

# Archbishop of Wellington

---

PO Box 1937, Wellington 6140, New Zealand

24 June 2020

Fr Doug Shepherd  
P O Box 7173  
NEWTOWN 6242

Dear Doug, Cirilo, Joe, Pastoral Council and Finance Committee chairs

I have taken the opportunity over the last three months to study and reflect upon the proposals which parishes put forward for the future of their properties, and to seek input from my advisory bodies.

I am very grateful for the work that the Catholic Parish of Wellington South put into developing proposals. I am very aware of the complexity of the situation the parish faces with its multiple communities and properties, and the difficulties in the consultation processes within the parish.

There are some observations which I am making to all parishes about the consultation process and the proposals:

1. The pastoral letter which began the review process said: "The 2017 Archdiocesan Synod voted for new priorities which must be addressed. They cannot be simply 'add-ons' to what we already do. They require us to look with new eyes and, with Pope Francis, to radically rethink how we are to be the People of God in today's environment. We are called to be 'missionary disciples', which in the words of Pope Francis, makes an attitude of 'we've always done it this way' not only damaging to the Church, but invalid." **We are reorganizing for mission, making decisions about our properties so that we can be better "missionary disciples"**. This aspect of the property process was understood well by a few parishes but not by most.
2. Some parishes made detailed financial cases for the retention of certain churches. While these financial details were very helpful it actually does not take into account the availability and capability of priests. Small churches which currently have a Sunday Mass once or twice a month will not be able to have this in the near future.
3. Priests are allowed to celebrate only one Mass each day (Canon 905), and with special dispensation from their bishop, up to three Masses on Sunday (including a Vigil Mass). This needs to be kept in mind when making decisions about the churches in a parish.

4. When a Mass cannot be celebrated in a church on Sunday, there is an obligation to go to a nearby church. A Liturgy of Word and Communion cannot be substituted. (*Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest - Congregation for Divine Worship*)
5. Parishes will still have to go through the normal Archdiocesan property processes with regard to the sale or purchase of properties or development of projects.

Once I had the opportunity to go through all the parish proposals, I then discussed them with the Council of Priests, the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council and with the Board of Administration. Properties that are of particular interest to Maori communities were also reflected on by Te Kahu o te Rangi (the Maori Pastoral Council). They all listened to my suggestions and I listened to the advice I received from them.

The Catholic Parish of Wellington South proposal is to become a one church parish within ten years, with the Newtown church being developed as that church, with a new presbytery. The Mount Victoria and Brooklyn churches and the Brooklyn presbytery would be sold. The Island Bay church would be retained as a shared facility with school. The Island Bay presbytery would be retained as a youth house or sold. The Ellice and Brougham Street properties would be sold.

I realise that my response is different to the proposal the parish sent in, but after consultation and taking what I believe to be a pastoral approach, my response to the parish's proposals is as follows:

- Sell Brooklyn church and presbytery.
- Retain the Island Bay church as the main parish church. Consider remodelling and refurbishing the interior.
- Retain the Island Bay presbytery as accommodation for priest(s). Do some renovation of the presbytery as it has not had work done on it since it was built in the 1960s.
- Keep the Newtown church as a weekday chapel with no weekend Masses.
- Keep the Newtown hall and the parish offices in it. Further develop the parish offices to provide a space for meeting privately with parishioners and possibly also a base for Catholic Social Services activity in the area.
- Retain Mt Victoria church, but enter into a process to investigate its separation from Wellington South Parish and partnering in some way with the Cathedral and St Mary of the Angels.
- Sell the Ellice and Brougham Street properties.

The separation of Mt Victoria church from Wellington South and its partnering with the Cathedral, and possibly St Mary of the Angels, recognizes the church's geographic location and its history as a former site for the Archdiocese's cathedral. It has more in common with the two inner city churches than with the other parts of Wellington South. I am not sure at this stage what form its partnering with Sacred Heart Cathedral and St Mary of the Angels might take, as we have a long-term agreement with the Society of Mary regarding St Mary of the Angels. However that can be worked out as part of the investigation process.

I would like the investigation into the separation of St Joseph's to be conducted by an independent person from outside the parish. He/she should be able to consult freely with

parishioners, the pastoral team and others. The investigation should focus on the pastoral good of the people, and I would be happy to provide a brief for the person who will carry out the investigation, and to propose some names.

Keeping the Newtown church as a weekday chapel does not mean that the aulotu will continue to use it in the weekends. It will not become their church. Their Masses would need to shift to Island Bay, as I believe the aulotu needs a strong connection with the parish.

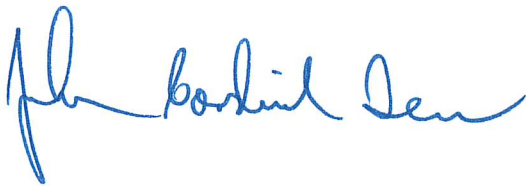
I realize that the Ellice Street property is used to house refugees, and that some parishioners want to retain the Ellice and Brougham Street properties for this purpose and for some form of mission. The value of these properties is such that if sold they could fund the purchase of several houses in areas of the city where properties are less expensive, and allow support to be provided for more people who are disadvantaged. It would also allow the purchase of properties which are better suited to refugee families.

The selling of the Ellice and Brougham Street properties needs to wait until a decision is made about separating St Joseph's Church from Wellington South, and what form a partnership between St Joseph's, the Cathedral Parish and St Mary of the Angels might take.

I recognize that there will be difficulties and opportunities as decisions begin to be translated into action. Building the parish community will need people to support one another, and to look to the good of the whole parish and its mission. Your leadership and prayerful discernment will be essential during this time, together with lay leaders in the parish, and the Archdiocese will do everything it can to support you.

With sincere thanks again for all the work that has been done and with all good wishes and every blessing.

Yours sincerely in the lord



✠ John A Cardinal Dew  
**Archbishop of Wellington**