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Parish of St. Thomas Aquinas,
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Tauranga.

15 Braeburn Place,
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Tauranga. 3110
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Dear Father and Members -

When we came to Tauranga 22 years ago and first went to mass, the overall impression of St Mary's from the outside was - "Depressing".
Entering the church, that impression was not dispelled.

Today little has changed.

Grey predominated and the emphasis was steel truss beams highlighted against the background; my thought being that the church had been the first design of one of the old PWD engineers whose speciality was bridges!

Subsequent repaints have not attempted to blend the trusses into the background by painting them to merge.

Nor has there been much effort to brighten the building.

Why have the obvious colours of Our Lady - blue and white, not been introduced to lift at least the interior?

I discussed this early on with the then Parish Priest and he agreed – or perhaps didn't want to get into argument.

Of all the churches I've seen built in the last 30+ years, of any denomination, I have not seen one less attractive.

Today these are not the issue under consideration. But hardly an argument in favour of reconstructing the building.

The reports on the condition of the church show that to retain the structure and restore it to a sound condition is a major and very expensive and disruptive project. The extensive restorative work virtually involves a rebuild. The basic structure would not vary much from the present.

What is the earthquake status of the present structure – presumably lessened

by the deterioration revealed?

Restoration will not achieve even the present desirable requirements, or for those of an increasing congregation. Let alone the influx of visitors in holiday periods.

The church is barely adequate now.

The congregation is growing, and this will continue.

The number of clergy are contrary to this, diminishing. Combined, a larger church would allow of bigger congregations and less demand on the clergy.

Additional features are still being added to the church - stained glass windows, fans , but to a structure the future of which is under consideration.

(And consideration should be given to the strobe effect of the fan blades cutting through the light source which could be a problem for persons with epilepsy or similar. These persons should take front pews.)

The present lighting in the church is dreadful, and expensive. The air conditioning, heating, inadequate.

The organ is certainly adequate for a much larger structure. Something positive!

There's no question the church site is a prime commercial locality.

Recent building opposite on Cameron Road supports this. It is close to the central commercial and CBD area.

The church has owned and occupied this site for a long and historic period. It certainly has great sentimental ties, but this is to the land, not the buildings. St. Mary's is not the first site of a Catholic church in Tauranga. And the present complex has grown to its limit.

Tauranga is not now the small town it once was and its growth will continue. The future should be anticipated and provided for. The state of the present church structure perhaps the catalyst for the desirable change.

There has to be progress and realism.

Presently churches and other organisations benefit from reduced rates, taxes – here the accountants can define these advantages.

But will these advantages continue to be the case?

Society is increasingly atheistic and opposed to any church advantages.

In the event concessions be removed or modified, the church would be disadvantaged by its present locality on its very highly valued land. And this

value and importance will increase.

This is a very desirable commercial site.

While it would be a huge, lengthy and expensive project the opportunity to build a new larger church and complex, not too remote from the city centre, has to be a serious consideration and a good financial option.

A church of a size suitable for a congregation at least twice that of those at present.

Will Tauranga in future be the centre of a diocese?

Location for a new church complex, in a fairly central location, possibly to the south and east of the present church. Somewhere to look to purchase a number of adjoining properties for the church and associated buildings. With adequate parking space, some incorporated in the Church structure?

Town planning and other restrictions or requirements would need establishing at an early stage.

St. Aquinas College and grounds are spacious but not central enough.

Very few parishioners seem to have read the reports on the church structure or be aware of its condition.

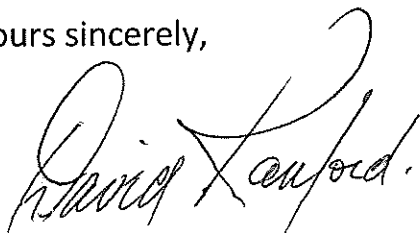
While these reports are available on-line there does not seem to be knowledge of their presence, or persons are not able to, or are not enquiring enough to access them.

This information needs to be better disseminated to parishioners to ensure factual knowledge and a balanced response to future proposals and actions.

These thoughts are for consideration by the decision makers.

Reality must prevail over sentiment.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Ranford', written in a cursive style.

D. K. Ranford.

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