



**THE ANGLICAN  
PARISH OF  
DIAMOND CREEK  
ANNUAL REPORTS**

**2023  
2024**







# ANGLICAN PARISH OF **DIAMOND CREEK**

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# SENIOR MINISTER'S REPORT

*Tim Johnson*

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Psalm 127:1 reminds us 'Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labour in vain.' In 1 Corinthians 3:5-8 the Apostle Paul speaks about different labour that is undertaken in ministry with some planting and others watering but, he emphasizes, it is God 'who makes things grow'. Praise God that we are part of a church that is growing! This takes much labour and hard work from staff and volunteers alike but that labour has only been effective because of the grace and kindness of our Lord God who is building his house and enabling the growth.

Over the past year we have seen each of our in-person church services grow in attendance. The overall increase in attendance has been 8% on the previous year (see the statistics later in this report) and over the past two years 31%. To some extent this has been a revivification following the impact of Covid but it also represents new people coming to faith in Jesus, people who had become de-churched reconnecting with a faith community, and new people joining us to be part of our church family. We give thanks to God for them all!

In 2022 we set a new vision for church to run until 2025. That vision is: Reconnect and build a multiethnic and intergenerational network of congregations, Life Groups and mission initiatives for Diamond Creek and the northern suburbs. It has been great to reconnect and we thank God again that he is building us. We are certainly a church which spans the generations from newborns to our precious aging saints. It is encouraging that we are more multiethnic than we were, although there is still much room for growth. The life of our church is expressed through our congregations, Life Groups and mission initiatives and you will see that outlined in what follows in this report.

## **Church Services**

In 2024 we continued our pattern of three in-person Sunday services at 8am, 10am and 6pm, and a Digital Service streamed each Sunday at 9am and available to be watched at any time from then.

Our 8am has grown again this year, a 14% increase on the previous year. This service continues to be a quiet and reflective space which celebrates our life together using the prayer book service accompanied by a thoughtful mix of hymns and contemporary music. There is a growing culture of volunteering and



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serving in different roles and the weekly morning tea has a good number of volunteers who contribute to this and enable this opportunity for fellowship after each service.



Our 10am service continues to be intergenerational with new babies being born and beautiful interactions occurring across ages and demographics groups. It has been encouraging again to see continued growth at the 10am this year with an 8% increase overall and new people joining us. Roughly a quarter of the congregation each week is under the age of 18 with a flourishing crèche and kids program. We have celebrated a number of baptisms this year at 10am and this has given additional opportunities to welcome visiting family and friends for these special occasions.

The 6pm service has continued to see an encouraging number of youth and young adults attending alongside people of various different ages. The 6pm service also increased by 8% in this past year, a very healthy sign for our church as we continue to engage and grow younger generations. This congregation has a wonderful feel to it with supper being enjoyed together each week and a monthly dinner preceding the

service giving additional opportunities to gather. We are led upfront by youth, young adults, and older adults. It is a constant training ground for ministry as well as being a place to worship.

In terms of teaching this year we have covered the following:

- New beginnings (Luke 5);
- The Power of the Gospel (Romans 1-4);
- Life and Death (Luke 22-24);
- I believe: The Apostles Creed (various passages);
- Upside Down Kingdom (Luke 18 & Matthew 20);
- Praying the Psalms (various Psalms);
- Hope in a Hostile World (Daniel).



Our Christmas services were well attended in 2023 and all of them were larger than the previous year, again showing a steady regrowth following the Covid years. Similarly Easter services were well attended and with a significant increase in attendance. These high points in the Christian year are wonderful ways for us to reflect on the key events in our faith in Jesus and to share these

with others who would not regularly attend on a Sunday.

On 11th August we held a Confirmation service conducted by our Bishop, Brad Billings. We had 8 people confirmed, including two who were also baptised in the service. Each confirmer shared their testimony and it was an encouragement to hear how God has built and encouraged their faith. There was such a variety of ways that God had been at work and it was again a reminder that God builds his church!



Running weekly services involves a large number of volunteers and I am so thankful to everyone who serves in various ways: music, prayer, welcoming, hospitality, bible reading, service leading, kids ministry, communion setup and assisting, and more. A special note of thanks to Sue Jetten who coordinates music across the church and encourages our band leaders and musicians in their dedicated and joyful service of us all.

## Music Ministry

Sue Jetten

*Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly*

*as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. Colossians 3:16*

St John's is blessed with many volunteers who use their God-given gifts to serve in Music Ministry, leading God's people in our sung worship. Over the last year we have had 6 bands who serve the 10am and Sunday@6 congregations, and an ensemble of 2 (keys and voice) to lead the 8am service. We have continued to use pre-recorded music from St John's bands and Emu Music in our Digital Services. Thank you so much to our band leaders: 10am - Hamish Bland, Darren Pilkington and Victor Jetten and for Sunday@6 - Lachie McGuinness & Scott Pilkington, Warwick Knight and Alison & Damien Knuckey. This is the second year that we have had our Youth Band joining the band rotation once a month, and it is so encouraging to see their enthusiasm and development under the leadership of Alison & Damien. These are the next generation of St Johns musos and it is truly exciting to have 10 youth involved in this band. Thank you to the 40 + people who make up the music min team, playing and singing in the various bands, and a huge thank you also to our tech teams who support us.

A highlight for our team this year was the Melbourne Word in Song Conference which we hosted at St Johns. This event included a Friday night concert, 'A night in with Emu' and a full day conference on Saturday 26th October, led by members of the Emu Music team from Sydney. 260 people enjoyed amazing worship, encouragement and training as we looked to the Bible to learn more about the worship that God desires and attended workshops where we learned more about how we can best serve God and our congregations.



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Over 30 churches from Melbourne and regional areas were represented and it was wonderful to see our church facilities being used to bless so many.



## Life Groups

### Delle Matthews

There are currently 20 adult Life Groups. At the beginning of the year two new groups were started, one for people primarily attending the 6pm service and one on-line contemplative group. Another group of parents with young children has divided to meet as a men's group and a women's group making attendance easier. Two groups that were running last year could not be continued into 2024. Members of those groups who wanted to continue in a St John's Life Group have been placed in another groups. There are approximately 200 adults attending a Life Group.

Life Group leaders/facilitators continue to serve groups well. This is a significant role and their dedication and commitment are much appreciated. Over half the groups use the study questions produced for each of the sermon series. Incidental feedback is positive with the

study questions appreciated most. Some leaders prepare or source their own materials to meet the need of their group.

Our Life Groups are good at nurture within the group through prayer and some practical support on occasion. Most have a means of sharing prayer requests between meeting times. Over the year a few groups have been supporting members who have experienced a significant bereavement or illness. Life Groups remain important for pastoral care of members.

Delle Matthews (Life Groups Minister) continued attending a network of Life Group ministers. The group meets on zoom once a term and is useful for mutual encouragement and ideas. In comparison to other churches St Johns has a healthy number of Life Groups and strong participation across all age groups.

Most of our Life Groups are going well but have reached capacity. Looking forward to 2025 there is need for more groups to meet increasing demand.

## Prayer

Prayer is vital to our church life and one of our values is Pray Expectantly. Prayer happens in a range of ways through St John's: personally, in prayer pairs and triplets, in Life Groups, church services, prayer meetings, and prayer ministry.

Each Thursday at 8am a small group of staff and church members meet to pray through the needs and ministries of the church. We regularly have around 8 people attend this gathering. We have also held two special church wide prayer meetings over the course of the year in April and September. It was especially encouraging to have around 40 people attend the September meeting, representing people from all our congregations.

It has been wonderful to continue prayer ministry

at all of our services in 2024. This has been led by Lyndell Whiting (8am), Robyn Bland (10am) and Linda Cridland (6pm) who have gathered and trained teams to offer prayer at the end of each service. This is an important part of our pastoral care as we offer this as a way of responding to God each week and a space to avail ourselves of his listening ear.

## Pastoral Care

As a church we are committed to the biblical principle of mutual care, where all Christians minister to one another and support one another as we follow Christ. Our Life Groups are the main way that we exercise this ministry but it happens in a variety of other ways, both formal and informal. The staff team are always actively engaged in pastoral support of people within our congregation.

Our Pastoral Care Support Team has again been led by Nikki Isaks, Judy Parkin and David Smith and they have coordinated additional support and care as needed. In a large church like ours there are always pastoral and practical needs and I am thankful to the many people who love and serve others by providing meals, driving people to appointments, praying and listening, and offering various other forms of practical assistance.

Over this past year we have said farewell to some beloved church members and held funeral services for family members and those in the wider community. We give thanks to God for the lives of Barry Gunning, Dorothy Beale, Margaret Viney, Ralph Wilson, Deborah Allen, Isla Heddle, Dora Huggins-Rauber and Raymond Wilton. These faithful servants of Jesus encouraged us in our faith in many different ways. We grieve their passing because we miss them and yet we grieve also in hope knowing that they are now in the presence of their Lord and Saviour Jesus and enjoying his commendation 'well done good and faithful servant'.

Over the year we also celebrated the baptisms of Zachary Waghorn, Olive and Annie Stevens, Rowan Travis, Skylar Abraham, Ivy Bales, Addison Burge, Oscar Gentle, Asher Gbadeyan, Shiloh Maddison, Charlie Brimelow, Tilly and Billy Menichelli, Charlie and Elodie Campbell, Fletcher Whyte and Amelia Ladigus-Grange. We also celebrated the dedications of Naomi Emuat, Klara Cox, Alice Jetten. Bishop Brad Billings confirmed Charlie Brimelow, Eli Buchan, Ade Gbadeyan, Emily Johnson, Elijah and Shiloh Maddison, Lachie McInnes and Bethany Woodman. What a long list in all the above categories! How wonderful to see our church growing in this way.





## Local Mission

Joel Snibson



As we reflect on local mission through the life of St John's, our starting point is that God has been and will continue to be faithfully on mission in our community. We have the joy and privilege of partnering with what God is doing in making Jesus known in our time in 2024.

St John's mission, vision, and values are all founded on our call to "Know Jesus and Make Him Known." This is the basis and motivation for the array of local missions throughout St John's, with a strong emphasis on sharing Jesus in word and action.

Equipping for local mission happens throughout the entire life of the church, including in our services, life groups, and through various Local Mission Teams (LMTs).

LMTs are smaller teams that engage in regular missions and key events to serve Diamond Creek and beyond, aiming to create opportunities for gospel engagement.

Following a Local Mission Review, there is currently a mix of large annual mission events and regular rhythms that foster ongoing relationships and connections. While local

mission exists on a spectrum regarding explicit gospel engagement, success in local mission should always seek to bring people along the path toward knowing Jesus, potentially involving new Christian courses like Alpha. In 2024, there has been a focus on hosting events with speakers, such as the "Gingerbread House Making Night." Additionally, there is a push to create a "third place" – an environment that invites the community to gather and interact with us, fostering interest, curiosity, and trust (for example, the TOGETHER Art Gallery and The Marriage Course).

The launch of HOPE 25 in early 2025 will bring a renewed, church-wide focus on mission and evangelism, including outreach initiatives. Thanks to an anonymous donation toward Hope 25, in February 2025 there will be church-wide evangelism training led by City to City. Please pray that the Spirit will use this season to further equip and empower our community so that new people will come to know Jesus!

Review of LMTs in 2024:

### TOGETHER - Art Show April 2024

This event aimed to be pre-evangelistic, seeking to build trust and curiosity as the church celebrates creativity while building connections within local art communities.



The community engagement was high, with the team involving various art co-ops and groups. At the Friday opening night, the event "TOGETHER" featured a talk from Christian guest speaker Lindy Yeates, with community members outnumbering St John's attendees. The opening night saw approximately 150 attendees, with a further 300 visiting throughout the two-week gallery expo. Eighty percent of the artwork was from external artists.

The community feedback was very positive, with artists appreciating the opportunity to display and sell their work – all commission-free.

Chaired by Janet Tiller, the TOGETHER committee included Isobel Fisher, Jan Loughman, and Maike Prichard, whose diverse skills contributed to the event's success. A big thank you to the planning committee for their exceptional effort, as well as the 26 St John's volunteers who helped make it happen.



While attendance was slightly down from 2022 due to overlapping local carols events, we still had over 500 locals attend.

Preparations are already underway for the 2024 Carols. Please pray for the planning team as they seize this rare opportunity to share the good news of Jesus with the community. A big thank you to the carols leadership team, comprising Sue Jetten, Jan Loughman, Phil Wadeson, and Joel Snibson.

### Leith Park and Wattle Glen Chapel Services

At Liscombe House in Leith Park, the team continues to run fortnightly chapel services, including a monthly Holy Communion service. A big thank you to Bev Ward and Charlotte Chidell for coordinating this ministry and outreach each fortnight. The Leith Park team includes Kris Ryall, Jan Hollingsworth, and Nola Borrie, who provide ongoing pastoral care and assist in leading the services.

At Estia Health in Wattle Glen, the team, which includes Jan Hollingsworth, Charlotte Chidell, and Janice Smith, supports St John's bi-monthly Holy Communion services. As Diamond Creek Uniting Church currently has no clergy member, we have increased our presence by leading



### Diamond Creek Community Carols

On December 17, 2023, we hosted our annual Community Carols at Coventry Oval.

This year saw increased community participation, with performances from a local singing school and the Early Learning Centre, Smartie Pants.



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monthly services. Staff at both facilities have been incredibly supportive of our presence.

### Alpha Marriage Course (May-June)

We hosted The Marriage Course, a seven-week program from May to June 2024, aimed at meeting felt needs within our community and demonstrating Christ's love. Positioned as "pre-evangelism," it serves as a stepping stone toward an Alpha course.

The course included nine couples, two of whom were non-churchgoers. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with consistently high attendance. We thank Rod and Janice Smith for their hospitality and leadership, and Carolyn Burns and the catering team for creating these welcoming evenings.

All participating couples were invited to continue their journey by joining an Alpha course. We are considering next steps to further engage these couples.

### Town Fair Team

In 2024, at a rather "wet" Town Fair, we extend a big thank you to the young adult street teams, including Jon Grinton, David Tregale, Eli Buchan, Lachie McInnes, and Sean Colebatch, who donned St John's "We Love Diamond Creek" T-shirts and engaged the crowds by hosting the Diamond Creek Trivia.

Following a 2023 review, the difficult decision was made to discontinue the Hospitality Tent in 2024. We honour the hard work, love, and dedication of Phil Wadeson and Dianne Cheraghi, who have sacrificially contributed to the tent's success in recent years. We are exploring new and creative ways to engage and serve our community at the Town Fair in the coming years. See the form on the info hub to share your ideas!

### CFA Suppers

For over 14 years, Linda Cridland and Robyn Gorfine have continued the tradition of blessing and encouraging the Diamond Creek CFA with suppers. This ministry has fostered goodwill and strong relationships with the CFA, who we also greatly appreciate for their partnership in our 2023 Community Carols.

### Food Pantry

Originally implemented as a COVID measure in 2020, our community pantry was initially supplied in conjunction with Diamond Valley Community Support. It is now supported by the generosity of the St John's community and seasonal contributions from the Smartie Pants Early Learning Centre in Diamond Creek.

The recent July "Winter Appeal" was a success, and we extend a big thank you to everyone who contributed. This has boosted our supplies amidst the high demand due to the cost-of-living crisis.



While the self-service pantry model has provided dignity and privacy, it has struggled to meet demand and has limited our ability to engage personally with those seeking food relief.

### **“Drop-in Pantry” Trial**

Since October 21, we have begun trialing a “drop-in” pantry model at the Pizza Box. Nikki Isaks leads a volunteer team who will be available each Monday at an advertised time, allowing those in need to receive non-perishable items as required. This three-month trial better aligns with our mission by offering new opportunities to build connections and provide support to those seeking it.

Please pray for the team and continue to give generously by leaving non-perishable donations at the “drop-off” point in the foyer. In August, Tobin Brothers donated \$2,000 toward our pantry as part of their community initiative to celebrate their 90th anniversary. This gift will be considered in our review.

### **The Memory Care Café**

In partnership with Health Ability and the Nillumbik Carers Collective, St John’s hosts a Memory Care Café in the foyer and hall on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month.

The café supports carers of loved ones with memory loss, providing a welcoming space to share experiences and find support among peers. Meanwhile, those with memory loss enjoy activities and companionship in a supportive environment. A big thank you to Carolyn and Alan Fairweather, who lead St John’s involvement, along with eight volunteers.

### **Gingerbread house making night**

In December 2023, we hosted our second “Gingerbread House Making Night.” This evangelistic event was designed for the un-churched to enjoy a night of fun, experience our community, and hear a clear gospel message about the meaning of Christmas.

There was a strong turnout, with over 80 attendees, including many non-churchgoers. A big thank you to Caitlyn Cox for leading this event, and to Jo Stolfa and Krissy Veerhuis for presenting.

On November 29, the tradition of the Gingerbread House Making Night will continue in 2024. Please promote this non-threatening event and invite friends to hear the true meaning of Christmas.



### **Mission Partnerships**

The members of the Missions Committee for 2024 have been Tim Johnson (Chair), David Woods (Parish Council representative), Robyn Bland, Michelle Jacobs, and Diane Cheraghi. Ella Tregale was a valued member of the Missions Committee in 2023 but finished up at the start of this year to take up a youth ministry role in Bendigo. The missions committee has met bimonthly throughout the year to ensure that we are meeting our mission commitments, to support our missionaries in the field, and to promote mission activities across the parish.

In the 2023-2024 budget cycle, we assigned 15% of our offertory income to missions, as has been the pattern for some years at St John’s. This amounted to \$78,739 and of this money \$74,050 was allocated upfront, keeping a reserve in case the parish didn’t meet its budget for offerings and also to be used for urgent mission needs. This initial allocation was as follows:



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*CMS (Deans and Snibsons) - \$16,090*

*Wycliffe (Fidocks, Baldwin, Liems, Josh Bartlett) - \$12,580*

*Open House - \$10,560*

*Ridley College - \$6,130*

*Breakaway Youth - \$5,630*

*Diocese of Morogoro - \$4,590*

*Bush Church Aid (Weickhardts / Edwards) - \$3,020*

*Nungalinya College - \$2,410*

*Anglican Overseas Aid - \$2,410*

*Scripture Union - \$2,410*

*Mustard - \$2,410*

*Prison Fellowship - \$2,410*

*Langham Partnership - \$2,410*

*Kid's Hope - \$990*

Through the year the missions committee has allocated money to welcome home gifts for the Snibsons and the Deans as they returned to Melbourne for deputation.



At the end of the church financial year, when the actual offertory income is known, the amount of money remaining will be assigned by the missions committee and paid out in November. Additional money was also paid to various mission partners

through the direct mission giving of congregation members through the offertory.

Missions are promoted in a variety of ways throughout the church. This year we have continued the Missions Blog which highlights a mission partner or explores an area of global mission. We have committed to publish a blog post once a month and these have been produced this year by Robyn Bland and Tim Johnson. There are currently 62 people subscribed to this blog. Mission Partners have also given video updates in services before reading the bible reading for the service. Again this has been well received and a good way to regularly hear from and to see our partners in mission.

Through the year we had services with Missions speakers doing the sermon and sharing about their work. We have heard from the following speakers this year:

*28th January: Derek and Rosemary Snibson from CMS*

*23rd June: Susanna Baldwin from Wycliffe Australia*

*4th August: Gillean Smiley from Langham Partnership Australia*

*18th August: Max Sahl from Wycliffe Australia*

*25th August: Sam & Bec Gorfine from CMS*

Most of these mission partners spoke at all three in-person services (8am, 10am and 6pm) as well as recording their talk for the digital service. Susanna Baldwin was interviewed at each service and ran a special lunchtime event to explain further the work she is undertaking on the Plain English Version (PEV) translation. Sam & Bec Gorfine spoke at each service and then visited a number of Life Groups in the following fortnight.

This year we decided to focus August as a mission month but in 2025 our plan is to spread the visits out more evenly through the year.

In May Tim Johnson spent a week with Langham Partnership training pastors and preachers at Ukarumpa in the Eastern Highlands of PNG. This was an engagement with both Langham and also Wycliffe/SIL as the training took place at the Wycliffe/SIL base.



There have been other opportunities to build our mission partnerships as well. Church members have attended missions conferences, organized and participated in fundraising activities for mission partners, and served as volunteers and board members for our mission partners. In many ways, big and small we are working in partnership together for God's mission in the world.

St John's commitment to God's worldwide mission is a joy to be involved in. We are very thankful for we can play our part in this mission wherever we are.

## Children's Ministry

Maddy Bialecki

As always, there's a lot going on in Children and Families' Ministry at St John's! Below is a snapshot of what we've been up to this year.

If you're interested in a slightly more detailed version, you can find the latest Generations Ministry Update (July 2024) on our website at the Info Hub.

## St John's Kids

St John's Kids runs every Sunday during school terms at our 10am service including our Primary aged groups that meet in the Hall and Foyer, our Preschool room, and the Toddler Time program in the Creche.

### Toddler Time (Creche)

For the past year, the Toddler Time (TT) space has been facilitated primarily by Robyn Gorfine and some wonderful assistants. This space each Sunday is bustling with parents and young children and in some ways is already maxing its capacity (which is a good problem to have!).

Robyn and I met late 2023 to discuss developing a recurring curriculum for Creche that would be available for families to use both when facilitated by our leaders, but also accessible for families to disciple at home or during any service. We have developed a 2-year rotation with each term having a single theme and crafts/activities. E.g. Term 1 - God Made the World, Term 2 - God Made Me, Term 3 - God Loves Me, and Term 4 - God Made My Family.

Toddler Time needs more volunteers and supporters. We are aiming to recruit enough





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volunteers so that parents who wish to can leave their children in our team's care on occasional Sundays to be fed in services and supported. At this stage, we don't have the necessary leaders to facilitate this.

Ministry to families and children in this space is so important and I'm deeply thankful for the pastoral care of Robyn. Robyn has just this term started a monthly evening hosted at her home for mother's in this season (babies 0-5) to reflect on scripture, pray together, and share in fellowship and food.

### Preschool Room

Each Sunday we see anywhere between 3-10 children in this room which seems to fluctuate the most when we have events that involves visitors such as baptisms.

This year as we have introduced the curriculum for the Primary School groups that has followed along with the sermon series for terms 2-4. The preschool team have worked hard to use our existing resources to develop more age-appropriate teaching and ministry to our Preschoolers. Margaret, Tash and Belinda have been instrumental in sourcing content, craft, and activities for these sessions and working with me on finding helpful resources for our Preschoolers.

This term focusing on Daniel 1-6 we were able to produce some Preschool specific resources for St John's with the amazing provision of access to St Bart's Toowoomba's Children's Ministry Resources.

### Primary Groups

Each Sunday we have anywhere from 15-30 children in the Hall and Foyer for our primary program. For the past year we have seen new families make St John's their home church that have children in this age group, so it's encouraging to see growth alongside the ongoing maturing of

the children we have known for years!



From the beginning of the year, it was a goal to develop St John's specific curriculum resources for our teachers in the Primary space. We had amazing feedback about how Term 2's correlation with the Apostles' Creed for the whole church teaching series enabled rich conversations around household tables and during car rides, and it was encouraging to see how our young people responded to our statements of belief. Many of these weeks, I know had fruitful and engaging discussions about who our great God is and what He has done. Term 3 we again paralleled the teaching series in the Psalms and looked at some creative ways to respond to God in praise including writing Comics about God, making posters, learning songs based on the Psalms and using the psalms to reflect on God's love for us. Term 4 we have begun the Daniel series alongside the whole church with significant resourcing from St Bart's Toowoomba's Resources for Children's Ministry having their curriculum to bounce off from Daniel 1-6! We've already seen some fantastic and meaningful discussion from our young people wrestling with the Bible and wanting to understand who God is and his design and love for his family.

## Volunteers

Across our children's ministry for St John's Kids there is an absolutely amazing team of volunteers starting from age 12! I'm thankful for the continued partnership and support of ALL our leaders, but particularly of Tania in the Primary/Preschool space with admin, creating rosters and organising craft, and Robyn in our Toddler Time. We currently have 5 junior leaders serving on our St John's Kids teams either in the Preschool or Primary spaces. This year we've seen a few new faces join our teams and it's been a blessing to see a younger generation of leaders being trained and blessing our children with their gifts. Thank you to all our teachers and assistants who prepare, are present, and praying for our youngest brothers and sisters to come to know Jesus and make him known! As mentioned above, we are in need of volunteers for our Toddler Time space most of all so please get in touch with Maddy if serving in kids ministry is something you're considering!



## Peak Experiences

This year we were also able to return to hosting our peak experiences for some of our primary aged kids. At the start of term 3, our grade 3-4's and their families met at St John's for some games, scavenger hunting, discussion cards and a little focus group on prayer looking at a model and

discussing what prayer looked like in our families.

The end of term 3 saw our grade 5-6's and their families heading back to the McNicol's amazing property for our bonfire, bbq and wide games! Scavenger hunts, pinecone golf, dinner and discussion around the fire all resulted in a wonderful evening of connection and a chance to reflect on prayer for them as well!

Lastly, we saw our grade 6's welcomed into our youth ministry at the start of term 4 with the junior life group dinner and games at the Pilkington's and have seen some of our 6's already at youth life groups this term!

## Christmas 5pm Service

2023 saw 97 children and 154 adults join us for our 5pm service! Last year a couple of changes to the 'attractions' of the family service were made to respond to the growing cost of the animal farm and to be able to provide some meaningful alternatives that were still high value. A few volunteers invited families to play lawn games out the front before the start of the service and after as well as purchasing and offering some high-quality ice cream for children and families after the service in the foyer.

The actual service itself is a testament to the highly competent young people we have in our church family with the youth band leading all our worship, our St John's Kids doing our Bible readings, the skits and prayers, stage direction, and our teens helping in other areas like games, ice-cream scooping and tech. Rehearsals for our play started on the final Sunday of November and went through until the dress rehearsal just before. It was so encouraging to see how many young people wanted to be a part of the play but also wanted to serve in other ways like stage management. The families and young people who practiced and



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rehearsed for this event put in so many hours and did such a fantastic job!



Our theme for this coming Christmas 5pm is "The Biggest Promise Ever Made!" in line with our advent series teaching. Our cast is already practicing their lines and we will begin our rehearsals in December!

## Mainly Music

This year has seen a lot of changes to Mainly Music. With an ever-increasing demand on our program from the community, we launched 2024 with two groups! These groups run parallel to one another with one group starting at 930am and the next at 10am. They move through free play, to music and dancing, a God spot, and finally morning tea and craft.

Mainly Music continues to be a regular local outreach to our community that sees significant numbers of non-church families engaging with St John's and God through the music time and volunteers. We currently have just over 50 children enrolled in our program with anywhere between 1-4 parents, grandparents or guardians coming along from each family. Most weeks we will have an average of 17-19 children in the first group and

10-15 in the second group. The dedicated group of volunteers who oversee this have worked tirelessly to enable this program but are each week feeling the strain. More volunteers, and in particular areas of service such as tech, up front leading, and general connecting with the other families, are needed. Sue gives "great praise and thanks to God for the committed leaders, although weary, and that He has provided new helpers this year. Each week we have enough leaders to run the program, and wonderful connections are being made and support given to families in need." In Term 2 we had our annual trip to Rare Bears Playcenter in Eltham which was a highlight. It enables both groups to connect with one another and for conversations between parents and leaders to be given more space. It's also just amazing seeing how much fun our little ones get to have. We still have almost weekly inquiries for our program with other local programs struggling to see interest and



our capacity is limited being stretched to max. We are seeing great growth with the cohorts we have and continue to be encouraged by MM families engaging with other St John's ministries with their older children, like Going Bananas.

## Going Bananas

This year we were once again booked out with over 120 children from Melbourne's north and surrounds coming to St John's for Jungle Rumble!



Among our incredible team of over 60 volunteers we had 31 teens who not only went through the entire clearances process including some extra training on our whole team training day, but were essential to the smooth and joyful running of this year's program. Our tech and media team was entirely run by teenagers (one turning 18 a day before program) and our small groups, craft, science, and outdoor games all had junior leaders stepping up to lead and facilitate these spaces.

Our theme, Jungle Rumble, focused on the 'I am' statements Jesus makes in John's Gospel.

*"I am the way, the truth, and the life" John 14:6*

*"I am the good shepherd" John 10:11*

*"I am the light for the world" John 8:12*

*"I am the vine, and you are the branches" John 15:5*

*"I am the resurrection and the life" John 11:25*

*"I am the bread that gives life" John 6:25*

Through skits, Tim's awesome teaching, and our discussion in small groups, we were so excited to see these young people learning more about Jesus and what his life and person means for them. We could see a lot of this learning and growth reflected in our prayer wall that was on display for a few weeks after the program.

Our family fun night had a great recap of the teaching for the week, our awesome highlights video, some shenanigans from our skit team, and heaps of dancing and praising Jesus and lots of yummy food. There was a lot of really positive connecting between families and it was a great showcase of just how high quality and God-glorifying GB is. A BIG thank you to the core team, Sue Jetten, Kylie Pilkington, and Tania Grinton (which often includes their entire families) in how they dream, plan, and execute this fabulous event! There was a lot of joyful sharing, really encouraging connections made between leaders and participants, and lots of positive memories made amongst our team as we bumped out on Friday night.

We have since also seen some of our GB families connecting with our St John's Kids program and some of our junior leaders connecting with St John's Youth after their experiences at Jungle Rumble. Please keep these young people and their families in your prayers and for God to be





## Senior Minister's Report

preparing, even now, all that He will do through this ministry in the year to come! We're also excited to announce that Going Bananas has been successful in receiving a grant for our 2025 program from the CEBS Grant for Children's and Youth Ministry through the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne. Our heartfelt thanks and gratitude go out to CEBS for their support and partnership in this amazing ministry!



## Kids Hope

Our now ten-year relationship with Kids Hope continues with smaller mentor numbers at present but a great enthusiasm from the Diamond Creek P.S. Wellbeing team and Principal. At present we have 3 mentors who go for one hour every week. At the end of this year, we will say goodbye to one of our mentors as they take a well-deserved break with their mentee graduating primary school. As many of you know, we have had some amazing good news stories from our ministry through Kids Hope and I'm very committed to continuing this program as long as possible. My goal is to see another few mentors engaged each year with longevity in mentoring and ideally some more male mentors who are in great demand at Diamond Creek P.S.

On a personal note, I have thoroughly enjoyed the mentoring process of engaging with the school,

having a warm and friendly mentee who's always excited to see me, getting to know the teachers and staff, and occasionally running into some St John's kids! To make such a big difference in this one child's life is a great blessing every week. One hour once a week is all it takes to help make difference in not just a child's life, but a family and a school community. There is 1 more mentor projected to start in Term 1 2025 but we could always use more so please contact Maddy if you're interested in this amazing program!

## Special Religious Instruction (SRI)

Our partnership with SRI in Kangaroo Ground PS has needed to be suspended this year but please continue to pray for Nerida, our other volunteers, and the Kangaroo Ground PS children and staff and thank God for the many years of faithful ministry our St John's family have given to this community to show Jesus and his wonderful gospel.

## Playgroup

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the suspension of our Playgroup program as of the end of 2023. This group began in Term 2 after a soft start event Term 1, and had a great interest from key families in our community both St John's and non-St John's. We saw some great relationships built during its time. Unfortunately, due to it being both a St John's hosted program and not having enough of a leadership or core team to sustainably run, we had to suspend the playgroup for the foreseeable future. At the end of 2023, we invited all our families to consider Mainly Music as a slightly different alternative that still engaged with this age group and a few of our key families moved over to Mainly Music and continue to positively connect with us today.

## Youth Ministry

### Maddy Bialecki

As always, there's a lot going on in Youth Ministry at St John's! Below is a snapshot of what we've been up to this year. If you're interested in a slightly more detailed version, you can find the latest Generations Ministry Update (July 2024) on our website at the Info Hub.

### Youth Life Groups

Each Sunday our leaders meet from 315pm to brief and pray before our youth join from 345pm until either the service begins, our monthly dinners start, or youth band practice begins. Both our junior and senior life groups have been making our way through the Apostle's Creed during terms 2 and 3 and found the slower pace really helpful for repeating themes or theologies that need a lot of time to digest. It has led to some incredibly fruitful discussions, studies, and opportunities for our youth to do Q&A. In Term 4 our juniors are following the Daniel series whilst our seniors use the theme of Daniel to explore some tough topics.



There has been an incredible amount of growth in the faith and personal conviction of many of our young people in the past year! Shiloh was

baptised and confirmed, and Elijah and Emily also confirmed in August. How wonderful to witness!



Despite having major leader changes at the start of this year, our life groups feel like they have some wonderful rapport and depth of conversation and sharing. The introduction of sermon 'scavenger hunts' in term 4 2023 has also made a great impact in their engagement with talks and their learning and understanding of our teaching series. It's been more fruitful than expected in their own personal evangelism and faith.

Kylie, Mark and Jason work enormously hard to prepare content for our energetic and persistent juniors. This group is so big and enthusiastic that most weeks they split into two smaller groups which means two of them prepare a study every week in advance. Our juniors are averaging 8-10 but as of term 4 we have seen more than 12-13 every week so far!

I primarily lead our senior life group with the amazing support of Scott Pilkington. We have enjoyed a slightly different approach to the teaching whilst also having a group that is in a season of transition with an average of 3-5 attending regularly. There are some seniors who have already transitioned out of our life group model but all of these 5 (and those who attend 6pm) are actively serving on 6pm core team, tech



teams, youth band, St John's Kids and Going Bananas!!

Almost all of our youth group was involved in serving as Junior Leaders at Going Bananas. One of my key challenges in youth is recruiting leaders into this high-demand ministry in terms of frequency and preparation. At this stage, only two households support the leadership of this ministry, which I'm very conscious of in weeks when one household is otherwise engaged. A key priority for the coming few months will be to recruit more life group leaders, and potentially a separate few extra volunteers who are happy to facilitate the external events to give our life group leaders some balance.

I would love to take this space to thank all the parents, spiritual parents, and people of St John's who are investing in our youth across all the different platforms they learn, grow and serve. Alison and Damien do a fantastic job at discipling our youth in the band to model theologically reflecting on what they are doing in worship and growing their skills for God's praise. As well as our St John's Kids leaders and Going Bananas teams who are teaching, empowering and equipping children! There are

countless others who have trained, taught, loved and prayed for our youth that I mostly want to encourage by sharing the growth and quality of these young people in their love of God and His church. Praise the Lord!

### **Northern Churches Youth Camp (NCYC) & Northern Churches Youth Events (NCYE)**

This year we saw a bigger than ever group of young people descend on Upper Plenty Conference Centre and for the first time in our history became interdenominational with the Persian Resurrection Church sending 6 of their young people! We have since had 3 new churches join our group that will hopefully join us in Upper Plenty next year!

This year our Core Team invited Stephen Tan from Regeneration Church Monash to be our key speaker across the weekend. His talks focused on the themes of Cradle, Cross, and Crown and were geared for the youth to practice evangelistic conversation in their own contexts, including an awesome workshop on the Saturday around faith and science. Our discussion groups went deeper on these topics and were a great space for youth from different churches to get to





know one another and open up about their own faith journeys. Our own Abi Johnson shared her testimony on the weekend which was positively and thankfully received by many, and Jon and Daniel stepped up to support in Tech for the whole weekend with barely any notice.

Our time always includes the delicious food from Upper Plenty's staff, as well as awesome wide-games, activity rotations, free time play, quiet times, discussion groups, and worship including a reflective style 'service' on Sunday morning to process and respond to all that God had been saying to us over the weekend. As always, the team was an incredible example of partnership in the gospel and I'm deeply thankful for the partnership of St James Ivanhoe, Plentylife, and All Saints Greensborough for how our young people are known to one another, and our leaders continue growing in love and friendship for one another as we seek to disciple our youth.

Following on from the success of our camp, St. James hosted a youth night including games, worship and supper in Term 2. Our Alex gave his testimony in an interview with me, and Kirk taught from the parable of the persistent widow on prayer. It was an incredibly encouraging night with youth from Banyule Parish and Redemption Church Craigieburn joining our group. In Term 3 our NCYE was at Greensborough OzTenpin with a noticeable increase in numbers from last year's event around the same time, and a continued joy in seeing each of our individual youth ministries growing even as we grow together.

Term 4 we will be heading back to All Saints Greensborough for another scavenger hunt at the plaza where we will also launch our NCYC 2025 dates and theme with tickets open from that evening onwards!

## Combined Youth Events (NEW Collective)

Each term we also have the opportunity to attend a NEW Collective event in the northern suburbs. This year we have had less capacity due to calendar clashes, however, our youth life group leaders were greatly blessed by their Youth Leaders Training Day hosted by Diamond Valley BC with a delicious breakfast and some amazing teaching and discussions!

## Thank God it's Friday (TGIF)

### Twice a term Fridays 6:30-9:30pm

This year we began a trial youth outreach in our local community that meets twice a term at the Diamond Creek Skate Park. The idea of the drop-in style program was to make a space for play, fun and create meaningful relationships with local non-church youth. Each event our team sets up lights, a marquee, picnic rugs, cushions, games, henna, and engages at the skate park. Every time is different in terms of who engages, how long they stay, and what kinds of conversations we can have. It's been an encouraging start but has a long way to go in terms of building traction and a presence in our community.





I've had (and others on team have had) some great conversations with local teens about their lives and pressures as well as lots of being silly, enjoying the bikes and skateboards, feeding local teens, seeing their joy at our generosity, and just being really encouraged by the commitment of the team who are pioneering in this with me.

My particular thanks go to Chris and Belinda Grinton and Jason Bialecki for their consistent, engaging and welcoming attitudes with Lachie McInnes and Dave Tregale. And specifically, for Chris always coming on a 'flyer walk' with me to invite more people to the space and being willing to talk to strangers and police. The Stevens family in particular has also supported this ministry with Paul providing lights and skateboards as well as the kids coming along to enjoy the space and hang out with us. Our hope is that more of our SJDC teens will be interested in inviting their friends to the space in the future.

The next stage of TGIF is to keep building, rocking up, making friends and making a difference however slow or small it may be. We're also excited to announce we have been successful in receiving a grant from the Melbourne Anglican

Foundation for our 2025 program and look forward to dreaming up all the possibilities as to how we can use those funds to make an impact in our local community for our youth.

## Young Adults Update

Joel Snibson

In 2023, the young adult community continued to connect each Sunday and through regular social events, notably the inter-church trivia night held at St. John's. Additionally, 19 young adults attended the November retreat, where they enjoyed a great time of community, outdoor activities, and spiritual growth. In 2024, there has been an increase in social events, some held jointly with other local churches. In coordination with Delle Matthews, there has also been a focus on establishing more young adult life groups. This has included the introduction of a new Wednesday group and planning for an additional group in 2025. Planning is now underway for the upcoming Young Adult retreat in November in Taggerty, where Ros Manson will be the speaker. A big thank you to Mike Ellis (Sunday @6 Young Adult representative), Chloe Manson, Lachie McInnes, and Kirsten Grinton for their dedicated investment in our young adults.



## Safe Ministry

As a Christian community, meeting together to worship God in the name of Jesus Christ, we affirm our commitment to the safety of each child and young person who interacts with our community. God's word makes it clear that all people are created equal and that any position of power is to be accepted humbly and with the intent of serving others, never to harm them. Our faith motivates us to love everyone and never to discriminate against anyone, especially based on age, race, gender, language, sexual orientation, disability or family/social background. Therefore, we seek to protect the safety of all young people without exception. We take a zero tolerance approach to child abuse. We want our church to be a place where young people can come to know and experience the love of Jesus and his followers.



Child Safety is embedded into our practices as St John's including in the following ways:

- Parish Council has a standing item on Child-Safety as part of each meeting.
- All people working with under 18s at St John's must obtain a Clearance which includes a working with Children Check, Police Check, and screening by Kooyoora (the Professional

Standards body used by the Diocese of Melbourne).

- Training for all people working with children and youth to ensure awareness and compliance with safe ministry practice.
- We communicate regularly about Child Safety through posters around our church building, upfront notices, slides at the start of each service, and age appropriate conversations about safety within our programs.
- The keeping and updating of a child safe register for the parish which is provided to the diocese on demand. This register will be sent to the diocese as part of our annual returns and accompanied by a declaration by the Senior Minister that we are following all child safety requirements.

Some of the new systems we've implemented in Safe Ministry in the past year include the following;

- Updated our Safe Ministry website page to include a welcome video, and a more user-friendly layout that now features more than just the screening and training requirements for volunteers working with children and young people. One addition in this space is the Welcome Pack for New Families that is available for parents to download to communicate about safety and safe ministry with their children.
- Developed a safe ministry feedback form, and we encourage families to use this as a regular check-in with their children about their experiences at St John's, and to encourage conversations about what Safe Ministry looks like.
- Implemented our first Teen Helpers Training





using the brand new Diocesan program facilitated in person by Maddy during the training of our junior leaders for Going Bananas. All of our youth regularly serving in St John's Kids were also taken through the Clearances process for the first time along with the Going Bananas team.

- Late last year we also invested in some 'Calm Space' resources that are currently available in the Library/Prayer Room for use of anyone who needs some space to regulate or just decompress during our programs and services.

The level of compliance required for child safety is very high and it changes regularly. I am thankful for the hard work that we all are doing as a church to ensure that everyone is safe. My thanks especially to Carolyn Burns, who serves as our child-safety officer, and to Maddy Bialecki who as Generations Minister has particular responsibilities in this area. Thank you to all our wonderful volunteers who undertake the compliance requirements in order to serve our beautiful children and young people. As we respond to these requirements,

we are encouraged to know that each step is an intentional part of our love, care and protection of those more vulnerable in our midst. It is a ministry of self-giving service and displays a positive fragrance of the gospel to all families who engage with our ministries to children and youth.

As a church which is intergenerational and has thriving ministry to children, youth and families we know how important it is to do this safely and well. Thank you for your part in this, because it is a church-wide and every church member responsibility. For more detailed information about our screening processes or reporting procedures for Child Safety at St John's please see our website at [stjohnsdc.org.au/safe/](http://stjohnsdc.org.au/safe/)

## Digital Ministry

It has been a year of transition for our digital ministry as we farewelled Andy Barras in June. Andy had been on our staff team for 7 years and spearheaded the implementation and growth of our digital ministries. Andy guided us through the Covid years and enabled us to not only survive the periods of lock down but to also develop a new ministry area and provide leadership in this space to the wider church. Andy's gifts were



recognised in this as the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne offered him a digital ministry role.

Since Andy's departure Joel Pilkington has served with us one day a week to film, edit and upload the digital service. Joel has done a great job as he has stepped into Andy's very big shoes. This has enabled us to continue to produce a 'made for digital' service of high quality.

### Digital Services

Our Digital Service has continued to be a viable option for many regulars and visitors, for those sick and those travelling, to both remain connected and to get a sense of what our church is like before attending in-person.

In the past year we have continued the format of this service, namely shaped specifically for an online audience, rather than trying to replicate an in-person experience. This has meant a shorter service, focused more on the talk, with a very brief introduction to the passage before launching into the teaching.

### Digital Outreach

Through our YouTube, Facebook and Instagram accounts, we have continued to produce content aimed at a non-churched audience. The main

source of this content has been snippets from sermons, posted as 1-2 minute clips. This aspect of the digital ministry has paused since Andy's departure, although we had have a catalogue of reels that we did use for a few months. As Joel is growing in his confidence with the digital service he will add the production of reels from sermons into his weekly schedule and we have increased his hours to enable this to happen.

### The Tech Team

Our tech team has continued to develop their skills in facilitating worship during our in-person services, and I'm thankful to each member for their commitment to this ministry. At both 10am and 6pm, it's great to see a large number of kids and youth serving in these roles.

### Looking to the Future

There are a number of important things that we need to be mindful and prayerful about as we move into 2025. Our current Vision: "Reconnect and build a multiethnic and intergenerational network of congregations, Life Groups and mission initiatives for Diamond Creek and the northern suburbs," will culminate in 2025. This was formulated on the back of Covid and God has been very kind in answering our prayers and enabling the outworking of this vision. In 2025 we need to agree on a new Vision and Strategic Directions for the next season of our life as a church. We are growing and we need to think about how to disciple and nurture those who are joining our church. We also have significant assets that we are stewarding in terms of finances and property and need to make decisions so that we are faithful in this stewardship to enable good ministry to continue into the future. We are looking at enlisting an external consultant



to assist us in this Vision and Strategic planning as we need someone who is outside our church community to guide us with fresh eyes and objectivity.

There will also be change within our diocese in the coming year as Archbishop Philip Freier retires after 18 years in the role. This is a significant change and there is uncertainty about who the new person will be and the vision they will set for our diocese. Whoever the person is they will face incredible challenges as the diocesan finances are unsustainable and it seems likely that we will need to sell 10-20% of our property in order to balance the diocesan budget and set up investment income to enable this to remain in balance.

There will also be staff changes for us in 2025 here at St John's. With Andy Barras's departure in 2024 we have been looking about how best to utilize these days of work. It is encouraging that we have been able to employ Joel Pilkington as digital ministry coordinator for 1 day a week and Isobel Fisher as Communications Coordinator for 1 day a week. Our plan is to also recruit some additional ministry assistance for the 10am service, given the Senior Minister's already full load. In addition we will have Maddy Bialecki

on maternity leave for 6 months in 2025. I'm pleased that Tania Grinton and Lachie McInnes will backfill this role, each doing 2 days a week and covering the Children's Ministry and Youth Ministry respectively. What is particularly pleasing about all the above appointments are that they are internal and utilizing the gifts of our own church members to serve. St John's has long had a reputation of raising up ministry workers and being a training ground for people to go on to other ministry and mission responsibilities.



In 2025 we are also excited to be participating in Hope25, a national initiative for the Anglican Church of Australia. Hope25 seeks to share the hope that we have in Jesus with those around us and so is an intentional season of evangelism for our church. Lent 2025 is a season preparation





for mission and then from Easter to Pentecost all churches are being encouraged to reach out to their neighbourhoods with the hope of Jesus. We will be doing training together as a church using The Ripple Effect an Australian resource on evangelism. We have also planned to run Alpha and intentional outreach services and events from Easter onwards next year. I encourage you to be praying for this season of outreach as we offer hope in an uncertain world, hope that is steadfast and sure because it is grounded in the risen Lord Jesus.

## Thank you

I'm grateful for our godly and passionate staff team. Thank you to the current staff team of Joel Snibson, Maddy Bialecki, Delle Matthews, Carolyn Burns and Joel Pilkington. Over the past year we have said farewell to and thanked Andy Barras for his faithful ministry and service. We also had the benefit of having Rachel Farrar from Virtual Church Assist work with us for a few months to aid us in the period of transition.


I'm grateful for faithful and wise Wardens: Mick Fisher, Nat Coleman and Alan Fairweather. David Woods has served as our Treasurer for the past 6 years and I cannot emphasise enough how much he has done to faithfully guide us in use of our finances. David has a heart for mission, for service, for good stewardship, and for God and his people. He has worked tirelessly in the role of Treasurer and I am immensely thankful for him.

I'm grateful for our prayerful, pastoral and strategically-minded Parish Council: Graham Batcheler, Dushi Arulanantham, Leah Rudd and Chris Grinton. So much of what happens at St John's is behind the scenes, unseen and unnoticed. The fact that we are able to undertake mission and ministry in a way that is well resourced, safe, and

strategic is testimony to those on our governance teams as well as the army of volunteers who serve so faithfully every week.

I am now officially the longest serving Vicar in the history of St John's. This is a great honour and privilege for me. I love St John's deeply and am so thankful to God that he has called me to be your pastor and teacher. I look forward to continuing to serve with you in this mission and ministry that we share together as the body of Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God.

In Christ,



TIM JOHNSON  
*Senior Minister*



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# WARDENS' REPORT

*Nat Coleman  
Alan Fairweather  
Mick Fisher*

The Churchwardens during 2023/2024 were Nat Coleman, Alan Fairweather, and Mick Fisher. We have again worked well as a team with Nat focusing on finances, Mick concentrating on staff matters and Alan working tirelessly on property issues.

We are pleased to present the Wardens' report for the 2023/2024 church year and, as we have seen, there has been a lot happening through the year.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the members of Parish Council: Dushi Arulanantham, Graham Batcheler, Chris Grinton, Leah Rudd, and David Woods. It has been a challenging year, as we shake off the effects of the pandemic and move on to plan for the future of St John's with a confident Vision.

We thank the Council for their prayerful support, encouragement, and collective wisdom. Their guidance has been invaluable as we have considered our path, all the while seeking to 'know Jesus, make Him known.'

We continue to host the Persian Resurrection Church, with their Christ-centred services conducted each Saturday evening. It has been a joy to develop a strong relationship with the PRC, and to be able to share our facilities as they bring the gospel to Farsi-speaking people in Melbourne.

Many events and programs were run through the year by St John's people to reach out to our local community.

For two weeks in April the 'Together' art exhibition



was visited by over 300 people who were treated to a wonderful display of works by local artists and artisans. And, of course, there were the many regular activities that go on day in and day out all year.

After many years the hard decision was made in consultation with Phil Wadeson and Dianne Cheraghi not to present the hospitality tent at the town fair. The small number of St John's members offering help to set up the tent or be available to serve people during the day made it apparent it was time to rethink our involvement at the fair. Nonetheless, we remain committed to finding ways to serve the people of Diamond Creek at the 2025 town fair.

Many of us will remember how very well attended the Christmas Carols were last December at Coventry Oval, where a carefully thought-out program was presented by musicians from St John's. Rehearsals are underway already for this year's Carols.

## Staff

Once again, our staff has been a great blessing to us. Despite the difficulties and high workload each member has been sustaining, all have been cheerful, encouraging, and resourceful, and have adapted to every situation with good grace and humour. The parish has been blessed by God through their dedication and ability to work together, supporting one another as they care for each of us as well as reaching out to the wider community. Our staff team has included:



**Ven Dr Tim Johnson**

After 11+ years Tim is now the longest serving Vicar at St John's. We continue to thank God for the wisdom, integrity and purpose shown by Tim, who as well as being our senior minister, also continues as the Archdeacon of the Yarra. Again and again, we are blessed by his talents, amply demonstrated in searching sermons and the clarity of his mind in maintaining the focus and direction of the parish.

We are also grateful for the pastoral care he shows to all who attend St John's or reach out to us in other ways. We look forward to the coming years, confident that God will bless Tim and all who are touched by his ministry in Diamond Creek and far beyond.



**Revd Joel Snibson**

Joel is often seen preaching, leading services, and is deeply involved in the life of the church. He is well loved by all congregations at St John's and is widely respected for his character and abilities. We thank God for bringing Joel to St John's as our associate minister.

This year Joel has continued the responsibility of

overseeing the Sunday@6pm service, its core team, and all its goings on. He has provided support and empowerment to the youth and particularly the young adults. He has also had responsibility for local mission. The practical involvement and humility shown in his leadership has been a great inspiration to us all.



**Maddy Bialecki**

Maddy joined the St John's staff team in mid-2023 as our Generations Minister and has brought her own brand of energy and joy to this vital role that she performs so well.

She has thrown herself into the job with fantastic results, leading, teaching, and inspiring all age groups she cares for. Along with reaching out to local youths on the streets of Diamond Creek with TGIF, she develops programs and organizes events (such as the Northern Churches Youth Camp attended by youth from several churches) as well as longer term planning. Somehow, she also finds time to prepare impressively enlightening and challenging sermons. We continue to look forward to the great things that will come through her ministry at St John's.



**Delle Matthews**

Delle has been overseeing Life Groups in an honorary capacity for three years now, and true to Delle's style, they continue to run smoothly under her charge. We thank God for her gifts of pastoral care, guidance, and wisdom in this role, and for the support she gives to Life Group leaders. We also see her leading services or delivering challenging sermons, sharing her vast wealth of knowledge, experience, and wisdom with us. We thank Delle for taking on the position with such dedication.





## Carolyn Burns

Carolyn is often the first contact people have with our church, and her gentle and caring nature is invaluable in this position. She also does a lot of the planning and rostering so necessary in a church the size of St John's. Many of us rarely see how well she handles all kinds of events and occurrences, whether planned or unplanned. The calm and compassionate way Carolyn deals with all aspects of her work is a credit to her and a great benefit to us all.



## Andy Barras

Throughout Andy's ministry we have all been able to feel part of the St John's family - informed, connected and with a sense of belonging.

Andy's position as Digital Minister served us very well, particularly while we were in 'lock down' during Covid restrictions. Since the lifting of restrictions, the focus of Andy's role shifted to providing a modified digital service to those St John's members who for various reasons could not attend in person, and to on-line people who live far away.

Andy's tech knowledge and skills in the digital field were recognized by the diocese, and he was offered a position as Digital Media Specialist. He accepted that position with our good wishes in June of this year. Nonetheless, he has remained a helpful digital expert to us, as Andy, Lenny and their family have continued to worship with us since that time.

## Joel Pilkington

Joel started working as our Digital Ministry Assistant for 6 hours a week when Andy stepped

down. He has done a marvelous job filming, editing, and uploading the digital service and podcasts, as well as putting together ProPresenter slides for in-person services. His enthusiastic willingness to solve whatever problems may occur and help staff with anything digital is not only deeply appreciated, it has been essential to keeping things running at times. Great work Joel!

## Behind the scenes

Henrike Brussaard-Kerr works one day a week taking care of the back-office paperwork, entering transactions as well as looking after the office from time to time. Belinda Grinton and Kylie Pilkington also stood in at times while Carolyn has been on leave.

Dianne Cheraghi works in the "back office" performing the important role of financial bookkeeper with a gentle blend of helpfulness and guidance, making sure that the books are kept accurately and up to date.

We thank all the staff for the grace and patience shown under the endless rigours of daily life in a parish office. We also acknowledge the extra load they each have carried again this year with activities at St John's gaining pace as we come out of the 'fog' that Covid caused for so long. Each member of staff has borne the extra load with understanding and grace, and we sincerely thank them for their efforts, their forbearance, and their willingness to be servants of God, whatever the circumstance.

The dedication of each staff member has been a blessing to us corporately and individually. We praise God for the provision of a team with such a wide range of skills, capabilities, and passions. Together, with the support of their families, all

our staff members have played significant roles in doing God's work in Diamond Creek and we gladly take this opportunity to thank them.

## Finance

We started the 2023/2024 financial year with a challenge to our finances again. Going into the year with another deficit budget, the Wardens were determined to keep a close eye on our finances to continue being careful stewards of our resources, and ensure we were still meeting our obligations.

The decision to frame a deficit budget was not made lightly. Rising operating costs meant we had the choice of three alternatives. We had to either seek a substantial increase in giving from the congregations, or reduce our fundamental mission programs, or dip into cash reserves accumulated over past years. Given that the economy was still recovering from Covid effects, a big increase in offertory was out of the question, as was pulling back on mission locally and beyond. So, it became clear God had blessed us with previous surpluses for a reason.

Confirmation of the people's support for this approach came quickly with a strong response to our Thanksgiving Appeal which gave us a good foundation to begin 2023/2024. Periodically through the year the Wardens made presentations to the congregations to keep the parishioners informed so all would clearly understand our financial position.

Though we budgeted for a deficit of \$36K, not having a Digital Minister for a full financial year and strong offertory receipts meant that by God's grace we have been able to end the 2023/24 financial year with a deficit of \$7K - much smaller than expected.

Given the surpluses accrued over past years the Wardens and Parish Council are confident to work again with a deficit budget to continue to develop the mission of St John's in our community. Much consideration was given to this decision by the Wardens, Treasurer David Woods, and the rest of Parish Council.

2024/2025 is presenting as another challenging year in many ways but we are confident that with continued prayer and support from God and the congregation, we will make it through.

We make special mention of the tireless efforts of David Woods who is stepping down after six continuous years of service as Treasurer. His experience and attention to detail have been very much appreciated. We have also been blessed to have Dianne Cheraghi who, we are glad to say, will continue to be our able bookkeeper. The work David and Dianne have done this year has again gone above and beyond the titles of the positions they hold. What they do is invaluable to the parish and we are thankful for their knowledge, tenacity, and support.



## Property

Throughout this year, as in the past, there have been many people who volunteer of their time and skills to assist in maintaining and improving the buildings and gardens of the church. This was

especially significant during June to August while Alan and Carolyn Fairweather were overseas. The Wardens and all members of the church take this opportunity to thank all who stepped up to help. Their support, in so many ways, is greatly appreciated.

Minor maintenance work continued throughout the year, with repairs to the rendering on the interior wall of the old church on the carpark side completed. Electrical work included overhauling the main switchboard controlling lighting in the church and replacement of lamps inside the church in addition to the external floodlighting with low-energy LED units.

Other maintenance included servicing of the bi-fold glass doors between the foyer and the hall, and separately, servicing of the external automatic glass doors at the main entrance to the foyer.

As usual, air conditioner, exit sign and fire extinguisher checking and maintenance has happened, as well gutter cleaning and other tidying up.

Working bees have been conducted with many gardening needs addressed. Thank you to all those who have attended. A special thanks to Philip Wadson for his commitment to caring for the lawns and gardens on a regular basis at St John's and to Bruce Harman for attending to the lawns and gardens at St Katherine's and St Michael's.

Termites found at St Michael's have now been eradicated, however, the "Sunday School" room will have to be demolished because of the damage caused.

Every month, an Essential Safety Measures inspection and report is undertaken on all physical



aspects of the church buildings, the processes involved, the testing and tagging regimes etc., all designed to keep the area, as well as the people using the facilities safe. St Katherine's and St Michael's buildings are included in these inspections and reports. Appropriate work or processes are then put in place to rectify any areas needing attention.

As in 2023, again this year the Diocese conducted Occupational Health and Safety Inspections throughout the three church complexes as well as audits of all our Essential Safety Measures (policies and procedures). A change of the Diocesan appointed inspector has brought some small matters to light. These are being addressed progressively as required.

We have been blessed with wonderful facilities in which to meet and to share with the community. It is an ongoing commitment to maintain them, which we can all be involved.

It has been an honour to work together with so many wonderful people in this church and this community. Now let us continue to trust in God and strive on to the praise and glory of His name as we seek to be more and more involved in the life of our local community, showing God's love to all.

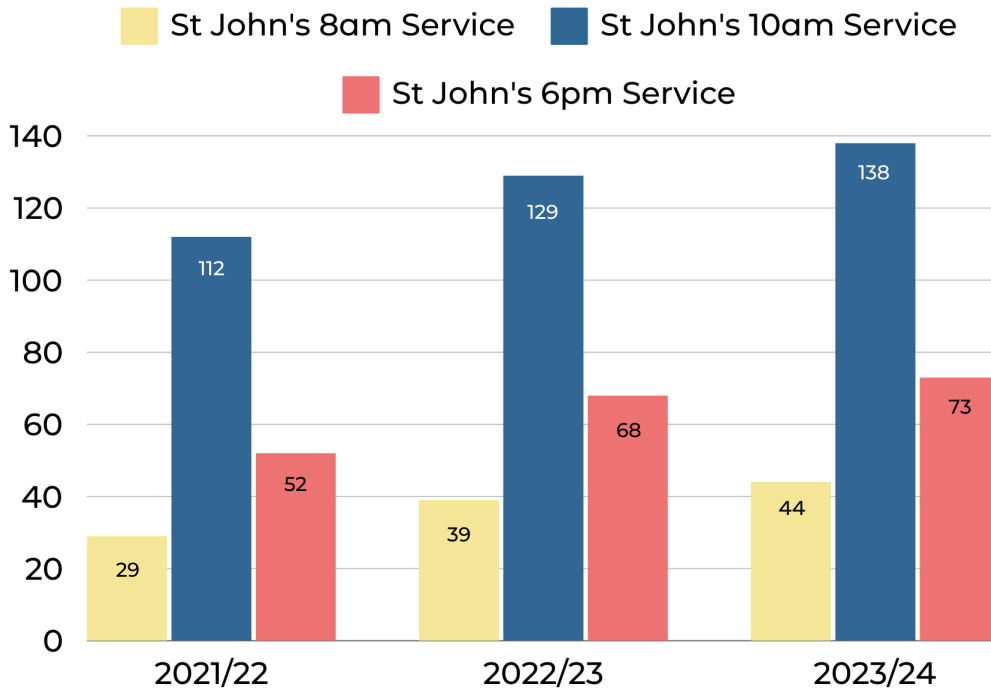
NAT COLEMAN  
ALAN FAIRWEATHER  
MICK FISHER.

*Wardens*



# Parish Statistics

Numbers never tell the whole story, but here are some statistics about our attendances at church. It is encouraging to see such positive growth in the last year! It's encouraging to see growth in both our attendance and evidence of effective discipleship across all congregations and programs.



### CHILDREN



2022/23	2023/24
28 0-5 YRS	35 0-5 YRS
35 PRIMARY	34 PRIMARY

### YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS (LESS THAN 25 YRS)



2022/23	2023/24
25 YOUTH	28 YOUTH
19 Y.A.	16 Y.A.

### LIFEGROUPS



2022/23	2023/24
208 PEOPLE ATTENDING	223 PEOPLE ATTENDING
21 LIFEGROUPS	22 LIFEGROUPS

### BAPTISMS



2022/23	2023/24
5 INFANTS	14 INFANTS
	2 ADULTS

### CONFIRMATIONS



2022/23	2023/24
3 CONF.	8 CONF.



2023  
2024



**ST JOHN'S  
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