



Our Lady of the Valleys Parish

Pastoral Care Plan 2024-2029



The Pastoral Care of the Our Lady of the Valleys Catholic Parish: Pastoral Plan: 2024-2029

***“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 1 February 2015 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 roll 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 Parish should focus on in the future, the top five 2023 survey 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

We have developed this Strategic Plan over an eighteen-month period in 2023-2024. During this time all groups and individuals have been given the chance to offer feedback, which has been incorporated into the Plan where appropriate. It remains a 'living document' to be reviewed and revised annually.

The Plan has six key sections, generally reflecting the priority areas identified by parishioners in the 2023 survey. Each section is divided into three columns.

1. The left-hand column is 'where we are now'. These activities will generally continue.
2. The middle column is where we want to be in one or two-years' time.
3. The right-hand column is more aspirational, being where we want to be in a 5+ year timeframe.

The future focussed items require more detailed planning on how and what we want to achieve, and what resources are available in order to get there. Achieving these requires a whole of Parish support, for such a long list of objectives cannot be met by the efforts of just a few people.

It is the intention that the Parish comes together around the Strategic Plan so that we can move forward towards the goals we have set ourselves with a regular review and feedback to the parish at the Annual General Meeting.

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
• 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, incl annual Parish Picnic event	• 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 • Work with existing groups to attract and welcome new members e.g. buddy system, contact and check for next event, introduce them to others • Establish relationships with newly arrived migrants	• Parish Picnic becomes a 'must attend' event for parishioners with greater than 150 attendees • Little Churches ("hubs") are developed to connect people and facilitate local or online 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
• A strong Finance Committee is in place • Ongoing maintenance of existing facilities • Archdiocese wide cost-sharing facilities used (e.g. insurance) • Parish newsletter includes a Cashflow summary each financial quarter. Annual Financial Report presented at Parish Annual General Meeting • ‘One-parish one-place’ Living Stones Group community engagement over 2023/25 completed • Environmental considerations integrated into all purchasing decisions	• Properties meet the standards of Creating Welcoming Churches: a disability resource for faith communities • Improve gifting – digital options, increased use automatic payments, ad-hoc options, bequests and legacies • A FUNdraising activity is held every year	• Parish assets are income generating thereby lessening dependencies on congregational donations

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
• 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 • physical copy at all Sunday masses • emailed to 300 parish families • St Brendan’s School newsletter • on our website • Parish Directory booklet • Annual General Meeting held to share the Annual Report and provide update on Parish activities • Parish events calendar is published on our website	• Develop and implement a cost-effective new website, with fresh design and content • Collect data on use of current communication preferences, and the value parishioners place on them, and preferred channels e.g. social media • Stored data is ‘cleaned’ regularly and complies with the Privacy Act.	• Use outcomes from data collected to determine our communication methods and continually review • 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
• 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	• Data gathered to identify formation needs e.g. retreats • Formation for leadership and ministry is identified across ethnicities and gender 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 Archdiocesan faith building activities for teens • Encourage private / family devotional activities • New people are stepping forward as catechists • Celebrate events of national significance, e.g. ANZAC, Armistice Day to connect with wider community and Defence Force	• Formation needs are held to meet identified needs e.g. retreats • 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 e.g. OLOV Parish Youth • 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 | youth 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 *Hikoi Tahi* (standards for Catholic Youth Ministry), and current research into strategies to assist young people.”

Current action	Current action with a “stretch”	Aspirational
• Focal liturgical events of Easter, Pentecost and Christmas supported by Liturgy Committee • Sacramental activity (2023/24: 25 Baptisms, 35 Confirmed, 1 Marriage, 8 Funerals) • 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 and Holy Family Music Group • Samoan Aufaipese (Choir) and Samoan Autalavou (Youth)	• Inclusive language with te reo incorporated • Masses led by key groups (youth, ethnic) on regular basis • Build a stronger relationship with St Patrick’s, St Bernard’s, Sacred Heart, and St Mary’s Colleges	• Implement new ways of engaging children, young adults and family to flourish in Parish liturgy and therefore in the parishioner’s own life • Building on this, the Parish invests in children, young adults and family ministry • Rangatahi youth have a “voice” in the Parish • Lay-led funerals and/or committals are available, offered and used

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

Current action	Current action with a “stretch”	Aspirational
• 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 • Community for the Holy Family	• Grow participation in Family Groups • Family groups collaborate for enhanced parish activities • Seek interest in launching Teams of Our Lady for married couples • Develop support for those who feel marginalised by the Church • Events for the renewal of marriage vows	• 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