

Wednesday, 26 April 2017



St John's Stone Church restoration update

One of the most commonly asked questions that the Hororata Community Trust receives is 'when is the St John's Stone Church going to be repaired.'

Given that the earthquake damage to the Stone Church was one of the catalysts for the establishment of the Hororata Community Trust, this is perfectly understandable. There is considerable frustration and conflicting stories within our community regarding this project, which so many people feel passionately about.

The Hororata Community Trust was formed in March 2011 for the purpose for assisting with the repair and restoration of buildings and facilities damaged by the Canterbury Earthquakes, as well as the provision of new projects and facilities for the benefit of the community. This specifically includes the St Johns Hororata Anglican Church, although the Trust's objects are not limited to this building.

Whilst it might not be obvious to the casual observer, the Hororata Community Trust has dedicated significant time and resources to the repair and restoration of the Stone Church over the last six years. There has been extensive discussions between the Hororata Community Trust, the Church Property Trustees (CPT), and the Hororata Parish Vestry as well as significant legal work undertaken by Duncan Cotterill pro-bono on behalf of the Hororata Community Trust to try and progress the project.

Specifically, representatives of the Hororata Community Trust have been working with the Hororata Parish Vestry since 2011 and subsequently the CPT since 2014 on options for the restoration and repair of the St John's Stone Church.

The original intention of Hororata Community Trust was to look at the acquisition of the St John's Hororata Stone Church from CPT and the repair and restoration of the Stone Church. This intention was communicated to Hororata Parish Vestry, and the Parish sought feedback on the concept, which generally saw many people in favour of this option.

In August 2014 the Anglican Church ruled out this option and since October 2014 the Hororata Community Trust has been in discussions with the CPT regarding other alternatives for how the Hororata Community Trust may assist CPT with the repair and restoration and ongoing management of the St John Stone church.

These discussions have included the development of proposals around a covenant between Hororata Community Trust and the CPT in relation to the restoration and ongoing management of the St John's Stone Church. These proposals involve a joint approach to the repair and restoration of the Stone Church (including input both from the Church and the Trust on feasibility, planning, and design work) utilising insurance funds available to CPT and funds raised by the Hororata Parish Vestry and the Hororata Community Trust.

Once the repair and restoration is completed, the Hororata Community Trust has offered to take responsibility for maintaining the building in the medium to long term and to manage the building both for Church and community use. It being a key requirement of the Trust's involvement that if community funds are to be committed to the project then the repaired and restored building should be able to benefit both the Church and wider community.

Two formal legal documents attempting to set out these proposals in detail have so far been prepared by the Hororata Community Trust and provided to CPT for review.

During this time the Hororata Community Trust has continued to discuss this project with the Hororata Parish Vestry and keep them updated with communication between the two trusts. The last official discussions between the Hororata Community Trust and the CPT regarding the St John's Stone Church took place in July 2016. The outcome of those discussions was that the CPT was to respond to the Hororata Community Trust regarding the draft Memorandum of Understanding prepared by the Hororata Community Trust. So far, no official response has been received.

The Trustees of the Hororata Community Trust feel that they have done their best to progress the repair and restoration of the St John's Hororata Stone Church on a basis that will serve both the local parish and wider local community, however the reality is that in six years relatively little real progress has been made. If and when the CPT wishes to progress the repair and restoration of the St John's Stone Church, the Hororata Community Trust will be happy to engage.

However, the Hororata Community Trust is now turning its attention to other projects that will benefit Hororata and its wider community, such as the proposal to restore the Hororata Hall and ongoing development of the Hororata Domain, both of which are important and historic community facilities in themselves.