

A message from the Living Stones Group to all the Parish.

Ecclesiastes 3:6 reminds us that everything has, “*a time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away...*”

In 2019 Cardinal John Dew directed parishes in the Archdiocese of Wellington to review their churches and presbyteries with a view to reducing them in number. The reasons he gave for this are quite simple. The expense of maintaining churches is rising rapidly, especially insurance costs; in OLOV both churches are aging, making maintenance a constant drag on parish finances. There are fewer priests; in OLOV there is one priest but two churches. Cardinal John expected the review to consider the number of churches and their location. He emphasised that “For most, if not all parishes with more than one church, this will mean reducing the number of churches in the parish.”

In OLOV the process of determining how to respond is taking some time as we look at all aspects of this very significant decision, but we not only need to tread carefully to ensure all views are heard, we must also be brave, and as Cardinal John told us “You need to be prepared to be radical in your thinking and discernment.”

A decision to close one church will obviously lead to some sadness amongst parishioners. What we cannot do, however, is let our sadness become a barrier in the way of changes that must happen. To help parishioners understand this process, as much information as can be provided will be distributed in the next few months. Your input is always welcome. Please ask questions. Your question may well be one that others would also like an answer to. Any comments or questions will be carefully listened to because they may well help with the thinking needed for this difficult project.

The OLOV review of churches is an ongoing process. It will be good if everyone feels they can contribute to it by adding their own ideas to the mix. What sort of ideas might these be? Maybe you want to ask if some item in particular can be saved from the church that will be closed? Well, perhaps it can. Will there be a special place in the remaining church where we can worship in our own way? Maybe, that might be possible. You can share in the process in this way, and it will be a good thing if many parishioners take the opportunity.

Sadness and grief are natural human emotions, and we have all felt them at some time. Eventually, they pass and we move on. Some things are lost and some gained, so we can learn to let go of the past and look towards the future. So it will be with the decision to close one of our much loved churches for the greater long term good.

Once the process is completed, what we will have is a church building as the meeting point for all the parish to share, where we can all praise the Lord together, and where we have more convenient Mass times, and make better use of our parishioner contributions to the parish budget.

If you would like to speak to a member of the Living Stones group, either on your own or in a group, please let us know. You can speak to us after a Mass or send a message to the Parish Office asking for a meeting.

Cardinal John Dew. *Pastoral Letter*. 15 February 2019. <https://www.wn.catholic.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Churches-and-Presbyteries-Pastoral-Letter.pdf>