

Situation Report 8 April 2011

Essential services and communication links have now been restored to the parish office, and with the parish administrator just back from compassionate leave the parish nerve centre is now fully operational.

Last Sunday we had the 9.30 am Sung Eucharist in the Harper Gardens Lounge. It is around the corner from the St Francis hall, and upstairs in the independent living units of the Fitzgerald complex of Anglican Aged Care. We had delayed making this transition because some feared to be in a second story room, or to use the lift. We appear to have got past that now. The venue is excellent for worship with its greater size for our growing numbers, its lovely views of the churchyard, and its fine piano. Ron James our music director played some particularly attractive 19th century Romantic piano pieces before the Liturgy began.

Demolition work has commenced on some of the downed shops in the Stanmore Rd/Worcester St complex. Speculation mounts as to when the parish hall will be demolished. So far as one can tell the loss adjustors are pursuing other priorities at present, and in as much as Diocesan priorities are on their radar screen it would appear that the Community of the Sacred Name and St Lukes will come first so that Barbados St can re-open, and the residents of the St Lukes Close can move back in. Apparently demolition is a complex business, and if you are not careful you can blow a lot of your indemnity money just on removing rubble. I look forward to meeting with the Vicar of St Lukes soon for wide advice on this subject.

Demolition, or rather deconstruction of the Church will be a more exacting matter, and will also require the deconsecration of the Church. The Bishop is due to celebrate and preach at the Patronal Festival on Sunday 19 June. Perhaps this additional function could be carried out then?

On Tuesday afternoon a parish representative attended a community engagement pilot project meeting for community groups from Aranui, Dallington and Avonside. 75% of those present were Council employees. Community groups present expressed frustration about communication difficulties with Council. There was a general mood of exhaustion, and of pessimism about the future. Uncertainty about the land in the vicinity of the river, and the judgement call that would be made as to whether it is suitable for rebuilding, led to the unusual suggestion that if the residents have to move to a new location could they have the option of moving together to a be a community in the new location.

It has been a week of coming to terms with challenging news about basic infrastructure – a sewage system in danger of collapse, and the likelihood of winter power cuts in the east. No doubt the no flush request will have the usual response of the conscientious and the anxious over complying while the high user group blithely carry on. But in general there is a sense of taking the measure of just how long it will take to get back to being an adequately functioning city.

As small businesses continue to fail, or to go into hibernation, the desolating plague of redundancies spread. Some will undoubtedly leave in response. Alice's Video parlour, a particular favourite business, is fighting to survive. Two of its employees must find a suburban villa to relocate the business to, must get permission to remove the stock from the CBD, and must persuade a bank to lend them enough to buy out the owner. It is a race against time, and against the odds. I do wish them well!

For all the difficulties there are good things happening. Road repairs are being tackled energetically. There has been a major improvement to Stanmore Rd just outside the Church driveway, and the flow of traffic has speeded up. Parishioners are returning from many locales and we are encouraged to have them back with us. Holy Week will be here soon, and oddly enough with many of the Liturgies of the Paschal Triduum due to take place in the more intimate setting of the St Francis Hall, I expect there to be an even more telling power in the way they convey the truth and the wonder of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.