

REPORT

Parish Merger Consultation - Wellington North Pastoral Area

This report is the response from the Wellington North Pastoral Area to Archbishop John's request for consultation regarding a proposed merger of the three parishes of St Benedict's Onslow, SS Peter and Paul Johnsonville and St Andrew's Newlands.

Preliminary comments/observations

The following comments/observations are provided as background to the Report:

- It seeks to provide a practical and objective record of the views of the people as expressed during the consultation period.
- It does not include the views of the Wellington North Temporary Pastoral Leadership Team or the smaller Facilitating Group which conducted the consultation and prepared the Report. A report is being provided separately from the Facilitating Group with its views on the merger and reflections on the consultation process.
- The people were provided with extensive notice, multiple opportunities and ample time in the consultation process (see **Process** below)
- In seeking the people's views the Facilitating Group encouraged them to think imaginatively, widely and hopefully on the sort of faith community they wanted. The people were assured that Archbishop John wanted to hear from them, that no ideas are stupid or un-discussable and that *all* views would be communicated to him in one form or another.
- The consultation process was carried out in a spirit of prayer and faith reflection throughout the consultation period. The respective communities' awareness and concern – and their faith and hope in the face of the challenges before the Church (both local and international) – were constantly evidenced throughout the process. The wisdom and the movement of the Spirit were evident whenever the people met.
- There was a definite sense of gratitude in the communities that they have an Archbishop who consults with his people.
- Caveats that should be placed on the Report content are that (i) by and large it represents the views of the middle-aged and older members of the communities. Notwithstanding considerable efforts to engage 'young family' parishioners (including personal approaches and school and parish newsletters) their low representation was disappointing. With notable exceptions it would appear that the future structure of parishes in the Pastoral Area is just not currently a focus in their lives. This is in contrast to their strong engagement in the life of the two school communities. And (ii) the consultation process failed to engage significantly the ethnic minorities in the Pastoral area. With notable exceptions, the large Asian and

Filipino communities were under-represented in the process. This is notwithstanding a strong and vibrant faith amongst these communities.

Report Methodology

In the Archdiocese's "Proposal Document" a template was provided for individual/parish response. The document also specifically requested the Pastoral Area "to consider what we could do better if we were to combine our resources and work together to build up Catholic communities in this area".

On reflection it seemed to those facilitating the Process that the latter question was the proper and most productive point from which to start the consultation – not least because its starting point was the people themselves, where they are and whence they see themselves journeying as a faith community. It was this question that was constantly put to the people in notices and whenever they gathered. Accordingly the Report describes this as "the Overarching Question" and provides the people's responses thereto.

In the course of answering the Overarching Question the five specific template questions have also been covered. The related specific answers are provided at the end of the Report.

Process

The people of the pastoral area were provided with extensive notice, multiple opportunities and ample time in the consultation process.

The process included ten public meetings to which parishioners of all three parishes were invited. The public meetings were held in local community centres in order to bring an atmosphere of change, neutrality and objectivity to the process. Additional meetings were held at St Brigid's School, with the Passionist Family Group leaders and with a Youth Focus group. Over 400 people attended these meetings. This figure represents over 30% of the Mass-going numbers in the area (approximately 1200).

People were invited to attend meetings through a letter sent to most Catholics on the respective parish rolls, group or individual invitations, public youth-designed posters, and parish and school newsletters.

Views were also sought and received via a consultation email address and physical "dropboxes" in the foyers of all parish churches.

Throughout the consultation period the Temporary Pastoral Leadership Team leading the Process met 6 times with a 14 further meetings being held by the smaller team leading the facilitation and preparation of the Report.

After the penultimate public meetings a draft Report was prepared and made available to the people. Final public meetings were then held in Johnsonville and Khandallah at which the people were asked to confirm that the Facilitating Group had heard and accurately recorded what they wanted to say to Archbishop John.

A comprehensive and contemporaneous record of the views expressed at all the consultation meetings was kept. This is attached in the form of appendices to this Report. Whilst it is appreciated that this material significantly increases the Report's volume – it also:

- (i) provides the flavour of the wide-ranging views and ideas which came out of the consultation meetings, and
- (ii) fulfils the Facilitating Group's undertaking that *all* views would go forward.

THE OVERARCHING QUESTION

What could we do better if we were to combine our resources and work together to build up Catholic communities in this area?

The responses from the people to this question fell into a number of broad themes which have been grouped as follow:

- Merger
- Preservation of Identity and Tradition
- Community
- Leadership and Ministry
- Liturgy
- Buildings and Finance
- Pastoral Care, and
- Mission.

In addition to these themes the views obtained from our young people have been retained as an integral contribution under Youth Voice.

Merger

It is clear that many parishioners in the Wellington North Pastoral Area have been aware of the situation in the Archdiocese for some considerable time now and have been anticipating changes. There was a discernible feeling amongst the community that consideration of the pending difficulties and the resultant need for change was overdue. To these people the Archdiocese's Proposal was in itself welcome as evidence that the apparent problems are now being addressed.

It is generally accepted and agreed in the Area that there is a need for the merger of parishes throughout the Archdiocese. There was broad acceptance and support for the proposal that the three parishes of St Benedict's Onslow, SS Peter and Paul Johnsonville and St Andrew's Newlands should merge.

There is recognition to the point of a strong understanding that change is part of the local church's tradition and needs to continue to allow the growth of the faith community in the Area.

The merger was seen broadly as an opportunity to renew our communities and share human, spiritual, financial and physical resources and to explore different ways of spreading the

Gospel. This was often expressed in the context of a desire to reclaim and harness the spirit of Vatican II – to be living witnesses to the Gospel in the world, delighting in belonging, participating and giving.

The people of a merged parish could develop a new vision and plan that would not be possible in the smaller parish groups. Using combined resources, strengths and facilities new, fresh ways of living the Gospel might be developed. Ways of praying together, faith formation, social activities and adult-educational opportunities would be enriched with a wider and more culturally-diverse pool of people.

Qualifications to the Merger Proposal

- Parish” v “Faith Community”: At some of the meetings individuals spoke strongly in favour of the value of talking about a “faith community” without physical boundaries rather than a “parish” with its geographical boundaries. There were discussions about being a parish without boundaries and the essence of a Christian community. This concept was new to many people but also appealed to them in its openness to the Spirit who has no boundaries.
- Merger combination: Although there was broad support for the 3 parish merger proposal, a minority of individuals strongly advocated alternative merger combinations including the mergers of Onslow with the Cathedral and Johnsonville and Newlands with Tawa. For some, such merger variations reflected their alternative Mass centre preference in the event they were unable to attend Mass in their own parish.
- Extent of Proposal: The question was regularly raised at meetings as to whether the proposed mergers across the Archdiocese are going far enough. People commented that if there needs to be change it should not amount to short-term tinkering with inevitable further changes in a few years. The merger should be more widespread to avoid this. When such views were advanced they seemed to meet with general affirmation from others at the meetings. People are open to change – but it must be effective and enduring change.
- Merger “nuts and bolts”: There was concern particularly amongst some Onslow parishioners that no merger models have been provided or discussed. What does “merging parishes” mean? The observation was made that a merger might take different forms eg retaining the parish names and identities but establishing an area-wide administration or clergy ministry. Strong views were expressed that if there is to be a “merger” in principle then there should be further consultation with the people as to the models that are available and which might be implemented. Doubts were expressed as to the durability of the “Parish priest-led” model and whether the retention of a larger version of this in a 3-parish merger should be retained.
- Re-inventing the wheel? Supplementary to “nuts and bolts” above there was a strong call for the knowledge and experience of other merging parishes in the *world-wide* church to be sourced and tapped for guidance and inspiration.

Preservation of identity and tradition

Notwithstanding broad approval of the merger there is widespread concern – to the point of anxiety in some people – that what is good, functioning and Spirit-filled in each current parish should not be lost but wherever possible should be preserved. The respective parishes existing sense of community was at the forefront of these concerns. As a result many prefer to keep the three parish churches as Mass centres at least in the short to medium term to ensure the continuation of community gathering and worship.

At the same time several people looked forward to the day when the whole, enlarged community might worship and share life together in one central church and multi-purpose building.

Community

With the prospect of change people hoped for a new community which is welcoming to all-comers, connected with its youth and united in its diversity - a single parish with many smaller communities reflecting a variety of interests, needs and services.

It was acknowledged that a new merged parish will be presented with considerable challenges and opportunities arising from the resultant multi-cultural mix. The influx of migrants from several countries into the Wellington North Pastoral Area brings great diversity and richness. Formation and support will be needed to develop cultural awareness and to enhance the “unity in diversity” model in the new parish.

A new parish must look to create opportunities for social and connecting events to build up the new community.

Leadership and Ministry

Leadership and Ministry would be key considerations in a new parish. These topics generated much discussion. Strong and varying views were expressed.

Role of the Laity

Whilst there is recognition that the laity have already stepped up in many ways there is a keen perception that they will need to do so even more in the times ahead. At the forefront of this thinking was the importance of Baptism and the resultant call of the baptized to holiness, leadership and responsibility in their faith community. There was frequent reference to Vatican II’s concept of “the priesthood of the laity”.

To achieve this greater involvement of lay people a number of developments were suggested:

- On-going formation, training and spiritual development will be needed for all. Many people voiced their reluctance to take on ministries – even very simple and apparently undemanding ministries – without training and ongoing support.
- Priests need to encourage the laity to take on their responsibilities even when this means some loss or compromise of their own traditional role or authority. It is not just about the laity “stepping up” – but in some instances about the clergy “stepping

back”. The laity and priest working model should be one of collaboration and partnership – rather than leadership and authority.

- Promotion of the concept that all parishioners should actively participate in the life of the community – including, where possible, by taking on a ministry if only for a short time.

Different models of leadership

The diminishing number and health of priests is broadly perceived by the people of the Area as being the trigger for the Archdiocese’s review of the parish structure. The perception is that such shortage means that the laity must step up and indeed “take matters into our own hands”. Many believed that the Archdiocese has already reached a “tipping point” and the smaller and ageing number of priests means that the Church must promote – and in some cases consider - new models of leadership and ministry including:

- More lay pastoral leaders.
- Revisit the option of male deacons and consider female deacons.
- Married priests. People regularly queried why the Church was not allowing this as an option. There was significant acceptance of and support for married priests. As part of this option there was strong support for consideration being given to inviting back individual priests who have left active ministry – whether to marry or for other reasons.
- Women priests. Although this option was not raised as often as married clergymen it was regularly raised. There was a significant number of people who observed that the question should at least be looked into and discussed.
- Clergy from overseas. There was divergent opinion about this option which assumes that there are foreign priests who are willing and able to come to New Zealand (and it was accepted that this is by no means certain). Whilst a few people saw it as an obvious solution – many others preferred not to take this option even if it were available.
- Clergy Training. Review current formation practices. Concern about sufficient recognition of previous study and experience for men who begin seminary training later in life and that the current seminary training does not seem to include skills required in today’s church: relationship issues, conflict resolution, leadership, financial issues.

These alternative leadership models - or combinations of them – were raised and discussed at nearly all of the meetings held. In the case of married clergy and women priests there was a call for the issues to be continually raised and seriously considered at both the local and universal level.

As an off-shoot of the discussions in these areas the view was put on more than one occasion that there should be a complete revision of the Church’s Canon Law which was seen as being disconnected with modern times and the people’s lives. When voiced such views were met with warm and general assent.

Leadership Practicalities

The people envisage a Parish Team model in which a variety of personnel will be needed to establish a new, merged-parish community. There will be a need for permanent paid core staff as well as volunteers with good management, formation and resourcing skills.

Groups such as the Parish Council (Leadership Team), Finance Committee, Liturgy Committee, Pastoral Area Team will work together in consultation and on-going involvement with the whole Catholic faith community. The Parish Priest will be part of the Pastoral Area Team which will have a clear direction and mandate from the start. This is an opportunity to develop structures to ensure that all voices in the community are heard. There is a strong desire for a continued and developed youth ministry with adequate resources.

Such structures and processes will require funding.

Liturgy

A number of observations/suggestions/proposals were made regarding Liturgy:

- The new Parish Team and the parishioners would need to discern appropriate timetables and rosters to ensure that people can continue to worship at least occasionally in their ‘own church’.
- Decisions will need to be made as to the frequency of ‘Pastoral Area Masses’ at which the whole community can gather to worship
- On the assumption that daily Mass may no longer be available in each of the current Mass centres there will be opportunities for communities to experience other forms of praying and worshipping together, including increased use of Liturgy of the Word and Communion liturgies.
- A wider pool of laity should be called upon and trained to prepare liturgies.
- More “faith reflections” from lay people.
- There was a strong call for improved vibrant music and hymns that all people can sing. Much church music is difficult to sing, sung too slowly and for too long and often in a register that is too high for many voices. Liturgy should be life-filled, vibrant, engaging and allow active participation by all on many levels.
- There is continued strong disaffection with the new English translation of the Mass.

Buildings and Finance

General

There is recognition that ultimately any merger will have far-reaching implications for the new parish’s building assets and finances. Issues will need to be addressed by the Archdiocese and yet-to-be-established finance and building committees with an emphasis on working together collaboratively and in consultation with the people.

There should be an early review and assessment of the new parish’s financial situation including existing land and buildings, resources and finances. This will allow eventual discernment of on-going capital expenditure and maintenance, and the best use of land and buildings and any other assets.

Buildings - Existing

There is a strong desire to discern the use of existing buildings and land so that new needs can be met. People wanted warm and friendly meeting spaces, activity rooms, and quiet spaces. These could be developed in existing church buildings or in the current presbyteries.

There was a strong appreciation of the symbolic value of a central church and administration building. Even if people do not regularly attend Mass the physical and visible presence of the building is a reminder and perhaps an anchor. Many felt that logically Johnsonville would be a suitable site given its central locality, extensive land area, facilities and proximity of St Brigid's School. However this is a sensitive issue for some people in the other parishes who perceive such centralization as a diminution of their own community and a 'takeover' by the larger parish of Johnsonville.

Generally people wish in the meantime to maintain current use of the various sites including the three local/community mass centres - although there was also acceptance that this may not be possible long term for various reasons, including finance, mass-going numbers and any new building programme.

There is some concern that the formation of a new parish and the need for earthquake strengthening have happened at the same time. While the issues have been explained some parishioners need more information. Many realise that safety in the short to medium term is a priority, if use of existing buildings is to continue.

Buildings – Future

A significant minority across the three parishes see in any merger an opportunity for the new parish to dream big and to realize the people's many hopes and desires that have emerged during the consultation process.

Such people envisage a new modern-designed, multi-purpose large church and facilities to meet the needs and dreams of both the faith community and local communities. Such a development would ideally include good parking (and possibly commercial parking as an income source), a school, a service and community centre, design-built residential accommodation for priests and others. There would be space and opportunity for youth, young parents, migrant and ethnic groups, prayer groups and other interest groups to meet for shared activities - including to pray and celebrate according to their customs.

The siting and development of such a complex would be decided while reflecting on the question, 'Where is the best location for the future proclamation of the Good News?' Given projected population growth to the north it was suggested that Churton Park or adjoining areas under development would be a logical site for a large new church and facilities and possible adjoining primary/secondary school(s).

Proponents of such visions were under no illusions as to the likely cost of such a development. But they felt nevertheless that such options should be examined thoroughly. In this regard they pointed to the visions and dreams of those who came before us and who left us the great legacies the local church now has.

Fundraising

There was a strong feeling across the three parishes that it made sense to suspend any current fundraising projects relating to buildings throughout the Area until the post-merger use of buildings becomes clearer.

Some Johnsonville parishioners and leaders strongly oppose this view and maintain that current fundraising efforts for the SS Peter and Paul Church and parish house must continue in any event.

Pastoral care

There was a strong sense that everyone in the community is responsible for pastoral care and must work together to this end.

A new parish should:

- act immediately to ensure that the merger will not penalize or adversely affect the elderly and vulnerable
- Pastoral care will be extended as we deal with the complexities of Mass timetables and travel. This will provide parishioners with immediate opportunities to care for others who may be disadvantaged.
- offer professional formation and training, including in the areas of listening skills, boundaries, confidentiality and unconditional support
- carry out a review of the way it identifies and responds to needs.
- establish or confirm existing small voluntary groups to address the needs of the elderly, young parents, migrants
- work at new and old forms of welcome and hospitality
- maintain and develop pastoral care of the clergy. This is seen as very important.

A new parish would:

- give a wider base for established groups like St Vincent de Paul, the Catholic Women's League, Challenge 2000, the Focolare Movement and the Passionist Family Groups.
- provide a way of re-connection for people who have not been coming to Mass or otherwise participating in parish life.

Mission

Some have asked if the responses to the consultation have tended to concentrate too much on ourselves and internal ministry. They have pointed out that the new parish will provide a fresh opportunity to bring the Kingdom of God to the wider Area community with a new enthusiasm and commitment. A combined community should develop a sense of Mission and a desire to reach out not only to its own people but also to those in need in the wider community - providing living witness to the Gospel to people of other faiths and of no faith.

We should "start the conversations", especially with youth, migrants, our own family members and strangers. The changing social and cultural face of the Area provides clear opportunities for such evangelization.

In this context several people referred to the spirit and energy of the years immediately post-Vatican II.

This is also an opportunity for us to reach out to other denominations. We have much to learn, much to share. This would be achieved by working collaboratively with an ecumenical focus so that liturgies, activities and resources are shared with other churches and faith community groups in the Area.

The combined facilities of a merged parish – and any multi-purpose complex that might eventually be constructed - could be used by groups beyond the immediate Catholic community as it reaches out to the wider community.

Youth discussions about the merging of parishes.

The team felt it important to capture fully the ideas and energy shown by the youth/young people in this pastoral area:

What would you like your church community to be like?

- **Crowd more involved-** During the homily instead of just having the priest talking to the congregation about what the readings were about, the idea of having discussions were thrown out there. This is to get people more involved with the masses, and that the congregation feels as if they are interacting together, and having discussions. Another way by getting the people more involved would be get them to come up with dramas, instead of the priest saying a homily the people of the congregation can put together a drama. Whether this be one a month, or every 2 weeks.
- **Getting the youth more involved and having programmes / groups that they are able to do-** This would include having hang out areas where the youth can chill together, having youth programmes and groups that the youth would be interested in going to – youth camps as well. Also having youth masses, so that they youth are able to have their say in how they would want a mass to look like, and run the mass the way that they want to, so that it is enjoyable for them, so they are wanting to come back.
- **More culturally sensitive / bring in a multi-cultural aspect –** This could include having prayers in different languages i.e. Maori, Samoan, Chinese, also having songs in different languages. But then also having different cultures things throughout the mass, i.e. something that the Maori culture may do one week, and then another week Samoan , then Chinese etc.
- **Food after mass – chat to people –** This would be a way for people to be able to meet other in their church community, and just be able to have general chit-chat over a cup of tea / coffee after mass weekly. Bring the community closer as one.
- **Building communities on other days** - This would include starting up different events / groups on different days of the week not only Sunday so that the community is able to stay connected, and the community relationship would be able to grow on a larger scale not only at church but only a social aspect as well.
- Sound systems more up – to – date
- New songs – contemporary, upbeat songs
- More modern buildings with more versatile space
- More interesting and fun
- Big choir

- Separate masses, come together monthly
- Shorter mass
- Sign of the peace – less structured, longer, more symbolic and real
- Good website
- Different cultures having / hosting masses
- Relaxed masses
- Good vibes
- Welcoming – Opened to multi religion
- Cultural acceptance
- Trips as a Parish
- Friends
- Sports activities
- Involve the earth
- Groups talking about faith

What do people need from their church community?

- **More youth masses** – getting the youth more involved into things that are going on within the parishes. Get the youth to lead some of the programmes and have some say into what they want to see in the programmes for the youth.
- **Support that is unconditional** – A place where someone is able to go and feel that they have support with them, no matter what the situation is, whether it be a hard situation or a good situation. The person should be able to know that they have the support of their church community.
- **Youth leaders** – This is so that the youth voice is able to be heard, and not ignored. So the youth leaders would be able to bring up any ideas/problems that the youth of the community have.
- **Support / help in times of need but also privacy** – knowing that there are people to talk to within the church community and help you through your time of need, but then also knowing that what is said stays in confidence and it is then only between those 2 people, or the small group of people.
- **Their own voice to be heard** - Especially for the younger generation because in a few years they will be the ones who are running the way that the parishes are working, So it is important the voice of the young are heard and that they aren't ignored.
- A sense of belonging and acceptance
- Welcoming – people greeting each other
- Giving to others – preference to help the poor
- Information about what is on offer
- Website, fliers at the door
- Better relationships between schools and churches
- To be active
- To be involved
- Encouraging community
- Interest in each individual
- The Church to show the public what it is about – being out in the public sphere on all topics
- Performances and positive events
- Multi language masses
- Volunteers to help them

- More encouragement on faith
- Education, talk about your faith.

What do you think will be difficult about joining the parishes together?

- **Transport** – Because 2-4 parishes will be joining together, it will be a struggle for some people to get there as it may be further than within walking distance. So would that then stop people from coming to mass?
- **Different ways of doing things / different opinions** –Because there would be a number of different parishes joining together each parish has their own way of doing things, so there could be the conflict of how things are to be done, and the way that the joint parishes will run, and also the way that masses would be run.
- **Having buildings that are big enough?** Would the current buildings big enough to hold 2 or 3 times the amount of people that are currently there on a Sunday? Would it be a comfortable fit? or a tight fit? What happens when there is something else that happens goes on at mass on a Sunday i.e. Baptism. Will there be enough room for the current congregation as well as the extra people who come for the special occasion? Also at Easter / Christmas there are a lot more people coming to church at those times so would the size of the specific building be able to facilitate for that many people.
- **People may not be heard as much** - Because the parishes will be getting bigger, there is a higher chance that everyone won't be heard, so it would be important that there was a way that everyone was getting their opinion across.
- Money and Earthquake safety
- People not willing to contribute
- Modern vs traditional
- Too many people at the masses
- Hard to keep in contact and keep everyone in the loop
- Different inter-generational expectations
- Time
- Size
- Change
- Location
- Hassle
- Which church would do the mass?
- Entertaining people

What is exciting about the parishes joining together?

- Building – more spaces to do cool stuff / open spaces
- New focus
- Meeting new people
- FUN & interesting
- Wider and bigger community
- Could create recreational space to get people involved – emphasise that being church isn't just about mass
- Soup kitchen to reach out to people
- Building and other aspects put together by community
- Sunday school
- Homework club / study room
- Music room

- Art room
- Doing / trying out new things
- The word of the Lord gets spread around faster
- Learning more about different cultures
- Including all age groups
- All of your friends are together
- New ideas
- Learn how other people do things
- You can achieve more together
- Bringing different communities together
- New building/ have a games room.

Youth Leaders Summary

The youth voice was noticeably absent from most of the consultation meetings. The youth voice was compiled from various sources including a consultation specifically for young people, and through personal connections of the leadership team.

Whilst it was acknowledged at many of the consultations that this merger wasn't a chance to try solve all of the problems associated with a lack of engagement from young people in the Church, it was seen as an opportunity to carefully consider young people and the future as a significant consideration when deciding a path forward.

Many of the young people expressed their desire to be part of a faith community, and many were frequent attendees and participants in their local parishes. However many of the young people spoken too expressed their alienation from the church, their struggle with the existing parish structures, and problems with the connection between parish structures and the mission of the 'Church' as in the people of God.

Many young people mentioned that whilst there seems to be an absence of young people from the Catholic parishes, there are other churches that have huge numbers of young people attending. Many thought that it would be good to examine these churches and seek what made them successful at engaging young people. Some were also cautious of taking too many lessons from these churches, but rather that these illustrated that young people had a desire to belong to a faith community that was being met by these churches, but not by the Catholic church in many instances.

Other young people expressed a concern that many of the decisions about the present would be made without looking toward the future, and creating communities, buildings, liturgies, structures that supported young people being engaged in the work and mission of the Church.

If the Catholic Church is to survive it needs to emulate Arise in a Catholic fashion - learn, copy, then improve

Start addressing why young people aren't attracted to this community:

“Always obstacles every time I come into the parish and try do things differently - obstacles in terms of liturgy, obstacles in terms of building use, obstacles in terms of music - I start to wonder who this Church is for and whether I fit into it”.

Responses to the five proposal questions. (These brief responses should be read against the background of the responses to the Overarching Question – see above)

QUESTION 1

What general feedback do you wish to offer the Archbishop?

The people of the Wellington North Pastoral Area support in principle the Archdiocese' proposal that the three parishes of St Benedict's Onslow, SS Peter and Paul Johnsonville and St Andrew's Newlands should merge.

QUESTION 2

What specific feedback do you wish to offer the Archbishop about the proposal for your Pastoral Area?

The people of the Pastoral Area readily engaged in the consultation process and the consideration of what it means to be a Catholic faith community at this time of change. The process generated a positive sense of empowerment. A merger will be more successful and fruitful if the people continue to be involved and consulted at every step of the way. This will result in a greater "buy in" of the community to the changes. In this context several people want more information as to the form the merger might take, what models are available – before there is further discussion and consultation.

QUESTION 3

What, in your opinion, should the Archbishop reconsider?

Does the extent of this merger proposal go far enough? Is it looking far enough into the future?

QUESTION 4

What other factors do you consider need to be part of the decision making process?

The people should continue to be included in the decision making process.

QUESTION 5 (Timeline)

The three parishes are ready to begin the merger process as soon as the Archbishop makes his decision. The nature and pace of the implementation process is difficult to assess or predict in the absence of concrete proposals as to what form the merger might take. Any time-line for implementation will be determined by the form of the merger and the people's readiness to engage at each necessary step along the way.

That said – there is a readiness to start! Assuming that the merger is to proceed and that the people of the Pastoral Area will be looking to create a new larger Catholic faith community in the Area, possible first steps might be:

1. Public meetings/consultation following Archbishop John's decision - with a focus on the form of the merger and its ramifications.
3. Formation of a new Pastoral Leadership Team. It will be very important that people with the right talents and skill sets are identified and engaged in the Team.
4. Comprehensive survey of the new parish – including demographics, the gifts of our people, faith ministries, land and buildings, assets/liabilities, engagement with the wider community, ecumenical relations, spiritual/pastoral/cultural needs. Before we can go forward we will need to have a feeling for who/what we are.
5. All steps in close collaboration and partnership with ADW and Archbishop John.
6. On-going consultation with the people at every step of the way.

**Wellington North 'temporary' Leadership Team
29 August 2013**

Appendices of the various meeting notes will be forwarded separately, next week.