

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS from CONVERSATIONS February to March 2019 :

The Leadership Formation Team has been working through the questions raised at the many meetings that we have hosted and attended in the Parish. Every week we will provide our responses to those matters that you have raised.

Q 1. What is the current situation about priestly vocations? Why not have International priests in the Archdiocese?

The New Zealand church at all levels -diocesan, parish, school and family - continues to encourage priestly and religious vocations. We have all prayed for vocations and dioceses have put structures in place to welcome those who wish to serve God's church in that particular way.

The drop in numbers of vocations to the priesthood across the world over the past four decades is a complex issue that is linked to broader changes in society. We will continue to pray that the Spirit will support young men and women to hear and discern their vocation to the priesthood and religious life while also "responding to the signs of the times" so as to provide our communities with the effective leadership required - liturgically, spiritually and pastorally.

We will also continue to foster the understanding that the married and single states are vocations that God calls people to and promote these ways of living as a holy expression of the Gospel call to discipleship.

In relation to International priests, Cardinal John has made it clear that he has had numerous conversations with Cardinals and Bishops from various overseas countries. They must also provide priests to their people and are increasingly unable to provide additional priests to another country. Cardinal John has described it as unjust for New Zealand to take priests from countries where the ratio of priests to laity is even worse than in New Zealand. While some religious congregations are still willing to provide Religious priests, these arrangements are generally for short periods of time.

The New Zealand Immigration Department is making it increasingly difficult for priests to be issued with a work permit, leading to permanent residency. The whole process is very slow. It sometimes takes up to five years to arrange an overseas priest for New Zealand.

Q 2. What is the new model?

The new model is a three-way collaboration between the Archdiocese of Wellington, the Society of Mary and the faith communities that make up St Francis of Assisi Ohariu. The core of the Leadership Formation Team, personally appointed by Cardinal John, were involved in facilitating the parish merger consultation of 2014/2015. The role of the leadership team is to develop the structures and processes that will ensure the continuation of the parish's liturgical, spiritual and pastoral care in line with the mission of the church outlined by Pope Francis and articulated by the Archdiocesan Synod of 2017.

In November 2018, Fr Peter Fitzgibbon dissolved the finance committee as is the norm when a parish priest retires. After a meeting with members of the 2018 Parish Council, it was agreed that two members of that Council would join the newly formed Leadership Formation Team. It was also decided that the finance committee would merge with the LFT. One member of the past finance committee accepted the LFT's invitation to remain involved. Others agreed that they were happy and willing to support the transition to the new model.

The Parish Administrator, Fr Peter Roe SM, is, by virtue of his role, a member of the Leadership Formation Team. The Leadership Formation Team reaches its decisions by way of consensus. There are seven additional Marist priests, all involved in other ministries, who are supporting our parish sacramentally and pastorally.

This new model is a work in progress. Each member of the LFT has made a commitment to develop the new model and serve the parish in line with the vision of Pope Francis and the Archdiocesan Synod. It is anticipated that other structures will emerge as our parish mission becomes clearer.

The new model relies completely on the continuing active involvement and service of all the different ministries that already operate so well in our parish.

Q 3. How will leadership be determined going forward?

The Leadership Formation Team is working hard to develop the model and structures that build on the strong foundation that exists in our parish. We are especially committed to listening to parishioners and to transparency in our decision making. We will continue to meet with parish groups, ministries, schools, other churches, community groups, businesses and individuals to hear their concerns, listen to their ideas, show appreciation for

their ministries and to identify ways of supporting them and ensuring that ongoing succession planning occurs at all levels of parish activity.

At the moment many Leadership Formation Team members are volunteering for 30+ hours per week. As the model develops, new needs will emerge and there will be opportunities for other people who have discerned their ability to commit to the mission and new model to put themselves forward to serve.

As this is a new model of parish governance, it is inevitable that there will be some uncertainty and unpredictability. However, as a people of faith committed to prayer and reflection, we can be certain that the Spirit will be present and will lead us all to continue building a vibrant faith-filled community.

Q 4. What can we do to help?

We are very grateful to all the parishioners and ministries that serve and enlighten our parish in so many different ways.

Building on the present foundations, the Leadership Formation Team is seeking new and different ways to live the Gospel and to harness the diverse gifts of all the people in our community. Succession planning and additional people in some of our ministry groups are urgently required. New people are also needed to lead different formation and service opportunities as were identified in our merger process of 2014-2015 (See the Parish website for the Merger Document – written after extensive consultation with 400 parishioners).

We need scripture study guides, meditation and prayer leaders, additional people in the pastoral and bereavement ministries, catechists, people who speak other languages, English tutors, music teachers, website builders and artists for liturgical banners and so much more. Already, 22 people who have not previously been in a formal ministry have offered their services. We are very encouraged by this. The potential in this area is huge. The Leadership Formation Team appreciates and relies on the prayerful support of all parishioners as we work on this model together.

Please contact any of us directly if you have concerns that you wish to discuss with someone face-to-face. We are aware that there are a lot of rumours and incorrect information being circulated. While this is normal in times of change, it has the effect of drawing energy and resources away from positive engagement, teamwork and the main task in hand - the strengthening and renewal of our Parish community in line with the Gospel.

Q.5 What is Challenge 2000's role in this new model?

Challenge 2000 is a Charitable Trust that operates in the Ohariu community and the Wellington Region. It was founded in 1988 by Kitty McKinley at the request of Sts Peter and Paul's Parishioners who were concerned about their young people and who wanted to better live out the Catholic Church's call to work for justice and peace. Challenge 2000 provides a great number of services and programmes to individuals, families and groups in this parish and to the wider community. Challenge 2000 is always happy to respond to and provide support for any personal or community need that may arise.

As with all other members, Kitty has been appointed by Cardinal John to the Leadership Formation Team as an individual - she does not represent Challenge 2000 on this team.

It has been reported to us that some in the Parish are concerned that Challenge 2000 has a conflict of interest and is 'after the parish assets'. This is not correct. To put things in perspective, Challenge 2000 employs 38 staff and has a budget of 2.3 million dollars.

As with many other groups within and outside the parish, the LFT intends to foster a strong positive relationship with Challenge as, together, we build a new model of church here in the northern suburbs of Wellington. The Leadership Formation Team acknowledges and is grateful for the many ways Challenge 2000 already and generously supports the parish.

*Leadership Formation Team
March 23 2019*