

St Anne's Northland-Wilton Hall reconstruction – a case study

St Anne's is a small suburban parish situated in Northland, Wellington. Average regular Sunday congregation 51. The current Vicar, Canon Deborah Broome, has been in the parish since July 2006.

Some years before that, the parish had sold their previous church buildings and purchased facilities previously owned by the Ward Methodist congregation which was moving to Karori.

They became the owners of a beautiful old brick church and an historic hall. The hall was old, tired, and requiring substantial maintenance. It was not meeting the needs of the parish or the community.

What happened next

- The parish was eager to work on a new hall but had met opposition to removing or demolishing it. This had come from the neighbours and some concerned local people who saw the hall as having historical merit, from the City Council and from the Historic Places Trust.
- Consent to demolish or move the hall was declined. Eventually the parish decided to look at upgrading and integrating the old with the new in a sympathetic manner.
- Plans were submitted. The Wellington City Council approved this change in approach and resource consent was obtained in 2007.
- The parish was then required to set about raising \$600,000 to fund the hall.
- The parish had around \$240,000 tagged as 'redevelopment assets' in hand from the sale of their previous buildings.

Local needs and funding

The project had two components in regard to funding.

- There was the historic and conservation aspects as well as what the community needed i.e. a working hall versus a local monument.

Grant process

This process involved several application streams. Applying for assistance as it related the historical/heritage requirements as well as the community perspective.

To be eligible for community funding the parish needed to undertake a feasibility study looking at community needs.

- There were two parishioners with the required skill set who undertook the work. Recognising a potential conflict of interest they sought an external peer review of their work.
- The parish undertook a survey of the local community via a letter box drop. They provided a number of local drop boxes for completed forms. The feedback was low but statistically significant. It provided enough supporting data for grant applications.
- Key feedback incorporated the need for a small community meeting space versus the larger community centre hall close by. The only small space available in this venue was up a flight of stairs and relatively inaccessible.

- The parish had also seen the need for a smaller accessible space as a need. Current tenants, the Toy Library and other users had similar accessibility needs to the parishioners.
- Other funding applications were made to other community funding sources .
- Lottery Board Heritage & Conservation funds were also applied for, and for this the parish had to engage a Conservations architect to prepare a Conservation Plan.

Engagement

The whole parish came on board seeing the hall as an outreach opportunity versus a building project.

- As well as engaging the whole congregation it was important to engage the local community. (see below)
- Two hall project groups were formed:
 - (a) Those with the specific skill sets required for the practical aspects of the project and making funding applications.
 - (b) Another team of people to support the project with prayer.
- Each group was informed of key events and decisions at the same time and all involved were able to remain involved and supported throughout the project.
- St Anne's was also lucky enough to have a project manager in the parish that was able to assist once building started.
- The parish got behind the building process, praying for the builders by name, and regularly dropping off baking. The roof "shout" was cause for a particular celebration.

Community engagement

The parish in wanting to engage the community came up with a novel strategy.

- They distributed Easter eggs and information during Lent 2010.
- They gathered to pray prior to this exercise and took to the Northland Streets with information about the upcoming Easter services, Easter eggs, and information about what happening with the hall, along with a request for monetary assistance. (The hall at this stage was propped up on piles so people were very interested in what was happening).
- The people of Northland opened their wallets and gave over \$4000. There were further donations continuing to come in even after the hall was opened. The Vicar recalls going to her letterbox every day during Lent and opening envelopes containing cheques, or being stopped on the street and given money.

Future proofing

The building committee did a number of things to future proof the building. These included:

- a commercial dishwasher - in anticipation of greater use
- putting wiring in place for another stove should it be required
- putting in a parish office –not yet required but will be in the future.

They were linking the church to the hall so with the two buildings opened up:

- they were able to add wiring for a hearing loop in the church

- put wiring in place for a sound system –which they will get at a later date

Happy stories

With all old buildings there are always unanticipated problems and expenses. The building committee found themselves having to replace a matai floor which was a significant unbudgeted expense. They looked at cheaper options such as particle board and lino but were blessed to receive the whole amount via a funding application (an unusual scenario – usually what you get is far less than what you apply for).

The floor was restored to its former glory!

The new hall was opened on St Anne's Day weekend in July 2010. It was important to the parish that the opening begin with a service in the church, moving through into the new hall and blessing all the different rooms. Then the party began, including toasts to the architects and the builders.

What now

St Anne's has a new hall. They had money left over once all the building invoices were paid, and have placed this (\$10,000) in an ongoing maintenance trust fund.

This Easter they're planning another round of Easter eggs to say thanks to their community.

To sum up what they did:

- They engaged with the community and identified local needs
- They asked their parishioners for financial assistance
- They used their parish skill base to support the project work
- Looked to future proof their work
- They had an enthusiastic and committed team
- They build a relationship with the community leveraging off a key event in the Christian calendar
- There was a lot of prayer.

Please let me know your stories and successes and how you got there. I can be contacted by email on fundingmanager@wn.ang.org.nz or call 04 471 8590.

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