



Our Lady of the Valleys Parish

DRAFT: Pastoral Care Plan 2024-2034



The Pastoral Care of the Our Lady of the Valleys Catholic Parish: Pastoral Plan: 2024-2034

***“We, the parishioners of Our Lady of the Valleys Parish are one community under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”
(Parish vision statement)***

Background

Our Lady of the Valleys Parish (OLOV) currently has 500 families on the Parish roll across two sites, one centred on St Francis Xavier Church (SFX) in Stokes Valley, and the other around Our Lady of Grace Church (OLOG) in Heretaunga. The Parish was established on 1st February 2016 by the amalgamation of the two former parishes in the Trentham/Heretaunga to Silverstream area and Stokes Valley.

From a parish survey in 2023 we know that we are made up of many different ethnicities, backgrounds, and ages. The majority of parishioners are of European origin; mostly born in New Zealand; three fifths female; three fifths over 65 years old; more than half retired. There are, however, small yet significant numbers of Indian, Filipino, and Samoan parishioners. Our parish primary school (St Brendan's) has a maximum role of 290 and we have an all-male Catholic college (St Patrick's Silverstream) in our Parish.

Nearly half of our parishioners have been attending our churches for more than twenty years; with a quarter attending for five years or less. Most attend services with their wife/husband. Nearly all live locally.

The reason most often given for attending services is to receive Holy Communion. Parishioners also like the music, and meeting people.

When asked what people think the church should focus on in the future, the top five responses are:

1. Building a strong sense of community
2. Creating a clear vision for this local church's future
3. Worship services that are nurturing to people's faith
4. Ensuring new people are included well in church life
5. Ministry to children and youth

Introduction

The following Pastoral Plan has been developed out of a three-step process.

Firstly, in February 2023 the Archdiocesan Church Mission team held a full-day workshop with members of the Parish Council, St Brendan's School Board of Trustees, ethnic communities, the Parish Liturgy Committee, youth representatives, and other strategic groups in the parish.

The workshop reflected on the key themes from the recent Synod 2021-2023 process adopted in the archdiocese. As a result participants identified various local focus areas.

The Parish Pastoral Council then met over March-July 2023 to flesh out these focus areas into three categories: 'where we are now' (good), 'where we want to be' (better) and "stretch action points" (best). Then, following the community consultation survey in September 2023, the PPC incorporated key themes. Some of the action points are what might be termed "aspirational" and are potentially 10-year goals.

From here, the draft plan will be circulated for broad feedback. Additional items will be sought from various community groups.

We thank all those who participate in this process. Like all good plans, this is a living document and will subject to regular review.

The document needs to be read as a whole: many action points are interchangeable with strategic goals other than the one they are listed under.

Specific time-frames have not been set, however "current action with a stretch" will encourage action by 2025, "aspirational" are medium term goals.

A scriptural context

Luke 15:1-2

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

Our Six Priority Areas

1. Community Building: Communion, Inclusivity, Social Justice, Pastoral Care, 'at the peripheries'

“Actively building community for formation and mission. This includes supporting existing community groups within the Parish. It also includes building new faith-sharing, prayer, education, charitable and other sharing groups. Community sharing groups enable people to deepen their relationship with one another in and with Christ. Smaller, more personal, settings can offer a real sense of belonging and inclusion. They enable people to acknowledge and care for one another and to encourage one another to live lives filled with faith and meaning.”

| Current actions | Current action with a “stretch” | Aspirational |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● OLOV Family Groups ● Men's Group ● Catholic Women's League ● St Brendan's School ● Filipino Community – Barangay of Our Lady of Miraculous Medal ● Samoan Community ● Women's Circle of Friendship ● Café Living Waters at OLOG ● Parish ministry groups (Parish Council, Finance, Liturgy, Music) ● Visitation ministry visits the sick and housebound ● Social Activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Grow the annual Parish Picnic event to greater than 75 attendees through greater representation from parish groups ● Launch cuppa after mass (out front) at both OLOG and SFX on regular basis ● Identify new faith-sharing, prayer, education, charitable or other groups to enable people to deepen their relationship with one another in and with Christ ● With assistance from the Parish Council, existing groups to plan how they could attract and welcome new members such as using a buddy system, contact the new person, check they know when the next event is, introduce them to others. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parish Picnic becomes a 'must attend' event for parishioners with greater than 150 attendees ● Neighbourhood based little churches (“hubs”) are developed to connect people and facilitate local prayerful and caring community relationships ● All Catholics feel welcome from any community including ethnicities, LGBTQI, single and divorced, and have been invited through clear messages that we want you to be part of God's community and there is a place for you with us |

2. Finance / Property: Sustainable / Assets managed wisely

“Supporting the mission and pastoral care of the Parish by funding activities, maintaining and improving facilities, ensuring that financial processes align with New Zealand law, accounting standards and taking into consideration Archdiocesan norms.”

| Current action | Current action with a “stretch” | Aspirational |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A strong Finance Committee is in place ● Future ‘one-parish one-place’ project planning team (Living Stones Group) ● Archdiocese wide cost-sharing facilities used (e.g. insurance) ● The Parish newsletter includes a Cashflow summary each financial quarter. Parishioners receive an Annual Financial Report included with the Annual Report prepared for the Parish Annual General Meeting. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ‘One-parish one-place’ community engagement over 2023/24 completed to input into future strategy ● Properties meet the standards of Creating Welcoming Churches: a disability resource for faith communities ● Environmental considerations integrated into all purchasing decisions to be seen to be leading from the front ● Goal for majority of parishioners to use automatic payments instead of envelopes ● Explore the use of technology to make engaging with gifting easier ● We have a dedicated fundraising focus/subgroup and seek funds as part of our regular work. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parish is financially robust ● ‘One-parish one-place’ community facility in place – a leading aspirational, faith building and community focussed facility that is flexible for different uses of our community and the wider community ● Parish assets are income generating thereby lessening dependencies on congregational donations ● A place where people can come and hold meetings, a community hub, so buildings are being used all the time and not just on Sat/Sun each week. |

3. Communication: Listening and responding (feeling heard) / Synodality / Bring people on the journey, explain the process and decisions made.

| Current action | Current action with a “stretch” | Aspirational |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Digital has become a key, though not sole channel (email, social, web). We recognise and value personal connections as the most important means of Christian interactions, though we value technology developments. ● The newsletter is our primary mechanism for communication parish wide and is shared via <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● physical copy at all Sunday masses ● emailed to 300 parish families ● St Brendan’s School newsletter ● on our website ● Parish Directory booklet ● ‘One-parish one-place’ community engagement plan being developed ● Parish Council socialise this draft plan with as many groups in the parish as possible | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strong engagement across channels with ‘One-parish one-place’ leading to phase 2 of plan. ● Survey parishioners to gather general feedback Collect data on use of current communication preferences, and the value parishioners place on them. ● Collect data on preferences for how parishioners would like to be communicated with | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Digital is our primary channel (email, social, web) ● Parishioners regularly share thoughts/feedback online, knowing we’re listening and responding ● Parish has good process in place for those who don’t use digital channels. ● Remove any language barriers for ethnic groups to participate in Parish communications |

4. Faith Building: Evangelisation; Adult faith formation e.g., Alpha; Deepen spirituality

“The discernment of gifts and talents, the calling forth to ministry, and catechesis based on a sound theology and ecclesiology.”

| Current action | Current action with a “stretch” | Aspirational |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sacramental Preparation Programmes ● Bible study group ● Prayer Groups ● Children’s Liturgy ● Ministry groups meet for formation, mutual support and encouragement at least twice each year ● Ecumenical relationships are developed and maintained in the Parish ● Ecumenical events (shared worship) include Good Friday (walk), Stations of the Cross, World Day of Prayer for Christian Unity RCIA Program ● All activities are shared across both churches | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Data gathered to identify formation needs ● Formation for leadership and ministry is identified and offered on a regular basis ● Events and opportunities exist for various ethnic groups on a regular basis ● Online resources for prayer, gospel reflection, evangelisation, church news, etc. are identified and promoted ● Promote wider faith building activities for teens ● Encourage private / family devotional activities ● New people are stepping forward as catechists | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bi-annual retreat ● Active pipeline of candidates for the RCIA programme of 4 p.a. ● Parishioner(s) interested in a religious vocation ● Parishioners feel inspired / challenged to take action that reach out to the wider community (e.g. visitation, outreach, community service, social justice) ● Parents are engaged with the parish and are active in the faith formation of their children ● The parish has ministries that reach the youth of the community ● Catechists are trained and competent in their ministries |

5. Refresh Liturgy: Engage kids / youth / ethnicities / schools; Te reo; Weigh up tradition and change (balance)

“Empowering rangatahi (young people) to live as disciples of Jesus Christ, drawing them to participation in the life, mission and mahi of the Catholic faith community and fostering their personal spiritual growth through a ministry that is based on the gospel, *Tu Kahikatea* and *Hiko i Tahi* (standards for Catholic Youth Ministry), and current research into strategies to assist young people.”

| Current action | Current action with a “stretch” | Aspirational |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Focal liturgical events of Easter, Pentecost and Christmas supported by Liturgy Committee ● Sacramental activity (2022/23: 30 Baptisms, 35 Confirmed, 2 Marriages) ● Family Masses and training sessions for the various ministries ● The Parish has a strong relationship with our school including Year 7-8 students leading a liturgy ● Active Filipino Community – Barangay of Our Lady of Miraculous Medal ● Samoan Aupaipese (Choir) and Samoan Autalavou (Youth) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inclusive language with te reo incorporated ● Masses led by key groups (youth, ethnic) on regular basis ● More “guest” speakers at Mass to provide parishioner with different perspectives (sharing the homily time between priest and guest) ● Build a stronger relationship with St Patrick’s, St Bernard’s, Sacred Heart, and St Mary’s Colleges | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implement new ways of engaging children, young adults and family to flourish in Parish liturgy and therefore in the parishioners own life ● Building on this, the Parish invests in children, young adults and family ministry ● Rangatahi youth have a “voice” in the parish |

6. Supportive of family and marriage: Engaging all into active roles; Embracing diversity/inclusion of LBTQI, single, divorced/separated, widowed.

| Current action | Current action with a “stretch” | Aspirational |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Family Groups operating (five groups) ● Strong engagement with St Brendan’s School community ● Filipino Couples for Christ community ● Engaged couple opportunities supported ● Married couples retreat via broader Archdiocesan resources ● Christian Life group via Filipino community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Grow participation in Family Groups ● Seek interest in launching Teams of Our Lady for married couples ● Develop a ministry to support those who feel marginalised by the church | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lay-led funerals and/or committals are available, offered and used ● Regular coffee gatherings open to all to attend each weekend as an opportunity to meet and share ● Marriages and families are stronger through greater participation in relevant events and sharing their experiences |