

Diocese chooses Warren and Mahoney for cathedral project

MEDIA RELEASE

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The Catholic Diocese of Christchurch has chosen Warren and Mahoney, one of the country's leading architectural firms, to design the new Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament and the surrounding precinct.

Bishop Michael Gielen last year initiated a national search for an architect to work with the Diocese in building a cathedral as the spiritual centre for the Catholic Church in the region. The Diocese has been without a cathedral since the major Christchurch earthquakes in 2010 and 2011.

Bishop Gielen said Warren and Mahoney has been a mainstay of Christchurch architecture for decades, working on iconic buildings like the Christchurch Town Hall, Te Pae Convention Centre and the Justice Precinct.

"We hope – and we expect – that the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament will regain its status as one of the architectural treasures of our city and our nation," Bishop Gielen said.

"We were fortunate to have significant interest from possible partners for this project. We are confident that Warren and Mahoney will walk with us in building a worthy house of worship to glorify God and to welcome His people.

"It will be a place where heaven and earth meet."

Warren and Mahoney will be guided by a design brief that was developed through diocesan consultation and then refined by an advisory group representing clergy, religious, laity and cultural communities.

Joseph Hampton, Warren and Mahoney's project leader, said being called to work on the cathedral project is a great honour and responsibility.

"The new Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament and the surrounding precinct is a generational project for our studio and practice," Mr Hampton said.

"We look forward to working with the Diocese to shape a vibrant precinct that serves as a beacon of hope and faith, giving back to the wider community for generations."

Jonathan Coote, head of design at Warren and Mahoney's Christchurch team, said the studio is ready to help develop an exceptional design outcome.

"Cathedrals are incredibly powerful places that evoke a sense of unity, ritual and tradition by using all the tools we have as architects – volume, acoustics and light in its varying forms," he said.

"We are looking forward to elevating and amplifying these aspects with the Diocese to create a place and experience that leaves a lasting memory."

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The project will include the design of a new cathedral, together with a wider precinct masterplan. That plan will unite existing education and community functions with administrative offices, parking and multipurpose spaces to create a place of welcome, witness and worship for current and future generations.

Bishop Gielen said the Diocese will continue to keep the Catholic faithful and the wider community updated on progress towards the cathedral's construction.

"This will be the first Catholic cathedral built in New Zealand in more than 120 years. It is an historic opportunity and privilege for us to be entrusted with this sacred undertaking," he said.