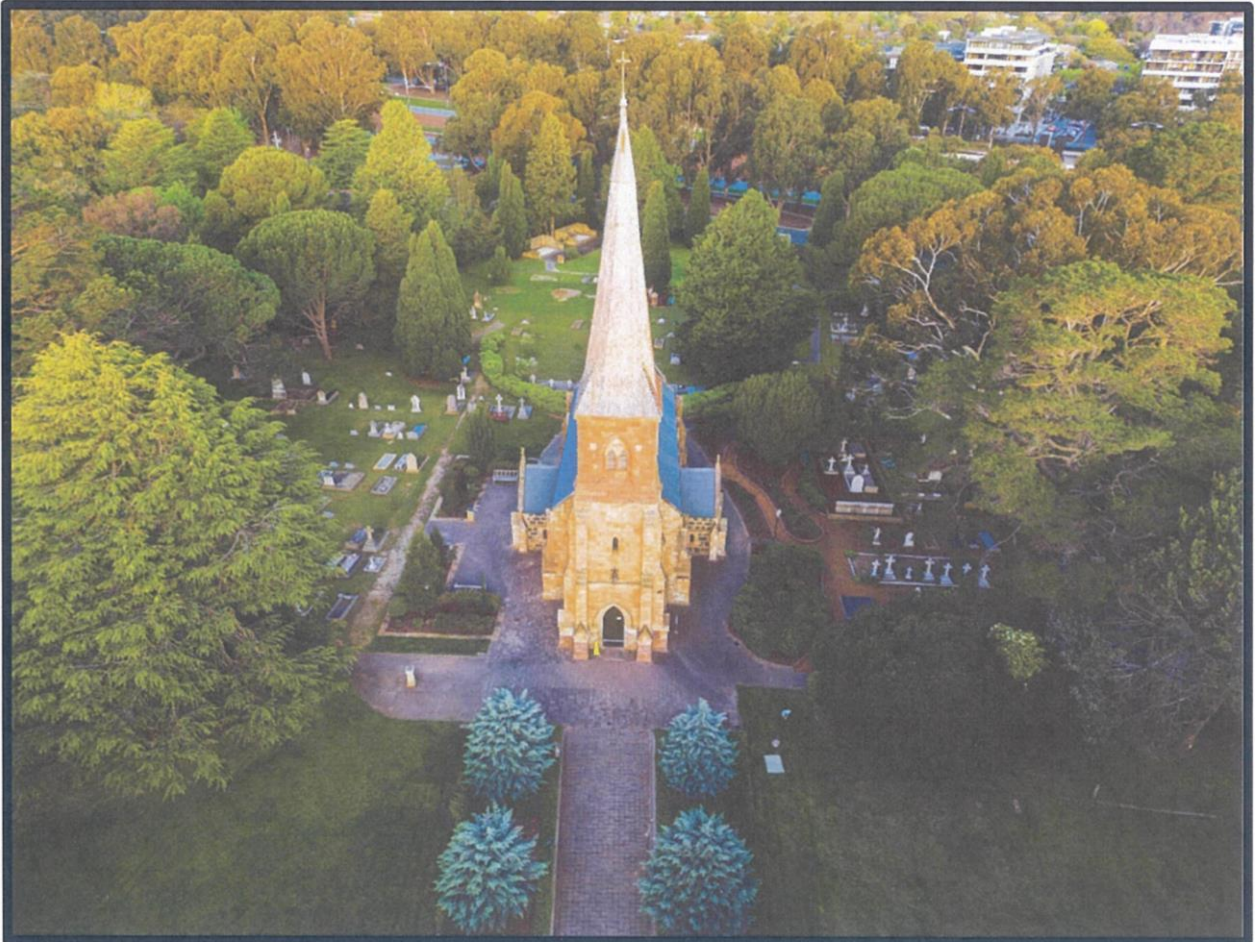




ST JOHN'S

ANGLICAN CHURCH

CANBERRA



Annual General Meeting

Sunday 17 March 2024

2.00pm

**St John's exists to bear public witness to Jesus Christ,
the source of life.**

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St John's Anglican Church, Canberra Annual Report 2023

Presented to the
Annual General Meeting 17 March 2024

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND ELECTORAL MEETING

Sunday 17 March 2024 at 2.00pm in the Hall

AGENDA

Attendance: Please sign the list of attendees as you enter

Apologies: Please write the names of apologies known to you on the list as you enter

1. Opening Prayer

2. Adoption of the Agenda

3. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held 26 March 2023

Draft Motion:

It is moved that the meeting note that the Minutes of the AGM held on 26 March 2023 were approved by Parish Council on 19 April 2023

4. Annual Reports for Noting

Authors are welcome to make brief comments on their report, which can be followed up with questions or comments.

5. Adoption of Financial statements for 2023 and of Budget for 2024

Draft Motions:

It is moved that The Finance Report, and the Financial Statements for 2023 be accepted.

It is moved that the Budget for 2024 be noted.

6. Appointment of Auditor

Draft Motion:

It is moved that PKF Canberra be appointed Parish Auditors for 2024.

ELECTORAL MEETING

The Rector will take the chair for this meeting.

Decision on the number of Parish Councillors to be elected for 2024.

The Governance of the Diocese Ordinance provides for St John's to have 3 Wardens—2 elected and 1 nominated by the Rector.

The Governance of the Diocese Ordinance provides for the electoral meeting to determine whether 2, 4, 6, or 8 persons should be elected to the Parish Council—with the Rector then to nominate 1, 2, 3 or 4 persons respectively.

As in 2023, it is proposed that we elect 6 Parish Councillors.

If this is agreed, the Rector would nominate 3 Councillors, making 9 Councillors. Together with 3 Wardens, the Rector and the Assistant Minister, this makes a total of 14 people.

Decision as to whether the Presiding Member of Parish Council should be elected by Parish Council or at this electoral meeting

We propose that we continue the practice at St John's of the Parish Council electing its own Presiding Member (i.e. chair), since it is considered that it is Parish Councillors themselves who are best placed to decide the most appropriate Chair.

Election:

Wardens (2 to be elected)

Parish Councillors—the number determined in Item 6 above

RESUMPTION OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

7. **Other business** (preferably, with notice of any substantive motions or questions before the meeting)
8. **Closing Prayer**—The Grace

St John the Baptist Anglican Church, Canberra
Annual General Meeting
Sunday 26 March 2023, held in the Hall.

MINUTES

1. Opening Prayer

The Presiding Member asked Rev'd Dave to open the meeting with prayer. The Rector then acknowledged the contribution of the Ngambri and Ngunnawal people to the land in which the parish is now placed.

Attendance

As shown below there were 59 parishioners and clergy in attendance, and there were 12 apologies.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was accepted, with one request for a motion to be considered under 'Other Business'.

3. Minutes of the Last Annual General Meeting held on Sunday 20 March 2022

It was resolved that the meeting note that the Minutes of the AGM held on 20 March 2022 were approved by Parish Council on 13 April 2022.

4. Annual Reports for Noting

Rector's Report

Rev'd Dave noted his first year in the Parish had been productive and enjoyable with the good news of Jesus Christ being preached and received as a source of comfort for members of the parish community.

Of significance, an average of 178 people attended services of worship each week. This regular habit of worship is one he saw as central to our life as a church. Strategic planning work, foreshadowed at the 2022 meeting, has come to fruition in the *2023-2028 Strategic Plan* which followed from consultation meetings with parishioners from each service and from planning days with Parish Council.

Considerable change is coming to the neighbourhood of St John's with new residences, businesses opening and a campus of the UNSW coming to our boundary line.

The parish vision was reworked to 'bear public witness to Jesus Christ, the source of life', and our mission statement to 'bear public witness to Jesus Christ through Anglican worship and pastoral ministry, loving community and outward facing mission'.

In the Plan there are 8 ministry goals: The Parish honours the rich Anglican tradition of worship services. We focus on foundational instruction. We will increase our commitment to world missions. Emergency relief will continue as a central feature. We will publicly engage in the challenges faced by Christians, through a seminar or similar series. A stronger community culture will continue to be nurtured. To support these measures the staff team will increase to three full-time clergy, several part-time ministry workers and additional staff to support our growing operational load.

The Rector acknowledged the strong support given by Margaret Rodgers in her role as Sacristan and welcomed Jennifer Lawson who will be assuming that role in mid-year. In 2022 the Rev'd Guerin Tueno and the Rev'd Tracey Sutherland provided valued assistance as members of the stipendiary staff. He recognised the work of Michael Shaw in his care for the parish's young people, and Kimberley van Leeuwen in her role as parish administrator.

Pastoral Care under the leadership of Canon Kevin Stone continued to expand; we now need to consider how to continue that care after his retirement at the end of 2023.

Parish activities continue to broaden. We no longer minister in the wilderness as did St John the Baptist; our modern secular wilderness is every bit as hostile to the life of the spirit as is the most scorching desert to natural life.

Other Reports

The Presiding Member then noted each of the other reports and invited their Chairs to speak, and/or to respond to questions.

The following comments were made:

The 2023 Fair date is 14 October 2023, it will be an opportunity to continue to build community within the parish and welcome others; the Friends of St John's invited all to take up membership; the Missions Committee issued an invitation to others to join; the National Trust – St Johns Conservation Heritage Appeal Fund foreshadowed their annual appeal letter would be circulated in the next month or so; regarding the Pastoral Care Committee Ailsa Curtis acknowledged the strong commitment of Canon Kevin Stone; the Projects Committee recognised the retirement of Rob Brooks as Honorary Parish Architect and welcomed Terry Ring to the membership of its committee; the author of *Sanctuary in the City* noted there were few copies left following its publication in 2012, a satisfactory position given it is now outdated; the Schoolhouse Museum expressed pleasure that they were still around some 178 years after the opening of its building; the rapidly changing operating environment for St John's Care was highlighted, as was their current approach to assist clients improve their own personal situations while responding to their immediate needs. While they also assist with any spiritual needs as they arise, they will look to expand this aspect of their operation, as appropriate.

5. Adoption of Financial Statements for 2022 and of Budget for 2023

As the Parish has no Treasurer the Presiding Member summarised the 2022 financial operations. Eighty percent of our income comes from offertory and parking. In early 2022 Parish Council was sufficiently concerned at the decline in parking revenue to revise the 2022 budget to get us through the year. A reduction in expenditure was deemed necessary for the time. Through the generous gifts of six parishioners, we received \$190 000 towards our current needs. Those gifts enabled us, along with later increases in both offertory and parking income, to end the year very satisfactorily.

We have sufficient funds for a two-year appointment of an Operations Manager. The Presiding Member also noted that we changed the parish car arrangements from purchase to leasing and we upgraded our computer system to cloud-based architecture.

The parish balance sheet remains above \$2m after substantial capital expenditure on both the rectory and no. 1 Amaroo Street.

It was resolved that the Finance Report and the Financial Statements for 2022 be accepted.

A question (Richard Refshauge) was posed on the St John's Care financial statement:

On page 29 there is a reference to 'receipts from customers' for the SJC financials. Do we charge \$845,459 to the people who come to SJC. If not, who are our customers?

The Presiding Member considered that 'customers' may be an accounting term, used somewhat loosely in this context. He agreed to discuss the matter with the SJC accountant and respond.

[Note added subsequent to the meeting: it was confirmed that "customer" is a term built into the software used by the SJC accountant. It actually refers to those given assistance, free-of-charge, through the year. The terminology will be corrected in next year's accounts. Further, the apparent discrepancy between the entry of \$845,459 in the Cash

Flow statement on page 29 and the entry of \$817,244 in the Statement of Profit and Loss on page 26 is that the latter is based on accrual accounting whereas the former is a cash statement.]

The Chair of the SJC Management Committee referred to a substantial increase in staffing costs resulting from recent changes in the Community Sector Industrial Awards.

A question (Ian Dalziell) was asked regarding the nil balance listed on page 7 (other income) of the bequests now held in the ACPT. The Presiding Member advised the parish does not use income from ACPT held trust funds for Parish recurrent expenditure. The 2022 actual figure refers to the capital value of bequests received.

A question (John White) was asked regarding the parish holding 'too much' money in its cash accounts. The Presiding Member mentioned that the current situation is unusual and only developed over the past few months. Parish Council will examine whether surplus cash should be held in AIDF term deposits.

6. Appointment of Auditor

It was resolved that PKF Canberra be appointed Parish Auditors for 2023.

ELECTORAL MEETING

The Presiding Member called on the Rector to take the chair for this meeting.

The *Governance of the Diocese Ordinance 2000* provides for St John's to have three wardens with two elected and one nominated by the Rector. The *Ordinance* also provides for the electoral meeting to determine whether 2,4,6 or 8 persons should be elected to Parish Council with the Rector to nominate 1,2 3 or 4 persons respectively.

The Rector announced that John Richards would continue as his Warden, and that as only two nominations for Peoples' Warden had been received, in the names of Christine Hawkins and Russ Tunks, they were declared elected.

The Rector proposed the parish continue past practice and elect six Parish Councillors, and further that the Parish Council choose its Presiding Member. Both were accepted by those in attendance.

Given he had received 11 nominations for the six Parish Councillor positions an election was held and Russ Tunks and Christine Hawkins were appointed as counters.

The Rector declared as elected: Andrew de Latour, Bill Sutherland, Greg Cole, Jo Lloyd, Simone Ilett and Cerelia Lim. The Rector noted he would consider his three appointments over the next few weeks.

Given there were four nominations for the position of Lay Synod representatives an election was held with Russ Tunks and Christine Hawkins appointed as counters. The Rector announced that Ian Dalziell, Emma Body and Cerelia Lim were elected, and that Cliff Lloyd would be an alternate Lay Synod representative.

As there were no nominations for membership of the Clergy Appointments Board the Rector determined that the three present members (Ian Dalziell, Jon Hawkins, Helen Wilson) would continue in their roles until the next AGM.

RESUMPTION OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

7. Other Business

There was one item of business, a motion proposed by George Pooley who, as an apology, asked Randall Wilson to present on his behalf.

The Presiding Member read the motion:

That the minutes of Parish Council meetings be placed on the notice board in the Robertson Room on the day following their confirmation.

The Presiding Member asked if there was a seconder: Ian Dalziell agreed to that role.

To open discussion the Presiding Member acknowledged there was a need to improve the communication of its deliberations. He referred to the past approaches of using a rapporteur as not being totally successful, but with the recent appointment of Rosemary Shepherd to the role of Parish Secretary he believed the situation would improve. Her report from the March meeting was included in today's parish newsletter.

Those present acknowledged that while transparency was welcome, certain matters dealt with in confidence in Council would need to be removed for general distribution. In that case a redacted version would no longer reflect the actual discussion. Conversation then moved to the need to be informed of the decisions taken so as to build greater engagement across the parish. It was the outcomes that were central rather than the actual nature of discussion.

The Presiding Member took the opportunity to advise the meeting of new arrangements in Council operations: as a trial period from May to July 2023 the Executive will take on more of the procedural matters of Council to allow greater time for more involved discussions at Parish Council meetings. A report on the deliberations of the Executive will form the basis of a communique, which when refined by Council, will be widely shared across the parish and with Parish Council committees.

The Presiding Member proposed an amendment by the addition of 'the Parish Council be asked to consider' at the beginning of the original motion. The amendment was accepted by those present. Subsequently,

It was resolved that the Parish Council be asked to consider that the minutes of Parish Council meetings be placed on the notice board in the Robertson Room on the day following their confirmation.

8. Closing Prayer

The meeting closed at 1pm with The Grace.

RECTOR'S REPORT

I want to begin by acknowledging the goodness of God to us over the course of 2023. The year had its challenges, but two things stand out. First, from an organisational perspective, we have made good progress in implementing the strategic plan we announced and presented at last year's AGM (more on this later). Secondly – and more importantly – 2023 was a year in which we were privileged to witness a number of people coming to faith in Jesus Christ, or returning to faith after a long season of wandering.

We should not be too quick to believe the 'narrative of decline', in which the church is depicted as shrinking and possibly dying, and secularism is triumphant. The primary reason this narrative is false is that the resurrected and ascended Christ reigns as the victorious Lord of all, whose Spirit continues to be poured out. But the falseness of the narrative of decline is also evident in other tangible ways. Many have observed that there seem to be new stirrings of spiritual hunger in the western world, as people grow increasingly dissatisfied with the poverty of vision offered by a secular outlook. At different paces and from different contexts, there is a steady movement of people finding their way back to the story of Jesus, his cross and his kingdom. And they are able to receive it as the breath of fresh air it truly is. Globally, especially in the developing world, the church is growing rapidly – sometimes in the face of serious persecution. In our different context in the West, the situation is different. Still, there are ample enough signs of God's Spirit at work to give us hope.

Overall, good attendance trends

Overall, 2023 saw signs of good health in our parish's life. The only pieces of objective data we gather are offertory income and attendance trends. Both were encouraging.

On average we saw 223 people worshipping with us each week, marking a 25% increase in the previous year's figures. This places us in the realm of what is sometimes called 'the 200 barrier'. When churches reach 200 people (or thereabouts), growth typically stops – unless the church is able to adapt, 'scaling up' in its organisational life. This will be a challenge for us in the years ahead.

Most of the growth we have seen is accounted for by our 9.30am and 6pm services. The excellent ministry to youth and children at 9.30am continues to play a significant role (although please note Mary's and Kirsten's reports, which remind us of the pressing need for more helpers if we are to offer age-appropriate teaching).

Another great help to our growing congregations is the post-service morning teas and suppers, and occasional dinners at 6pm. See Dianne Porter's report for the way morning tea ministry has blessed our mid-week congregation, which is also growing.

A key implication of this growth is that there are many who are relatively new to our community. It is important for them, and for us, that we be alert to their presence, welcoming them more deeply into the life of our church family. Otherwise, we risk operating a revolving door, in which newcomers stay for a time, fail to connect, and eventually leave. I believe St John's is a welcoming and friendly community, but I suspect there is more we could do to keep the fish that are landing in our boat.

I should also note that the picture is not universally rosy. Sadly, despite their real riches, our 7am and 11.15am services are not following the overall pattern of growth. Their decline in the past year has not been significant in percentage terms, but given their fairly low starting points they are entering somewhat dangerous territory. In the absence of a turnaround, the 'viability question' cannot be delayed forever.

Progress against Strategic Plan

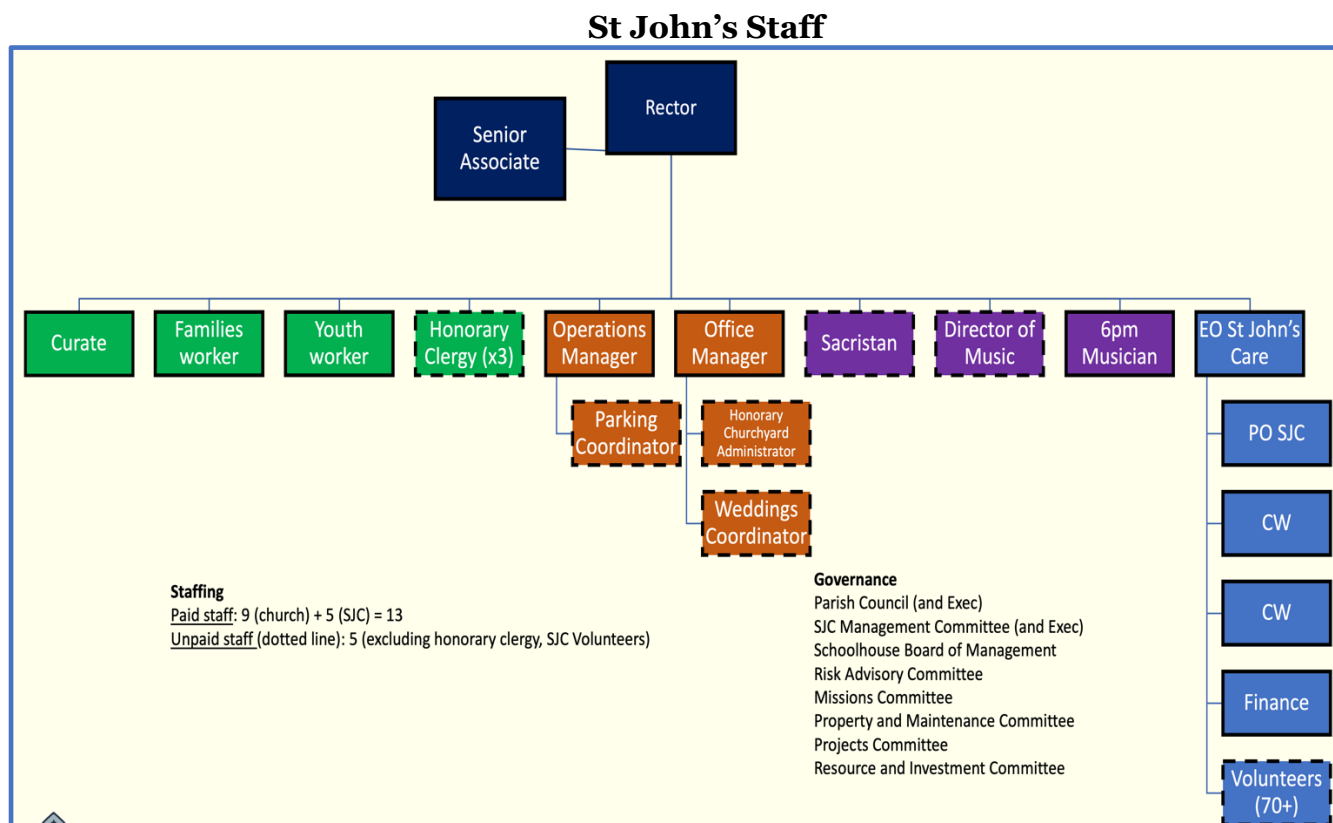
Last year we launched our Strategic Plan (2023-2028). Through the efforts of John Richards (Presiding Member, Parish Council) and John Stafford (Chair, Risk Advisory Committee), this plan is now front-and-centre in determining priority areas for our parish. It is worth recording some of its more notable achievements:

- We have more focussed Parish Council meetings, and improved communications with the parish through our monthly bulletins.
- We have substantially increased our missions budget to 4.5 percent of our income. (We intend that this budget will continue to grow – to at least 6 percent by 2028, and eventually to 10 percent.)
- The wi-fi coverage and camera installation needed to livestream from the church is almost completed.
- We have agreed to a set of principles ('Site Concept') to guide any development proposals for our site, and a needs analysis has outlined our key space requirements for the coming years.
- As a result, we are now in the process of developing some concepts for extensions to our buildings, allowing for more (and better) meeting, office and storage space, an improvement in St John's Care infrastructure, and further upgrades to our kitchen. Watch this space for more news in coming months.
- We have ongoing contact with UNSW, including through my membership on the Canberra School of Professional Studies Advisory Group. The importance of this connection will grow as UNSW's presence increasingly shapes our local environment over the coming years.

A more sustainable staffing situation

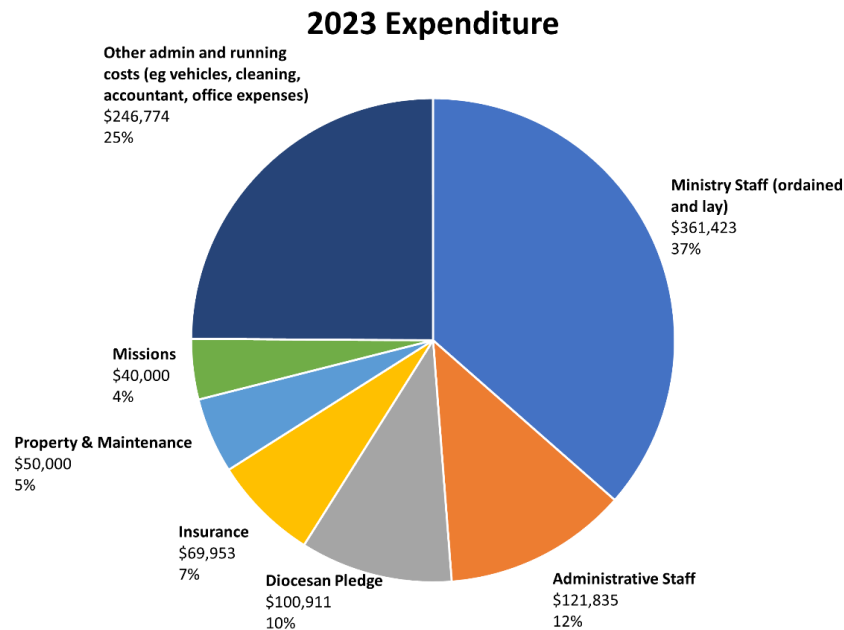
In terms of the day-to-day running of the parish, we are better placed to deal with the many demands on us than we were a year ago.

The parish has eight (mostly part-time) paid employees – thirteen when you include St John's Care. There are others who are unpaid, yet form an indispensable part of the staff team.



This may seem a lot of staff for a church. Yet the weekly tempo at St John’s is unusually complex and demanding. While we exist primarily for worship and ‘bearing witness to Christ’, this witness-bearing is done in a context where we have to devote considerable energy to engaging with tradies, contractors, accounts, hirers and other matters related to this large and historic site which hosts a church, a charity, a graveyard and a museum.

While our running expenses vastly exceed those of most churches, you can rest assured that a large proportion of your giving goes towards enabling ministry staff to lead the work we primarily exist to do (see below diagram). Our admin and operations staff are essential in giving us the capacity to do this. The arrival of Alison Hosking as Operations Manager last year has been a big help. Alison and Kimberly van Leeuwen spearhead the team which manages to keep most of the plates spinning, and I am grateful to them.



You may recall that our strategic plan envisages a staff team of at least 3 full-time clergy (as was once the case). However, after a false start in 2023, we were forced to soldier on with 1.3 full-timers.

This was a strain, but I want to record my thanks to those who got us through – notably Canon Kevin Stone for his final full year of pastoral care work at St John’s. In addition to Kevin, there were those who gave valuable service in an honorary capacity, namely: Rev’d Tracey Sutherland, Murray Woolnough and Cam West, to whom I record my thanks. Similarly, the ministries of our lay-preachers, especially Winifred Lamb and Harold Koch, were greatly appreciated. I am also deeply thankful to Phil Kirby, who at very short notice stepped into the role of music coordinator for stjohns@6, a role he performed to a very high standard until the welcome appointment of the talented Tom Priest late in the year.

It has been a tremendous relief to begin 2024 with a stronger clergy team, and especially to welcome Rev’d Dr Andrew Cameron aboard. I know we are all already appreciating how blessed we are to have someone of his reputation, stature and gifts to help us better grasp the richness of the gospel. Besides his contributions in our worship services and pastorally, we look forward to his eventual oversight of a series of lectures or seminars (another plank in our strategic plan) so that we can advance the work of public theology in our city.

It is also a joy to welcome newly-ordained Deacon (soon Priest) Anna Krebs on a half-time basis and share in her journey towards ordination. This contributes to our diocese’s intention to increase the number of ordained women. Anna will play an important role in helping us respond to one of our key risk areas – managing the pastoral care load left by Canon Kevin. For this to be fully met, I

believe we ultimately need a trained and equipped team of lay-volunteers – something I’ve so far been unsuccessful in developing, despite a couple of attempts.

In other staff news, we welcome Rebecca Lindsay and Yaso Arumugam to our team of office volunteers, with the latter taking on the important weddings’ coordinator role. Mary de Lautour and Kirsten Lamb continue to minister with outstanding creativity and energy to our youth. Diana Body has stepped down after many years as the Chair of the Schoolhouse Museum’s Board of Management. Her careful custodianship of the Schoolhouse has been a true labour of love, and I am thrilled Diana will continue as a volunteer. I wish her well, and also extend my thanks and full support to Jennifer Garden as she takes on this important role.

Defining ‘Christian ministry’ at St John’s Care

One very important feature of our parish ministry is St John’s Care – created by our parish over three decades ago, and now a leading light within the ACT not-for-profit sector. I want to register my thanks to the SJC Management Committee, led by the untiring Glenda Richards, for their dedication to this work; and also to you – the parish that so enthusiastically supports this ministry. Jason Haines and his staff team, as well as the many SJC volunteers, also deserve our thanks for their professionalism and commitment as they represent this parish’s desire to bless, in Christ’s name, those doing it tough.

We have invested considerable time in the past year to strengthening and clarifying our foundations, ensuring our founding documents are fit-for-purpose, and developing a plan for coming years. This has involved occasionally asking ourselves difficult questions so that we can stay true to our founding vision (and our Strategic Plan, which commits us to offering ‘*an excellent, parish-led emergency relief centre that offers practical love to all – openly doing so in Christ’s name.*’)

One matter I am committed to championing is ‘holistic ministry’ – which draws on our rich Christian understanding of the person as more than a physical or economic animal, but a deeply relational and spiritual one. To that end, I am making the case for a ‘community chaplain’ working alongside our existing suite of case management, emergency relief, and other programs. I believe this would play to our unique strengths as a faith-based charity that is able to acknowledge the deeper dimensions of human need. In my view, this could only enhance the organisation’s focus on ‘breaking the cycle of disadvantage’ and would further cement the link between St John’s Care and the parish. Inexplicably, Christian charities can occasionally be extremely shy about their faith basis – a shyness that can be the first step towards losing connection with it. A chaplaincy presence would have the advantage of making the Christian foundations and ethos for this ministry unmissable.

There remain some issues to consider, not least: how to fund such a position; how to ensure our taxation status is protected; and how to carefully design such a role so clients will feel respected, regardless of background or faith tradition. But these are not insurmountable and are successfully dealt with in many other organisations. I am very hopeful we will see positive movement on this in 2024.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the beginning of 2024 feels to me like we may be entering a new and more stable phase, after the white-knuckled ride of the past couple of years. I doubt this will ever be a quiet parish, but it is starting to feel like it might be survivable, and I thank you all – there are too many individuals to single out – for your partnership in the work of ministry. In our different spheres, may we all be willing co-workers with the ‘Lord of the Harvest’ as we bear public witness to Jesus Christ, the source of life.

Rev’d Dave McLennan, Rector, St John’s Canberra

2023 AGM PARISH COUNCIL AND CHURCH WARDENS

The new Strategic Plan for the Parish saw its first full year of operation in 2023. While we still have to implement facilities for livestreaming services from the Church, good progress was made on assessing a needs analysis for desirable future development of our site and its buildings. That analysis will form the basis of a brief to architects to generate a site concept to meet the needs identified.

Other achievements against the plan included an internal redesign of St John's Care, and a modest kitchen upgrade. Importantly, we are now increasing our mission giving commitment in line with achieving 6% of parish revenue going to missions by 2028 (the last year of the current plan).

We have maintained our delivery of a wide range of worship and pastoral services and, with the appointment of the Rev'd Dr Andrew Cameron as our new Senior Associate Priest, we are well positioned to expand our public theology, including a regular seminar and lecture series. That will position us for supporting staff and students at the new UNSW campus being built adjacent to the Parish precinct.

Together with the Rev'd Dr Cameron, the appointment of Rev'd Anna Krebs as a half time curate means we are also well on the way to restoring our ministry team to three full time priests as was the case in the past. This is another of our strategic objectives, seen to be important not only because of the complexity of our Parish and the breadth of its services, but also to meet anticipated future growth.

To support our planning process Parish Council has re-arranged its agenda, freeing up more time for discussion on matters of implementation of the Strategic Plan. The Executive now looks after procedural items, leaving Parish Council to focus on strategy. As part of this process, we have refined our risk management plan. Many years ago, the Chair of the Council's Risk Advisory Committee, John Stafford, taught us that risks are not just trip and fire hazards, or matters of site safety and security, but any matters which stand in the way of achieving our strategic objectives. To help identify and manage all types of risk, Parish Council, with John's assistance, has devised a scorecard which is now analysed at each meeting and will guide future activities.

Other matters of focus for Parish Council during 2023 included management of the Queen's Jubilee Tree project, oversight of the Parish Fair and similar public events, the establishment of a committee on technology, and the replacement of the finance committee by a resources and investment committee.

The year was one of considerable growth in the Parish in several respects. So many new parishioners and families have joined us and numbers at services have increased considerably. As seen in the finance report, our income exceeded budget by a wide margin in 2023, and the generosity of our parishioners was evident in offertories being almost 30% above budget. That, together with another significant donation and other unplanned increases in revenue, meant that we avoided a very large deficit for the year.

As in the past we acknowledge the invaluable contributions of our volunteers and parish staff. Parish Council and its committees alone account for about 30 people who give their time selflessly in contributing to the governance of the parish. When all those others who work quietly in the background, who support our working bees and who support the important work of St John's Care, we note that our Parish depends on hundreds of people to maintain our operation and services.

Our Parish Administrator, Kimberley van Leeuwen, as always, has been a wonderful source of administrative support and corporate knowledge. Alison Hosking, our Operations Manager, joined us early in the year and quickly made her mark, lightening the load of many with her great contributions. Margaret Rodgers stepped down as Sacristan this year; we record here our enormous gratitude for her many years of dedication to this important role, now ably taken on by

Jennifer Lawson, who has also recently accepted responsibility on the retirement of Charles Body after many decades of commitment as captain of the bells.

Sheila Thompson our Director of Music, and the Chairs of Parish Council Committees—Diana Body, Canon Kevin Stone, Glenda Richards, John Stafford and Helen Wilson—and their committee members are thanked by a very grateful Parish Council. With the appointment of Kirsten Lamb as youth minister and Mary de Lautour as families minister, we have seen wonderful growth and commitment in ministry to our younger parishioners. They have done exceptional jobs and the whole Parish owes them a debt of gratitude for the success of their ministries.

Canon Kevin Stone was appointed to head up our aged care ministry almost a decade ago. Originally a three-year appointment, under Kevin's guidance it has grown to be a major part of our Parish. With his recent appointment to the Parish of Murrumburrah-Harden we will now lose his services, but he has established a very firm base on which we can build. We express here our heartfelt thanks to Kevin for growing and operating our commitment to aged care in a manner we could not have envisaged, and we wish him well in his new calling, again in retirement!

Our Rector Dave is a gifted faith leader, as evidenced by growth in the Parish of St John's. His ideas, drive and commitment will ensure that the Parish will remain a centre for Christianity in this part of Canberra for years to come and which will meet the needs of a growing local population at a time when so many new challenges are opening up, including ministering to the new UNSW campus and others.

Peoples' Wardens

Christine Hawkins
Russell Tunks

Rector's Warden

John Richards

ARCHIVES

The purpose of the Parish Archive is to preserve and organise for use documents and images relating to the history of the Parish since before its formation. It comprises at least 15,000 printed documents in 75 archive boxes, and over 35,000 digital files, including about 6,000 images. There is some overlap, but it is estimated that there are at least 40,000 documents/files in the Archive. The Archive is housed upstairs in the Parish Centre, in the Projection Room, while digital files are in the Parish Office computer system.

In addition, much early archival material, e.g. baptism registers, marriage registers, burial registers, confirmation registers, service registers, minute books, and account books, is held in the National Library of Australia, together with other relevant material, e.g. Rev'd Pierce Galliard Smith's diaries.

The scope of the Archive includes: the Church building and its contents; the precinct, including the Parish Centre, Rectory, Schoolhouse, churchyard, Scout Hall, lychgates, Amaroo Street residences; clergy who have served in the Parish; administration of the Parish; St John's Care; events and services, e.g. royal visits, fairs, weddings, funerals, baptisms, confirmations; other churches for the period for which they were in this Parish, e.g. Manuka pre-1950; parishioners and their parish-related activities.

Work underway this year has included: reading the *Weekly Newsletter*, Parish Council minutes, Parish annual reports, etc. to identify additional events or documents; working through archive boxes becoming familiar with and listing contents in more detail; sorting and describing images; digitising the most significant documents; transcribing and updating registers of baptisms, marriages, funerals, interments; and searching for relevant media items in the National Library's Trove service.

Alan Wilson, Hon Parish Archivist

BELLRINGING

2023 was a fairly quiet year on the bellringing front. We were able to recommence Monday evening practices after the COVID restrictions, but the small number of bellringers meant on some occasions we had to cancel due to lack of numbers.

The main purpose of the Monday practice sessions is training new ringers. Unfortunately, we have had no new recruits recently, so we decided during the year to suspend our Monday practices. We hope to introduce monthly practices during 2024 when anyone can come along and have a ring.

However, we continued to ring for weddings, Sunday services, Christmas services, the parish Fair, and other special occasions, and sometimes just for fun. We continue to hear of people who have come to St John's because they heard the distant sound of the bells.

On a personal note, I advised the Rector and Parish Council early in 2023 that I would be retiring as bell captain at the end of 2023. I did this with some reluctance, but I believe it would be good for a younger person to take over. I intend to keep ringing the bells and am happy to help train anyone who wishes to take over as bell captain. Is there is a volunteer?

Bellringing is a very enjoyable activity, is good exercise (without the cost of gym membership) and is one of the ways we can, as our news bulletin says each week, "bear public witness to Jesus Christ, the source of life". Please let the parish office know if you would like to be part of the bellringing team.

Charles Body

CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH MINISTRY REPORT

Kids Church

Kids Church runs during the 9:30am service in school terms. We cater for ages 4 years – 12 years (essentially to Preschool to Year 6). The focus of this ministry is to provide a fun and safe environment for children to grow in their knowledge and understanding of the Bible, and most importantly, Jesus.

In 2023, mostly due to volunteer capacity constraints, all the children were in one group in the Robertson Room (in previous years they had been split into a younger group and an older group). We had 24 kids enrolled in Kids Church in 2023, with an average weekly attendance of 12 kids.

Kids Church activities during the year included Start Up Sunday, an Easter Day easter egg hunt, and the Christmas Pageant. A big thanks to Kirsten Lamb, Cath McLennan, and Jennifer Lawson who were the primary producers of the Christmas Pageant.

The ministry could not function without volunteers. I have been incredibly blessed by the support of Cath McLennan, Ed Jackson, Raelee Chapman, Erica Kotnik, Will McLennan, Jo Lloyd and Sym Collette.

As we grow in numbers, please pray for at least another 5 committed volunteers. A greater number of volunteers would enable us to split the groups again, and better target the program for the age range, without burning out our volunteers. We are required to have a minimum of 2 helpers, in addition to myself. Best practice is that we would also have an additional volunteer for every 7 children.

Mainly Music

Mainly Music was restarted in 2023 after a 12-month break and is held on Wednesday mornings from 10am – 11:30am (during school terms). I am assisted by several volunteers – Bec Collette, Cath McLennan, Luise Cottis, Sonja Otter and Carol McCabe.

We have capacity for ~20 families. In 2023 we had 16 families (approximately 18 children) across the year (never all at one time). On average we had 6 children attend each week. There was a mix of families who regularly attend a church, those who have some faith but are not regular church goers, and some who have no faith at all. The program is light touch in terms of evangelism but each week there are at least 2 songs that reference God. Families are given packs at Easter and Christmas which include storybooks on the true meaning of these seasons. It was also an honour to have the offer of prayers accepted by some of the families. Through our hospitality and love I hope we can shine the light of Jesus into their lives.

Baptisms

St John's conducted 8 baptism ceremonies during 2023. This was a significant decrease on the previous year (31), when the COVID backlog was worked through. Rev'd Tracey Sutherland met with families individually prior to the baptism to increase their understanding of the commitment of baptism. Demand was not great enough to warrant continuing the baptism information sessions. With Anna Krebs commencing as Curate, we will be revising the format of these and may reintroduce these later in 2024. A revised baptism policy is now in place which requires families to attend at least one church service prior to meeting with clergy to discuss baptism. This is to encourage the families to establish a more genuine connection to the church family. For similar reasons, baptisms will be conducted primarily in the 9:30am service every 6-8 weeks.

Other Activity

Other events held during the year were a pancake afternoon tea on Shrove Tuesday, a pizza and movie night, an All Saints Eve event and 2 gingerbread decorating events.

Anything achieved in 2023 has not been through our efforts alone but by God's faithfulness to this ministry. There is such abundance in this life, and a richness and joy in serving our God through serving the church, and I look forward to all that God has planned for this ministry, and St John's in 2024.

Mary de Lautour, Children and Families Worker

Youth

My main objectives for Youth Group in 2023 were to nurture amongst its members a sense of community and belonging, as well as a personal and practical understanding of Christian discipleship. To this end, we began with a study on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, with a particular focus on the application of Jesus' teaching in everyday situations. In term 2, we looked at the birth, life and death of John the Baptist and concluded the year with a study on Acts 1-10.

Youth Group were involved with the wider church community too. Most notably, members organised two morning tea fundraisers, with proceeds going to St John's Care. We also heard from three guest speakers: Nathan Clapham, who shared his experiences as a missionary in Japan; and Dr Monica Short and Fiona Reid, who spoke about their careers in social work and the influence their faith has had on their work.

Youth Group experienced a shortage of volunteers throughout the year and most especially in term 3. This was largely due to the small team of volunteers being unavailable because of travel or being needed to serve in other ministries. It is encouraging to have four new volunteers committed to serving in Youth Group in 2024.

The primary (and enduring) challenge that faces this ministry is the regular attendance of its members. Numbers fluctuated throughout the year but maintained an average of 5-6 attending each week. An additional challenge has been finding ways to cater meaningfully to the wide age range of the group. It is increasingly clear that many College-age members prefer a different format of study and fellowship. With this in mind, the Young Adults Fellowship for 17-22 year olds was established in term 2 last year.

Kirsten Lamb, Youth Leader

CHURCH CLEANING

Thank you to Margaret Rodgers, Peter Pedersen, Colin Lendon, Jennifer Lawson and Alison & Murray Davies for generously volunteering their time on a monthly roster on Monday mornings - to help tidy the church after busy weekend activity. The Church continues to be cleaned on a Friday by the contract cleaners.

Updated by Kimberley van Leeuwen.

CUPPACOMALONG

Cuppacomalong has been an active group for the past 20 years. All parishioners are invited to come along and enjoy afternoon tea on the fourth Monday of every month and meet other parishioners. Many very interesting, varied talks about the Church or environs have been enjoyed by all.

Coral Ogilvie & Ailsa Curtis

FAIR

The St John's Community Fair was conducted by the Anglican Parish of St John the Baptist Canberra from 9.00am to 2.00pm on Saturday 14 October 2023. The Fair was an enjoyable event with some slight changes made based on advice and feedback from 2022. We received very positive feedback from those both internal and external to the Parish.

St John's Community Fair 2024 – save the date!! **Saturday 19 October 2024.**

Updated by Kimberley van Leeuwen (in the absence of Bill Sutherland Fair Convenor 2023)

FLOWER POWER

Congratulations and many thanks to our dedicated flower team.

It is due to your talent, time and care that we at St. Johns enjoy floral tributes each week, enabling parishioners, the chance to donate flowers in memory of loved ones.

It was a challenging year due to 2 members resigning. Thankfully, we now welcome Brooke to our roster, joining Jo.

My thanks to Chris who took over while I was in hospital and during my very slow recovery. Chris is still in charge of special events, Easter, and Christmas,

Sanya Ritchie – Co-ordinator

FRIENDS OF ST JOHN'S

It was a real honour to be re-elected Chairman again of the Friends of St John at the AGM in March 2023, on my return from posting in The Hague. I would like particularly to thank Suzanne Howarth and Ian Doherty who chaired the Friends of St John in my absence, and the wonderful Members of the Committee. Despite COVID, the Friends have continued to meet and maintain an inspiring program of speakers and have done great work in supporting the ministry and fabric of St John's, in line with our Constitution.

In 2023, we have maintained our programme of diverse and interesting speakers at the regular "Friends Services and have published their talks in booklets that are posted or emailed to all members free of charge. With the pandemic behind us we were able to return to a regular program of Services and activities in 2023 and expect to do the same in 2024.

Our year began with a Service on 19 March with **Lt Colonel Chaplain Stephen Neuhaus RFD**, the current Chair of The Military Christian Fellowship of Australia, as speaker. His topic was "The Military Christian Fellowship - sowing the seed in Defence". Our AGM was also held that day.

A key event on 14 April was the dedication by the Governor General and Bishop Short of the **Jubilee tree and garden** at St John's, in memory of the late Queen Elizabeth II, who worshipped several times at our church. The Friends made a substantial monetary contribution of \$5,000 towards the cost of this project. A permanent plaque on the site acknowledges the Friends' contribution. It has been beautiful enhancement to the churchyard environment, providing an area of peace and contemplation.

Speakers during the year at our services included:

- **Professor Con Campbell** of the Sydney College of Divinity on 18 June the topic "Jesus versus the Evangelicals", a critique of the "evangelical" Pentecostal inspired prosperity gospel churches emanating from the USA.
- **Rev Sarah Plummer** (Anglicare) on 17 September the topic of "I was Hungry – Responding to Jesus' Call in Matthew 25", highlighting the work of Anglicare and the social imperative of the gospel.
- **Dr Jonathon Cole** Acting Director of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture on 19 November on the work of the Centre in promoting inter-faith dialogue and understanding between different faiths and cultures.

In other activities, we were fortunate, also on 19 November to be provided with a rare, guided tour by the Duntroon Guides, of Duntroon House, historic home of pioneer Robert Campbell who donated the land to establish St John's Church. We were doubly fortunate that his descendant, Friends' Life Member and longstanding parishioner, Robert Campbell, was able to join us on this visit and give us unique insights into the history of Duntroon House and St John's.

In other activities, we were pleased to again participate in the Parish Fair on 14 October with a St John's stall, and I was delighted to speak on Radio 1 Way FM about our work. We were also pleased to contribute to the cost of establishing a young organ scholar, a cost which has now been taken up on a regular basis by the Parish Council.

We were also pleased to award Life Membership to two longstanding and dearly loved members of the Friends, Rev'd Dr John Bunyan and Mrs Faye Ahrens.

We already have a busy program scheduled for the year ahead. Renowned musician Penelope Thwaites, whose family has been part of St Johns for many decades, will speak to us on 18 February on the topic “Faith in Music”, supported by relevant musical recordings and items by the Choir. We have also agreed to support the visit by the Choir of St Pauls College, Sydney University, with a special service and lunch on Sunday 7 April. This should be a very special occasion. In conclusion, I would like to thank the many people who have made all this possible. First and foremost, my fellow committee members for their work and support, particularly the office bearers, Suzanne Howarth, Janet Brandon, Gail Davis, Barbara Griffiths and Richard Griffiths as well as Malcolm Brandon, Sheila Thompson and Penny Tompsett for their professional and diligent work throughout the year. Other members of the Friends have helped at our events, with special mention for Ailsa Curtis and Barbara and David Hill who do so much with the catering of our lunches. I should also note during the year the official retirement of Rev’d Vicky Cullen, who has done so much for the Friends over the years.

The Rector, Rev’d Dave McLennan, has been a strong support, with his invaluable commitment, guidance, and practical suggestions throughout the year. Kimberley van Leeuwen and the Parish Office staff have been unfailingly helpful in their courteous and efficient administrative support, and the high standard of publication of our material. Our Musical Director Sheila Thompson and the St John's Choir, add a special dimension to our worship at the Friends’ Services and we thank them for this.

Above all we remain grateful to you, all our loyal members, for your support to the Friends and the Church through donations and in other ways. You are the extended family of St John’s, and without your generosity nothing we have achieved would have been possible.

Honorary Professor Matthew Neuhaus
Chair of the Friends of St John’s.

LAY SYNOD REPRESENTATIVES

The first session of the 49th Synod was held over 3 days, 8-10 September 2023, at the Canberra Grammar School, instead of the usual Goulburn Workers Club. This meant that we did not have the Cathedral to worship in, but it was a much more convenient location for Canberra based members. People who attended from St John’s included Emma Body, Vicky Cullen, Ian Dalziell, Wayne Harris, Dave McLennan, Chris Murray, Richard Refshauge, and Kevin Stone.

Synod began with Bishop Mark Short’s presidential address. His theme was engaging a world of difference and explored six priority areas of mission - gracious and patient witness, safe and sustainable ministry, compassionate and skilled service, creative and informed advocacy, and inspiring and empowered worship. The Bishop gave particular attention to evangelism and to engaging with the differences associated with the upcoming Voice referendum. He also announced that Assistant Bishop Carol Wagner would be retiring in March 2024.

This being the first year of the three-year Synod cycle, elections were held for various diocesan positions. Particularly noteworthy among the results for our parish was the election of Rev’d Dave McLennan to Bishop in Council, General Synod, and to the Episcopal Elections Nomination Committee. Saturday was dominated by the presentation of reports that allowed us to gain insights into the priorities and challenges faced by the Diocese. These reports included Bishop in Council, Anglicare, the Property Trust, the Anglican Investment and Development Fund and the Diocesan schools.

We also heard from Emma Body and others about the development of a Diocesan Climate Change Action Plan. Among the new outreach initiatives, we learnt about a new Anglican school to be built in the new suburb of Wright (Stromlo Forest Anglican College) and the establishment of early learning centres at the old worship centres in Chapman and Deakin.

The Diocese has also established an Exploratory Ministries Unit (EMU) to assist with innovative ministry and outreach initiatives.

There was also a presentation by various chaplains including from our hospital chaplain Rev'd Chris Murray. Also, on the Saturday, an indigenous cleric from Melbourne Diocese, Assoc. Professor Glenn Loughrey gave some background on the Voice referendum.

The next day we voted on a motion in support of the Voice. It was passed but only just.

Other motions discussed and passed by the Synod included ones expressing concerns about refugees, poverty, voluntary assisted dying, ministry wellbeing and development, affordable housing, and women in ministry.

On the last issue we learnt that whilst in the past, our diocese had been a leader in Australia there were now only three women priests who are rectors of parishes in our diocese (compared to 13 in 2015). A working group has been established to investigate and address this trend.

More details about the Synod outcomes can be found in the September 2023 Anglican News which was circulated with the Parish Newsletter and via the Diocesan website and can be accessed here: <https://diolog.anglicands.org.au/intranet/documents/2041/24747>

Ian Dalziell, Emma Body and Cerelia Lim (Lay Synod Members)

(MIRACLE) WEDNESDAY MORNING TEA

This report is about the Wednesday Morning Tea held after the 10am Wednesday Service. It is a group which resumed once it was considered safe to do so - following the restrictions created by the Covid 19 Pandemic.

This report was not requested but has been submitted to raise awareness of the presence of the Wednesday Morning Tea Group. We meet for an hour after the service and provide fellowship, support, and time for conversation to those coming to join us. A special effort is made to welcome newcomers and visitors.

From time to time this Morning Tea is followed by a bible study led by Rev'd Vicky Cullen - which commences close to 11.30am and ends at 1pm. This way of operating has worked well with the benefit of fellowship and being part of the community at St John's a positive outcome for participants.

Dianne Porter is the hostess of this morning tea, and she is well supported by those who come. Two key participants are David Adams who sets up the room, and Fiona Dowse, who helps serve refreshments before she leaves. As a group, members collectively provide consumables for the needs of morning tea so there is enough on hand to cater for visitors. It is a lovely way to relax and meet fellow members of this congregation and follows the example set by others down through the years.

One participant nicknamed it the Miracle Wednesday Morning Tea as we always have enough food and consumables on hand to more than meet our needs. Thank you for your support.

Dianne Porter

MISSIONS COMMITTEE

In 2023 our parish gave \$25,000 (about 3% of our budget) to missions, consisting of:

- \$5.5k to the Church Missionary Society for Claphams in Japan
- \$5k to the Anglican Board of Mission for Newton (a ministry training college in PNG)
- \$5k to Ngukurr (an indigenous ministry in Southeast Arnhem Land, NT).
- \$3k to the Anglican Board of Mission for Wontulp Cairns (a ministry training college for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders)
- \$1.5k to the Bush Church Aid Society (supporting Anglican ministry in rural and remote Australia)

(The extra \$5k in our missions giving is accounted for by a donation to the Cathedral Restoration Appeal – a worthy cause, but not ‘mission’ in the narrower sense that is the focus of this report).

We were fortunate to host a visit from ABM mission partner and Prime Bishop of the Episcopal Church of the Philippines, Most Rev'd Brent Alawas, who preached at our morning services. Anabel Lima, from Youth With A Mission, gave an inspiring evening seminar on her mission work in Bahareduk. The Clapham family also spent a week in the parish sharing about their work in Japan.

Beyond our budgeted mission support, the parish also facilitated parishioner donations to Operation Christmas Child (the latter accounting for about \$2000 - and 80 boxes of gifts lovingly prepared by parishioners and sent to needy communities overseas).

Despite these positive actions, it is fair to say that renewed attention to our overall missions strategy and budget is due. While it is true that a church like St John's has significant spending pressures not shared by most parishes, we are still in relative terms a ‘wealthy parish’, with commensurately large obligations. Jesus' words remind us that ‘to the one who has been given much, much will be demanded’ (Luke 12:48).

Our Strategic Plan has therefore set us a goal of allocating 6% of our annual budget to missions work by 2028, in the hope that we can eventually reach a target of 10%. As 2024 begins, this work is underway with a larger budget (\$40,000, or 4.5% of our overall parish budget) and a larger missions team.

We hope that this year our parish will grow in a shared sense of engagement with the Spirit's work in the world, as the good news of the Saviour is proclaimed in word and deed.

Rev'd Dave McLennan
Rector

MUSIC

After a year of recovering from restrictions, worship at St. John's is returning to the pattern we know. There are fewer services, one casualty of Covid, but that has meant fewer demands on our competent and dedicated team of organists.

Attempts are now being made to expand our knowledge of the hymnbook, always a contentious subject, but one worthy of pursuing in view of the number of very fine new hymns in the latest hymnbook *Together in Song*. Two "hymn fests" were held in the last 12 months, and were very successful, though many hymns deemed familiar by the compiler of the list, were apparently completely unknown to a number of people. This becomes a very interesting problem; we are a congregation of varying backgrounds, so hopefully people will accept the fact that people's knowledge may well differ.

The choir, which sings at the 11.15 am services, and choral Evensong once a month, has often had to struggle because of lack of numbers. Nigel Poole has now taken over as choir leader and would be delighted to hear from potential choristers. The choir has also sung on occasions at the 9.30 am services, and hopefully that will continue. Music at that service has also been supported by Rosemary Shepherd playing flute, something that is much appreciated. The church is also encouraging younger organists, in the hope that the very fine instrument the church possesses will not fall into disuse.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge with much appreciation the support for the music given by the Rector and the clergy team. Rev'd Dave is always willing to listen to suggestions regarding the music, is very open to ideas (not always implemented, but rejected with good reason), and willing to learn new things as well. He is also very conscious of the amount of time we spend in preparation, and frequently expresses his thanks. For all this, we are most grateful.

Sheila Thompson
Director of Music

NATIONAL TRUST-ST JOHN'S CHURCH HERITAGE CONSERVATION APPEAL FUND

During 2023, the Heritage Fund raised \$17,239.09 with 94 per cent of this amount (\$16,275.62) being donated during the Appeal period in May and June. The amount raised this year was less than previous years, but it still boosted the Fund's financial resources and will enable us to continue our support for significant conservation projects in the heritage precinct.

Of the total raised during the year, donations amounting to \$14,239.09 were allocated to General Funds. These funds can be used at the trustees' discretion to support any eligible heritage projects. The rest of the donations, totalling \$3,000.00, were allocated in accordance with donors' wishes as follows: the Church (\$2,850.00); the Schoolhouse (\$100.00); and the Churchyard (\$50.00). The Fund's trustees express their appreciation to all those who donated this year. Your financial support is greatly valued.

In 2023 the Fund supported heritage projects totalling \$41,768.48 relating to the Church and the Schoolhouse:

- A total of \$25,236.18 was reimbursed to the Parish for three heritage projects relating to the Church. The first of these involved improving storage in the Sanctuary for books and other items used during services. The second related to improving the entrance to the Church entrance. This involved refurbishing and enhancing the functionality of the Gruner cupboard and repairing the timber work around the stairs leading to the choir loft, both at ground level and above. The third project involved the installation of an attractive and secure donation box at the rear of the Church and the reconfiguring and repositioning of two pews in that vicinity.
- A total of \$16,532.30 was reimbursed to the Board of the Schoolhouse Museum for the internal and external repainting of the Schoolhouse in the lead up to its 180th anniversary in 2025.

In addition, the Parish was reimbursed \$579.09 to cover the cost of printing and postage in connection with the mid-year Appeal.

Each year the Fund pays 3 per cent of the amount it receives in donations, capped at \$2,000 p.a., to the National Trust of Australia – ACT in recognition of the advice provided to trustees and to the Parish more generally. The Fund's link to the National Trust enables donors to claim tax deductibility for their donations. The payment made to the National Trust in 2023 was \$519.42.

At the end of the calendar year, funds held by the National Trust–St John’s Church Heritage Conservation Appeal Fund totalled \$127,179.18. The funds are held in a current account and a term deposit account with the Anglican Investment and Development Fund.

Randall Wilson chaired the committee of trustees throughout 2023, with the other two general trustees being Philip Creelman and Steve Moseley. Ex officio trustees were Eric Martin, representing the National Trust of Australia – ACT and the Rev’d David McLennan.

Randall Wilson, Chair of Trustees

PARISH OFFICE

2023 was an enormously frantic year with many challenges both resolved and ongoing. One of the positives was the addition of Alison Hosking as Parish Operations Manager. The creation of this position has very much alleviated the stress and workload that has been placed on the Parish Administrator for the past few years.

Baptisms – Please see Children’s and Youth Ministry report.

Weddings – St John’s conducted 10 weddings during 2023, a small increase on 2022 (8). Mary de Lautour continued to co-ordinate weddings during 2023 but, we have now secured a new volunteer co-ordinator - Yaso Arumugam. Yaso commenced in February and is available for 2-3 hours per week for this ministry.

Funerals & Memorial Services – There were 19 funerals onsite and 2 offsite funerals conducted by St John’s clergy during 2023.

Interments - There were 18 interment services conducted at St John’s last year into our Columbaria. Of the 18, we had 3 sets of parents. There were also 2 interment services where the ashes were interred into a grave in the churchyard.

Worship support – Worship service sheets for the 8.00am, 9.30am and 6.00pm services are prepared and printed weekly. In 2023 we introduced a service supplement for the 11.15am and 5pm services.

Weekly Newsletter – Each week we email the newsletter to around 345 people to keep the St John’s church community informed together. We continue to mail the newsletter to 4 recipients every week.

Conclusion – I remain truly thankful for the support of Rev’d Dave as we navigate the next steps for the Parish Office and the Parish at large. To the parish office volunteers, I would be lost without you and the support you provide.

Kimberley van Leeuwen - Office Administrator

PARISH OPERATIONS

Safe Ministries -St John’s is fortunate to have a plethora of willing and capable volunteers. As such, there is a lot of work to be done to achieve compliance with the Diocesan requirements for Safe Ministry, as many need to update their training and lodgment of current WWVP cards with the Parish office and the Diocesan online SMIS tool. Thanks is owed the Rev’d Dr Guerin Tuono and Andrew Carson for their patience and support in response to our many questions to clarify the requirements. We have a long road ahead of us to get everyone up to date with their training, and to tease out the details of how to effectively use the SMIS tool, to meet the goal of complete compliance for St John’s volunteers by June 2024. Everyone’s cooperation in working towards this has been greatly appreciated.

Office Volunteers - It has been our pleasure to welcome to the office our new parishioner volunteers, Rebecca Lindsay and Yaso Arumugam. We also continue to benefit from the hard work of our regular volunteers, Helen Wilson, and Jennifer Lawson. The office staff would like to acknowledge how greatly we appreciate the contribution made by them all, and that we are grateful for their continued support.

Room Bookings - 2023 proved to be a busy year for room bookings, and by December the overall budget was exceeded by \$4,900. St John's welcomed back our regular hirers – The Canberra Choral Society, Canberra City Pipes and Drums, Young Person's Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and the Canberra Lakes Ladies Probus Club. We were also revisited by a number of groups such as the Society for Creative Anachronism, Scottish Country Dancing, the Mar Thoma church, the National Trust of Australia (ACT) and the Ionian Club, and we enjoyed hosting a number of quality music performances in the church and hall during the year. So far, 2024 is shaping up to be a busy year again for bookings with many dates already booked up in the calendar and requests still coming in.

Car Parking – Some parts of our St. John's precinct are made available to the general public for paid car parking from Monday to Friday. The fees we collect are an important part of our parish income.

Our popularity as a competitively priced parking option in this locality remains strong and we finished 2023 with parking income back to a pre-pandemic level.

Alison Hosking – Manager of Parish Operations

PASTORAL CARE REPORT

It has always been a very high privilege to bring Holy Communion to people who are confined to their own home, an Aged Care Facility, or a hospital environment. During the last year there have been 98 acts of Holy Communion. In many cases the opportunity to visit reveals much about the spiritual journey of each person. Sometimes the situation to administer Holy Communion can vary greatly given the physical situation and/or the physical and mental condition of the person. This can be particularly so with those suffering from some sort of dementia.

Bible for Blokes has continued at different times during each year and almost always during the Season of Lent. Last year it was encouraging to also meet during the Season of Advent and to attend to the Advent Bible readings during Morning Prayer on each Monday.

Preparing for a Funeral is always important but sometimes it can be difficult to attend to the wishes of the deceased person. Because of this reason, there is available through St John's Office a Funeral Arrangement Form that sets out all the necessary information to ensure that a funeral is then conducted as well as possible for all concerned.

Education for “growing old” by way of seminars which have been held at St John's over a number of years has lapsed since COVID 19. Nevertheless, it has been encouraging to pursue the benefit of Spiritual Reminiscing. Also, a particular resource which has been published by the Diocese also continues to provide much wise counsel: **When I'm Old: A Guide to Pastoral Ministry with Frail, Isolated Older People** by Anne Ranse & Don Jamieson, 2014.

Other specific acts of pastoral care can vary greatly. It is very heartening to see parishioners reach out to others when a need arises. Illness and grief are common needs; but so too is the need for many just to be able to talk about anything that they may be troubled with. In this instance the regular **Cuppacomalong** monthly gatherings have been encouraging. Both Coral Ogilvie and Ailsa Curtis have been a great help with their leadership.

Worship varies greatly amongst parishioners. With the reduction of BCP services at St John's on a Sunday, there has been an increase in parishioners worshipping on Wednesday at the 10.00am service. The after-church fellowship with morning tea has been much appreciated.

On a personal note, I will miss the high privilege in serving the Parish of St John's which has occurred over the last nine years. But I am sure, that with a heightened sense of the need for pastoral care for all ages, together with the additional clergy support, the ministry in pastoral care will not be forgotten. I am grateful for David our Rector, for his guidance and encouragement, together with the ministry of the Rev'ds (Dr) Andrew Cameron, Vicky Cullen, Anna Krebs and Chris Murray.

Canon Kevin Stone, Pastoral Care Coordinator and Associate Priest St John's Canberra

PROJECTS COMMITTEE

The Projects Committee was very pleased to welcome Mr. Terry Ring, as our newest member in 2023. Terry is a well-known architect in Canberra and attends our 8am service. Terry's arrival was very timely for the Committee as Steve Moseley was overseas for the second half of 2023.

While we have undertaken a number of projects, listed below with details, a highlight from the year was our presentation to Parish Council at their August meeting. The presentation included a broad overview of the Committee's structure and responsibilities as well our list of longer-term maintenance and building projects titled the Parish Works Schedule.

The schedule, an Excel spreadsheet originally created by Steve Moseley, lays out the major building and maintenance works that are likely to be required across the parish over the coming years and what the possible costings may be. This is an important tool for our Parish Council to be able to see the longer-term needs for cost outlays that are likely to be required over coming years and to make more informed decisions of which projects to plan for.

It is the Committee's responsibility to use its skills and experience to inform the Council to the best of its ability and then for the Council to make the final decision on priorities and expenditures.

Projects from 2023

The Rectory, 1 Anzac Park West

Cracks in the internal walls remain an ongoing issue in the Rectory. While some cracking was expected, and filling and painting every few years was added to our maintenance schedule, a few of the recent cracks have been quite significant. An engineer completed a review of the structure early in the year and advised that the house is sound, but the internal cracking is unavoidable unless the house is fully restumped. A less expensive option for a longer lasting improvement would be to insert expansion joints on the most affected walls. This is still a messy and disruptive process however, so it was agreed to leave this work until the house was unoccupied for some weeks. In the interim, the largest cracks have been filled and painted.

1 Amaroo Street

Having only recently completed a kitchen renovation and new paint in the previous year, there was no significant work required at the end of the previous occupancy in August. Rev'd Dr Andrew Cameron moved in on a temporary basis in November and out again on the 26th of February 2024. Minor items of repair were dealt with in 2023. Rev'd Dr Cameron has sent the office a list of possible improvements for consideration before any new tenants move. Items that may need attention include new living room carpet and repairs to the fence between #1 and #3 Amaroo.

7 Amaroo

The Clark family moved into #7 in May 2023. A few improvements of re-grouting and painting were completed before they moved in. Temporary curtains had been added during the previous tenancy and need to be replaced. The Council approved a budget for new ones which are now on order and will be installed sometime in March 2024.

Stonework

This project has been carried over from previous years. As background, St Johns applied for funding to repair six damaged stones at the church entrance in the 2022-23 round of ACT Heritage Council grants. At that time the ACT Heritage Council responded that funding for repairs would only be provided after specialist testing was made on the damaged stones but did not elaborate on what testing was required. Subsequently, the Projects Committee corresponded with ACT Heritage in 2022 seeking clarification but in the later part of 2022 the ACT Government dissolved the Heritage Council. We did not receive a reply with how to proceed until April 2023.

Once provided with a way forward we engaged Sydney Stone Masons for an assessment and report which was carried out in June. Unfortunately, there was some delay then during Steve Moseley's absence overseas, but we are now waiting for Sydney Stone Masons to begin work on the first step of damp proofing the stones near the entrance of the church. Damp proofing and desalinating affected stones near the damaged area is likely to take most of the remaining grant funds and additional funds will need to be found for the replacement of the damaged stones.

Timberwork

National Trust - St Johns Heritage Conservation Appeal Fund supported several timberwork projects for the church this year which Steve Moseley designed and oversaw most of the works. The credence table in the sanctuary was adapted into a storage unit for prayer books and the entry area of the church had the lower panelling and door refurbished. After a faculty was agreed by the parish and then approved by the Bishop, a new top for the entry way cabinet and a new donations box for inside the church were installed. Our thanks go to Rob Brooks who assisted with the works during Steve's absence.

Parish Centre Roof

In March 2023, areas of damp and deterioration were identified in the walls of the parish centre. A roofer was brought in to review and assess the area in consultation with Terry Ring. The images showed that both the number of damaged roof tiles and the difficulty with locating all possible leaks led to the recommendation to replace the 65 year old roof.

The area over the offices of the Parish Centre had the old tiles removed and replaced with similar style new ones. New batons, waterproofing, R5.0 HD Ceiling insulation and guttering were also installed. The damaged office walls and ceilings and new fascia and eaves were repainted in February 2024.

The drainage at the vestry end of the parish centre had been an issue for some time and the previous down pipes were in varying states of disrepair. In 2024, before installing new downpipes, the drainage also needed to be addressed. The downpipes had been removed or had holes put through them because the attached drains under the building were blocked. After an inspection, the area of drainage pipes between the vestry end of the parish centre towards the top corner of the hall was identified as the best place for new pipes to be added. Three inspection openings were also added.

The reparations to the landscaping on the area adjacent to the new drainage was delayed several times over the summer due to heavy rains. The excess soil was removed, the sloped area has been covered with bark and retaining logs were added in February 2024 to reduce run off into the parking area. The decision to level and add new gravel to the parking area has been delayed temporarily.

Steve Moseley, Helen Wilson, Terry Ring and Christine Hawkins

PROPERTY AND MAINTENANCE COMMITTEE

The P&M Committee worked within its 2022 Terms of Reference set by Parish Council and the *Guidelines for the Management of the St John's Precinct* (agreed by Parish Council in 2015). The Committee references the conservation management plans: *Conservation Management Plan for the St John's Church Heritage Precinct Landscape, Reid, ACT* (2010) and *Anglican Church of St John the Baptist Canberra ACT – Significant Structures* (2015).

Our work continues to be shaped by the small number of keen volunteers assisting to maintain the buildings, gardens and grounds across our large eight-acre site, some of which is heritage listed by the ACT Heritage Council.

What did we achieve?

- contracted out: extensive tree and hedge pruning, locksmith, plastering in the rectory; pest control, servicing the organ and fire extinguishers and air conditioning units; gutter cleaning; painting; tiling; electrical and plumbing work throughout; horticultural advice; irrigation and whitegoods repairs; machinery servicing; line marking; and handyman and carpentry works.
- new and replacement plants, acquired a new trailer and a screen door, cleaned the fountain; and added rabbit barriers.
- general landscape maintenance with almost continuous lawn mowing, green waste removal, raking, shrub pruning and weeding.
- within our resources continued to care for the areas now government designated as remnant native grasslands and home for the endangered Golden Sun Moth.
- monthly working bees on the first Saturday of each month

The Committee thanks our volunteers, both in the monthly working bees (we welcome all who come!) and those who respond on an 'as needs' basis: Phil Creelman, Christine Goode, Tim Wright, David Adams, Ross de Vere, and Pam Atkinson. Our thanks to Kimberley van Leeuwen for support from the Parish Office.

The continuing challenge for the Committee is how to encourage new members to join the current small number of mature-age volunteers. The garden maintenance tasks were continuous with the weather encouraging rapid grass and weed growth. All helpers are most welcome, and a priority is to offer a safe work environment to all. A task warranting consideration is how to respond to the increasing numbers of rabbits in the precinct.

As St John's is a feature of the local community of Reid it helps to maintain good relations with its close neighbours. That includes ensuring the precinct, a privately owned place but open to the public who pass through every day, is welcoming and adds value to the neighbourhood.

Our challenge was to use the funding available for purposes not able to be handled by volunteers: hence much was allocated to urgent needs.

We farewelled two members of our group: George Pooley and Bill Sutherland: both are much missed.

The members of the P&M Committee in 2023 were: David Adams, Barbara and David Hill, Alison Hosking, Colin Lendon, George Pooley, Bill Sutherland and Helen Wilson.

Helen Wilson, Chair

RISK ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Scripture calls us to be faithful stewards of that which God entrusts to our care: people, property and all God's creation.

The Risk Advisory Committee (RAC) is a Committee of the Parish Council with the responsibility to advise the Parish Council, through the Executive Committee, on the management of risks to the Parish's stewardship responsibilities. These activities are outlined in the Terms of Reference of the RAC.

The membership of the RAC comprises the Rector, John Richards (Rector's Warden and Presiding Member of the Parish Council), Helen Wilson (Chair, Property & Maintenance Committee), Jason Haines (Executive Officer, St Johns Care), Alison Hosking (Parish Operations Manager) and John Stafford (Chair).

A complex organisation

St John's is a complex parish with seven worship services (and distinctly different congregations), forming a Faith Community with the mission to bear public witness to Jesus Christ, the source of life.

The Parish is also the steward of significant and important heritage buildings and artefacts and churchyard.

The Parish Council has developed the 2023-2028 Strategic Plan that integrates aspects of the historic and heritage needs with contemporary requirements while focussing on the challenges and opportunities of the future.

Risk Profile

The RAC advises the Parish Council on the effectiveness of its management of risks to the achievement of the Parish Council Strategic Plan. The profile of risks to the strategic plan aligned with those of the Diocese, namely:

- Strategy
- People
- Reputation
- Operations
- Finances
- Governance

Scorecard

The RAC has developed a Strategic Risk and Performance Scorecard by which it provides regular feedback and advice to the Parish Council. The Scorecard highlights prioritised information on the management of risks. This clarity of contextual information is designed to support the decision making of the Parish Council; enabling more time to be devoted to strategic matters.

Controls and Control Owners

The management of risks relies on effective and timely application of effective controls. St John's is fortunate to have the support of 10 staff and volunteers who have taken on the roles and authority of Control Owners. One of the roles of the Control Owners involves briefing the RAC on the effectiveness of their controls and what assistance is required to enhance the maturity of their processes and decision making.

Focus for 2023

Key areas of focus for the RAC in 2023 were:

- Governance
- Work Health and Safety
- Security (physical and IT)
- Information Management
- Volunteering and staffing

Focus for 2024

Key areas of focus for 2024 include:

- Maturing Parish processes
- Financial Management
- Integration of Parish activities
- Succession Planning

Conclusion

The members of the RAC look forward to continuing to work with the Rector, Executive, Parish Council and Control Owners in achieving the Parish Council Strategic Plan and in doing so contribute to achieving the Mission of the Parish.

John Stafford, Chair

SACRISTAN, SIDEPERSONS & ALTAR LINEN GROUP

It is now a little over six months since Dave asked me to be Sacristan and it had been quite a steep learning curve. I had no idea of the number of people involved in preparing for services and why the Rector occasionally wore different coloured robes.

I would particularly like to thank Margaret Rodgers for her unfailing advice and Michael Myint who faithfully sets up for communion each week. My grateful thanks also go to those who regularly give their time and expertise to serve in the Sanctuary so that services run smoothly, those who ensure the linen is pristine, those who supply us with the bowls of flowers which fill the church with perfume and colour, the sidespersons who ensure we get the correct book and service sheet and those who pick up after us all and clean the church.

It is a joy to walk into our beautiful building and know that I am part of a team of wonderful people and that I can help to ensure that it is ready for us to join in worshipping our great God in a place of beauty and peace.

Jennifer Lawson, Sacristan

SCHOOLHOUSE MUSEUM

I have pleasure in presenting the 53rd annual report for St John's Schoolhouse Museum.

SCHOOLHOUSE BUILDING: The Schoolhouse was built in 1845 and was 178 years old this year. The building is in good condition. In September the Schoolhouse was closed for several weeks to allow for some repairs and for the building to be painted inside and outside. New security sensor lights were installed, and a new heater purchased for the volunteer's room. Grateful thanks to Rob Brooks, the Clerk of Works for his dedicated work in keeping the Schoolhouse building in such good condition. Some comments from the visitors' book: A hidden gem of Canberra, incredible history, amazing architecture, beautifully kept”.



THE GARDEN: The plants are growing, and we are thankful for the good rain, especially over the summer months. Thanks to our volunteers who feed the plants and water and weed the garden.

VISITORS: The volunteers welcome all who visit, and it is always special to welcome and meet descendants of former pupils, teachers and residents and pioneers of Canberra. This year included Shumack, McLachlan, Scott and Boag families. There is a wonderful photo in the schoolroom of the horse drawn school bus, driven by Eleanor Ann (Nell) Boag. Nell was baptised at St. John's and is buried in the churchyard.

HERITAGE FESTIVAL 13 April – 29 April: The Schoolhouse opened every day from 2 – 4 pm. Many thanks to Jennifer Garden for arranging the special display marking the 70-year reign of Queen Elizabeth the Second. The display included photographs of the late Queen's four visits to St. John's Church, and the parish VIP Visitors Book signed by Elizabeth R and the Duke of Edinburgh.

TORCH LIGHT TOURS: These popular events were held on the 17, 18 and 19 April conducted by June Penny and Pennie Pemberton. Refreshments were held in the Schoolhouse after the tours. Always enjoyed and appreciated by those who attend.

ANZAC DAY: The Schoolhouse was open for Anzac Day.

SCHOOL VISITS: Emmaus Christian School on 5/5/23 43 students & 9 teachers. Bluegum Community School 6/6/23. 12 students and 3 teachers Radford College Mystery Tour 26/10/23. 196 students and 8 teachers.

OTHER GROUPS: The Schoolhouse also welcomed other groups Christian Military Fellowship 4/3/23; Living with Dementia group 5/23; The Parish Fair 14/10/23; and the Registrars' Conference 12/11/23 following Evensong at St. John's.

VOLUNTEERS: Grateful thanks to the Schoolhouse Volunteers who come week after week, month after month, to open the Museum, welcome visitors and care for the Schoolhouse and garden. These are the people who keep the Schoolhouse Museum open and its history alive to the people who visit this amazing place. Grateful thanks to Corinne Collins for maintaining the Schoolhouse Scrapbook.

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT: Grateful thanks to our Rector, the Reverend Dave McLennan for his interest in and support of the Schoolhouse Museum and the volunteers and to the members of the Schoolhouse Museum Board of Management for their care and commitment to the overall management and especially to Jenny Carlin, the treasurer, for the financial management of St John's Schoolhouse Museum. The Schoolhouse Museum is heritage listed and holds a very special place in both St John's parish history and the history of Canberra.

Diana Body, President St John's Schoolhouse Museum Board of Management.

ST JOHN'S CARE

SJC reports to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) on a financial year basis consistent with their requirement for financial reports. To avoid confusion with presenting two different Annual Reports this report covers the period July 2022-June 2023.

SJC is the charitable outreach arm of the parish and forms the key part of our local outreach into the Canberra community to those suffering hardship or disadvantage. Every day, people come to our church site for a helping hand. While their needs are often complex, and sometimes quite overwhelming, we hope that the support we give contributes to a sense of wellbeing and peace. We are grateful for the church's regular prayers, donations and other support to this work, which together with the contributions of people across the Canberra community, other churches and organisations, help us to be a blessing to people 'doing it tough.'

This year again demand for the services provided has risen. SJC has been able to assist as costs of living soared. Many have struggled to cope with the increasing costs of food, utilities, rental and mortgage repayments. Fear of homelessness, feelings of failure and hopelessness weighed heavily on so many of our clients, negatively impacting their physical and emotional well-being and undermining their ability to cope. SJC supported 4324 households and of these, approximately 5% (217) presented with complex needs and were referred to our Case Management Program.

Most clients came seeking help with food and/or material support. However, this support, whilst critical, only provides some immediate relief. Importantly, emergency relief is a "front door" which can provide access to other services. SJC programs aim to provide holistic support. Our Case Management Program, staffed by two dedicated Case Managers, and supported by the Executive Officer and Operations Manager, is central to this.

SUMMARY OF SERVICE ACTIVITY FOR 2022/23

PROGRAM	ACTIVITY
Emergency relief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4324 requests were received for Emergency Relief Assistance (individuals and families). <i>Many of these households attend SJC more frequently than monthly, and approximately 11% of these households have no income, including several refugee families</i>
Case Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 217 clients received short or long-term case management (Senior/Case Manager, Operations Manager and Executive Officer).
Telephone welfare checks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1330 Welfare Telephone Checks of clients targeting issues of social isolation, housing stress, physical and mental health issues, and COVID 19. SJC is often the only point of social connection, as many don't have any family or friends. In some cases, we are the only ones who listen to them.
Food Delivery /Welfare checks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 498 for clients that were unable to attend SJC
Christmas Hampers and Present Room:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 722 Christmas Hampers and over 6000 gifts for families with children
Christmas Lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 250 people attended the Christmas Day Lunch

Friday Community Lunch – Monthly First Friday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 682 clients had a sit-down lunch in the hall and over 600 other takeaway meals were given out
Chemist & Medical assistance provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chemist & Medical assistance provided: 1553 Prescriptions and medical procedures (local and interstate)

FUNDING and SUPPORT

SJC is a donation-based organisation. It is through the generosity of our supporters and donors that we have been able to meet the increasing demands. Donations of goods-in-kind and the value of volunteer hours, whilst critical to the operations of SJC, are not recognised as revenue in the accompanying audited Financial Statements.

REVENUE

2.8% of SJC funding is provided by the Commonwealth Government. The remaining 97.2% comes through donations. We have all had to cope with increasing costs, but the generosity and support of our donors has meant that SJC has been able to continue to provide programs that meet both the immediate needs of clients and those which provide long term positive outcomes.

SOURCES OF DONATIONS

Cash Donations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total cash donations were \$780,996 comprising of Regular Donations \$347,663, Winter Appeal \$285,060 Christmas Appeal \$148,272
12,000 Volunteer Hours	<p>Invaluable contribution made by volunteers in the following programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>ER centre</i> • <i>Food drives and collections run by organisations, schools, businesses, and individuals</i> • <i>Christmas Present Room</i> • <i>Christmas day Lunch (preparation, set up, serving and hosting)</i> • <i>Community lunch</i> • <i>Management Committee</i> • <i>Gardening</i>
Donated goods, value not calculated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Food (perishable and non-perishable)</i> • <i>Clothing</i> • <i>Bedding</i> • <i>School supplies</i> • <i>Hygiene products</i> • <i>Presents /Gift cards</i> • <i>Homeware</i> • <i>ActewAGL utility vouchers</i>

GOVERNANCE

Ensuring flexibility to continue to respond meaningfully to the changing and ever-increasing need of the community underlies the activities of the Management Committee. Key areas this year have been risk management, effective and focussed data collection, and enhanced donor and supporter engagement.

STAFFING

Jason Haines: Executive Officer, ongoing
Robbie Speldewinde: Operation Manager, ongoing
Karen Medrano: Case Manager, fixed contract
Tracy Creber: Finance & Administration Officer, ongoing
Belinda Ding: Senior Case Manager, fixed contract

STAFF and VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Training of staff and volunteers is critical to ensuring best quality service to our clients. The identification of training needs has been the major focus of this year to ensure training commitment is targeted. The organisation has identified strategic client focused activities requiring a package of specific training for staff and volunteers. This targeted training will support the existing volunteer forums and staff supervision.

THANK YOU

The work of SJC is only possible because of the continuing support and dedication of Church and community groups, schools, organisations, work groups and so many individuals who generously contributed their time and resources. This enables SJC to provide support and assistance to our community and makes for a strong effective organisation. The continuing support of the Snow Foundation and the Victoria Shakespeare Trust is gratefully acknowledged.

The commitment of our volunteers and dedication of our professional staff underpin our quality service to our clients.

Finally, we express our continuing gratitude to members of the Management Committee whose combination of skills and dedication ensure sound and effective governance of SJC.

Jason Haines, Executive Officer

Glenda Richards, Chair Management Committee

ST JOHN'S CHURCHYARD REPORT

There has been little change in the numbers of interments in the Churchyard over this year. There were a number of enquiries, (14 plus), regarding conditions related to interring ashes but most were in advance, and no decision has been made. There were 18 interments in the columbaria and two in graves. There was one interment in the Campbell enclosure.

- A number of descendants have paid in advance for interment of their ashes into family graves. This information is kept on the family file.
- David Hill made secure the fence along the Venables grave.
- The Callander headstone has been replaced with the correct wording.

- The old marble headstone which shattered when it fell has not been repaired although I have made many enquiries as to the lack of progress – lack of workers and the weather have been mentioned as the causes.

Subsequently another headstone broke in two. This will be repaired in situ when the workers and the weather are suitable. This one was knocked by a mower which emphasises the care that needs to be taken around the churchyard.

The weather has meant the grass has grown rapidly and we need to keep up to date with the mowing.

I feel it is worth mentioning that there have been two incidents of vandalism on graves, one broken wooden cross (replaced by Phil Creelman) and numerous wire flower baskets destroyed in two separate occasions in November 2023 and January 2024. All wire flower baskets have now been removed. This follows on from another occasion in 2023 when any porcelain or pottery vases were broken.

Generally, it is a peaceful and calm place and many people value that as they walk through.

Dr Barbara Hill
Hon. Administrator, St John's Churchyard