

Parish with a Mission By Geoff Pryor

Foreword - The Parish Today



The train crosses the bridge at Paremata with Pauatahanui in the background.

The train escaping Wellington darts first into one tunnel and then into another long, dark tunnel. Leaving behind the bustle of the city, it bursts into a verdant valley and slithers alongside a steep banked but quiet stream all the way to Porirua. It hurtles through the Tawa and Porirua parishes before pulling into Paremata to empty its passengers on the southern outskirts of the Plimmerton parish.

There is no sign that the train has arrived anywhere particularly significant. There is no outstanding example of engineering feat or architecture, no harbour for ocean going ships or airport. No university campus holds its youth in place. No football stadium echoes to the roar of the crowd.

The whaling days have gone and the totara is all felled. Perhaps once Plimmerton was envisaged as the port for the Wellington region, and at one time there was a proposal to build a coal fired generator on the point of the headland. Nothing came of these ideas.

All that passed us by and what we are left with is largely what nature intended. Beaches, rocky outcrops, cliffs, rolling hills and wooded valleys, magnificent sunsets and misted coastline. Inland, just beyond Pauatahanui, the little church of St. Joseph, like a broody white hen nestles on its hill top. Just north of Plimmerton, St. Theresa's church hides behind its hedge from the urgency of the main road north.

The present day parish stretches in an L shape starting at Pukerua Bay through to Pauatahanui. From the high thrust, rugged cliffs and shoreline of Pukerua Bay, the parish slopes down through gentle greened and wooded hills, past Whenua Tapu and the ancient Taupo swamp to Plimmerton.

It fingers its way north-west to touch Hongoeka Bay and the pa, to turn south again winding along sandy, rock framed bays towards the main inlet at Paremata. From there it heads inland, sidling round both sides of the inner harbour to arrive at Pauatahanui.

Pulled by strong tides and drifted southwards, lying flat like a huge waka, Mana Island, once the home of Rangihaeata, stands resolute among the rip tides and the persistent north west winds. As though at anchor, Mana Island tugs its chain of reefs taut across the bay. Further north the sharp peaked Kapiti Island, still exerts its dominance, a reminder of the power of Te Rauparaha.

This linear parish straddling the coastline and the main transport routes north is made up of little communities with their own sense of identity. Pukerua Bay to the north connects by a long stretch of road and rail to Plimmerton. Plimmerton and its long stretch of golden beach is sutured by the railway crossing from nearby Camborne and Mana. Mana strings along the main road to Paremata. Paremata strongly identifies with the harbour and boating. Behind it lies the quiet settlement of Papakowhai.

Separated from Paremata by the narrow winding harbour road, Whitby asserts itself along the eastern bluff. Over the one way bridge past the fortress hill of Rangihaeata and towards the Hutt, Pauatahanui hides behind fences and fields. The other route north from the bridge goes past the Pauatahanui school and on towards Battle Hill to emerge at Paekakariki.



Photo by Jo Ten Broeke of Plimmerton Beach at sunset

The parish was established in 1940 - ninety six years after the parent parish at Otaki in 1844. The little church of St Joseph has an even longer history. We were the twenty fourth of the forty nine parishes in the Archdiocese to be established. Mass counts taken between 1979 and 1987 show a fairly constant attendance of between 569 and 632 people. The Mass count in October 1999 was 398. On that basis we are the eighteenth largest parish in the Archdiocese.

This parish is immersed in Maori history and settlement, and is always conscious of the sea and the weather, familiar still with wool sheds, paddocks and fences. Each working day, many of our parishioners rush off to the commercial and political centre, Wellington. Only twenty minutes away is a world of Parliamentary pomp, the Catholic Centre in Hill Street, computers, anxiety and decision making. Our parish communities are made up of administrators, entrepreneurs, civil servants, trades people, professionals, families, the young looking to futures and old identities with memories of beginnings. Did I forget artists, musicians and craftspeople?

This strung out environment shapes us. There is no village pump except for a brief time after Mass when we meet in the church foyer and hall. Maybe once a year we have a parish picnic or social. But for the rest, we simply merge into the community on the beach or playing fields, or we disappear down into our gardens.

How often as we drive to Mass on a sunny morning or we stroll along the beach front in the evening, do we not say "My God, how beautiful." How grateful we are to live here. It resembles what Joy Cowley described in Aoteroa Psalms as, ".. this cathedral of sky, earth and sea .."

But in the back of everyone's mind is the dreaded earthquake. We know that the big one would destroy rail and road links, destroy the bridge, perhaps swamp the low lying land, and what then of parish?

We leave that to the future. For the moment let us live in the past.

Parish with a Mission

Introduction

"... we still must try to learn from history. History is ourselves"
Kenneth Clark, Civilisation

We live and move and have our being within certain contexts. The most familiar and therefore predictable is the individual context. We are, within our own limits of knowledge and intelligence, able to assess, decide and act.

The context widens into that of the family, school, church and community. Each widening of the context produces more complexity, uncertainty and risk taking.

As the scope of the context in which we live widens into that of the socio-economic and political spheres, our understanding and responses sometimes amount to no more than guess-work, some vague preference or hope.

But it is the spiritual context which is the most difficult to plumb. We are confronted with an immensely important choice. That choice inevitably determines our world view and the path we follow. It is at this point that we acknowledge our finite nature and calculation gives way to faith.

The spiritual context seems to move on a cosmic scale in which our short lives appear only as crotchets in a symphony. Consider the slow movement of time in the Old Testament from the time of creation to what is perhaps the first most significant event in the history of the Jews - the Exodus and forty years of desert life which resulted in the gradual development of the concept of the Absolute and the birth of Israel. Then for centuries the Jews awaited the coming of the Messiah. Suddenly, he was there.

The Catholic Church came into being through persecution and centuries of martyrdom, prayer, theology and philosophy. It survived as a rather monolithic bastion of the faith. But as we moved into the twentieth century it became clear that we were beginning to fossilise and that we were rather aloof guests at Christ's festival. Suddenly, Vatican II happened.

Two thousand years after the coming of Christ, we find ourselves still in a process of transformation, somewhat speeded up, it would seem, like a bud opening in spring.

Associated with the spiritual context is the physical environment. Surrounding this parish is a ring of hills which push the southerly winds up into billowing white clouds miles high in a matter of minutes. Cradled by the hills, the two shallow inlets allow the waters of Cook Strait to ripple in and dazzle us in the rising sun. In the evening, straggling clouds warm themselves on the after glow of the setting sun and God's presence seeps into our very souls.

The aim of this parish history is to contrast those early years of settlement when faith marked time with the post-Vatican II era when we found ourselves in a swirl of change.



Historian, Michael King
during his school holidays in
the parish

How I wish I could faithfully record the story of each and everyone in this parish. At the best perhaps all I can do is to give some impression of how we moved with the times and in so doing bring to the surface some memory of the good people of this parish. The thought of missing anyone out causes me great anguish and I hope readers will forgive my failings in this respect.

I take some consolation from the fact that other and better writers have already covered large parts of our history. The centenary history of St Joseph's church at Pauatahanui, for instance, records much about the local identities going back to the 1850's.

Historian, Michael King, in both *Being Pakeha* and *God's Furthest Outpost* provides detail and atmosphere of the early days of this parish. Rosaleen Conway was for many years a freelance journalist for the Catholic press and contributed numerous articles on Catholic and parish matters. *Kapi Mana News* has also published various articles on the history of the area. The 1963 brochure used for planned giving provides a useful thumbnail sketch of the establishment of the Plimmerton parish.

The church too is history conscious. A list of priests is mounted in the concourse and photographs of the religious adorn the walls. The school has been meticulous in preserving its photographic records and the names of all pupils and teachers. Recently we have had the addition of a book of remembrance recording the names of deceased parishioners.

Russell Norris has been responsible for introducing a time line history of parishioners' ancestors which stretches back to the seventeen hundreds and which hopefully will be published shortly.

Secondly, this account of St Theresa's parish is produced particularly for the celebration of the Jubilee year and, as I understand it, the focus is to be on 'contemporary history'. I take that to mean that we should look back over our history in an attempt to better understand our current situation. To some extent then this account is to be interpretative rather than a record of events and personalities locked within a certain time frame.

The difficulty in dealing with contemporary history, however, is that the history tends to outrun the account. For, instance, while I make reference to work undertaken in the parish to settle Vietnamese refugees, plans were already afoot to house refugees from Laos.

As we move into a new millennium the mood is one of expectation about the future rather than of a desire to present the past as a sort of encyclopaedia. There is in fact almost a compulsion, once we have arrived at an assessment of ourselves, to project a little into the new era.

So rather than a close-up account, I decided to take the material supplied so conscientiously by parishioners and instead of simply reproducing it, I wanted to step back from it, see what could be learnt from it and then provide a commentary.

In the process I hope I can retain a human side to the story. I hope the humour, the mingling and kindness of the community will show through. Important as certain events no doubt are, it is the communal atmosphere of the parish that I wish to capture. I think of the joyous arrival of brides at the church, the meeting of families for baptisms, the parish picnics, first communions, grandparent Masses, the solemnity of funerals and even the sounds of raging arguments that have occasionally flared. Putting all the organisational and administrative changes aside, I want to focus finally on the nature of the parish as it has developed over this time span.



St Theresa's before the renovations with the former presbytery on the left and the school in the background.

This account of life in the Plimmerton parish divides into three parts. Firstly, I want to deal with the emergence of the parish in a big block of time from 1850 to 1963. In that period I want to cover the building of St Theresa's in 1931 and, tied in with that, I want to comment on the main features of the history we inherited through the incorporation of the community at Pauatahanui.

The definitive moment comes when planned giving was introduced in August 1963. That was, I believe, a most decisive moment in our history because it welded us into a much more effective parish. The early 1960's also take us into the revolutionary period of Vatican II and the on-going fundamental changes deriving from that. I shall also touch on the radical changes that took place in the administration of the parish school. This was a period also in which two Archdiocesan synods involved the parishes in mapping out their futures.

Finally, I would like to consider our parish in terms of its declared mission and its current performance and look briefly at the sort of challenges that yet face us.



St Theresa's Parish in August 2000 with the new Foyer added during 1997

Parish with a Mission

Faith Marks Time - 1850 to 1963



Fr. Jean Baptiste Comte SM,
the first Maori Missionary in the Wellington
District

In 1850 Father Jean Baptist Comte S.M. arrived from the Otaki Mission to perform two baptisms at Pauatahanui. From that moment for nearly a hundred years the practice of the Catholic faith in that church conformed with little, if any, deviation to an established pattern.

The Latin Mass was at the centre of that faith and confession, the rosary and all the sacraments surrounded it. Aspects of that format may now seem rather structured, for example, the recitation of the catechism and the practice of missions.

This is not to say that the practice of the faith went on for a hundred years totally undisturbed. As the following account shows there was constant re-adjustment taking place in the administration of parishes as attempts were made to employ a limited number of priests in a young economy spawning new settlements.

This is a story about how two Catholic communities persisted through difficult times to finally coalesce into one parish. It is a story about two communities who both felt the need for communal worship and whose best strategy, at a time when transport was not easy, was to erect a church in their own midst.

It is a story about how adaptable the parish has been in providing alternative places of worship in Plimmerton, Pukerua Bay and Paremata and how it later centralised communal worship in Plimmerton.

Although built three quarters of a century apart, the churches at Plimmerton and at Pauatahanui were erected at a time when there were still too few priests to go around. They were built perhaps in the hope, but not the immediate expectation, that there would be a resident priest.

St Theresa's Church, Plimmerton

This story starts a little out of time sequence with the church of St Theresa's and the emergence of the Plimmerton parish.

Before the erection of the church, it is recorded in the history of the Plimmerton State school how its premises were made available to the Catholics in the district for Sunday worship.

The Catholic church was by no means the first denomination to be established in this area. The Presbyterian parish, for instance, dates back to 1924 when St. Paul's was opened in Karehana Bay.

Even from the early beginnings of the Catholic church in this parish, it is apparent that there was a good degree of co-operation within the district. The use of the Plimmerton State school as a Mass centre before the church was built is clearly indicative of this.

It is apparent too from the ready provision for the celebration of Mass at Pukerua Bay made available by the Anglican community at St Mark's church right up until 1980.

When plans were laid for the building of a church at Plimmerton, there was probably an air of optimism. The main trunk rail north had already been laid in 1885. That was part of a plan to connect the port of Wellington with its farming hinterland in response to developing world trade. The railway to Foxton had also encouraged holiday makers into the area and that, together with dairy and sheep farming, logging and sawmilling, boat-building and fishing added to the prosperity of the area.



St Therese of Liseux after whom Plimmerton parish was named.

In a letter to her sister, Celine on 14 October 1890 she wrote: "Do not forget your Therese, simply murmur her name and Jesus will understand"

In 1939 the main road north was diverted from running through Pauatahanui over the Paekakariki hill to run parallel with the railway. The location of the church on the new main road no doubt seemed a logical choice.

But 1931 was not an auspicious year in which to undertake expenditure on a church. The collapse of financial markets in 1929 in the USA spread to a world wide depression which reached its height by 1932. Even then, and even though New Zealand was an integral part of the British Empire, our farmers and exporters were not immune from world-wide trends. The value of exports fell from 55 million sterling in 1928 to 35 million sterling in 1931. Overseas debt, which in 1928-29 absorbed just over 14 percent of export income, by 1931-32 soaked up 26 percent. Unemployment rose to 76,000.

The situation worsened as the quest for a balanced budget led to severe cuts in Government and local body spending. Butter prices fell in 1925 and kept on falling.

Condliffe in his history of New Zealand writes: *"Dairying was the industry of the small farmer and accounted for a big proportion of the rural population. The prospects which had brought men on to the land both before and immediately after the war were no longer bright with a sun of certain prosperity."*

No doubt the farmers in the Plimmerton-Pauatahanui area were adversely affected at this time.



The cost of 1,700 for the church was offset to some extent by the gift of the land for church and school by the Walker family. The founder, James Walker, and his family arrived from Scotland in 1841 and set up a boat building company at Paremata. His son, also called James, became Paremata's most extensive land owner - an area stretching from the whaling station to Whenua Tapu. James Street in which the church is sited is a convenient reminder of him.

The Walker homestead was on the hillock just north of St. Theresa's church on what is now part of the Plimmerton Farms.

St Theresa's parish in Plimmerton during its early days.

Even allowing for that, it is likely that the church at that time did not have a large bank account. There was, after all, no planned giving and people were probably fairly hard-up. If there was poverty in the area, what if anything could the church do about it? Did the church see relief from poverty as part of its role?

As early as 1926 the State had started to accept some responsibility for social welfare. The Reform Party introduced a system of family allowances. These were, however, on a meagre scale - two shillings a week for the third and each subsequent child to families earning less than four pounds a week. The children of unmarried mothers, of mothers of

bad character, of aliens or of Asians (naturalised or not) were not eligible. In a tremendous burst of legislative activity in 1936-38 and again in 1945-46 the Labour Party created the Welfare State, "from the cradle to the grave".

This underpinning of society by the State through taxation no doubt obviated the churches from intervening extensively at that time, although the years between 1932 to 1936 were difficult.

Although the Vincent de Paul Society was founded in Wellington as early as 1876, it was not established in Plimmerton until 1968. Presumably, charity in the lean times was from person to person and not on the organised basis of food banks as we now operate.

When the church was built in 1931 it was within the Johnsonville parish. The Plimmerton parish was not formally established until 1940. At that time it included within its boundaries the church at Pauatahanui. The parish also extended to Pukerua Bay, Porirua and Titahi Bay.

From this perspective in time it is apparent that those boundaries would be subject to fracture. As State housing started to cover the hills at Porirua and Titahi Bay, the population drift was bound to exert new pressures for change and so it was that finally three new parishes emerged out of what had once been the Plimmerton parish.

Father Jeremiah McGrath was appointed as the first parish priest in 1940. Until the following year when a presbytery was built at a cost of \$1,500, Father McGrath slept in the vestry. The parish is indebted to the Oswald Murphy estate in helping to pay off the debt.

No doubt having a presbytery at that time seemed a luxury. But there are many who will remember that it was pokey and dark and was subject to flooding. At least it did not suffer from the noise of heavy traffic that the presbytery, subsequently built, is subject to, night and day. And now this new presbytery has been vacated and is only used as office and meeting space. Father Alan Roberts has moved into a unit in James Street.



Fr Jeremiah McGrath
(left) with Fr Pat Abbot

There was little time between building the church of St 'Theresa's at the height of the depression of the early 1930's and the next disastrous event - the outbreak of World War II in 1939.

New Zealand was no stranger to war. The remains of the barracks at Paremata built in 1846 and Fort Strode on a peninsula of the inner harbour are still reminders of the outbreak of fighting between the Maori and Pakeha at Boulcott farm in the Hutt Valley. The barracks are also a reminder of the vulnerability of this area to attacks by the Maori chief Titokowaru who was clearly demonstrating how easily settlers in the Horowhenua could be dislodged.

War brought gains and losses for New Zealand. In the first World War we lost 18,500 troops plus 50,000 wounded. But that war pushed up the prices of our primary commodities and we had a guaranteed market in Britain. The second world war was less costly - there were only 11,600 killed and 15,700 wounded!



Maori Battalion during World War II

The aftermath of the Second World War and the beginning of the Korean War shortly after again pumped up prices for wool, butter and meat. These quite enormous price movements must have been welcomed in an agricultural area such as this.

Whereas, however, many of New Zealand's small towns have monuments to the dead of those wars, I know of no such monument in this area. However, a book of remembrance recording the names of local men and women killed in the Second World War was compiled by St Andrew's Ladies' Guild.

One of the most startling events in this parish must surely have been the arrival of the United States marines in 1942. At any one time in those early 1940's there were 22,000 marines stationed in New Zealand. In this parish there were several large camps - one on the Ngati Toa domain, one on a small golf course at Judgeford owned in the 1980's by David Gray, one next door on the Judgeford golf course proper and one at Motukaraka.

Even though it is understood that those marines gave generously to the Catholic church, I can find no recognition of that.

Until quite recently the only remaining evidence of their camping here was a rotting tent pole left on the property of David Gray. They were young men mostly in their early twenties many of whom were destined to give their lives in defence of the Pacific area in Guadalcanal and the Solomons. They were described by a nursing sister, at the Silverstream hospital, Eve Ebbett, in *When the Boys were away* as generous, open handed young men who knew full well that after their wounds were healed, they would return to the war and face being killed on some beach front in the Pacific.

Until recently the only reminder of those grim days appears to have been one concrete machine gun post on the Plimmerton beach front.

A few years ago, however, a parishioner from Titahi Bay arranged for visiting marines to unveil a memorial plaque at the Judgeford golf course. Also a carved post was erected on David Gray's golf course in memory of those marines.

Post war was a prosperous time. Overseas earnings were high, local manufacture was protected, unemployment and inflation were down to about 2 percent, and young migrant workers were arriving from Britain and the Netherlands. The parish was to attract quite a number of these in permanent settlement.

New suburbs were established. Paremata expanded and later Papakowhai, Camborne and Whitby were developed.

Father McGrath's ambition was realised with the establishment of the parish school. This was built at a cost of ?8,000 and was opened by Archbishop O'Shea on 30 January in 1949.

From the time of early settlement of Catholic families in the area until 1949 the Catholic children had attended the State school at Plimmerton or went to the Catholic school in Tawa. There are certainly plenty of names of Catholic families on the old rolls of the State school as evidence of this.



Archbishop Thomas O'Shea opened
the school in 1949

"I made my first communion at Plimmerton and I was present at the blessing and opening of the St. Theresa's church. In the early days the priest, Father Lane, rode on horse back from Lower Hutt, then later come on the train from Johnsonville. He would arrive on the Saturday evening, hear confessions, sleep in the church sacristy, say the Mass on Sunday, then some of the parishioners would take him on to Pauatahanui."

From Mary Bryce

Parish with a Mission

Faith Marks Time - 1850 to 1963 (cont'd)

Reminiscences

The following two reminiscences have been extracted from our school's fiftieth Jubilee publication written in 1999:

"The Parish Priest, the Reverend Father McGrath, welcomed the foundation members of the staff - Sister M. Rose (Superioress), Sisters M. Vianney and Fabian of the Congregation of St Joseph of Nazareth...As a convent was not immediately available, F'ather McGrath arranged temporary accommodation for the Sisters in the presbytery...

The school opened with a roll of fifty-one pupils. This number quickly increased as the Sisters undertook their apostolate of visiting in the parish and parents were only too willing to avail themselves of the opportunity of a Catholic education for their children... On 22 March... registration was granted (to the school) ...

In 1950 the Sisters, still awaiting a suitable convent, resided temporarily in part of the school building until a house was obtained at Corlett Road... eventually a house opposite the church was purchased in 1951.



Sr Carmel Orange

The school was opened in late January 1949 with a good roll of pupils from all the surrounding districts and also we had pupils from Paekakariki. Although Paekakariki was not in the Plimmerton parish, the school was the only Catholic school between Wellington and Otaki "

From Liane McConchie

The first lay principal at St Theresa's primary school, Richard Archer, wrote: " It was great to have Sr Carmel Orange on the staff during the transition period. She gave us insights into preserving the special character of a Christian school..."

"I have especially fond memories of those to whom I became close: Sister Isadore with her story-and moral filled approach to teaching; Sister Andrew with her apple-red cheeks and interest in the good character of her charges: Sister Monica, an art teacher of real panache: Sister Majella with her emphasis on stern kindness; and Sister Momitille who thought I had perfect pitch and made me run from the school piano and across the road to the convent piano, humming middle C, to gauge if both instruments were in tune. "

From Michael King

Father McGrath remained as parish priest for nearly 12 years until February 1952 when he was transferred. Father Kavanagh took his place and soon after he was assisted by Father Bill Clancy as curate and later by Father Hyland.

Then in 1960 he was succeeded by Father O'Shea until 1962 when Father Tom Murphy continued the line of Irish priests. Father Tom Murphy left the parish in 1966. A complete list of parish priests is contained in [Appendix 1](#) of this book.



Fr Bill Clancy who celebrated his Golden Jubilee in 2000 was curate at Plimmerton in the early 1950's

The decision of when and where to build a church can never be an easy one. Any such undertaking normally means drawing heavily on funds and usually involves some borrowing. The location of a church is subject to the vagaries of population movements, local or neighbouring: the coming and going of commercial and industrial enterprises, the redirection of transport routes and the proximity of other parishes.

In the case of the church at Plimmerton the decision has so far been fortuitous. Despite the changing of parish boundaries and various attempts to provide alternative Mass centres, the old church has remained the focus of the parish. Its location has various advantages. It is on sufficient ground to be able to include the school and even with the growth in population and reduction in Mass times the church and its grounds have been able to cater for the parking required.

So far the lesson to be learnt is that it may be a better policy to add on to the existing church when necessary rather than to build and service an additional church in the parish.

Whether that strategy of anchoring the faith by erecting a church has left us with a lasting solution is open to question. Roading has improved enormously since the days of mud tracks and horse transport. Motor cars are plentiful and cheap.

A growing shortage of priests is again emerging as a challenge to parish boundaries and the luxury of having a resident priest. The redirection of the main north road along its former route and through Transmission Gully may enhance the growth prospects for Paekakariki and distort the parish catchment area.

It perhaps could be speculated that the increase in population in the Paekakariki coastal area might, likewise, call for church expansion in that area. If that implies further boundary changes we would have to examine the effect on church income and budgeting.

All this has implications for land and building ownership. Certainly a question which has exercised the mind of the parish is the use of the land purchased at Whitby some years ago with the intention of building a church there. That land has now been sold and a Mass centre in Whitby will not go ahead.

The effect that changes in the Road Transport Act had in permitting heavy trucks to displace rail cargo and the noise factor could not have been foreseen at the time the new presbytery was erected. There is a lesson in this because if the re-location of priests becomes more of a feature in future, we have to remember that their accommodation needs are special to their function as priests

In this brief look at the establishment of the parish we have seen it struggle through the depression years and have noted how a major part of its mission was the employment of

the religious sisters for the education of the young. That mission has substantially changed. In a later chapter I touch on the integration of the Catholic schools into the state funding system.



Fr Michael Steiller was parish priest at St Theresa's from 1976 to 1982

In the process, the mission of the church has expanded into dealing with the needs of the community over a broad range of concerns. The indigent church of the 1930's developed during the 1980's and 1990's to some extent into a social agency as the State withered.

By the early 1980's the welfare state started to fail in its objectives. The emergence of the global economy, the development of the EEC, the reduction in import licensing and tariff protection, resort to market forces, the call for budget surpluses and privatisation produced an increase in unemployment.

Ironically, an increase in the number of people dependent on the State started to erode the system of welfare. The high taxation needed to maintain the system produced its own form of 'poverty trap'. Colin James in his book *New Territory* described the situation as "welfare in crisis".

In 1991 benefit cuts were imposed, health charges increased, userpay policies were introduced and market rents for State houses saw families moving in with each other in an attempt to economise.

In this re-shaping of the welfare system, responsibility has shifted to some extent back to communities, families and to the churches. It was in this period that food banks sprang up and agencies such as the Vincent de Paul found themselves under pressure.

In another sense we became more self reliant. Since 1850 we had been served by French and Irish priests. Then in 1976 Father Steiller in conjunction with Father Leo Curry heralded a break in that tradition and the appearance of New Zealand born priests.



Fr Leo Curry was at Plimmerton from 1978 to 1981

At the same time we became aware that in parishes around us there was an injection of Pacific island cultures, particularly Samoan and Tokelauan taking place. Numerous ethnic groups with their own priests and forms of inculturation sprang up in the Archdiocese.

Our parish became involved with the settling of refugees from overseas through the Vincent de Paul Society. A more multi-cultural parish is emerging and at long last it is starting to incorporate the symbolism and language of the Maori culture.

Before exploring the challenges facing the parish in the new millenium, the story pauses to describe how St Joseph's at Pauatahanui became incorporated into the parish.

Parish with a Mission

Faith Marks Time - 1850 to 1963 (cont'd)

St Joseph's Church - Pauatahanui

The history of the Catholic community at Pauatahanui can be traced as far back as 1850 when the French priest Father J.B. Comte tended to their needs from his mission sited at Otaki. For the best part of a hundred years Catholic devotion continued unchanged in format.



The Church of St Joseph's at Pauatahanui -
"revered and elderly"

One can almost hear the sigh of people as they kneel at evening prayer on the wooden floor of the church, the shuffle of linen dresses and the scrape of boots on bare wood. Later the rattle of dishes as the evening meal is prepared and outside the lowing of cattle and the soft bleating of sheep. That was the quiet and holy rhythm of country life.

We can see and hear the measured tread of the funeral cortege winding its way up the hill to the church adding yet another gravestone to the history of the parish.

We no longer hear the clip clop of horse with dray as party goes make their way to the hall near the one way bridge past where Rangihaeata's pa frowned down on the river flats.

Perhaps, as today we drive effortlessly through the countryside, we are oblivious to the effort of clearing the pasture land and the hardship of making a living in those early days.

A blanket one hundred or more years thick has wrapped itself around this little community but what is evident is a sense of their determination. No matter what difficulties lay in their path, a willingness to go to almost any lengths to practise their religion emerges from the pages of history.

At first the small farming community was tended to by the French priest from Otaki. Then when that arrangement failed in 1854, the community came under the care of priests based in Thorndon until 1874. From there on until the 1890's priests would come on horse back first from Lower Hutt and then Petone.

In 1922 we know that the community came under the care of Father Michael Griffin who was the first parish priest at Johnsonville and in that year the Plimmerton-Pauatahanui association was formed. That arrangement continued until 1936. In 1940 Father Jeremiah McGrath appeared on the scene when the Plimmerton parish undertook responsibility for Pauatahanui.

So we see a church with no resident priest in all its hundred years of establishment. We see a community come under the auspices of five different parishes. We know that for most of that time travel in the area was by horseback, dray, carriage or foot. Since 1850 I can find the names of at least seventeen priests or curates upholding the faith in that community.

Add to that the real isolation that community must have felt when in 1885 the railway zippered its way from Wellington up the coast to Waikanae and then about 1939 the main

road north suddenly deviated away from Haywards and Pauatahanui to follow the rail north towards Auckland.

For a period of 59 years now the stories of the two churches have overlapped but not really merged. St Joseph's has become isolated. With the upgrading of the road through to the Hutt Valley, the church has a cliff frontage that makes access difficult. It has been designated as an Historic Places Trust and put into a special category. Its upkeep imposes an obligation. Masses are celebrated there infrequently now.

And yet the two churches have this in common: St. Joseph's church broods surrounded by the graves of those who have worshipped there; St Theresa's nestles amongst its school children. Both have this intimate connection with the community. In this special way the parish honours its dead and nurtures its future.

A group of dedicated carers look after the ageing church and it retains the status given to the revered and elderly.

The picture below shows Cardinal Tom Williams coming down the aisle at St Theresa's with Fathers Leo Curry and Michael Steiller



Parish with a Mission

Unexpected Changes - The 1960's Outwards

In the early 1960's life went on much the same as ever. The parish always had a good social life as might be surmised from the following extract:

Those ol' pals of mine

"I can still visualise Fr. John Griffen, a Columban priest, standing out on the lawn playing the violin; the Barbershop quartet, with Don Massam on piano, singing too many items! Our Antioch group led us in Praisercise, Rosaleen Conway made unleavened bread, Maureen and Garry Wilmhurst ran the kitchen and did some beaut roast dinners.



Those ol' pals of mine Noel Dobbs, Dwan Gilmor, Alan McEvoy, Rusty Norris and Denis Kelly

"Austin McClean sang "The Blaydon Races " and then our `Black Joes ' did a comedy skit with Sister Carmel holding a

cigar in her mouth as though it had always been there.

But the over-riding memory that all of us have is one of "community" based on family.

"These friendships are the very base of a parish. Families helping families, working co-operatively knowing that by having a strong and vibrant community faith we will have a strong and vibrant family faith "

- Memories of parish weekends at the Otaki Bridge Lodge

But, "the times they were a changing". It was a time when the normal life of the parish was interrupted by demands placed on it from outside. These changes were in part prompted by financial and structural re-organisation within the archdiocese but substantially by global changes emanating from the Vatican.

Planned Giving

Cardinal Peter McKeefrey appealed to parishes in the Wellington Archdiocese to undertake a campaign of planned giving arguing that it "... is an effort to place parish financing on an equitable basis, and to ensure that all meet their obligations. "

In August 1963 Father Thomas Murphy launched the campaign in the Plimmerton parish with the following words, "Our late Holy Father Pope John XXIII spoke of the need in this modern world for laymen to co-operate with the Bishops and priests in the building and extension of the Church. "

The aims of the fund raising were expressed in terms of the parish debt management, property acquisition and maintenance and such good works as the propagation of the faith. The parish got solidly behind the campaign. There was little opposition to it then and today we can see the benefits of this financial arrangement.

The parish has been able to build a school swimming pool, a church hall, and connecting foyer, a new side chapel, and a new presbytery amongst other things. John Barber, long time resident of Pukerua Bay and builder, was responsible for the erection and high standard of workmanship of many of these projects

A team of about 20 or 30 parishioners got around Father Murphy, received sound training in procedures and were given numerous duties. Today we can still re-call the great camaraderie of those times and especially the unity felt at the parish dinner.

One person who deserves special mention in this respect is Miss Jean O'Connor. Jean was the hostess chairman and from the inception of the campaign right into the 1990's she remained involved with the parish finances. Prophetically she wrote in the 1963 pamphlet, "We realise that the inspiration of the Campaign is the call to sacrifice our time and resources."

But were there outcomes perhaps not seen by many? The re-organisation of parish finances on a sound footing in turn allowed the Archdiocese itself to be better administered from the Wellington centre. Did that significantly change the relationship between centre and parishes? The answer to that may emerge later when this account looks at the work and outcomes of the Synods.



Jean O'Connnor who hosted the first planned giving campaign in 1963 is a much loved member of the community at St Theresa's

Parish with a Mission

Unexpected Changes - The 1960's Outwards (cont'd)

School integration

Father McGrath realised his ambition to establish a parish school in 1949. The fiftieth jubilee of the school was celebrated in October 1999. A detailed account of the school history is available in a booklet published for the jubilee. The Sisters of St Joseph of Nazareth taught at the school for 28 years until 1977.

According to a Synod report "The general condition of Catholic schools by 1987 was deplorable. " More and more lay teachers were being employed by this stage and had to be paid salaries commensurate with those paid in State schools. But school fees were held down so as not to shut out children from low income families. By the late 1980's, an average Catholic school with a role of 250 pupils could expect to incur an annual deficit of about \$37,000. School costs were absorbing, in some cases, over half the parish income. Buildings were old and there was no money to maintain, much less replace them."

In 1972 a Labour Government was elected with a promise that "Independent schools that wish to integrate themselves into the State system will be assisted to do so. "

After protracted negotiations the Private Schools Conditional Integration Bill was introduced and passed into law in 1975. By 1983 all Catholic schools had become integrated. This is another instance of a strong external impulse which changed the nature of parish life.

The main features of the Act are:

- The schools remain Catholic-
- Catholic parents have preference of enrolment for their children in Catholic schools
- Religious education is an integral part of the general school programme
- The schools are controlled as are State schools but Church authorities have an effective voice on the controlling boards
- The Church has an effective say in appointing teachers especially those who will teach religious education



Jean Norris with her Standard One class in 1979

- Church authorities have to bring the schools to a satisfactory level of maintenance and, with the help of government loans, supply any deficiencies in buildings
- The State pays for all running costs including the salaries

Complications arose when later legislative amendments gave parents the right to choose which school(s) to send their children to. A ceiling was put on class numbers and staff numbers correlated with pupil numbers and bulk funding was introduced.



So schools entered into a phase of being competitive in attracting pupils to keep up their numbers and level of funding. Part of this competition meant that schools in less well to-do areas have been forced to seek sponsors in the commercial world so that equipment, particularly computer facilities, were on a par with those in the better off zones. A School Board of Trustees was established.

The school role in 1988 was 168. By the year 2000 it had declined to 130. The principal is Mrs Libby Hainsworth. She is ably supported by well trained and enthusiastic teachers.

Fr Mathew Griffin was parish priest at St Theresa's from 1969 to 1975

The school is solidly supported by the parents association and by parents in general. The school facilities are of a high standard and the school premises are well maintained. A sun shelter has been built over the sand pit and two play areas have been built. The school grounds are planted with native trees and provide large areas for the childrens' sport and recreation.

A new relationship was entered into with the establishment of Viard College at Porirua which provided intermediate and college facilities for students from the Plimmerton parish.

Parish with a Mission

Unexpected Changes - The 1960's Outwards (cont'd)

St Theresa's Parish and Viard College

A parishioner from St Theresa's reminiscing on the relationship with Viard College had this to say:

"The more recent history of St. Theresa's parish would not be complete without references to Viard College which, while not within the parish boundaries is nevertheless within Porirua City.

Over the last 30 years there has been an extensive two-way contribution between the college and the parish. The college was built in response to a large shift in population and the need to provide an accessible education. The first chairman of the board was Kevin Bell from Paremata. Kevin Tracey, Maurice Harris, Russell Norris, Danny O'Hagen and John Barber, all from this parish, also became chairmen of the board thereafter.

"The original college was split into a girls ' college staffed by the Sisters of St Brigid and the boys ' college taught by the Assumptionist Fathers. The benefits of a merger led on to the co-educational college of today. "Although we have lost the religious as teachers, we recall how they not only taught at the college but played a full part in the life of the parish. For example, they attended the parish camp at Otaki for the weekend: the Brigidines (remember Sister Brigid and Sister Anne) attended confirmations and special celebrations.

The Assumptionists were still with us when Father Matthew Griffin came to the parish and each week shared our Sunday Masses when we operated from Mass centres at Pukerua Bay, Plimmerton, Paremata and, once a month, from St Joseph 's, Pauatahanui.

"In the time of Father Kenny we benefited from the assistance of Father Martin Van Haaren, particularly at Easter and Christmas. No one will forget the pleasure of listening to the sermons of Father John Heijnen or forget his contribution to the Antioch movement.

"Father Tom Homan, the happy traveller, had a special mission to new arrivals from Holland and was a prime mover in establishing Viard College.

"All of us have special memories of our involvement with Viard and although many have moved away there are those still such as Eileen Guise, Dennis Kelly, Austin McClean and Russell Norris who week after week shovelled metal into the herring bone drains dug by the Benniks from Pauatahanui. God bless their aching backs! Father Chris Penders drove the tractor!

"Dutch families in the parish will remember the chaplains who came out with them from Holland and especially Father Homan whose special mission was to keep in touch with them."



Fr John Heijnen's involvement with St Theresa's has been through Viard College, the Antioch movement and as frequent celebrant



Gathered in what used to be the Sisters' Library: Front (l-r) Fr Pat McCullough, Sisters Kevin, Bridget, John Bosco, Eugen, Marleen, Carmel, Francesca and Marie Theresa with Greg Norris in the doorway. Back (l-r) Assumptionist Fathers Eidhoff, Heijnen and Penders with the Anglican Minister Rev David Edgar.

Parish with a Mission

Unexpected Changes - The 1960's Outwards (cont'd)

Vatican II

"The Council," said Pope John XXIII, as he moved towards the window and made a gesture as if to open it, "I expect a little fresh air from it, " I expect a little fresh air from it ... We must shake off the imperial dust that has accumulated on the throne of St Peter since Constantine."



In 1959 Pope John XXIII convoked the first meeting of the Vatican Councils which were to have such an impact on the Catholic world.

However, Pope John died after the first session. At that stage not one document had been finished. Pope Paul IV inherited the task and continued to work with great patience for a further three sessions and thereafter set about implementing the decisions.

The purpose of the Council was so to renew the Church that the tradition of authentic doctrine would be expressed in the "forms of modern thought" and that the whole life of the Church would be related in the most effective way to the life of the new era-the quickly developing world of the second half of the 20th century.

Pope John XXIII

In an address he delivered at a conference in Hamilton in July 2000, Cardinal Tom Williams described Vatican II as *"the single most important event in the life of the Church Universal over the 20th century."*

He went on to say: *"It is in no way an exaggeration to present the Second Vatican Council, 1962-65, as the most enduring sign of hope in the life of the Church over these past four decades; and will continue to be so for many many decades hence."*

"There is simply no other event in recent Church history, with regard both to the Catholic Church and to Christianity as a whole, that has exerted such influence and caused as much change as has the Council."

"True, not all the immense hopes it raised have been fulfilled. It did provoke fears, and not all have been allayed in the three and a half decades since."

"But it was not possible to continue the degree of uniformity which had existed since the First Vatican Council. It brought with it an isolation for which a price had to be exacted."

"A deep rift separated the Catholic Church from other Christian Churches as well as from the world that had taken shape in the first sixty years of this century. It was almost a schism between the Church and modern culture.

"During the 18th century the Church in Europe lost most of the intellectuals, while during the 19th century it lost almost all the working class. And an almost glacial relationship existed between the separated churches for centuries."

The tiny parish of Plimmerton, a minute dot on the world map, was not to escape the impact of these momentous decisions.



Cardinal Tom Williams
Archbishop of the Wellington
Archdiocese

Thirty five years later it is perhaps easy to forget the wide ranging issues that Vatican II brought to the surface. Even at the time the number of voluminous documents and their radical nature made it difficult to fully grasp the significance of the event. For these reasons I have thought it useful to summarise the main items on the agenda.

The sixteen final documents can be grouped under the following three broad and inter-connected headings:

Doctrinal Renewal

The traditional theology of the Church had been juridical and somewhat thin. This concern was expressed in the constitutions on the Church and Revelation, but also in the early parts of many other documents such as the Liturgical Constitution, the decree on Missionary Activity and the decree on Ecumenism.

Modern Society

The Council was called to face up to human problems: socialisation, poverty and affluence, war and peace. The Church was to look outwards and no longer be satisfied merely to discuss internal affairs. Concern with these matters is to be found in the constitution of the Church in the modern world, in the declarations on Religious freedom and non-Christian Religions and in the decree on Ecumenism.

Changes in Church structures

This involved a re-shaping of liturgy, seminaries, ministry - a deeper awareness of the Church's own nature and of the pastoral needs of contemporary society. The decrees on Bishops, Priestly Ministry and Training, Religious Life, the Lay Apostolate, the Missions, and the constitution on the Liturgy reflect these concerns.



The changes that occurred in parish life in the 1960's may, however, be still vivid in the memories of those generations on whom they first impacted. To mention a few: the vernacular replaced the Latin Mass, ancient hymns and the Gregorian chant gave way at first to some rather folksy and uninspiring alternatives, the priest now faced the congregation, the altar rail was taken down, communion was received in the hand, the wording of parts of the liturgy including the Lord's prayer was changed, language became inclusive, the congregation was expected to greet each other and to offer each other the sign of Christ's peace and a rather gymnastic form of kneeling and standing was introduced. The nuns disposed of their habits and

gradually became indistinguishable the laity. Altar girls eventually made their appearance.

Mass is celebrated at St Theresa's during Social Justice week 1998. Parish priest Fr Alan Roberts was joined by Fr Colin Durning (left) and Fr Leone Iosefo

Parish councils sprang into being. Father Mathew Griffin established our first parish council. Lay readers were appointed and lay ministers of the sacrament assisted the priest at Mass and took communion to the sick.

These changes and the reasons behind them were not entirely acceptable to all of the community. Some were loath to depart from the traditional ways but, to their credit, it can be recorded that the transformation nevertheless proceeded fairly smoothly. Today it can be confidently claimed that we have a liturgy that is more inclusive and that has about it a new vitality. The changes brought us into a closer relationship with each other and with the religious.

Father Brendan Kenny put his full weight behind the RCIA programme and gathered about him an enthusiastic group of helpers. The effort bore fruit.

Father Michael Sweere ably assisted by Sister Helen Barry RSM continued working vigorously on that front. A dedicated band of parishioners gathered about Father Michael Sweere in a determined attempt to evangelise through a door to door campaign.

But there was for a while a downside. Cardinal Williams said in a report he had written for those taking part in the 1998 Archdiocesan Synod: *"Priests and people became uncertain. Pre-Vatican activities dropped away simply because they were pre-Vatican. The local Church turned in on itself, examining its structures, its liturgy, its internal relationships, its decision-making processes."*



Fr Brendan Kenny was parish priest at St Theresa's from 1982 to 1993

However, the about-face has produced good results. For example, sermons have become better crafted, the music has become beautiful, and the congregation has become involved.

Parish with a Mission

Unexpected Changes - The 1960's Outwards (cont'd)

Preparing a Sermon



Fr Michael Sweere was parish priest at St Theresa's from 1993 to 1998

This is how Father Michael Sweere answered when a parishioner asked him the following question:

"How do you compose your sermons, Father?"

"I take them mainly from books or the radio. I get the blueprint of the story then change it around. The story never just comes out of my head. The idea is that the point of the sermon becomes clear just as the sermon is ending. A life prisoner once said to me, 'When you start preaching, we never know where you're going to finish up.' I told him 'That's good because it keeps you wondering'.

"I start after lunch on Sunday searching for the beginnings of a story. I ponder a bit until about Tuesday and then start writing. The aim is to make one point.

"After I have typed the story on the computer I read it over and think some more. I write it in full and then start to edit it until it starts to sink into my memory. By Friday morning I go over it again. On Saturday I print it out, underline the important things and then in the afternoon I preach it to myself out loud."

Perhaps the most portentous change has been the sweeping aside of gender bias and the close relationship of laity with the priest in the administration of the parish and in the sacrifice of the Mass. This heralded a move in the direction of the formation of a lay ministry in keeping with the emerging needs of parishes and the diminishing number of priests.

A somewhat perfunctory approach to ecumenism is, however, characteristic of efforts in that direction to date. In June 1999 Cardinal Williams was invited to speak on ecumenism to a meeting in the library at Viard College for all of the Catholic parishes in the Porirua basin. The Cardinal outlined the long history of divisions between Christians and attempts over recent years to bring about unity.

Where mistakes have been made by the Church, he said, these should be readily admitted. He emphasised that the process was not one of bargaining but of seeking common ground as followers of Christ. He pointed to a number of dramatic advances made during 1999. These included an historic visit made to Romania by the Pope in May. It was an important move in our relationship with the Orthodox churches. That same month there had been an agreed statement by both Anglicans and Catholics on authority in the church. Then in October 1999 there was an historic declaration between the Lutherans and Catholics on the doctrine of justification which had led to the Reformation 500 years earlier.

The Cardinal went on to point out, however, that the question of the real presence in the Eucharist remains a sticking point with some churches. The principle he laid down was that we cannot share in the communion of other Churches if we ourselves cannot reciprocate. He urged parishioners to embrace those of other Christian denominations and to work towards Christian unity. At the parish level there are practical reasons why it is not always as easy as it sounds to enter into a ecumenical mode. Christmas and Easter are large scale events in the life of the parish and follow traditional liturgies so that these moments are not easily modified to accommodate a more general service.



Martin Luther burning the letter from the Pope in 1521 telling him he was excommunicated.

However, attitudes are changing: In a parish newsletter in December 1999 Fr Alan Roberts wrote: *"The bad news for those of us brought up in that other age is, the Protestants weren't wrong after all - them with their Bibles under their arms. The good news is that we weren't wrong either - at least no more wrong than our sister communions. We were both half right!"*

The programme of renewal set in motion by the Vatican Council later merged into the considerations of two Archdiocesan Synods called together by the Archbishop of Wellington. The relevance of that to life within the parish is dealt with in the following section.

Parish with a Mission

Unexpected Changes - The 1960's Outwards (cont'd)

Archdiocesan Synods

"The 1988-89 Synod proved to be largely a maintenance-oriented Synod. The Synod this year (1998-99) is directed to mission."

Cardinal Tom Williams

The above extract from one of the working documents for the 1998 Synod for the Archdiocese of Wellington indicates how the Vatican yeast was having a leavening effect, especially with regard to parish life. The 1988-89 Synod addressed issues and challenges facing parishes following on from Vatican II and provided a framework for examining the state of our own parish of Plimmerton. Appendix 2 of this history sets out the decisions of the 1998 Synod that were addressed to parishes.

Those decisions have started to have an impact on parish life as can be seen from Plimmerton's pastoral report included as [Appendix 3](#) to this book.



Shown here, at the 1998 Archdiocesan Synod, are three members from Plimmerton - Fr Alan Roberts, Geoff Shirkey and Shirley Kelland

For example, there is good support from parents at the school and the school is active in attracting more children to the school; for many years now the parish has had an active RCIA group at work and it is customary each year to welcome new members to the church; there is a growing search for spiritual meaning in the lives of parishioners and over recent years there have been a number of parish-based retreats in daily life. Those who conducted these retreats have provided a week long one-to-one programme of personal renewal and this new approach has been well received.

Father Alan Roberts has introduced a period of contemplation so that every Saturday morning a group of parishioners spend time in the presence of the holy Eucharist in silent meditation. Furthermore, Father Alan has conducted parish-based seminars on meditation and has written and published a guide book for contemplation called *From One Another*.

With or without the impetus created by the Synods, there were ; ready various initiatives being undertaken by the parish. But the 1998 Archdiocesan Synod did focus attention on specific issues and no doubt has helped to give the parish a sense of mission. These matters are covered in more detail in the following paragraphs.



Parish with a Mission

Unexpected Changes - The 1960's Outwards (cont'd)

Cluster Parishes

The aging of the priesthood and their dwindling numbers imposed a further urgent issue for consideration by the 1988-89 Synod. It was decided that, "There be consideration of the number and location of parishes, the organisation and management of parishes and the restructuring of parishes to enable priests to serve two or more parishes from the one priest's house."

The issue was taken up during the 1990's and was extensively discussed through a working group set up to report on the issue, during regional forums attended by members of parishes in the North Island parishes of the Archdiocese. It was also addressed by way of a survey carried out through Wel-com.

This extensive canvassing of opinion covered such matters as the pooling of resources including the sharing of financial resources, the accommodation and the on-going formation of priests, new forms of ministry, the diaconate, lay pastoral leadership and the alteration of parish boundaries.

This led on to the following important proposal put to the 1998 Archdiocesan Synod:

(a) as the number of priests available for appointment to parish pastoral care becomes fewer, groups of two or more neighbouring parishes form clusters, with one or more priests appointed to serve the cluster (one of whom would be designated as the supervisory pastor), and with the pastoral leadership in each parish within the cluster being entrusted to a lay man or woman;

(b) in addition to the formation already provided for lay ministers through the Archdiocesan Catholic Education Centre in theology, scripture, catechetics, family life education and ministry, a formation course in pastoral leadership be established to prepare suitable candidates for appointment to parish leadership responsibilities.

A programme of formation for lay pastoral leaders in parishes where there is no resident priest is to commence in 2001.

Given the efflux of time and these trends, it is likely that such reorganisation will be a future challenge and that strategic planning is needed.

Parish with a Mission

Unexpected Changes - The 1960's Outwards (cont'd)

Youth

Lots of our college students do not go to communion or confession and when they leave college they no longer go to church. This is felt by parents as a crucial failure. It leaves them confused because they have diligently set an example. They cannot understand why their children have deserted the church. They experience but cannot understand the generation gap. And so our whole focus tends to be on failure.



Ask the young ones why they do not go to church and the stock reply is, "Because it is boring". But turn the liturgy into a three ring circus and still they will not come. That is not really the explanation. God is anything but boring.

Wellington Archdiocesan
Synod 1998

But because the youth do not go to church now, does not mean that they will not return, perhaps enriched by life's experience. Next, although the example given by parents is not apparently followed, it does not mean either that the youth of the parish do not carry with them good values or that they denigrate the faith of their parents. Finally, if we focus on what we see as failure, we detract from the value of those young people who do journey with us.

As Father Alan has pointed out to us, *"Faith is a gift and religion is the expression of that faith."*

There are in the parish young people who have the maturity to combine faith with the practice of religion. It is these young people who have the formation to carry the church forward. In the face of strong peer pressure they have taken a stance. These young people should know that we admire the free choice they have made and that they have standing in the parish community.



Sr Anne Phibbs CBS is seen here receiving money from students at Viard College raised during the 1997 Lenten Appeal.

Brian and Diane Kelly founded the Antioch Youth Group in this parish and, sometimes, under difficult circumstances, kept the group active for many years. Thanks to their efforts, Antioch is still active in the parish today.

For a time a youth worker was employed to work with parishes in the Porirua Basin and his office was in the Plimmerton parish. He has now moved on and there has been no replacement. Some of the problems associated with the employment of a youth worker are the quick exhaustion of ideas when only one person is made responsible and the youth population is generally transient.

It might be thought that Vatican II merely changed the trappings of the Church but in fact it introduced several dynamics that even now are swirling us towards a different future. That future might at present seem somewhat unpredictable. For example, the thrust towards ecumenism which has languished for centuries has recently made startling progress.

An understanding of the significance of primacy of the Pope beyond the boundaries of the Catholic Church is a wonderful portent. It may well create a climate at the national, archdiocesan and parish levels conducive to unity in unforeseen ways. For example,

recently the Presbyterians have joined with the Home of Compassion to ensure the better use of hospital facilities in Wellington.

Agreement between Catholics and Lutherans over the meaning of "justification", a matter which has been divisive since the time of Luther, is likewise a welcome move towards unity.

The outpouring of recommendations from the two Archdiocesan Synods could lead to a belief that we face 'paralysis by analysis'. There are simply too many priorities to choose from.

Others might see those aspirations in a different light as evidence of a vigorous, growing Church that might be expected to advance on many fronts at the same time. For example, the 1998 Synod produced proposals under the following headings: spirituality, marriage, evangelisation, parish collaboration, youth, pro-life, formation, justice, liturgy, diversity and Maori inculturation.

Even as the Church progresses in one direction, that might set in motion changes in other directions. For example, the more successfully we enter into evangelisation, ecumenism and inculturation, will that change the emphasis of what we call the 'catholic character' of our schools and will that in turn impact on our policy towards church schools?

There is no doubt that even in the short term and at the parish level, choices are going to present themselves and problems will have to be overcome. As already indicated one choice likely to press in upon us is that of parish organisation and the role of the laity as the number of available priests continues to dwindle. That will raise all sorts of questions about priest accommodation, parish boundaries, mass times and frequencies, and the formation of the laity and priests.



Members of St Theresa's youth group reading the diocesan newspaper Wel-com

The role of the archdiocesan agencies working in the Catholic Centre in collaboration with the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council and the Council of Priests is a hopeful sign of the laity and the clergy working in partnership with Cardinal Tom Williams and Bishop John Dew.

Church with a Mission

"Despite its simple words, the thought of the Gospel flies like an eagle and we can easily sit and watch it soar and wheel entranced by its beauty without it affecting us further in the slightest. Herein lies the real challenge of the Gospel: to apply it to ourselves and to our communities."

Michael FitzPatrick from *The Years of John*

The concept of parish planning grew out of the second synod and Father Alan Roberts and the parish council took the first step in calling the parish together to formulate a mission statement for the parish. That statement is:

"We the parishioners of St Theresa's, with the help of Jesus, will continue to build a welcoming parish by reaching out and accepting all people with compassion and love."

It has been said that traditionally the Catholic church had a ghetto mentality in New Zealand. Readers might recall the times when permission was needed to attend, say, a marriage of a friend in some other church and when we ran private schools staffed by the religious intended exclusively for the children of practising Catholic parents. Gradually things began to change in the many ways described below.

It was perhaps through the integration of schools that the door to the outside world first began to inch open. Lay teachers of other denominations began to appear in our staff rooms and the children of mixed marriages, or even from Protestant parents, were enrolled.



Pukekaraka Marae in the grounds of St Mary's Parish in Otaki

The first association with the tangata whenua was through the Marist mission at Otaki when the French priests began to visit the small community at Pauatahanui. Although that was a distant link, nevertheless that association has persisted through to today. That association was reinforced when Bishop John Dew visited the marae in and officially sealed the relationship.

But in this parish it took many years before we started to openly acknowledge the tangata whenua. Even though we lived in a context rich in Maori history and tradition, not a word of Maori entered our liturgy, not one Maori hymn was sung.

In March 1990 the JPD published *Our Common Ground* and this became a resource book for study groups in the parish as we came more to terms with bi-culturalism.

In February 1999 the parish joined in a celebration of Reconciliation at Otaki's Pukekaraka marae in line with the Jubilee theme for that year. The parish, along with all parishes in the Archdiocese and other churches, presented a koha of greenstone and decorated stones as signs of reconciliation.

Recently, with the arrival of Father Alan Roberts, backed by the school staff in teaching Maoritanga to the primary school children and with the guidance of Shirley Kelland of Ngati Tuwharetoa, the parish has become more bi-cultural. Maori is now used in the liturgy and the congregation is acquainted with several Maori hymns.

At the launching of the latest of Father Alan Roberts' books on contemplation, *From One to Another*, the Plimmerton parish was pleased to host representatives from the Kawiu marae. In March 2000, parishioners from St Theresa's were welcomed to Kawiu Marae where Fr Alan Roberts has regularly celebrated Mass.



The parish was delighted to take part in the dawn celebration of the millennium at the Hongoeka Marae and were proud to have Fr Alan give a blessing to those present.

Kawiu Marae just north of Levin

Under the guidance of Father Brendan Kenny the parish had become outward looking when it decided to channel surplus funds to the neighbouring parish of Porirua. This led to parish funds being used to support Pro-Med, an initiative undertaken to help the needy in the Porirua basin to meet primary health care costs for low income families.

The Finance Committee report for 1999 made the point that the policy adopted by the parish is to re-distribute all monies over and above those needed to meet the necessities of the parish itself. To this end \$8039 has been given to church charities, \$ 12,506 to donations, \$ 10,850 to support the Assumptionist Sisters, and \$4,750 to Pro-Med to pay medical bills for the needy in the Porirua Basin.

The parish regularly gives over \$3000 to the Lenten Appeal each year and is well on a par with other parishes in the Archdiocese.

Over the last four years direct relief and indirect assistance (grants to foodbanks) made through the Vincent de Paul Society at Plimmerton have averaged about \$6,000 a year.

It is truly said that the tree will be known by its fruit. Although the outburst of growth following Vatican II might have thrown the sodalities existing before then somewhat into the shade, nevertheless, particularly as the economic situation worsened and as parishioners sought to reassert their Catholic identity, they turned again to traditional forms of giving. The Vincent de Paul Society is an active body in this parish and is responsible for the settlement of refugees, the operation of food banks and many charitable acts. Likewise numerous other sodalities are at work in this parish adding to its spirituality.

The numerous activities undertaken by the parish are reported in detail in the Pastoral Report for July 2000 contained in [Appendix 3](#)

Parish with a Mission

Conclusions

There are certain patterns beginning to emerge. Firstly, we have grown into a church with a mission. Within the broad guidelines of Vatican II, through participating democratically in the Archdiocesan synods, we have set ourselves the following objectives.

Improved Management

Recently the parish has undertaken a new and better way of operating the parish council with an emphasis on "shepherding". Set out as Appendix 4 are the guideline structures for the new initiative which were discussed by a broad representation from the parish and unanimously adopted. Strategic planning might be a next step.



This foodbank at Karori is an example of the ways parish communities responded to the welfare crisis that began in the late-1980s

Greater self reliance

Through force of circumstances we have set out to become a more self reliant parish. This short history has outlined our concerns with the growing priest shortage and the future need to consider the clustering of parishes and lay ministry.

The "welfare crisis" referred to earlier has likewise led the Church and this parish to re-assess its responsibilities and policies. Strongly to the fore now are the concepts of subsidiarity and supplementation. By this is meant, the role of the State should not subsume the responsibilities of the Christian church but where the agencies of the Church. are unable to meet welfare needs adequately then the State should provide assistance.

Faith sharing

As the parish mission statement indicates, we are to be a faith sharing parish. It has been pointed out in this history that we did at one stage tend to be somewhat aloof even though we have had good relations with other churches in the area. Again partly through force of circumstances especially in the field of justice and peace, we have rubbed shoulders with other denominations and have found common cause. We are becoming more ecumenical.

Readers of this history of the Plimmerton parish and and its parish report for the year 2000 cannot but be enormously impressed by the energy and commitment shown by such a wide range of parishioners. Even then Father Alan Roberts points out there are many other contributions made by parishioners that escapes attention in such reports.

Adaptability

What this history has demonstrated is that it is in the nature of the people to be both perseverant and, when needed, to be adaptable to unforeseen and sudden changes.

The times of momentous change have not necessarily passed. During September 2000 more that two million of youth from 160 different countries gathered in Rome to celebrate World Day of Youth. It was the largest gathering ever in the Eternal City.

Closer to home, on 4 November 2000 the largest ecumenical celebration in the history of Wellington region was held. It sought to bring together 30,000 Christians from 15 different denominations from some 300 churches in the region for a never to be forgotten concert. Celebrate Jesus 2000, held in the WestpacTrust Stadium as a joint celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ



2000 years ago. Who knows what will flow on from such events?

A social unit

Although the parish has been described in terms of its physical boundaries and boundary changes over a period of time, on another level the parish exists or should exist because of the people. In other words, it is really a social unit rather than a physical or administrative unit. If indeed future circumstances require some change in administration, we should endeavour to preserve the close knit relationship which now exists within this parish. That social setting goes hand in hand with our spirituality and spirituality, in a secular world, is our taonga.



Engaged Encounters plays an important part in helping people as they approach marriage. This 1997 photo of an Engaged Encounter gathering shows Fr John Heijnen with David and Carmel Keane on the left and with Dennis and Dorothy Gibbs on the right.

Parish with a Mission

Appendix 1

Priests who have served at St. Theresa's

1940-1952	Fr Jeremiah McGrath Assistant Fr William Clancy (Dec 1950 -1954)	
1952-1959	Fr John Kavanagh Assistant Fr Kevin Hyland (1955-1959)	
1959(Oct)- 1960 (April)	Fr Brian Fox (Admin)	
1960-1962	Fr Edward O' Shea	
1962-1966	Fr Thomas Murphy	
1966(Feb)- 1967(Jan)	Fr Peter Dunn (Admin)	
1967-1969	Fr Thomas Murphy	
1969-1975	Fr Matthew Griffin (assisted by Fr Jim Noir AA)	(In 1975 while Fr Matthew Griffin was on a visit to Ireland, he became ill and could not return to parish duties. So in 1975 there was a period with several relieving priests including Fr Patrick King and Fr John Healion. During this period the pastoral council had to play a more active roll in day to day parish affairs.)
1976-1982	Fr Michael Steiller Assistant Fr Leo Curry (1978-1981)	
1982-1993	Fr Brendan Kenny Fr Pat McCullough filled in for a time when Fr Kenny was on leave	
1993-1998	Fr Michael Sweere	
1998-	Fr Alan Roberts	



In October 1999, when St Theresa's celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its school, this photograph was taken of four priests who had served the parish since 1976. They are from left Fr Michael Steiller, Fr Alan Roberts, Fr Brendan Kenny and Fr John Heijnen AA.

Parish with a Mission

Appendix 2

Decisions of the 1998 Archdiocesan Synod which were addressed to parishes

The following decisions of the Synod of the Archdiocese of Wellington, convened in June 1998, and held in St Mary's College, Wellington, on 23-36 October 1998, were approved and authorised for publication by the Archbishop, Cardinal Thomas Williams in November 2000. Those presented by him as a guide to parishes are recorded here.

Sacraments of Initiation

The traditional order of reception of the Sacraments of Initiation is to be restored in the Archdiocese, that is: first Baptism, then Confirmation, and finally First Eucharist.

The Permanent Diaconate

It is not the intention of the Archbishop to accept candidates for ordination as permanent deacons in the service of the Archdiocese.

The Structuring of Parishes

Should at any time there be insufficient priests available for appointment as pastors of all parishes, groups of two or more neighbouring parishes are to be formed into clusters, with one or more priests appointed to serve the cluster, and with pastoral leadership in those parishes without a resident priest being entrusted to a lay man or woman. Appropriate formation in pastoral ministry is to be provided so as to prepare candidates for appointment to parish leadership responsibilities.

Parishes

In accord with the Church's Canon Law (cannon 536) as implemented by the two former Archbishops, Cardinals Peter McKeefry and Reginald Delargey, and by the present Archbishop, Cardinal Williams, every parish in the Archdiocese is required to have a Parish Pastoral Council. It is to Parish Priests and Parish Pastoral Councils, and to Chaplaincies insofar as they apply, that the following Synod decisions are referred for implementation:

Pastoral Planning

- that each parish prepare vision and mission statements as the basis for its pastoral planning, and that these be reviewed annually.
- that each parish recruit able and committed parishioners and assist them in training for parish ministry.
- that parishes contribute to a date-base of skills and good practice monitored by the Archdiocesan Pastoral Office.
- that parishes accept responsibility for making it possible for their priests to avail themselves of opportunities for further formation.

Structures

- that different groups within the parish be represented as far as reasonably possible on parish committees and organisations.
- that parish forums and similar gatherings be held which will reflect the cultural diversity within the parish community and encourage the participation of and respect for all groups.

Evangelisation

- that each parish further its evangelising mission by recruiting and forming leaders who will encourage the whole parish in its work of making Christ known, and playing their part in the adult catechumenate, celebration of the Rites of Christian Initiation [RCIA], and post-catechumenate involvement in the life of the parish.
- that in preparation for the Great Year of Jubilee 2000 and the new millennium, parishes commit themselves to the pastoral approaches exemplified in the ecumenical undertaking made by Churches in England:
We will make you welcome
We will be family friendly
We will make sure you can hear clearly
We will be practical and relevant
We will help you to explore answers to your deepest questions
We will offer you time to think in a busy life
We will help you to make sense of the Bible and who Jesus is
We will make sure your visit will be helpful but challenging
We will help you discover for yourself God's love, acceptance and forgiveness
We will offer you a chance to make a new start
- that parishes recognise that community is possible only when everyone within it knows they are welcome and valued, and grows only when every member is warmly welcomed.
- that when new parishioners come into the parish community, they are given information about the parish and its activities, and are encouraged and helped to take full part.

Formation

- that each parish appoint a representative to ensure awareness and availability of the education-in-faith resources and programmes for children and their parents, and for adults generally, and facilitate training of parishioners to present the programmes.
- that in each parish there be parishioners entrusted with the task of making contact with those who are inactive or in some way alienated from the Church, and who will make use of pastoral opportunities such as Baptism, Confirmation and First Communion to encourage such people to develop a renewed relationship with Christ and the parish community.

Liturgy

- that parishes enable continuing formation in liturgy for parish clergy and parishioners engaged in liturgical ministry.
- that each parish meet the need for liturgies which reflect the cultural diversity of its parishioners.
- that in scheduling parish Masses consideration be given to gathering parishioners as community and to the practice of sound liturgical principles.
- that with the assistance of the Liturgical Commission there be a greater variety of liturgies in order to celebrate in parishes significant occasions in the lives of parishioners, e.g. rites of passage, beginning and leaving school.

Marriage and family

- that parents be assisted in their task as primary educators and models for their children's faith development.
- that parishes collaborate with the Commission for the Family and the Family Life Office in promoting the services and resources already available, and in celebrating marriage through renewal of vows at Mass, marriage enrichment days, parish acknowledgement of wedding anniversaries etc.

Prayer

- that each year there will be widely promoted workshops in parishes on prayer to provide opportunity for parishioners and others to experience a variety of forms of

prayer.

Promotion of life

- that parishes ensure they are fully informed as to organisations and services available such as open adoption (as promoted by the Department of Social Welfare), Project Rachel (post-abortion counselling), (the hospice movement, the Archdiocesan Pro-life Desk, etc.
- that parishes make themselves more aware of the formal and informal support services in their communities, especially for those suffering illness or disablement and their families and caregivers, and encourage the involvement of parishioners.
- that parishes seek ways of assisting the psychiatrically ill by coming to know them, welcoming them into the parish community, helping them access appropriate services, and by visiting the community homes with the parish.

Social justice

- that in each parish a social justice animator be appointed who will liaise with the Archdiocesan Commission for Justice, Peace and Development.
- that parishes actively support the Bishops' statements on social issues, make them known, and act on them.
- that Maori be acknowledged as *Tangata Whenua* and that dialogue take place in respect of their involvement in parish life.
- that parishes make themselves aware of the degree and extent of marginalisation and alienation in the parish and the wider community, and seek to respond, working where possible with other Churches in the area.

Youth

- that each parish create an environment that is 'youth-friendly', i.e. in which youth are able to feel welcome and accepted as members of the parish community.
- that youth ministry in each parish continue to be developed by groups of neighbouring parishes employing full or part-time youth workers.
- that provision be made for having at least two young adults on parish pastoral councils and representation on other parish committees.
- that opportunities for involvement of youth in community service and social action be fostered by establishing in parishes such groups as Young Christian Workers, Young Vincentians, etc.
- that with the assistance of the Archdiocesan Youth Directorate and Regional Youth Workers, parishes promote evangelising initiatives amongst young people in both parish and school.

Finance committees

- that financially well-resourced parishes assist other parishes in financial difficulties.

Parish with a Mission

Appendix 3

Pastoral Report on St Theresa's Parish for July 2000

Contents:

- [Finance Committee](#)
- [Liturgy](#)
- [Prayer](#)
- [Care of the Sick, Elderly](#)
- [Care of the Poor](#)
- [Sacramental Preparation and Care](#)
- [Youth](#)
- [Adult Groups](#)
- [Evangelisation](#)
- [Yet to be Developed](#)
- [St Theresa's School](#)

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Chair: John Barber **Accountant:** Maxine Pearson
Terry O'Dea, Adrian Brady, Fr Alan Roberts

This committee meets monthly. We have recently received the resignation of Mr Jo ten Broeke after many years of service. Jo has been the secretary for this committee so we are looking for a replacement at the present time.

I believe that this committee operates well according to the norms set down by the diocese. I am very grateful for their faithful attendance at meetings, for their sense of responsibility towards parish finances and for the contribution made through the expertise of each member.

The guidelines for spending parish monies are as follows:

- without reference to the committee, the parish priest can spend up to \$600.
- without reference to the Archbishop, the committee can spend up to \$6000.
- Parishioners or committees who wish to receive an annual budget from the Finance Committee, or who feel entitled to parish support for expenses incurred, must make their requests in writing to the Secretary. If the amount request is below \$600 this can be made directly to the parish priest or administrator. If you spend personal money for parish concerns, and wish to reclaim that money, please keep all receipts. Claims can be made from the parish secretary.
- If a request is made to the Finance Committee and this request is denied, the applicant/s may, if they consider it unjustified, refer the matter to the Parish Council. If the Council are in favour and, presuming there is sufficient money in our accounts, they will then re-negotiate with the Finance Committee.

Planned Giving

This system of caring for our material concerns operates in this parish as throughout the country. Enrolment can be made through the parish office. Donations are made by way of weekly envelopes or automatic payments. Encouragement is given to the latter! Your planned donations cover all diocesan appeals (other than the special ones during Lent and Advent). One quarter of the Sunday's 2nd collection is donated on your behalf to all other collections such as Peter's pence, Seminary, Maori Missions, Holy Places. As well, the Finance Committee make on your behalf substantial donations to other appeals received.

Overseer of Parish Plant Contact: Graham Dodds.

Graham has undertaken the responsibility of inspecting all the buildings at least twice a year and will make a report to the Finance Committee. Any needed repairs should be referred to him.



LITURGY

Liturgy Committee

Pauline Eastgate, Graham Dodds, Madeleine Williams, Maureen Barber

The committee has recently received the resignations of Geoff and Louise Shirkey and Shirley Kelland, once again, after many years of dedicated service. Madeleine Williams who has recently come to the parish from Australia is about to join this committee. This committee operates efficiently and effectively. I am particularly proud our parish liturgy and of the creativity of those involved.

Liturgy is our most important work. For it to be effective it must be prayerful and well presented. The affirmation that I constantly receive indicates to me that we are on the right lines.

I hasten to point out that we really depend on your good will. Please, if you are musical or would like to help in any way, then do come forward. If you would like to join our committee to help in the planning of Liturgies you will be most welcome.

Music Ministry

Apart from a much appreciated choir, we have two or three other music groups and a youth music group, all of whom make a great contribution. Music is a vital part of liturgy, and part of the reward for belonging to a music group is, I believe, an increased appreciation of the power of Liturgy and the rich treasure we have in our worship.

The Ministry of Reading

As this is such an important part of our Sunday Liturgies. I have tried to take a very personal interest in this. I am thrilled with the response the readers have given, and it seems clear to me, that for the most part our Readers take their role very seriously. In order to proclaim The Word, it must first of all be heard by the one who proclaims it. Therefore, preparation is best made by meditation and reflection on the reading designated for the day. This takes time and commitment. The prayers of the faithful are also written each Sunday by one of the readers. These are based on the readings of the day and the various needs arising in our community and in our world.

It is hoped that with this ministry, we will involve people for a period of 3 years. After that, they will be replaced by a new team. The purpose of this is to give a wider selection of the community the chance to exercise this particular ministry. Volunteers must be prepared to undergo training.

Ministry of the Eucharist

Contact: Maureen Barber

We have a good team of Eucharistic Ministers. This Ministry covers not only helping at Sunday Mass, but taking communion to the sick. If you would like to be involved in this, please do not hesitate to make contact. Eucharistic Ministers are encouraged to try to make a weekly visit to the Church for a half hour of Adoration in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.



PRAYER

A parish simply cannot function unless there is a good prayer base. I personally have no doubt that if we seek first the kingdom of God, everything else will be given to us. The sense of prayer was the first thing I noticed in this parish on my arrival and working in the field of contemplative prayer seminars has been very satisfying. Each year for the last 3 years, I have conducted the seminar on Contemplation. This has always been well

attended. In addition, the mobile retreat team has had an excellent response during the 5 days they have been in our parish over the last two years. (They came again for the third time in August.) Prayer groups that give meditation/contemplation special emphasis are held as follows:

- Wednesday nights, Charismatic prayer meeting in our parish hall
- Monday nights, meditation group meet at Jean O'Connors
- Thursday nights, meditation group at Madeleine and Peter Williams
- Saturday mornings, meditation in the Church. Blessed Sacrament exposed. Each meditation time last for 30 minute

All are welcome to attend any of these meetings.

- In addition, there is adoration each Wednesday in the Church from 10 AM to 5.30 PM. You are requested to book yourself a time for this.



CARE OF THE SICK, ELDERLY

- Each Thursday, Fr John Heijnen, accompanied by a team of supportive parishioners, celebrates Mass at Glenbrook Rest Home.
- Harbour View is cared for by Madeleine Williams who leads a monthly Eucharistic Liturgy there on Wednesdays
- Several Eucharistic Ministers take communion to those who are either sick or housebound.
- Each month the Vincent de Paul society organises a Mass of Anointing followed by lunch.

What is happening in this ministry is admirable. We always need support, so please don't be afraid to speak up if you would like to help in any way.



CARE OF THE POOR

Vincent de Paul

The work this group does in Porirua area is well known. Thanks to the generosity of parishioners, the Vincent de Paul is able to continue their traditional valuable work. What I know they would appreciate are new members. The shop in Porirua was under threat of closure. People are needed to voluntarily work in the shop on a regular basis.

Pro-med

Each month the parish makes a substantial donation to this organisation so that anyone who is unable to afford medical treatment will be supported. I am told that it is due to the generosity of St Theresa's that Pro-med is able to continue.

Parish Collections

A substantial part (last year over half) of parish collections is given to various appeals. Some of these come from the Diocese and others, those that the Finance Committee receive directly and on your behalf, decide to support.



SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION AND CARE

A fairly large number of baptisms take place in this parish each year. I am particularly grateful to Nualla Calderwood who does the initial preparation, other than what is required for the Liturgy, but this is offered if they require it. Parishioners are advised

that encouragement is given to baptism taking place at Sunday Mass.

1st Reconciliation/Communion

For the past two years, those have been organised by Moira Whooley, who has been supported by a number of parents. Parent sessions have been held at the same time as the children's classes. Preparation is the responsibility of the parish, and parents cannot expect the school to look after it. However, for our preparation to have any value we do rely heavily on parental support.

I have to congratulate those who have been involved in this work. The preparation is always excellent, and a very good example of lay involvement. I should point out that we may soon be looking for someone to take over the role of co-ordinator. If this role is unable to be filled by a parishioner, then preparation will become the responsibility of individual parents.

Confirmation Joshua Forde, Kirsty Paul

Joshua and Kirsty are two graduates of former youth movements in the parish. They have shown enormous maturity in former Antioch weekends and in various youth activities within the parish. This year they were invited to help co-ordination preparation for Confirmation. Both gave talks to the candidates which were their personal reflections of chosen Scripture passages. In this they did themselves proud. 40 of our youth were confirmed this year, and all of them I know, enjoyed their preparation, thanks to our two leaders.

A suggested plan for the future is as follows:

- Confirmation for 15 year olds will be as usual for the next 3 years.
- There will be Confirmation for Std 4 - Form 2 for the next 3 years, held at the end of the school year.
- Those receiving 1st Communion this year will receive Confirmation either before or at the 1st Communion.

Rite of Passage

In order to provide what was achieved through Confirmation at 15, the diocesan youth delegates, along with Bishop Dew, are currently working on a programme that will challenge young people to a renewed commitment to Christ and the Church. The programme will enable them to review their lives, face challenging questions and then a Ritual will be designed to give them this opportunity of making a personal decision about faith.

Marriage Preparation

Couples intending marriage are strongly urged to attend one of several marriage preparation programmes available. Contact for this can be made through Denis and Dorothy Gibbs or Christine and Peter Rawnsley.



YOUTH

Once again we see here a wide variety of care and concern, given on a voluntary basis from parishioners.

Antioch: Adult Team:

Cathy Houliker, Jocelyn and Kevin Bryant

This movement has been in the parish for nearly 20 years and continues to remain firm, thanks to the good work of the adult team and supporting youth. This is open to 5th formers upwards.

12-15 years: Adult Team:

Anita and Ralph Lambert

This is a renewal group within the parish and meets at the home of Anita and Ralph. It is a group growing in popularity with each meeting.

At Sunday Mass:

We have Kids for Christ (KFC) for children from about 10-12 and the Children's Liturgy for younger children. A wide variety of parents care for this. Judging by some of the liturgies and comments, it seems clear that these efforts are doing a great job in helping children study the Word at their level.

Youth Music Group Antioch: Jocelyn Bryant, Cathy Houlker

Other: Bridget O'Shannassey

**ADULT GROUPS**

Teams of Our Lady: John and Sheryl O'Connell

There are 5 groups within the parish each with a supporting chaplain. Teams have been in existence now for about 5 years and the bond among the groups continues to grow. Membership to the groups is for couples and non-Catholic partners are very welcome. The aim of these groups is to provide support for married couples by developing their spirituality. Teams operate under the protection of Our Lady of the Homes. Couples who would like to join will be most welcome.

Possible Development

In recent times two ideas have emerged from parishioners concerning support for families, married couples and parishioners at various stages of life:

1) Passionist family groups

Passionist family groups are slightly different to Teams in that meetings are for the whole family and include an invitation to widows/ers, and single parents and the elderly. Meetings tend to be centred around simple social events, allowing the bond to build through these meetings. Family outings are often arranged.

2) Formation of /Groups for young marrieds (say under 10 years)

The request is that those in the early stages of married life can have contact with couples at a similar stage. Such groups have proved to be most appreciated in other areas where the concept has been introduced.



A gathering of families from St Theresa's who are involved with the Teams of Our Lady

**EVANGELISATION**

We all have to understand that to evangelise, two things are needed:

- renewal of our own personal faith

- the readiness to contribute to community

Evangelisation is much more effective when we are aware of our belonging through Baptism. When people become Catholic, they are joining a community, and frequently they join because they find the community to be a loving and welcoming place. It is in this environment that they can grow in their discovery of God. Naturally, if our personal faith is healthy, we will make a more valuable contribution to the life of the community in general.

Under the umbrella of evangelisation we have the:

RCIA Contact: Mary O'Leary

When adults choose to become Catholic, the usual procedure for them is through the process known as the *Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults*. Or, if they have never been baptised, the *Adult Catechumenate*. Both are really one and the same. This process is designed to help the person understand what is important to Catholicism: to develop their own spirituality and to understand the essential teachings of the Church. When we have at least 3 people who feel they wish to become Catholic, an RCIA or Catechumenate begins and study groups are formed. Such groups normally consist of 3 candidates, 3 sponsors and spouses if they choose to sit in. They are facilitated by a catechist.

Sponsor

When someone seeks entry into the Church they are given a sponsor. This person is chosen from the parish. The process of instruction extends over a period of about 9 months. The Sponsor's role is to accompany and befriend the candidate over this time and to be with them during their entry into the Church. They have the responsibility of instructing them in traditional Catholic practices and helping them clarify any matters of concern not covered in the classes.

Catechist

This person facilitates the discussion and the reading of the material provided. This apostolate was well established when I arrived here, and over the years several wonderful people have been welcomed into the Church, giving us a new vitality. The amount of support we need for this each year depends on the number of candidates we have.

Alpha Contact: Tony Lenton

Over the last 6 years, the Alpha programme has been held 5 times in this parish. Thanks to a number of enthusiastic parishioners, the programme has been attended by a significant number of people, Catholic and non-Catholic. Alpha is designed to renew the faith of life-long Christians as well as providing instruction for those just looking at Christianity or asking questions about life's meaning.

Welcomers and Hospitality

It is always nice to receive a welcome at Sunday Mass and to share a cuppa afterwards. The foyer of the Church is a place where we can get to know others and extend the hand of welcome to new parishioners. For this to be successful, all need to support what is aimed at here. If the official welcomers are not supported, then their efforts won't achieve very much. Perhaps we could all make the effort more often to stay behind for that cuppa and reach out to the unfamiliar person.

Little Rock Scripture Study

This study course is perhaps the best that I have experienced, in that it is clear and easy enough to follow, provided the participant makes some effort. The Word of God is perhaps not fully appreciated yet by most of us, in that we do not treasure it as a Presence with the same depth that we regard the Eucharist. This course, designed in Little Rock, Arkansas, has surprised me. Lectures on tape are only 20 minutes in length, and the points of interest are made very clearly. I hope that many will avail themselves of this course when it is offered again soon. Currently a number of parishioners are still completing the course which began a few years ago. They will testify to its value.

Legion of Mary: Contact: Ned Pattle

This small but dedicated band have visitation to homes as their special apostolate. They make a special effort to ensure that all are welcome here. A special letter has been written for them, so that some proof of their genuineness is established and that they are authentic representative of this parish. New members are welcome. The Apostolate calls for courage and commitment and we are in debt to those who regularly undertake this work.



YET TO BE DEVELOPED

Justice

While there is little doubt that the parish makes a big contribution to matters of concern for the poor, it is common in many parishes to have a Justice Committee. The role is to study matters of Justice, to help inform the parish and to make suggestions as to where we could develop in this area.

Anyone interested in initiating this committee can be assured that we will give you all the support necessary to get started.



ST THERESA'S SCHOOL

Emphasis continues to be placed on the importance of St Theresa's School. It is estimated that today in most Catholic schools, a significant majority of pupils and parents no longer attend Sunday Mass regularly. St Theresa's is no exception to that norm but, it is noticed that those parents and children who do attend are committed and radical in their approach in Catholicism. The school provides us with an opportunity for evangelisation and committed parents are indeed a major influence.

Maureen Barber has given many hours of time in teaching the Rosary to the students. Shirley Kelland has supported the school in their efforts to acknowledge the importance of tikanga and te reo Maori. Other parents of course give hours of time on a voluntary basis. Fr Alan devotes a morning each week to class visits and selected class liturgies. Considerable financial support has been given by the parish in order to help the school purchase the much needed equipment that is part and parcel of a modern school.

Parish with a Mission

Appendix 4

Model for a new style Parish Pastoral Council adopted at parish meeting on 13 August 2000

Reasons for the change

This model takes into account the belief that laity, through their baptism, have the right to be involved in ministry that is at the core of parish life, e.g. instruction of converts, preparation of children for 1st Communion, teaching of Scripture, leadership in Liturgy, directions in our work for Justice, Youth etc.

The model also takes into account the belief that at the heart of parish there must be a group of people with a clear vision, centered around the vision of Jesus who prayed, *'Father your Kingdom come'*. Then, in order for the vision to become reality, it becomes the role of the pastoral council, along with the parish priest and co-workers, to discern the direction we need to take. This means that the parish priest does not have to work alone, and can rest in the knowledge that others are with him sharing the vision. It then becomes the task of council to so convey the vision that the entire parish becomes mission conscious.

The place of committees

The council absolutely respects the place of parish committees and organisations that already exist. Committees are autonomous bodies encouraged to work in mutual cooperation with council. It is not the council's role to initiate everything or take over where work already exists.

Three times yearly, committees will be invited to present a report to council, stating their goals, their achievements to date and advising where help may be needed. Committee representatives, or indeed any parishioner will always be welcome at meetings, and may at any time come to speak to the council as needs arise.

Role of the council

- to affirm the work being carried out
- to ensure that all necessary support is given to those involved in apostolic work
- to cast a shepherd's eye over the entire parish
- to set up committees or teams of people whenever a need is perceived
- to be an emotional and spiritual support to the parish priest
- to elect future parish workers.

Election of the council

In order to set up the council initially, elections to be as follows:

- the parish priest will have the option of choosing up to 3 people. These to be from among those who are currently involved in pastoral work within the parish
- parishioners nominated from among the Sunday congregation will choose the remaining 9 members
- if a councillor should move from the parish, or find it necessary to resign, the new councillor will be the one next in line
- term of office, 3 years
- second term optional. Compulsory retirement after two terms
- congregation must be given the opportunity to nominate future councillors. These to be brought together to go through the process of election.

Structure for meetings

- Chairperson, Secretary/Facilitator to be elected by Council

- Meetings to be held weekly. (4 to 6 weeks at a time, followed by 2 week break. No meetings during school holidays and from Dec 1 to Feb 1)
- Meetings begin with reflection on Sunday readings.

Agenda - usually just one item on the agenda

- the person who nominates the subject speaks to it
- each councillor speaks to it
- facilitator writes up ideas
- conclusions drawn by chairperson
- parish priest's news
- next meeting's agenda is proposed.

Reasons for frequent meetings

If parishioners are to have a greater share in the pastoral direction of their parish, more frequent meetings are needed with the parish priest and any full-time workers in the parish employ. Monthly meetings are too far apart, and in that time decisions often have to be made by the parish priest that should ideally be made by a pastoral team.

Parish with a Mission

Appendix 5



In October 1999, when St Theresa's celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its school, this photograph was taken of four priests who had served the parish since 1976. They are from left Fr Michael Steiller, Fr Alan Roberts, Fr Brendan Kenny and Fr John Heijnen AA.

Geoff Pryor interviews the current parish priest Fr Alan Roberts

Q. Father, what do you honestly think is the state of our parish at present?

It is very healthy. I'm only just completing my third year here, but I see lots of wonderful signs of life. Perhaps the most pleasing is the depth of work our parishioners are prepared to be involved in now. The laity have moved from helping with the material side of parish life, into active, apostolic work. Parishioners are no longer priest dependent. They can run sacramental programmes efficiently. They care for the youth, instruct potential converts, lead prayer services and prayer groups with a great deal of maturity.

Q. Are they doing this because there is shortage of priests?

Perhaps that is the catalyst to get them going, but I think too, it is fair to say they know now, that it is their right as baptised Catholics to help with the more evangelical work.

Q. How is the parish affected by such lay involvement?

It is strange that you should ask that, as I was only thinking yesterday that perhaps the reason for a good general response to things, is the commitment of those involved in leadership positions. It may be coincidence, but it seems there is a change going on. This year we have 30 families enrolled for 1st Communion and at least 22 of them are regular Mass attenders. That is very good and I haven't seen anything like that for a long time. Half at most, but, in more recent years you could expect that of the 30 enrolled, 10 might be Mass goers. It was the same this year with Confirmation. Of the 40 who enrolled, I would say that 95 percent of them have regular contact with the parish community. And I don't think they have joined the exodus after Confirmation that we've become accustomed to. I attribute all of this to the example of lay leader who are involved, and of course to the commitment of parents, their dedication to family life.

Q. What potential exists for deeper development, say in the area of spiritual direction?

That is already there. There is an enormous commitment to the meditation / contemplation movement. There is no reason why some of these people cannot enter into the field of spiritual direction. We've yet to encourage this, but the potential is certainly there.

Q. If tomorrow there was not a resident priest at St Theresa's, would they cope?

Pretty much so I think. There are always areas in need of development, but they would manage. You have to remember, that if there was no resident priest, would they have someone at the helm to guide things? What we want though are leaders who can keep

the growth going. Not just people who keep the ship afloat.

Q. What do you think is the key to the development of lay involvement in a parish?

For me, the priest, or whoever is at the top, must ensure he or she does not run everything, but rather ensure there is development. I think my job at present is to help people discover their ministry. How can they serve the parish? It's crazy to have one person doing almost everything, or dominating an area that no one else can get a look in. I try to encourage one ministry per person. There are exceptions of course, like for those who have more time on their hands, but generally I say, take on one job and learn about it and do it well. When you're ready to give it away, make sure someone replaces you.

Q. Do they always live that out?

No, it's always imperfect, and you have to live with that. There will always be room for development. But we've come a long way.

Q. Where does the Pastoral Council fit in to things?

We've formed a new council. We're still developing, but given the quality of the people involved, I'm full of optimism. This council meets weekly, and after a time of substantial prayer, they discuss one item of pastoral concern. If a conclusion is drawn they action on it, otherwise it stays there until resolved. The intention is that they will be responsible for the parish and work in a supportive way with the official pastoral administrators, be they priests or laity.

Q. So together, they are responsible for the parish?

Yes. Ideally, I hope they will really take over our pastoral concerns. The priest has to be free to do those things that he is really ordained for. Giving talks, preaching, celebrating sacraments etc takes a lot of energy. If you don't have time to read, reflect and pray you just fail to produce.

Q. You've obviously worked on developing a new style of pastoral council. Why did you feel the need for this?

That's easy. People are sick of being a rubber stamp. Frustration with councils is widespread. People won't even bother about putting in a nomination. The old faithfuls have all had a turn and don't want to re-visit that territory again.

Q. If you could put your finger on one thing, what is the strong point of this parish?

I would say their hospitality. It's very noticeable. I was talking recently to a young mother who had just returned to the Church. I asked her what was her first Sunday like. Did people come up and talk to her? She told me she was overwhelmed and felt very welcome. Someone even stopped on their way back from communion and patted her baby's head.

Q. There is a commitment to family life here?

Very much so. We have a lot of young families and children. We only have half a dozen funerals a year, so it is a youthful place. I think that the young couple who practise their faith make a radical commitment these days - given the fact that there is a wide spread drop out. But the ones who come have a vitality. Their faith influences their life. The pressure they experience push them into making a radical decision or they go under. Many parents find a lot of support from movements like Teams of Our Lady. We've just started a group of young marrieds. The movements are all supportive and helpful.

Q. What about the parish's concern for the disadvantaged?

Well, if you're talking about the aged, the shut-ins, it is wonderful. It's been great to see them arrange birthday celebrations for some of the most senior parishioners. We have a number of them and over the years they have given a lot. I think that is significant. It's the same with the sick. The Eucharistic Ministers are wonderful in their caring. It is so much easier for the priest when he can have confidence in this. Perhaps one of the most encouraging things has been the sponsorship the parish have given to the Faith and Light community. This is an organisation that establishes community among the intellectually

challenged. We have several parishioners involved and this gives the parish a sense of usefulness. The parish in general have been very supportive.

Q. What's about the area of Justice?

On a practical level there are wonderful signs. For example, some years ago, parishioners began an organisation called Pro-med. It exists to ensure that no one in the Porirua Basin need go without medical treatment. Then the work of the St Vincent de Paul Society in this parish is truly amazing. As well, there's always a generous response from the parish for the various appeals. However, it's probably time to review all this and move on a step or two. There's more to it than just putting your hands in your pocket. So we've a bit of work to do in this area.

Q. And the Liturgy?

Judging from the affirmation I get, it's probably of a good standard. People let you know whether the Mass is inspiring. We have some key people and they work at it. It's an area though where they are a bit shy in coming forward. Not that I'm complaining. It feels alive for me as the celebrant and that's a good sign. Our Readers make a real effort to present the Liturgy of the Word well. And the music is very strong. All that helps enormously.

Q. I notice that you have introduced Maori into the Mass. This is a predominantly European parish, so why did you bother?

As I understand it, there had been requests for a number of years to acknowledge Maori in some way, but the time had come when it could be delayed no longer. There are a number of Maori parishioners, but that's not the point really. It's the fact that Maori is recognised. We began with a simple Maori acclamation and a Maori parishioner introduced a Karanga at the acclamation. Along with a Maori hymn around communion time we feel that that is sufficient at this stage.

Q. Was there opposition to it?

Not really. Surprise might be a better word, but I think that through doing it, they have come to understand why it is there. There are one or two significant parishioners who are Maori, and they've been very helpful in dispelling fears.

Q. What about caring for the youth?

Well, I couldn't ask for more. It so happens that I introduced the Antioch movement to the diocese back in 1981. It was taken up by this parish and led for a number of years by a dedicated couple. The movement is still in existence, changed somewhat I guess, but cared for by some wonderful parents. The young people love them and are I know inspired by them. This is what it is all about. Parents also lead groups for younger children and you can see the effect it has. I've every confidence in them. Nothing beats the example of their commitment.

Q. Does the school still play a part in parish life?

Yes, but I think that has changed. Because the school, like most Catholic schools in the country, have a high level of non-practising Catholics, it becomes a place where there is opportunity for evangelisation. The Staff of course are challenged to create that Christian atmosphere, and that's a big ask. But they have the ability to do it. Like most Catholics in the modern Church, they are also feeling their way and learning. What the school can contribute to parish life will depend on the commitment of Staff. The parish has to take great care to be supportive and it's good to see many caring parents giving voluntary time to the school. It's also good to meet Staff who want to know what to do. They have their faith and commitment challenged by what they take on. I think they do very well. There's a good atmosphere in that school. Several non-catholic trainee teachers have mentioned that to me, so it isn't just our imagination at work.

Q. All in that, there must be a great deal of lay involvement?

Yes, that's true, and it's a bit overwhelming. At Christmas time, I just have to say a general thank you to everyone involved. The list is enormous. If I tried the personal touch

I'd miss someone out. So we settle for a glass or two of decent wine and some simple food prior to Christmas.

Q. So where to from here?

I'd like to stay a while and watch it grow. It's a privileged time. The Church has been through a lot, and that applies to the parish. There's every reason to hope, and we can take risks. It's great being part of something vital and we're learning as we go. But it's a changing Church, and my bet is that the parish of the future will be a lot different I think, not only to that of the part, but even to what we know now.

Parish with a Mission

*In Memory of
Maurice John Harris*



We all know him simply as Maurice. His contribution to the Plimmerton parish was outstanding. He was a skilled Public Service administrator in the field of education. Maurie had been a member of the parish council and chairman of the Board of Viard College. He was a familiar figure at parish working bees and social gatherings.

It was Mauric who originally took the publication of the parish history. Regrettably ill-health forced his retirement from this project and he died before the work was completed. It is fitting that we remember him in this history.