

# **St Alban's Backgrounder – November 2016**

## **The Journey so Far**

St Alban's parish vacated its church and hall in August 2016 after receiving a report from engineers BECA which indicated both buildings fell well short of meeting seismic requirements. A "non-destructive" or visual inspection of the buildings had been carried out in 2015 and as a result of the findings of this visual inspection, a second report was requested. This "destructive inspection" opened up walls and took x-rays of walls, foundations and buttresses. This report identified serious concerns such as lack of reinforcing in brick walls, buttresses not supporting walls or buttresses not anchored correctly into foundations. The report estimated the church and hall met respectively 15% and 20% of seismic requirements.

Church wardens met with both engineers and diocesan representatives, advice was taken and the decision made to close the church and the main section of the hall as being unsafe for use.

St Alban's church was built in 1910 with further additions in the 1960's. (See the History section for more detail about church and hall buildings.) Although the building has withstood earthquakes during its existence, additions have resulted in concern about the weakening of the original structure.

The main section of the hall was constructed in 1927 with a number of later additions and modifications. Due to more robust later construction, engineers have approved continued use of the kitchen and parish office/toilet areas, although the central section of the hall is closed and all hall hiring has ceased.

Since the buildings were constructed, engineers have learned a great deal more about construction styles, materials and standards which contribute to keeping people safe in an earthquake. In New Zealand, buildings meeting less than 33% of the New Building Standard (NBS) are classified as earthquake prone and have 15 years to comply with the law, either by strengthening or demolition. A Wellington Diocesan Synod resolution in 2012 requires all church buildings in the Diocese to be brought up to a minimum standard of 67% NBS by March 2024 or as per local Council requirements.

St Alban's church has been used extensively for worship, weddings, funerals, concerts and occasional drama. The hall has provided for many community events and activities, and in the lead up to its closure included Pop in and Play for preschoolers, ballet and music classes, retreats, meetings for groups from other churches and communities, activity sessions for seniors, catering after weddings and funerals and private functions.

With its traditional focus as a community hub, St Alban's is keen to hear from the Eastbourne and Bays communities and listen to ideas of how this might serve the community into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is the background to the Blue Skies Day on 19 November.

Following the Blue Skies Day and feedback to the parish, the parish will focus on developing its brief to be given to the architect. An experienced facilitator will work with the parish, firstly with ministry and mission leaders and then with the whole parish. The facilitator will pull this discernment work together to affirm a clear brief for the architect.

The decision making for St Alban's redevelopment rests with the committed regular worshipping parishioners, who are members of the church's electoral roll.

Until a clear direction is established, following this extensive consultation, it is far too early to have any time frame or cost.

## **St Alban's Church & Hall – History and usage**

1910 - January	Foundation stone of St Alban's Church Eastbourne, designed by Frederick de Jersey Clere, laid in Ngaio Street.
1910 - May	St Alban's Church, built of camerated concrete, completed and opened.
1911	Anglican Parish of Eastbourne separated from Lower Hutt.
1927	Square brick parish hall built on north side of church.
1952	Hall extended westwards adding kitchen, choir room, toilet.
1962	St Alban's extended westward with new sanctuary and choir vestry.
1967-8	St Alban's extended eastwards adding new forecourt, entrance & foyer.
1972	Hall extended eastwards adding new foyer, parish office & toilets.
1974	Hall refurbished; stage & choir room removed, lounge created.
1980	Memorial wall built on eastern boundary for interment of parishioners' ashes.
1994	Hall kitchen seismically strengthened and upgraded to commercial quality.
2009	Hall foyer seismically strengthened, toilets upgraded, office refurbished. Glass doors inserted in hall's southern wall, opening to steps & garden.

Over the last 106 years, St Alban's Church has been used for regular Sunday and weekday services; special occasion services; baptisms, weddings and funerals; choir festivals, music festivals, flower festivals and concerts; dramatic productions; hosting retreats and visiting parishes.

St Alban's Hall has had extensive community use, with socials and dances, young people's clubs, playcentre and playgroups, men's and women's groups, indoor sports clubs, flower shows; Scouts and Guides, Red Cross & Townswomen's Guild (until they built their own rooms); Forty Hour Famine and other sleepovers; visiting concert parties and Whanau Ora; drama productions, ballet and music classes; as well as Sunday school, Bible classes and church groups.