by the end of this year. My congratulations to all involved. There has been a considerable amount of work to complete this work and it is a credit to all those who have been involved over the last few years.

I have been working through an issue regarding licences for Port Vincent. It relates to authorities for extended communion. I am still in conversation with the Registrar and this will hopefully be resolved before I leave at the end of next month. This process has been complicated by the crash of the diocesan computer system. We still have one of our LLM's needing to engage in Mandatory Reporting and another who needs to complete a police check. Their licences are held at church office.

As this will be my final report to the Ministry District Committee I would like to comment on what I think has been achieved over the last three years and on the challenges which lie ahead. In terms of achievement, I think there has been a growth in activity level and spirit in the smaller congregations within the District. This has notably been the case in Warooka and Curramulka. Warooka has come back to life after some encouragement and Curramulka has built on the closeness of the community to strengthen fellowship related activities. There has also been a strengthening in the smaller congregations of a willingness to share in the life of each other's centres in travelling to special functions, and even, on occasion, cancelling services to do so.

I have not focussed on ecumenical activity in my time here and that has been for a specific reason. It was my judgement that the life of the district itself needed consolidating and that has been what I have worked for. However, good ecumenical relationships have continued at Curramulka, Edithburgh and Corny Point, alongside the formal arrangements.

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I think it is important to explore ecumenical relationships outside of the formalised ICC structures, but that has deliberately not been my focus. And this work is often best done around structures because sometimes the very formal structures of our communities can create disincentives. Ecumenical engagement is about more than a sharing of tasks best done together – it is about a sharing of our faith in the light of our different journeys so that we may together be enriched.

Another development here has been the monthly midweek Eucharist followed by a meal. This has been quite successful. It is different to the morning midweek Eucharist common in many places. In that the purpose is to provide another opportunity for people to receive communion. Here, the purpose is fellowship – in order to draw us together in the presence of God and through that to grow as God's people. In fact, it doesn't matter if it isn't a Eucharist, so there is no need for a priest to make it happen. We can gather in God's presence in Morning Prayer. There is uniqueness, and specialness about Eucharist – but simply gathering together to pray and share in a meal is equally important. And that is what lies at the heart of these monthly gatherings around the district.

And the challenges? To maintain courage against the fear of small numbers. To keep turning up and worshipping God. To keep our communities alive. Sometimes it may seem like it is too hard, and easy solutions can be presented, they are not an answer. In the end, we flourish best in small communities and it is vital we maintain our worship and fellowship in each of the places we currently meet. And although we may prefer it to be Eucharist, it does not have to be – what matters is that we gather in each of our distinct communities in worship of God. The Eucharist is God's gift to us. It is not something we demand of God at our convenience. What instead we do, is gather in the presence of God and wait for God to act – whether we have Eucharist or not. This continues to be a growing edge and challenge for us – to accept the value of non-Eucharistic services. Some will struggle more than others with that. Many of us will still have particular preferences which may be frustrated. But the journey we are taken on is not that of having our preferences for worship satisfied, it is the challenge of living life in the presence of God in the time and place in which we live. Hankering for what once was doesn't help, nor does living by predetermined senses of what is right in worship. What does help is the simple commitment to be the people of God who gather in worship. And that is, in every place and time, our greatest challenge.