

*Christ established and ever sustains here on earth his holy Church, the community of faith, hope and charity, as a visible organization through which he communicates truth and grace to all.*

*The Church, although she needs human resources to carry out her mission, is not set up to seek earthly glory, but to proclaim, and this by her own example, humility and self-denial. Christ was sent by the Father "to bring good news to the poor . . . to heal the contrite of heart" (Lk. 4:18), "to seek and to save what was lost" (Lk. 19:10).*

*DOGmatic CONSTITUTION ON THE CHURCH -  
Lumen Gentium Paragraph 8*

*The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows.*

*THE CONSTITUTION ON THE SACRED LITURGY -  
Sacrosanctum Concilium Paragraph 10*



## **Church Community & Buildings**

*We are God's building (1 Cor.3)*

A discussion document for every  
parishioner

*Onslow Catholic Parish  
November 2007*

Dear Parishioners,

I am writing to you as the Parish Priest of the Catholic Parish in Onslow. We in the parish are facing a number of important and exciting issues around the future of the parish and are trying to involve as many of our parish members as possible with the discernment process. To this end we are sending out this booklet of information for you to be aware of and we invite you to be part of the consultation process in 2008. This booklet is being sent to all addresses currently recorded on our Parish database.

In his Apostolic Letter '*Novo Millennio Inuente*' John Paul II wrote that we are "invited to ... remember the past with gratitude, live the present with enthusiasm and look to the future with confidence".

In the spirit of the invitation our parish is currently formulating a Pastoral Plan for the next few years. This involves reflecting on where we have come from, looking at how we are being God's family today, and setting directions on where we would like to grow in the future.

As part of this process of growth and development the issue of parish assets has been raised for discussion. We are called to be good stewards of the parish's assets both for now and for the future - in Jesus' words 'bringing both old and new things from our storehouses'.

Now is the time for us to look at the treasures we have in the parish, especially our people who are our greatest treasure. We must ask ourselves how we can best minister to them with the resources at our disposal today.

This document was prepared for the parishioners by a working party from the parish council, the parish finance committee and the parish liturgy committee.

If you have concerns, queries or suggestions regarding this document you are welcome to contact any member of the working party:

- Fr Tony Kearns, *Parish Priest*  
ph. 479-7777 or stbens@xtra.co.nz
- Philip Colquhoun, *Chair of Working Party & Parish Council*  
ph. 479-1534 or philip.colquhoun@vuw.ac.nz
- Paul Neazor, *Chair Parish Finance Committee*  
ph. 479-5292 (evenings) or danielmary@paradise.net.nz
- Marie Byrne, *Parish Liturgy Committee*  
ph. 479-7389 or mjbyrne@xtra.co.nz
- Tony de Joux, *Parish Finance Committee*  
ph. 479-7063 (between 10.15 am and 5.00 pm), or  
tony\_de\_joux@xtra.co.nz
- Margaret Dunne, *Parish Liturgy Committee*  
ph. 478 6348
- Rebecca Kennedy, *Parish Council*  
ph. 479-9153 or 027 464-1715, or rebeccakennedy@hotmail.com

## *Next steps for our parish*

The options provided in this booklet are provided for discussion only.

Any decisions will not be made by one party, be that the Archbishop, Parish Priest, the working party, Parish Finance Committee or Parish Council.

Decisions to be made will require input from all of these parties as well as and most importantly from the members of our parish.

The Parish Council will continue to take the lead in this process on behalf of the parish.

In February next year we will hold two parish meetings to discuss the issues raised in this document. One meeting will be held on a Sunday afternoon and the other a weekday evening.

Following these meetings the Parish Council will put together a proposal for future action. The discussions and decisions are about our parish community, and will not be taken without a great deal further consultation and input from the parish.

As we move through the season of Advent and into Christmas we ask you to prayerfully reflect on this document and pray for our parish as we look forward.

To this end I ask you to take the time to reflect on the contents of this publication and take time to reflect on what is important to us all in our faith journeys. Take the issues that come to you to God in prayer. Then in 2008 we would ask for your input on how our parish can move forward with confidence into the future that God has in store for us.

If you would like more information about the booklet or any other issue in the Parish please feel free to contact me directly. My contact details are found on page 19.

May the God of yesterday be behind you -

protecting, nurturing and empowering you;

may the God of today be beside you -

supporting, befriending and loving you;

may the God of forever go before you -

inspiring, guiding and calling you

each day as you walk with him down the pathways of your life

*Father Tony Kearns*

*Parish Priest*

*We are God's building. Don't you realise that you are God's temple  
and that the Spirit of God is living among us? (1 Cor. 3)*

## *Introduction*

The 2006 Archdiocesan Synod process has led to planning at a parish level for sustaining and developing parish life over the next 5 to 10 years. What will in fact be done depends on the work of people in the parish.

What it is hoped will be achieved has been set out in the Parish Pastoral Plan. The parish plan includes:

- a. Enriching the experience of being part of the parish for everyone;
- b. reaching out to non-attending parishioners / school goers;
- c. having drawn in new and existing parishioners, educate them on faith and the Church's teachings on current issues; and
- d. reaching out to help the disadvantaged.

As well as looking at its activities, periodically a parish needs to take stock of its properties to see whether they continue to serve the parish.

The provision and upkeep of parish buildings fits comfortably under the first of the headings above. Church properties are not provided by parishioners over years as an end in themselves; they are a means of achieving the mission of the parish. One important thing they provide as well as a site of religious practice, is a place where people feel that they, and others who are there, belong.

## *Meeting space*

If the parish decided against a dedicated parish hall, for example by deciding to hire a hall for larger events on either a regular or as needed basis, then there are possible ways to incorporate an appropriate smaller meeting space for each of the options discussed earlier.

On the **Ngatoto Street** site (option A), a meeting space could be provided in addition to the significant expansion and renovation required to provide the necessary liturgical space. This additional expansion could be included either in front of or behind the new liturgical space.

On the **Everest Street** Site (option B) a meeting space could be developed within existing buildings. This could be a flexible space at rear of church or extending the basement and garage in the presbytery.

If a **new site** (option C) was found for the parish centre, our requirements would include a meeting space.

## *Hall and meeting spaces*

This section discusses the options for hall and meeting spaces. Professional advice has not been sought on these options.

At the start of this document it was noted that our needs included both a large hall with capacity for at least 150 people for occasional use and a smaller meeting space with capacity of up to 40 people for more regular use. A hall, if available, could also be used as the smaller meeting space. It was also noted that the Parish does not need to own all property that it requires.

### *Hall (incorporating a smaller meeting space)*

On the **Ngatoto Street** site (option A) a new church complex could include a hall. With the need to provide a larger church space such a complex would either completely fill the section or would need to be on two levels.

On the **Everest Street** site (option B) there is no reasonable possibility of a hall being built.

If a **new site** (option C) was found for the parish centre, our requirements could include a hall.

**Alternatively** there are a number of halls in the Onslow area that the parish could hire for those events that could not be accommodated in a meeting room. The cost of hiring a hall for one day a week every week is about \$4,000 per year.

The Parish has three buildings which were seen as required to serve the needs of the parish when they were built and for what was then seen as the future: a presbytery which would accommodate a number of priests, St John's church and hall, and St Benedict's church.

The parish school is managed and maintained through a different process and therefore not part of this discussion.

This document is a discussion document to get as wide a view as possible amongst parishioners of what the future should bring. It is not intended as a decision document – that follows a different process.

The Parish Council commends to your prayerful reflection the options for our parish as outlined in the following pages and our parish wide discussions early in 2008.

## *Our parish needs*

Our current needs are:

- A place of worship that can hold up to 300 people (200 regularly attend 9 a.m. Mass on a Sunday);
- Regular access (3 to 4 times a month) to a room able to host a 30-strong youth group;
- Access as required to a smaller meeting room for children's liturgy, parish meetings etc.;
- Access to a hall for one-off parish events;
- A presbytery for one priest; and
- A parish office.

The parish does not need to own all of these facilities itself.

## *Our properties*

St Benedict's Church: capacity 300

St John's Church: capacity 170

Presbytery: parish office and priest accommodation

basement level including small meeting room and double garage

The Finance Committee obtained indicative valuations for these properties:

St Benedict's & Presbytery: \$1,100,000

St John's: \$600,000

**Option C: Concentrate the parish on a new (currently unknown) site.**

This would see the parish selling all properties and finding a suitable site in the Onslow area and building a new parish centre.

For:

- New buildings likely to have reduced medium term maintenance costs.
- Would be built to meet current needs of parish community.
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Against:

- Cost. Most recent church built in diocese cost approx. \$2.5 million. Also would need presbytery and parish office.
- Finding appropriate site may be difficult.

**Summary:**

**If the parish was to decide to move to one site, the next discussion would be to evaluating the arguments for and against each of three possibilities; Everest Street, Ngatoto Street or a new (currently unknown) site.**

**Option B: Concentrate the parish on Everest Street site.**

This would involve selling the Ngatoto Street site, with the funds from the sale being used for catch-up maintenance and any other upgrades required on the Everest Street site. Any additional funds could be used for significant pastoral and property work as and when required.

For:

- The church building is the newer building and should require less long term maintenance and upkeep.
- The church accommodates the current worshipping congregation.
- The current close proximity of the school allows for them taking part in the worshipping life of the parish on a regular basis.
- Funds from the sale of the Ngatoto Street site would be sufficient to provide for outstanding maintenance cost and provide a resource fund to provide for future pastoral initiatives and maintenance on the remaining buildings.

Against:

- This site does not currently provide ease of access for those with disabilities.
- This option could leave the parish without its own hall/meeting space beyond the small meeting room currently under the presbytery. (The following section discusses this issue further.)
- Remedial maintenance work is required on both the church and presbytery.

## *Parish finances*

The parish is asset rich in terms of buildings: but unlike commercial buildings they all consume money not produce it. We have no endowment funds or other significant saved funds. The majority of our funds come from parishioners' contributions.

The number of parishioners and mass counts continues to slowly decline.

Our Receipts and Payments for 2006/07 showed spending of \$1,900 more than we received. This included \$16,000 on repairs and maintenance.

Without spending substantial funds on repairs and maintenance our finances are close to breakeven. Any substantial unexpected item will not be easy to meet. Any development of new activities, whether of a pastoral or other nature of significant cost could be inhibited under current resources.

## *On-going property maintenance*

The Parish Finance Committee as a matter of prudence has obtained advice on maintenance and structural work likely to be required on the two churches and the presbytery. A general review of deferred maintenance and what will be required in the future was obtained from Transfield Services in 2004.

The projected maintenance looking forward 10 years, (at 2004 prices) was:

Presbytery	\$80,639
St Benedict's	\$75,195
St John's	<u>\$109,726</u>
Total	<b>\$265,560</b>
or on average	\$26,556 per year

*Note: that non-residential building prices have increased in the 3 years from July 2004 to June 2007 by 14%. Thus the \$265,560 has already become closer to \$303,000. In ten years time the yearly figure would be \$45,000 (based on inflation of 4.5%).*

Since the Transfield report was prepared, we have had proof that these matters are not static. By way of examples:

- The roof of St Benedict's Church has produced a fairly serious leak which is expected to be expensive to repair.
- It has become apparent that the upper windows in that church are going to need quite expensive reframing.

Present estimates of catch-up maintenance are in excess of \$50,000.

### *Seismic upgrade of St Benedict's*

A seismic assessment of St Benedict's Church was obtained in 2006 when the question arose how it (in common with many buildings in Wellington) met current earthquake standards for new buildings. This was done, not because there are fears that the building was in danger of collapse or damage, but because the parish has a continuing responsibility to monitor its building in the light of modern engineering standards.

The assessment confirmed that if the parish wished the church building to meet the higher standards on new buildings a significant upgrade of parts of St Benedict's would be required. This work would include reinforcing or replacing the non-structural brickwork inside the church.

If and when this work has to be done the cost would be up to \$150,000.

Against:

- The current building would not be large enough to accommodate the current Mass population so rebuilding work would be required. Note: the most recent church built in the Archdiocese costs \$2.5 million (and that did not include a presbytery).
- Because of modifications to the current building this site could leave us without a hall. (The following section discusses the provision of a hall and meeting space further.)
- Difficulty in finding an appropriate and nearby building for a presbytery and parish office.
- Possible legal constraints on changing the current building.
- Significant short-term disruption for the parish with presbytery and parish office being moved.
- Because of increased distance the close involvement of the parish school in the worshipping life of the parish could be reduced or stopped.
- Sale of Everest Street property would be unlikely to fully cover redevelopment costs for the Ngatoto Street site and presbytery and parish office.

## *If one site, which one?*

This section discusses the options if the parish decides to concentrate on one site.

### **Option A: Concentrate the parish on the Ngatoto Street site.**

Ngatoto Street is the site of the first church in this area and holds historical value for many in the parish.

This option would involve selling the Everest Street property, including the presbytery. As the church on Ngatoto Street does not meet our current size requirements, as outlined earlier, significant expansion and renovation would be required; this would mean rebuilding the church. Such renovations would require the space currently used as a hall becoming part of the church proper. A new presbytery and parish office close to the Ngatoto Street site would also be required.

For:

- Ngatoto Street is on a flat section which provides ease of access for those with disabilities.
- The possibility of building a modern church suitable to the Ngatoto Street site and the needs of the parish community today and into the long term future.

## *Acquiring further funds*

The only ways we are likely to acquire significant additional funds are:

- existing active parishioners increasing their giving and that increase being maintained into the future (including inflation);
- a significant number of new parishioner/contributors; and/or
- selling some of the parish property, thus releasing funds for current use (as well as reducing maintenance burden from that property).

## *Summary*

*The parish has significant assets — but these require significant cash outflow to maintain.*

*Projected maintenance costs for all parish buildings cannot be met by current parish income.*

*Our existing buildings require on average \$30,000 maintenance per year in 2007 figures. To fund this maintenance would require a 28% increase in giving by every parishioner.*

*In addition we required in excess of \$50,000 for catch-up maintenance and may require up to a further \$150,000 for one off seismic upgrade of St Benedict's.*

*Without significant change to current parishioner giving patterns an increase in funds available for building maintenance and repairs seems unlikely.*

*For a number of years the parish has deferred significant maintenance. This situation cannot continue much longer.*

## *Where should we go from here?*

In accepting that the current situation of deferring significant maintenance cannot continue, the parish is faced with opportunities and choices. These opportunities and choices are in part about buildings but are also about community — our parish community.

The first decision facing the parish is whether we parishioners increase our financial contributions to the parish to fund all existing buildings **OR** we sell some of our parish buildings.

### **Option 1: Seek additional funds from parishioners to continue to support current buildings.**

This would require a commitment from every parishioner to an immediate increase in contribution of 28%. This would need to be ongoing, adjusted for inflation. In addition, funding of \$50,000 for catch-up maintenance is required.

For:

- Maintaining the current arrangement, including convenience of two sites for Mass.

Against:

- Additional maintenance costs are unknown, and could be large.
- Parish numbers show no signs of growth, placing an increasing burden on contributing parishioners.
- A long term financial commitment by contributing parishioners will be required.

### **Option 2: Concentrate the parish on one site.**

This would involve one of three options:

- A. Selling the Everest Street properties and making appropriate changes to Ngatoto Street site to provide for the parish's needs and a new presbytery, or
- B. selling the Ngatoto Street site, or
- C. possibly selling both sites and relocating on a new (unknown) site.

Each option is discussed in more detail on following pages. However before discussing each option we should discuss the arguments for and against concentrating on one site.

For:

- Provides a single focus for the whole parish.
- Removes any need for maintenance or upgrade of other site.
- Sale to provide funds for catch-up maintenance and upgrades of retained site.

Against:

- Each church has historical, emotional and spiritual significance for many in the parish. Closing either church will be difficult for some members of the parish.
- Convenience of two sites especially for those without access to motor vehicles will be reduced.

### **Summary:**

**The first point for discussion is whether the parish continues the current arrangement with two sites and raises additional funds required for maintenance from parishioners, **OR** sells some property and concentrates on one site.**