

Dear fellow parishioners of Te Awakairangi,

It is with deep gratitude for our shared journey that we want to update you on some important decisions affecting our parish and its cherished buildings.

Our Parish Community of Te Awakairangi was created in 2015 with the four communities of St Michael's Taita, St Bernadette's Naenae, St Martin de Porres Avalon, and Ss Peter & Paul Lower Hutt.

In 2019 Cardinal John asked all parishes in the Archdiocese to review their properties and parish buildings to assess pastoral needs, and how physical spaces can be at the service of mission.

As parishioners we naturally have strong connections to the churches in which we have celebrated Mass and significant sacramental life moments. We also know that as a faith community we need to keep looking forward in faith to ensure that we stay equipped for the future. The foresight of those who came before is what has enabled us to be where we are today, and similarly we must look to ensure we enable for mission the following generations of our faith community.

In 2019, there were consultations within the parish followed by communication with the Cardinal, and the Pastoral Team of Te Wairua Tapu, all of which led to the initial plan for our parish. This was to move to a three-church parish with St Michael's, St Bernadette's, and Ss Peter & Paul Churches and with the retention of the two presbyteries at St Michael's and Ss Peter & Paul. To progress this, we sought detailed assessments of the parish buildings so that decisions about their future could be made with some certainty.

A Property Plan Implementation Group was formed and has undertaken sizeable and detailed work to develop a report for the Pastoral Team, Parish Council, and Finance Committees. Some of the results from the external assessments were unexpected – most notably the New Build Standard (NBS) ratings of our churches. These ratings determine earthquake building safety, and ultimately whether a building needs to be strengthened for the future. While we were aware of the need to strengthen St Bernadette's Church, the seismic assessments also returned a need to further strengthen St Michael's and Ss Peter & Paul's Churches. Their current respective NBS ratings being 37% and 40%. Additionally, the assessment of St Michael's presbytery found a building that is unsafe to occupy and would need substantial work to make it safe to use.

The property report was considered, and the Parish Council has accepted the plan for a three-church parish with the suggested staged implementation process. There are five stages at which decisions will need to be made. On the completion of each stage, we need to decide as to whether we can progress to the next stage.

The plan will initially involve the strengthening of St Bernadette's Hall, and the preparation for sale of the St Bernadette's presbytery.

At that stage a decision will be made concerning the strengthening of Ss Peter & Paul Church and the demolition of St Michael's Presbytery. Then will come the stage for market assessments for the sale of St Martin de Porres property and the decision concerning the strengthening of St Michael's Church. Stage four will be the decision to strengthen St Bernadette's Church. Finally, stage five is the decision to integrate the parish office into Ss Peter and Paul Church, the removal of the presbytery at Knights Road, and the provision of accommodation for the priests of the parish.

Although the priorities of the property plan differ from our initial vision, the council believe we must prioritise strengthening our largest church to provide a safe gathering place in case of a seismic or other serious event. Ensuring pastoral care across the parish remains our paramount concern.

Archbishop Paul has seen the plan, and advised we can look to implementation. Due to the size of the works needed to be undertaken, the permission of the archbishop, and his consultative bodies, the College of Priestly Consultors, and the Board of Administration will be required at each stage, making the overall project likely to span over a number of years.

We are immensely thankful to the Property Plan Implementation Group for their dedicated work and the detailed plan that will guide us forward.

We are blessed in our wonderful communities, and in the faith we share. This plan we believe will provide for our needs into the future.

With prayers of thanksgiving,

Parish Council