



St Luke's in the City



*Media statement on behalf of
St Luke's in the City
Anglican Church
12 May 2021*

St Luke's in the City to close

The Anglican Parish of St Luke's in the City is to close on St Luke's Day, 18 October this year.

For 162 years St Luke's has been a liberal voice for the gospel in the heart of Christchurch, sustained by a deep commitment to a contemplative style of spirituality and outreach. Situated at the corner of Kilmore and Manchester Streets the Parish Church was fatally damaged in the 2011 earthquake and had to be demolished. The parishioners became homeless.

Over the last 10 years the parish has 'camped out' in other church communities. Churchwarden Jenny Drury has been quoted as saying "We are grateful for their generosity in enabling us to have a place to worship, but it is not possible to re-establish and nourish our outreach and ministry without our own permanent base in the central city. All our efforts to find a new home have been unsuccessful. Even so the parish has maintained its contemplative style of inclusive worship and its commitment to such social justice and service projects as ProTXT, the safety alert system run by the Prostitutes' Collective."

While there has been a very deep commitment to the parish and its heritage, there has been a slow and consistent decline in membership over the last ten years and it is an increasingly elderly congregation. "There does come a point where there are insufficient people resources, and flagging energy left to maintain and grow a parish," says Drury.

St Luke's parishioners are grieving deeply over the loss of their parish.

Usually in such circumstances a parish merges with another parish. But the people of St Luke's in the City are determined that all that St Luke's has stood for should continue in a new and transformative way. They want a legacy for the inner city which is not guaranteed by merging property and assets into another parish in the usual way. At a Special General Meeting of parishioners it was unanimously agreed to recommend to Bishop Peter Carrell and the Standing Committee that the parish be dissolved subject to successfully agreeing with the Diocese on a way forward which enables a legacy mission for St Luke's.

Current priest in charge, Rev'd Peter Beck says, "Parishioners are very clear that they would like the financial assets of the parish to be invested by the Church Property Trustees in order to fund a fulltime priest or deacon as part of the Cathedral team. This person's main ministry focus will be chaplaincy to the inner city (e.g. to businesses, to ministries engaging with those who are poor, to the creative arts) as well as ensuring that a regular celebration of the Eucharist in the St Luke's style is



maintained at the Cathedral. Parishioners would also like funds to be available to support contemplative spirituality projects as well as social justice and service projects in the inner city.”

Currently the former site of St Luke’s Church is leased to the Side Door Arts Trust who have placed their 185 white chairs art installation there. At the end of the lease in 2023 the parish recommends that the land be sold, with preference for a sale which leads to positive ‘social impact investment’ and the proceeds be contributed to the Cathedral Project.

“If these recommendations are agreed to by the Diocese at its annual Synod in September it means that what St Luke’s in the City has stood for all these years can be continued into the future,” says Beck. “It’s a real Easter story of death and resurrection.”

For further information:

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- St Luke’s in the City website: www.stlukesinthecity.org.nz
- St Luke’s is currently operating out of Knox Presbyterian Chapel, 28 Bealey Avenue, Christchurch.