

HOLY TRINITY PARISH

Parish Property Project:

A Future Full of Hope

**Overview of consultation and
submissions, and final recommendations**

**We are Pilgrims on a
Journey...**

Purpose of this document

This document summarises and provides an overview of the consultation and submissions on the parish's property project, and sets out the final recommendations agreed by the Parish Pastoral Council and Finance Committee (**PPC, FC**). The final recommendations will be provided to the Cardinal on 30 October 2019.

Consultation meetings

The parish held two consultation meetings, at Holy Cross Church and St Patrick's, these were well attended and a range of views expressed. They also gave parishioners an opportunity to understand the issues further, and hear different perspectives. The meeting at Holy Cross Church had majority support for option 3 (upgrade and renovate Holy Cross Church) and the meeting at St Patrick's had stronger support for option 2 (upgrade St Patrick's Church to be the main centre).

Overall, the weight of numbers supported option 2, but at both meetings there was also strong support for option 1 (new church at Miramar). The reason for the support for option 1 appeared to be the strong advantages of a new church in meeting the parish's needs, despite the high costs of that proposal. Indeed, there was a feeling that the Parish should find a way to make option 1 work.

The summaries of the discussion at those meetings, available on the parish website, provide a richer record of the meetings and are worth reading.

Written submissions

The parish received over 80 submissions from throughout the parish. This is very heartening and shows how much the people in the parish care about the future of the parish. All submitters are thanked for the time and effort they put into their submissions.

Overall, the submissions showed a strong and common desire for the parish to have a positive future, nourishing parishioners in their spiritual life, and also helping meet their community and pastoral ministry needs, and providing a base for mission.

At a high level, 10 submissions supported option 1, 35 supported option 2, and 12 supported option 3. The other submissions either made comments on the various issues, without expressing an opinion, or commented on particular aspects of proposals. Other submissions also made alternative proposals, e.g. to build the new church at Holy Cross school, to retain the existing churches as much as possible, to retain Good Shepherd Hall, to retain the church and presbytery at St Anthony's.

Many parishioners, however, felt that they couldn't express a strong preference in favour of an option without some more detail on what that option would look like.

Again, all the submissions were very helpful and the summaries on the parish's website provide a richer record and are worth reading.

Overall impressions from the consultation

After reflecting on the consultation meetings and the submissions, the overall impression of the PPC and FC is that:

- The parish is not ready to move to a single main church, and is probably not in a position to even be led that way at this time. There is a high risk of losing a significant proportion of the congregation either completely or to other parishes, from either Miramar or Kilbirnie, if a single main church option is taken right now.
- While good practical reasons were provided in support of both option 2 and option 3, the key concern of parishioners appeared to be to continue to be able to worship in their home area. Although there is opposition to closing down St Anthony's church as a mass centre, there seemed general (but not universal) acceptance that this might have to happen at some stage.
- There is strong support for finding a solution that provides as many parishioners as possible with access to facilities for worship, as close as possible to where they live and within existing communities. While important, halls, space for youth, and space for missionary spaces (e.g. a facility for community and social outreach and support) were generally seen as having secondary importance.
- There are a range of views about what a Church should look like and how it should feel.
- There is strong resistance within the parish to spending funds on strengthening and renovating the existing Holy Cross Church. This is seen by many as wasteful spending on an old and uncomfortable building, and is not sustainable, given it would come to only 67% earthquake rating. It is acknowledged, though, that some parishioners disagree with these views, and have strong linkages to the existing building.
- There are stronger linkages between the schools and the parish buildings than many parishioners realise. For example, the submission from the St Anthony's School Board explained a number of ways in which the school uses the church and interacts with the parish, and the St Patrick's school uses the hall quite extensively. Both St Patricks Primary School and nearby St Catherine's College use the St Patrick's church. The submission from Holy Cross School expressed a strong desire to build better linkages with the parish, with a chapel at the school being the preferred way for achieving that.
- Due to those close current ties and expressed intentions, any decisions on the churches and buildings, especially sale, would need to be discussed closely with the schools, given the potential impact this could have on them.
- There was concern expressed about the effect of the proposals on the Samoan community and, if Good Shepherd Hall is closed down, that the needs of that community need to be provided for in the new arrangements.
- There is a mix in submissions between those who felt that we should spend what is necessary to achieve the best spiritual outcome for the parish, and those who felt that we should be more careful with our finances, and save as much of our cash reserves as possible for the future. Some submissions also pointed to the ever smaller number of priests available.
- There is a need to respect and recognise the efforts of parishioners over the life of the parish, and before, in giving us the properties and facilities we have, and therefore not to part with those things lightly.
- There is strategic importance in holding on to land for the long term, especially the prominent site in Miramar.

- We should try to integrate plans with Wellington South parish (although this is presently difficult, as neither parish has yet settled on an approach).

Revised recommendations

After reflecting on the consultation, the PPC and the FC have decided on a revised proposal from those consulted on. Taking into account the consultation, in particular the above points, and the Cardinal's direction, the revised proposal is:

1. Dropping the single main church proposal as being a key guiding principle for the present decision, but retaining a vision *for the future* of possibly having a single parish church and parish centre.
2. Plan on the basis of having two churches at least for the medium term, one in Kilbirnie and one in Miramar. Within this plan, we would:
 - a. Retain St Patrick's Church essentially as it is, with only a small renovation to meet current needs (e.g. toilet upgrade).
 - b. Demolish Holy Cross Church and build a new smaller Church on site (most likely, to cater to up to 250 people), with a gathering space affixed to it. Although further investigation is required, it is considered this could be done for a cost of about \$3.5M (especially if an approach to building to budget is taken). The new Church would be designed in discussion with the wider parish community, including seeking input from Holy Cross School and the Samoan community to ensure their needs and aspirations are reflected as much as possible. The new Church could be designed in a way that is expandable and/or moveable to allow for future options.
 - c. For the longer term we could stay with two churches or consolidate at one site, depending on the parish's forecast needs at that time and the preparedness of the parish to move to that kind of structure.
 - d. Retain St Anthony's church at least during the period of new building work at Holy Cross and then make a decision on the church's future. The accepted long term view, which is also stated in the Cardinal's directive, is that we cannot proceed on the assumption we will have more than one parish Priest given the dwindling numbers of Priests available. As we will likely one day not have enough priests to adequately serve three churches, at some stage we will likely need to rationalise further by ceasing to use St Anthony's for masses. However, we would have a discussion with the school and the Archdiocese about the future of the church building before a final decision is taken on its ultimate future.
3. Demolish Holy Cross Hall, but not replace it, and thus increase the carparking area. The largest hall in the parish would then be in Kilbirnie, where we would need to undertake some earthquake strengthening and, perhaps, some minor upgrades (e.g. to kitchen). While there would be a gathering space attached to the new church at Holy Cross, it would likely be smaller than the existing hall, and any large parish gatherings would occur at Kilbirnie.
4. Retain the presbytery in Miramar.

Financial implications

While this is much more modest than the option 1 that was consulted on, it would still require significant funds for demolition of the existing Holy Cross Church, building a new church, earthquake

strengthening at Kilbirnie Hall, and minor upgrades at St Patrick's Church. To this end, it is proposed that Good Shepherd Hall and St Anthony's presbytery would still be sold (with the land area associated with the presbytery reduced, to allow existing playground spaces to be retained by St Anthony's school). It is expected this would raise at least \$2.7M. However, a significant portion of the parish's existing funds (currently around \$1.8M) would likely need to be used.

The financial aspects of this proposal require further consideration because:

- (a) We need to be more certain about the costs;
- (b) As it looks likely to require both the expenditure of a significant amount of our cash reserves and the sale of the St Anthony's presbytery, it will reduce the income from interest and rent making our yearly operating budget tighter, and threaten the financial viability of the parish.

However, we have heard the parish call to not let financial issues solely determine the solutions, there could be additional funding sources identified through further work (e.g. parishioners may be willing to fundraise for a new church), and/or the proposal could be further modified to fit.

In terms of process, once the Cardinal considers the issues, and makes a decision on the preferred approach, the PPC and FC recommend that more detailed design work and feasibility studies are undertaken, with further consultation in the parish on detailed proposals, before a final decision is taken.

Conclusion

We are pilgrims on a journey. While a significant minority of parishioners expressed a desire for, or an openness to, a 'radical' one church/one parish centre approach, the majority is clearly not ready for that move. We will journey forward together, taking the steps necessary to both prudently manage the parish's resources, and, guided by the Holy Spirit, to move in the direction that best achieves a united Holy Trinity Parish.

The PPC and the FC have decided to recommend to the Cardinal:

- The revised option above, subject to further detailed work and consultation on its design and feasibility; and
- If this revised approach does not prove feasible, then option 2 (St Patrick's as main church) would be developed further instead, as that is the preferred option by majority of the submissions and views expressed in the consultation meetings.