

DISCERNMENT OF CHURCHES AND PRESBYTERIES



for

Our Lady of the Valleys Parish
HERETAUNGA / STOKES VALLEY

14 November 2019

File Name: 2019-11 Final Report to Parish

Our Lady of the Valleys Parish - Background



Over the past eight months as you know various committees of the Parish have been working to collect, collate and information around the churches and presbytery buildings, the financial state and projected financial position of the Parish, demographic changes to populations in the various parts of the Parish, and information to provide insight into how the Parish could be operated into the future.

Information was circulated and parishioner-input gained into the strengths, challenges and opportunities found for Our Lady of the Valleys Parish.

This led to the last survey of parishioners in September where they were asked to indicate their FIRST and SECOND Preferences from four options, stating reasons for their choices. This provided the basis of the recommendations in the response back to Cardinal John as requested in his directive of February 2019.

The following summary has been taken from the full submission to Cardinal which ran to over forty pages. Detailed are the response to the Cardinal's enquiries on:

- Number of churches the Parish NEEDS to cater for its Mass count, and ideal location, (including rationale)
- Steps the Parish needs to take in relation to churches and priest accommodation.
- Assessment of Ministry able to be provided in future (including Lay Pastoral Leaders)

If you have any questions about this response or would like more information please contact the Parish Office or Prue von Keisenburg, Chair of the Parish Council.

Number of churches the Parish NEEDS to cater for its Mass count, and ideal location, (including rationale)



1. The Parish Council took the lead in co-ordinating the collection of information for submission to the Cardinal as requested This and other information was provided to Parishioners along with explanations of what the Review was hoping to achieve
2. Series of four Parish meetings at both sites were held over a number of weeks to determine the concerns, questions and suggestions from Parishioners. These were attended by 80 parishioners
3. Information from the above meetings was collated by the Steering Committee and consolidated into 4 Options
 - a. Build a new facility on a new site
 - b. Maintain the two present sites and churches
 - c. Consolidate onto Heretaunga site
 - d. Consolidate onto Stokes Valley Site.

These four options were presented to Parishioners who were asked to nominate a FIRST and SECOND PREFERENCE to provide for the future needs of the Parish in terms of churches and presbytery. They were also asked to provide details of why those options were chosen.

A table of the raw data of first and second preferred options across all four options results are detailed below

4 Option Consultation results	First Preference	Second Preference	Average of First and Second
Option A Build a new facility on a new site	21 (22.6%)	29 (31.2%)	25 (26.8%)
Option B Maintain the two current sites and churches	34 (36.6%)	29 (31.2%)	31.5 (33.9%)
Option C Consolidate onto existing Heretaunga site	37 (39.8%)	24 (25.8%)	30.5 (32.8%)
Option D Consolidate onto existing Stokes Valley Site	1 (1.0%)	11 (11.8%)	6 (6.5%)
TOTAL	93	93	93

This consultation occurred over three and a half weeks with 93 respondents:

Results:

1. There was a significant lack of support for the Stokes Valley site being the preferred site for consolidation into one church.
2. The major result of this consultation revealed an almost equal support in the responses between maintaining both current sites and consolidating onto one site.
3. Some of those who responded in support of maintaining the two sites tempered their preference by giving comments that indicated that they were thinking short term and acknowledged that long term one site may be required.
4. A number of those who responded to consolidating onto one site expressed more long term and visionary comments in their responses. Out of the current churches Our Lady of Grace was considered more suitable than St Francis Xavier
5. The long-term option that was also well supported was that of establishing a new more central site for Parish buildings which would provide our Catholic, and the wider community, a multi-purpose community space/hub.
6. A number of comments from those who advocated the establishment of a new Parish site stated that in their view this option needs to take into account the possibility of the School moving to be at the same location. St Brendan's has a limited site and has a waiting list of Catholic students for a number of years.

SUMMARY OF PARISHIONER RESPONSES	
FOR	AGAINST
MAINTAINING TWO PRESENT SITES	
Less disruptive to parishioners	Increasing costs from maintaining and supporting multiple sites
Need time to consolidate as one parish community	Questions were raised about this as a long-term in light of future clergy availability
Maintaining visible Catholic presence in both major parts of the Parish	Could tend to slow down the feeling of being one Parish family due to having two homes
Both churches facilitate easy access for parishioners in their local communities	Increase travel time for clergy to provide Mass and services at two sites
Was the second favoured option as a first choice The views were collated between first and second choices there was almost equal support for this option and One Site – Heretaunga	Comments in the last consultation needs to suggest that a certain portion of the support for this option was it as a short terms solution only

CONSOLIDATING ONTO ONE NEW SITE	
Would hopefully help consolidate the sense of being a new single Parish	Initial building costs would be substantial
Would cause disruption to all parts of the Parish rather than just one part of the Parish family	Would cause disruption to ALL parts of the Parish
This would be a very long-term process over more than five years which would allow for a transitional process to be undertaken	This would be a very long-term process over more than 5 years
Would have reduced long term maintenance costs	Was the third level choice at the last parishioner consultation
Funds would be generated from the sale of the current sites in Stokes Valley and Heretaunga.	
Would provide a more future-focused building resource to allow for more outreach into the wider community	
Could provide impetus for the School to investigate moving to the new Parish site, thereby visibly strengthening the relationship between two.	
New facilities would be designed to accommodate the current and projected Masses counts without increasing the present number of Masses offered	

CONSOLIDATING ONTO ONE SITE – HERETAUNGA	
This was the most support option in the last parish consultation as a First Option.	Would require some building programme to provide for the changing needs of the parish, especially to meet pastoral needs of Parish (i.e. accommodating St Vincent de Paul Society, youth activities, calls by ethnic communities) and in outreaching to peripheries of the Parish
Current building on site is large enough to accommodate the current Mass counts and those of the future without change to the present number of Masses.	Parish and school are not on the same site though they are within walking distance
Funds could be generated by the sale of the facilities at Stokes Valley	Could be seen to dis-advantage the Stokes Valley community as it would remove the visible Catholic presence in that part of the Parish
The church on this site has already been earthquake strengthened.	There could be transport issues for Stokes Valley to attend services here as public transport between Heretaunga and the southern part of the parish is not well serviced.
The presbytery on this site has been recently renovated and provides adequate accommodation to the clergy, the Parish administration office and has some facilities available already which could be used for Parish meetings etc	Current pastoral activities in the Stokes Valley community (especially in the area of the Samoan Community, Samoan choir, youth group) may not easily translate to the Heretaunga site. Initiatives would have to be made to ensure a smooth transition for these groups.
There is land this site that could be used for future building construction to address needs.	Burden of change could be felt by only part of such a change of facilities in the Parish
Close proximity to the Parish school was deemed important and this site allows for this	Parish building facilities would be situated at one end of the Parish geographical area
Would reduce Parish property holding costs (rates, insurance, maintenance) and duplicated pastoral costs	

Looking at the data presented it was clear to the Steering Committee that

- On numbers alone there was a preference among parishioners to **Retain Two Churches**, however the comments made it clear that some saw this as a **short-term step** and that a **longer-term option** would be required.
- There was a majority of responses that favoured **One Site** long-term solution. The support was split almost equally between **retaining the existing Heretaunga Site** and establishing a **single new site**. (see page 2)
- The timeframe of six months for this review did not allow for the opportunity to undertake feasibility studies on the two alternatives (keeping existing site at Heretaunga or finding and funding a new location.) This decision would be left to later consultation.
- The Steering Committee points to the comments later in this report (see pages 7 and 8) regarding the need for good pastoral care and change management.

Assessment of Ministry able to be provided in future (including Lay Pastoral Leaders)



Over previous years various initiatives have been implemented to provide for the Pastoral needs of parishioners due to an increasing aging population and fewer priests being available to staff the two and then one parish covering the current area of Our Lady of the Valleys Parish.

These initiatives have included training and installing Extra-Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion at Sunday and weekday Masses. These ministers also take Holy Communion to an increasing number of parishioners through age, infirmity or other circumstances can no longer attend the Masses offered.

Parishioners have also over previous years taken responsibility for generally visiting the sick and providing assistance as required, Other areas of pastoral care that now involve lay people is that of preparing training sessions for new volunteers to Proclaim the Word, Altar serving, Children Liturgy. The Parish will continue to look for ways that all members of the Parish can be encouraged to take up their baptismal vocation to be of service to their brothers and sisters both inside the Parish and beyond.

One area that was identified as being a present and future need in our Parish was in identifying suitable individuals to take on the role of leading liturgies for the Parish such as Liturgy of Word and Holy Communion as an alternative to Daily Mass. We have some generous people in the Parish already but more would provide greater opportunities to parishioners without overworking the current pool of about six who have been trained in this area. The Parish was intending to look at providing this training and will continuing to do so. A similar course as the one proposed was presented by Fr Bridgman in October which we are hopeful could go some way to address this pastoral need.



Steps the Parish needs to take in relation to churches and priest accommodation.



Pastoral Care and Change Management Process

The survey of parishioners clearly indicates the preference for a single church site, (either at the Our Lady of Grace church or a new site yet to be identified). A change of this nature will have substantial impact on the current operation and pastoral delivery of all services to the variety of communities in each of the present two churches in the Parish.

Since the amalgamation of the two former parishes, (both of which have very different cultures) there has been limited interaction of a common nature between these two communities. Change of this nature has the potential to generate loss of current relationships and community disruption, which needs to be minimised as much as is possible.

Following the deciding of the church's location, a change management process needs to be designed, timetabled and implemented with the objective of taking as many parishioners as possible into the new environment. Such a process calls for the development of a culture change to *sharing*, to achieve a mutuality of interests in celebrating liturgy, and use of all other resources, in an equitable manner. An environment that encourages belonging is the key objective of such a process.

Some of key factors that will need to be addressed in the change management process are –

- i) The St Francis Xavier church currently supports a large Pacifica community and related choir that acknowledges their unique language, and customs. Incorporation of this into the single church structure needs to be facilitated.
- ii) There is a youth ministry group at Stokes Valley part of the Parish that likewise calls for transference and support to a single church environment.

- iii) There will need to be a comprehensive reorientation program of all activities within both current churches and what blending needs to occur and how. An integral part of this is the review of Mass times particularly given the change in travelling times, and services required to the elderly.
- iv) Parishioners have raised the issue of difficulties of transportation to anywhere outside of Stokes Valley, including parking at a new location. Sizing of this need and investigation of options needs to be undertaken.