

Johnsonville Uniting Church/St Oswald Union Church Property Task Force Report 2004

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Introduction:

The task force was formed in May 2004 to investigate the options for the use of the properties owned by the new parish formed when St Oswald Union Church and Johnsonville Uniting Church merged on the 1st February 2004 in a service at the Terrace Centre in Johnsonville.

The process of merging had been a positive one for both congregations with goodwill on both sides. During the lead-up to the merger, it was understood that practical issues relating to the governance, name and use of the properties of the old parishes would be reviewed during the first year of the new combined congregation.

The task force was given several briefs:

- a) Determining the nature of the parish properties in Johnsonville and Newlands,
- b) Future capital needs they might require to both maintain them and serve the community;
- c) Given that the combined parish is basing its worship in Johnsonville, what should the future use of the St Oswald building be? (Lease it to another congregation, establishing a new congregation, keeping it for community use or selling all or part of it?)

The task force has obtained information from parish and national records, visited all the properties, met with the church's combined property committee and obtained feedback from parishioners, including the St Oswald Youth Group.

Given the current timetable it is not envisaged that major decisions will be necessary until 2005. The task force nonetheless presents the following for the congregation's consideration, as these questions will certainly arise very soon.

Our Parish's Property: An Overview

The combined congregation has three sites, Dr Taylor Terrace, Norman Lane, Johnsonville (Old Methodist Cemetery) and Oswald Crescent, Newlands.

Property Usage: The church properties are currently used by numerous community groups, which are listed in Appendix B.

The Terrace Centre:

Property location and composition: Opened in 1977, this building is composed of three sections, owned by the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand (PCANZ) at 12, 14 and 18 Dr Taylor Terrace.

It is composed of a main hall, a lounge, kitchen, toilet and shower facilities, storage, a committee room, three offices (including the minister's study) the Halliday Room used by the Counselling Service and others, and a chapel currently used by the parish's youth. It also has a church house (connected to the church buildings but having a separate driveway) occupied by the current minister and family.

Historical background: The buildings are the chosen physical home of the combined Johnsonville Union/Uniting Church formed in 1970 combining the old St Colomba Presbyterian Church (formerly based in Earp Street) dating back to 1896 and Johnsonville Methodist Church (formerly based in Johnsonville Road) dating back to services in 1842. As J.U.C.'s worship base from 1977 to 2004, it represents the combined heritage of Methodists and Presbyterians and a substantial part of Johnsonville's history. It continues to serve as a major community and worship facility for people throughout Wellington's northern suburbs and beyond.

Government Valuation 1 September 2003:

12 and 18 Dr Taylor Terrace:	\$1,525,000
14 Dr Taylor Terrace (land only):	123,000
Total:	\$1,648,000

Land Area: .3290h.

Maintenance and Future Options:

The past four years have seen the interior of the church repainted and new flooring vinyl/carpeting installed to offer a brighter decor. The kitchen has had a dishwasher added to its facilities. The grounds have also seen a memorial garden installed on the site of a previous building. The interior of the church house has also been revamped. Heating and ventilation facilities in the main hall have also been provided to aid comfort.

As such, the properties are in good condition, overall. Given the layout of the property, the nature of how the buildings might be changed could be problematic as there seems little room in either the front of back of the Terrace Centre to add further components. There seems currently little demand for expansion of the facilities but should parishioners and/or community groups have need of them, the parish might have to consider these. The task force has been made aware that St. Brigid's School, on the north boundary, are thinking about approaching us to see if they can purchase some of the property (on the northwest boundary) to use for a classroom or more playground area. This is in very early development and no formal approach has been made nor expected in the foreseeable future. This is being raised to keep parishioners "in the picture".

Johnsonville Methodist Cemetery:

Property location and composition:

The cemetery covers three sections at 27-29 Johnsonville Road and is located up the hill off Norman Lane.

Historical background:

The cemetery is a legacy of the Johnsonville Methodist Church formerly located at the front of the cemetery, which became part of the Union/Uniting Church in 1970 and was demolished in 1973. The front section was sold and now contains a commercial building. It contains the last resting place of many early Johnsonville residents and families.

Government Valuation (from rate notices):

Land: \$225,000

Land Area: .0604 h.

Maintenance and Future Options:

Formerly overgrown, the cemetery was substantially improved in the 1990s and is still maintained by parishioner Murray Henderson, whose forbears lie there.

The property is currently tidy and well maintained. It still has some vacant plots for family members of the deceased, but is generally closed. Vehicle access up Norman Lane is limited, but due to the small usage of the site, is not considered a major issue at present. The possibility of a sign at the bottom of Norman Lane pointing out the cemetery's location for historical and personal interest has been raised. Another sign could be located by the cemetery showing the names and position of the person interred as some gravestones are deteriorating and hard to read. Murray Henderson also has some ideas on the upgrading of the cemetery surrounds and would like to discuss his ideas to see if they are feasible.

St Oswald Complex:

Property location and composition:

The property is located on three titles at 2-4 Oswald Crescent and 6 Oswald Crescent, Newlands. It is composed of a main hall and worship area, a kitchen, storage facilities and toilets. A large parking area is located up the back of the property along with a large grassed area. The property was first bought by the Presbyterian Church in 1957 with the hall built in 1959 and the extended worship area opened in 1972. The kitchen area was upgraded in 2000 with a new sink bench, large sink/twin sinks and new floor vinyl. The church house/manse has been used by the parish to house ministers and their families and is currently being leased to a tenant (who is currently responsible for mowing all the grassed areas on the whole property).

Historical background:

The property is the physical home of St Oswald Union Church, dating back to worship services in 1959, when the area was still covered by Johnsonville-based congregations, then as a recognised congregation of Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational worshippers from 1961, then as a separate parish from 1966 to 2004.

As such it represents the combined witness of several generations of Christians in the Newlands/Paparangi area as well as being a community facility for various groups. For more than four decades, the St Oswald facility has been a symbol of active ministry at a time of major growth for those parts of the district.

Valuation 1 September 2003 (from rates):

2-4 St Oswald Crescent (Hall and Manse):	\$600,000
6 Oswald Crescent (Land Only):	\$94,000
Total:	\$694,000

Land Area: 0.3529 h.

Maintenance and Future Options:

The property is in good condition overall but will require improvements in coming years. Since the merger on the 1st of February, parishioners have helped to maintain the grounds but a more regular roster and maintenance routine will be required, irrespective of how the property is to be used in the future. This will be harder to maintain as the worship focus has shifted to Johnsonville and existing Newlands members do not use the property.

There are some repairs that are considered necessary over the short, medium and long-term and these are listed in Appendix A.

Ownership:

As the parish's Sunday worship is being based at Johnsonville, the question arises as to whether the property should be made available for other groups. Several expressions of interest have been received from different congregations. We have not carried out any discussions with these groups as to their future intentions or ability to either buy or lease and maintain the buildings.

The facility will continue to be used by community groups and parish youth groups for at least until the end of 2004. This is certainly the wish of the Youth Group there and was understood at the time of the merger.

The task force has been advised that some former St Oswald parishioners have a strong wish to retain the site and this was part of the understanding of all parties at the time of the merger. This consideration should be taken into account, while also acknowledging the will of parishioners to continue to maintain it.

If part or all of the property is sold, it would be very difficult to repurchase the same or similar property at a reasonable cost if we decided to re-establish a facility in the

Newlands-Paparangi area. Therefore, any selling should be done with careful consideration for neighbouring properties and good will of the community.

If the building is to be leased to other congregations either for worship or for general use, there will have to be sensitive negotiations with community groups who use the facility. It is possible that other congregations' use of the facility may clash with community groups. If that is the case, clear boundaries of usage by other churches will be necessary and effective enforcement likewise, if required.

It may well be that it would be easier for the parish to either lease the whole facility to another congregation, with caveats that the grounds and buildings be maintained and appropriate notice given to community groups so that they may negotiate future usage or find alternative and convenient sites. Schools and community hall hireage rates tend to be more expensive than churches. However, if the decision to sell was made then we could offer to subsidise any increased rental for, say, 12-18 months for current needy tenants.

If the property was to be sold in whole or in part, then this should only be done with a clear mandate from the congregation at a duly constituted meeting.

It should also be noted that if the decision to sell the property was made sometime in the future, then the capital proceeds of such a sale can only be used for capital costs. While the funds are invested, the interest can be used as the parish wishes.

Therefore, a possible future decision would need to be made in respect of the capital funds. Should we put these funds into extending or changing the existing Terrace Centre? Prudent thought would state the current complex is satisfactory for most of the activities that it is used for and that investing more funds into the property for capital works, would be over-capitalising the site (noting the Government Valuation in September 2003 was \$1.65 million).

One thought that has been raised to overcome the above is to use some or all of the funds, from a possible sale of the St Oswald complex, on the purchase of a church house away from the Terrace Centre. This would eliminate the over-capitalisation of the Dr Taylor Terrace site, have the minister and family situated in a suitable residence with neighbours and enable the existing church house to be used for offices (e.g. the counselling service and possible children's groups etc.). It must be noted that this is all "blue sky" thinking, not a firm proposal or a definite way forward.

Recommendations: The following recommendations are submitted for your consideration.

Terrace Centre: Retention of the current premises with ongoing consultation with users about the property's usefulness re: space and comfort etc.

Methodist Cemetery: Retaining the status quo with a priority being the ongoing maintenance of the section and suggested sign (see body of this report).

St Oswald Complex: Either:

a) Retain the property for community use and therefore carry out maintenance and/or leasing the church house (this would require both funds and personnel to complete the work) The church complex could be leased to another church for Sunday morning services; or:

b) Lease the whole property including the manse, to another congregation with appropriate precautions re: respecting community and parish users e.g. the Youth Group (retaining the rent as an ongoing contribution to parish funds; (with maintenance carried out by our parishioners or as part of the lease by the lessees) or:

c) Create a partnership with another congregation (such as another cultural community) which could lease the whole property and meet for combined services with us, say, on a monthly basis; or:

d) Selling the whole property with the parish investing the funds.

Conclusions

The task force recognise that we are not only dealing with the material possessions of the two congregations but also their spiritual homes for decades of Christian witness. We therefore recognise that the future use of all properties and possible developments will be considered in light of this.

Discussions should take place with the Presbytery and Synod Property convenors before any firm decisions are made.

If any new leasing or ownership arrangements are required for the properties, we recommend they be considered in full, with a suggested time-line of having all arrangements in place by no later than 30th September 2005.

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Property Task Force

..... August 2004.

Appendix A:**FUTURE MAINTENANCE REQUIRED FOR THE ST OSWALD COMPLEX:****Immediate:**

Car Park lights

Vents in base of building to be sealed/painted.

Brick wall in front of building should be done (outside)

Repair wallpaper in small hall

Check spouting

Borer in communion table and architraves – treat or dispose?

Big folding tables are dangerous – could be stored or given away

Forms: a number of these are stored in the small hall (dispose?)

Wooden chairs – repair or dispose of these

Management of the electrical system – permanent and compliant solution required

Trees to be topped

New sign at the corner of Bracken Rd/Oswald Cres needed (Urgent)

Regular inspections of property in line with J.U.C. policy

Within Next Two Years:

Drive may need attention – concrete is cracking

Heaters to be replaced in both halls

Long-Term:

Repaint whole building in 2008

Replace carpet in large hall

Possible upgrading or renovation of toilets

N.B. It should be noted that any suggested changes other than pure maintenance, may require Wellington City Council approval which could require the buildings to be upgraded to current WCC building requirements.