

Parish Properties Review Update

Our property proposals were put to Cardinal John Dew in October of 2019 and since then some further activities have occurred that some parishioners may not be aware of. This update summarises the activities over the last year or so and explains what the next steps are.

Due to the disruption of Covid-19, Cardinal John's response to the initial proposals was received in June 2020. In that response the Cardinal asked the Pastoral Teams (the Priests and Lay Pastoral Leader) of the Parishes of Te Awa Kairangi and Te Wairua Tapu to do some further work together. He asked them to consider the impact that the proposals of the two Parishes would have on Lower Hutt, when considered together. The Cardinal provided some parameters for that discussion, but allowed the Pastoral Teams significant latitude in the options available and in the process they wished to follow.

The Pastoral Teams decided to take a discernment approach and asked Fr. Brian Cummings, SM to facilitate the discernment process. There are various ways of approaching discernment and so it can mean different things to different people – it was important for the Teams to agree on the process they would follow. In their process, the Teams sought to establish a right relationship with God and enter a dialogue with Him. Through this process they sought to see what God sees and to act as He would want them to act.

In taking this approach, the Teams did not focus on practical issues or attempt to puzzle through potential scenarios but worked within the parameters requested by Cardinal John. They placed the decision in God's hands and sought his direction.

The first session occurred in August 2020. The group came to a view at this session on the right way forward, which they each then took away to pray on. They returned in September to reflect again. They met for a third time in November, this time with Cardinal John, to once again reflect and pray. Throughout that process they felt that the view they originally came to in August was the correct path to follow.

In December 2020 the Pastoral Teams submitted the results of their discernment process to the Cardinal. In February 2021 the Cardinal supplied a response that he does not have any objection to the proposal put forward.

The next step in the process is that the Cardinal will issue a formal decree. Due to his schedule, this is not expected until the week after Easter at the very earliest and is likely to be after this date. A further update will be provided in May if the decree has not been issued.

The proposal does involve the closure or re-purposing of more than one church. Further details are not being shared at this point because that would pre-empt the Cardinal's formal decree.

Further submissions are also not being sought. The Pastoral Teams feel submissions received during the initial process provided enough information for their discernment process and know that you will have been guiding them through your prayers.

It is important to note that the decree will provide only a direction of travel. There will be many practical concerns to resolve. Changes will occur over some time and in particular the welfare of Priests will play an important role in when the changes are made.

Please pray for the Cardinal and for our two Parishes as we make our way through this time of change together.