

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF ST THOMAS BECKET CHURCH CHAPLAINCY COUNCIL ON THE
ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE RESIGNATION OF REVD MATTHEW JONES AS CHAPLAIN**

22 February 2015

“All good things must come to an end...”

Well, we didn't quite appreciate the full implications of the theme of Fr Matthew's sermon last week!

Fr Matthew informed the Chaplaincy Council at our meeting last Monday that he had with a heavy heart decided to return to Australia after being persuaded by the Bishop of Grafton to be part of her team for renewal of the Diocese. Since we are currently without churchwardens, I have been asked to say a few words on behalf of the Chaplaincy Council.

We knew the day would come when Fr Matthew would leave Hamburg and that would be a sad day for us. This event has come a bit earlier than we expected, but we must respect the fact that clearly there is a place which needs Matthew's ministry more than us, and that he is being called elsewhere. This transition is not easy for him and it isn't easy for us.

Under Matthew's ministry over the past 3.5 years we have grown as a church: grown in numbers, and grown, I believe, in confidence and our engagement with the wider community. We are in many respects a stronger community than we were in 2011. Fr Matthew has a remarkable gift of being able to connect with people of all ages, backgrounds and situations which represent the diversity of people connecting with our church.

Now it is going to be up to us to build on what we have achieved together over these past years and redouble our efforts to be a welcoming, active and inclusive church, growing in our relationship with God and the wider community. Of course we are anxious about who is going to lead us— change always has that effect – but we should face the future with confidence, trusting in Him who knows our needs better than we do ourselves. Much is going very well in the life of the church. Just look at Junior Church, which is growing in numbers and has just appointed a coordinator. Or look at our finances: in 2013 we were practically facing bankruptcy; in 2014 we achieved a remarkable turnaround.

A church community is more than a group of people led by a priest. It is a community of people offering each other support and sharing each other's gifts and that is what is required of us now.

The Chaplaincy Council members will now prepare for the dialogue with the Archdeacon and Bishops about the appointment of a worthy successor to Matthew. Thanks to the consultations Fr Matthew instigated, we have a useful basis from which to start. The message has come through that there is a strong desire to continue with a full time priest. But we will undertake to consult widely before formulating a profile and anyone is welcome to speak or email me or any member of the CC with comments or questions. You can find our contact details on the back of BN, and you can find BN on the church website.

We ask you for your prayers to support us. Please also pray for Fr Matthew as he prepares for a new stage in his ministry.

Pray too for your own calling to serve this church and whether God is calling you to take on a role of leadership. We have a number of openings.

On a personal note, though I guess I speak for many here, I give thanks to God for sending Matthew to us when he did. It has been a real joy to experience his ministry and to work alongside him. Thanks Matthew for the time you have spent with us, a long way from home. I look forward to preparing for the transition as we move on in our journey as individuals and as a church.

May God bless us all

Monica Schofield, Hamburg 22.2.2015