

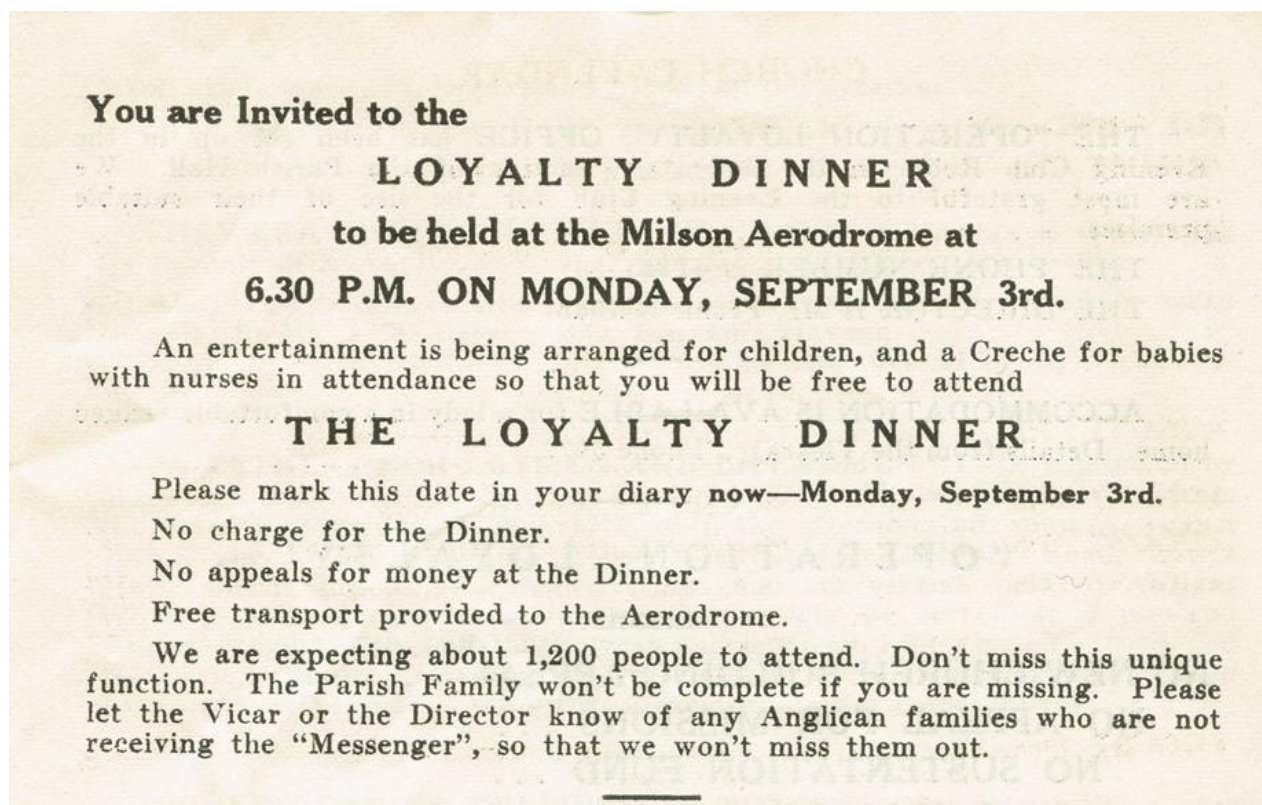
## Just a building?

Imagine being charged with a goal of raising \$2,446,586.51 in just under three years, and to do this decades before crowdfunding, quiz nights and silent auctions. Yet one community did just that - the goal being to build a “new Church”— the St Peters parishioners who have gone before us.

67 years ago, starting on October 7, 1956, members of this parish started fulfilling their pledges to help raise the sum of £40,000 towards building a “new and larger” St Peter’s. There was a degree of urgency as the Vicar Leo King wrote to the Parish in July 1956 edition of The Messenger:

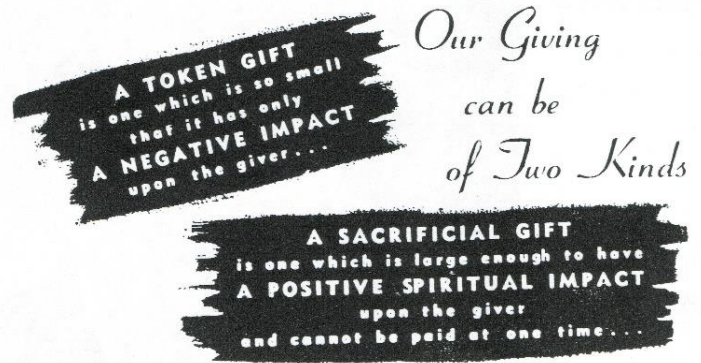
*Our present building is much too small. And as you will see if you inspect it, especially at the back, its life is very limited. (Due to the wood decaying)*

The mission, dubbed “Operation Loyalty” was officially launched on July 22, 1956. The Vicar labelled this as the “lay people’s movement” because the work towards raising this money was carried out by the parishioners themselves. An invitation to a Loyalty Dinner appeared in the August 1956 Messenger where the future of the parish and how parishioners and their families could be involved would be explained. There, the “Operation Loyalty Appeal” was unveiled. A team of “selected ‘Church men’”, would personally visit every household associated with St Peter’s, including parishioners, prospective members, parents of Sunday School children and anyone else remotely connected with the church, to obtain weekly pledges over the span of nearly three years. Parishioners were assured that this would be the sole means of



From The Messenger August 1956, p3. Invitation to The Loyalty Dinner

fundraising. A publication, *Operation Loyalty* (1956), defined Sacrificial giving as *the kind of giving that strengthens faith and brings the kind of interest that permits a Church to grow and render greater Christian Service.* Overall, the expectation was of a pledge greater than what one would think possible and *for the largest amount ... ever given,* because it would only be though this kind of giving that the £40,000 could be raised in the 150-week timeframe.



*Operation Loyalty 1956*

A table was prepared to help participants to consider how much to pledge. The average weekly wage at the first quarter of 1956 was £13 6/- 8d or thirteen pounds, 6 shillings and 8 pence.<sup>1</sup> This was averaged across all industries so a few parishioners may have had more in the hand, but the majority by far would have taken home a far smaller amount than this. 20/- (twenty shillings) was £1(\$61.16) and 7.48% of the average wage. The highest, 80/- or £4 (\$244.66), would have been 29.93%!<sup>2</sup> Translated into today's money, and showing pledged amounts as proportionate to weekly income, the giving of many would have indeed been truly sacrificial – the sums pledged prayerfully considered and decisions likely had to be made as to what might be given up in order to achieve this. What also made this an act of faith, was that there were no actual architects plans, nor artist's impressions; and for some of those pledging, there was the possibility that they may not even see their new Church completed within their lifetimes.

In the October 1956 Messenger, the Vicar, Leo King reported that £47,000 had been pledged which meant that it would *now be possible to approach an architect and ask him to submit plans.* He went on to write:

*By your willingness to make your pledge you are contributing towards the cost of the new Church which we will erect to the Glory of God and for the use of generations to come...*

*This Table Has Been Prepared to Help You*

20/-	a	week	for	150	weeks	—	£150	0	0
25/-	"	"	"	"	"	—	187	10	0
30/-	"	"	"	"	"	—	225	0	0
35/-	"	"	"	"	"	—	262	10	0
40/-	"	"	"	"	"	—	300	0	0
45/-	"	"	"	"	"	—	337	10	0
50/-	"	"	"	"	"	—	375	0	0
55/-	"	"	"	"	"	—	412	10	0
60/-	"	"	"	"	"	—	450	0	0
65/-	"	"	"	"	"	—	487	10	0
70/-	"	"	"	"	"	—	525	0	0
75/-	"	"	"	"	"	—	562	10	0
80/-	"	"	"	"	"	—	600	0	0

*Operation Loyalty 1956*

<sup>1</sup> New Zealand Yearbook 1956

<sup>2</sup> Figures calculated by the Reserve Bank of New Zealand Inflation calculator, using 1956 Q2 as a baseline.

67 years later, it is 2023. It is we, now the “generations to come”, who are enjoying the fruits of Operation Loyalty - our current church where we worship, pray, celebrate the liturgical year, sing, laugh, and sometimes cry, where we farewell our departed and welcome new members to our family through baptism. We take in the beauty of the interior, the light shining through the stained-glass windows donated by groups and parishioners long departed. We enjoy the music from the organ as we sit in the pews given by those same families who had already pledged truly sacrificial amounts. We kneel at our communion rails for which the boy scouts of the day must have undertaken countless bottle-drives. We admire the banners and embroidery, made by hand, and with love by the various guilds over the decades.

But what does this mean to each of us? Do we now dismiss our current church as “just a building”, no longer relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Is it now simply a money-spinner, a venue to be hired out to other groups who may not share the same values nor theologies? Or does it remain something far more, a sacred space, a whole infinitely and sacramentally greater than the sum of its parts; made even more so because of the sacrifices made by those past parishioners through their deep loyalty to God, the Church, and to finally to us. Could we ourselves match that loyalty? If so, what will each of us do to take our part in caring for, honouring, and preserving their legacy for those generations of parishioners yet to come?

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