

Parish Hui Notes

Spiritual Foundations: Gratitude and Transition

Across all our conversation groups, there was a deep sense of gratitude that serves as the anchor for our parish's future.

- **A Culture of Thanksgiving:** We heard profound appreciation for the gift of faith passed down through families, for long-term commitment, and for the many individuals who serve quietly behind the scenes. This gratitude motivates us to look outwardly and shape our response to God's call.
- **Navigating Transition:** We recognise that we are in a significant period of transition following parish mergers and the departure of long-standing members. While this has resulted in a loss of "people power," our community views this crossroads as an opportunity to actively rebuild our sense of belonging.
- **Discerning God's Call:** Parishioners emphasised the importance of a Christ-like attitude, prayer networks, and listening deeply to the Holy Spirit rather than personal agendas as we form our new shared identity.

Active and Intentional Welcome (*Whakawhanaungatanga*)

A dominant theme was the need to shift from passive friendliness to active, highly intentional hospitality.

- **Breaking Down Barriers:** It was noted that people in the pews often do not know each other well, and newcomers or different groups can find it difficult to integrate into the established community.
- **Practising Whakawhanaungatanga:** Purposefully building relationships is essential. We want to ensure everyone feels seen and valued, including single adults, young families, long-term parishioners, migrants, and youth.
- **Structured Pastoral Care:** Reaching the isolated is a major priority. Many elderly, sick, and housebound parishioners including those facing cognitive barriers long to remain connected but face physical limitations. A structured visitation network was widely suggested to keep them included.

Youth, Young Families, and Intergenerational Connection

The generational gap is one of the most significant concerns raised, with a clear desire to foster a "cradle to grave" community spirit where elders and youth support one another.

- **Bridging the Post-School Gap:** While early connections exist, a major challenge is that young people under 21 often drift away after their school years. This is compounded by modern pressures, such as Sunday sport and other commitments, which may conflict with regular participation.
- **Intentional School Partnerships:** To engage younger parents and children, parishioners suggested forming direct, active partnerships with our local Catholic schools.
- **Family-Focused Spaces:** Cultivating consistent engagement can be achieved by hosting low-barrier, family-friendly social events, such as parish picnics, to build community outside of formal Liturgy.

Bicultural Identity, Diversity, and Social Mission

Our parish's large, multicultural makeup is viewed as an immense gift and a rich expression of Catholic faith to be celebrated.

- **Honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi:** Embracing Te Tiriti awareness and justice is viewed as foundational to our identity and our internal parish processes. *Whanaungatanga* and Treaty justice are understood as core elements of who we are becoming.
- **Intercultural Integration:** Parishioners expressed a strong desire to actively learn from the different cultures represented in our pews, understanding and celebrating the unique ways various nationalities express their faith.
- **Faith in Action:** There is a collective call for our faith to overflow into the wider neighbourhood through concrete social justice initiatives. This includes structured outreach for refugees and migrants, ecological and peace initiatives, and strengthening the work of the Society of St Vincent de Paul.

Volunteer Capacity and Ministry Structures

The consultations highlighted a critical tension: a deep desire to serve, but a limited number of active volunteers, leaving a small group of leaders heavily overcommitted.

- **Concrete Invitations:** Parishioners want to help but need clarity and manageable tasks. Rather than vague, open-ended requests from the pulpit, invitations need to be specific and concrete.
- **Tangible Pathways to Service:** Providing clear entry points makes volunteering less daunting. Community suggestions included a potential community garden, a soup kitchen, or property maintenance volunteer teams.

- **Clear Communication:** Leadership development and clear ministry structures are required to match parishioners' unique gifts with parish needs, thereby reducing burnout. Practical next steps suggested for the parish include creating a clear ministry directory and providing easily accessible online rosters.

Moving from Tension to Opportunity

To help turn these discussions into action, the Parish Council will be looking at how we can bridge these key areas:

- **From Isolation to Belonging:** Launching structured hospitality and clear newcomer pathways to build relationships (*whakawhanaungatanga*).
- **From Uncertainty to Service:** Creating clear ministry pathways that offer specific, bite-sized tasks rather than open-ended commitments.
- **From Generational Gaps to Connection:** Forming direct school partnerships and establishing regular family-friendly social events.
- **From Diversity to Integration:** Integrating shared liturgies and cultural learning opportunities to celebrate our diverse faith expressions.
- **From Overcommitment to Shared Leadership:** Implementing leadership mentoring and upgrading our digital communication tools (website, digital rosters, clear contact points).