

St Stephen's  
WILLOUGHBY

# ANNUAL REPORT

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2022

From the Rector

## WELCOME

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This report is the reflection of many hours of service & joy in the life of our church. There are encouragements, and reflections summarising some of what God has done in 2021. It's also an opportunity to take stock and consider where we must go next. How can we, a people captivated by Christ, better pray, bring, grow and celebrate together? This is a task for each of us – no one is unimportant in this. God has placed each of here at this moment to serve this church.

We long to be a church made beautiful, diverse and large by the gracious work of Christ. It's a vision shaped by God's promise of the final church:

“... there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.<sup>10</sup> And they cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation belongs to our God,  
who sits on the throne,  
and to the Lamb.” (Rev 7:9-10)

God promises a people who are clothed in the beautiful robes of righteousness, who come from such a diversity of cultures and nations, who are too large to count and who's hearts are filled with Christ. Would God give us a taste of this future!

As you read through this report I encourage you to consider how God may use you in his mission.



Rev. Prashanth Colombage  
Senior Minister



# PRAYING BIG PRAYERS SHAPED BY THE GOSPEL



The Apostle Paul's famous prayer in Ephesians 3 finishes with these words:

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,<sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (Eph 3:20-21)

This is our God – he can and is doing more than we can imagine. This confidence in his commitment to his gospel of salvation prompts us to pray and shape our prayers around his plans.

This mission priority is implemented through:

1. Weekly Prayer meetings
2. Quarterly Prayer events
3. Gospel and Prayer Groups

## Weekly & Quarterly Prayer Meetings

Over 2021 we held 3 parish wide prayer times – 2 prayer nights (Feb & June 2021) and a prayer morning (November 2021). In addition, we host 2 regular prayer meetings each week (Mon & Sat mornings). Weekly prayer meetings focus on the ongoing ministry needs and opportunities of the parish.

Quarterly prayer meetings are an encouraging moment to meet across congregations and ages to pray together. We aim to actively shape our prayers around the gospel and move through confession, thanksgiving and request periods each time.



Prayer Morning in November

### ⚠ Challenges:

- Attendance at prayer days hasn't grown. It remained steady at ~30.
- We do not see many younger members engaged in this ministry space.
- We trialed a morning prayer in November. Only two families regularly attend.
- Encouraging our children and youth to pray is crucial. It needs continued focus from our broader church community.





1st Mission Priority

## PRAYING BIG PRAYERS SHAPED BY THE GOSPEL

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### Gospel and Prayer (GaP) Groups

In February 2022 we renamed and reshaped our midweek groups. Previously known as Connect Groups we have renamed them Gospel and Prayer Groups following a period of reflection by our group leaders.

These groups will provide regular opportunities to help our members shape their life and prayer around the gospel. We hope to get a better understanding of how to pray big prayers shaped by the gospel.

### What we plan to focus on in 2022?

1. Refining and developing GaP Groups to help shape our prayers around the gospel through leadership training and clarification of purpose.
2. Engaging more people in GaP Group Ministry with a goal of 65% of people regularly attending GaP Groups by Dec 2022.
3. Running another Quarterly Prayer Morning for the church in 2022.

### How can you engage?

Join a GaP Group

Attend the quarterly prayer meeting and encourage one other person to join you.



## **BRINGING FRIENDS TO FATIH**



The first disciples in John 1 came to spend time with Jesus and were so captivated by Him that they went to tell their family and friends to come and meet Jesus too. Our prayer and goal is that we too would be so captivated by Jesus that we bring our friends to come to meet Jesus, so that they might—by God’s power and mercy—come to have saving faith in Him too.

### **Snapshots of our 'Bringing friends' events.**



#### **Evangelism Training with John Lavender - Term 2, 2021**

In early 2021, we hosted a three-week training session with John Lavender from Evangelism and New Churches. John helped us consider how we might share our faith.

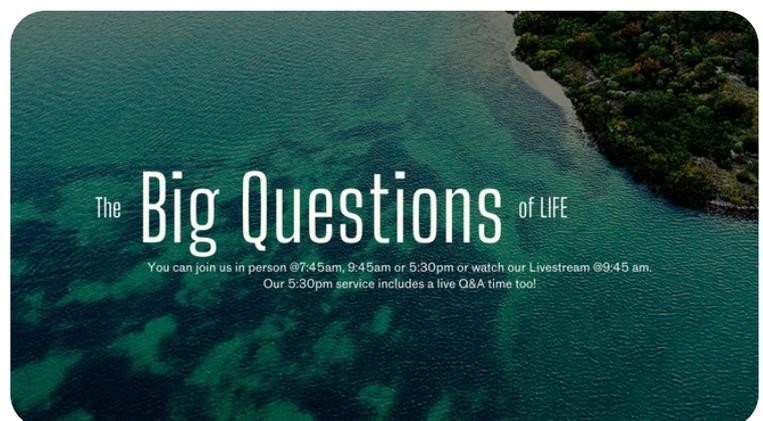


#### **Simply Christianity - Online Term 3, 2021**

Simply Christianity is a great way to consider the historical nature of the Christian story. John Dickson started the course for us last year with session one.

#### **The Big Questions of Life Sermon Series - Term 1, 2022**

We began this year with a January sermon series exploring how a Christian gospel-worldview addresses big life questions.





## BRINGING FRIENDS TO FAITH

### Lunar New Year Dinner - Term 1, 2022

Another event that gave church members a chance to invite friends to hear Jesus was the Lunar New Year Dinner. This was the first time St Stephen's had hosted an event celebrating the Lunar New Year, and God in His kindness gave us unexpected success in so many ways.



56 Attendees

23  
Non-Church  
Guests

### Alpha Course - Term 1, 2022

From the Lunar New Year Dinner guests, we had about 10 who regularly attended our six Alpha nights, exploring who Jesus is and what it means to have life and faith in Him. The team of discussion facilitators were Stephen Buckley, Liz Cooper and Jacinta Lin; we were also helped by Karen Buckley and the teams of GaP groups that provided dinner for each of the nights.



10  
Attendees

Alpha

4 people ticked  
the box  
*"I have put  
my trust in  
Jesus"*





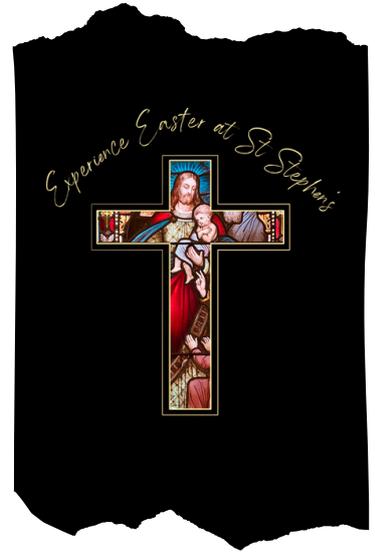
## 2nd Mission Priority

# BRINGING FRIENDS TO FAITH

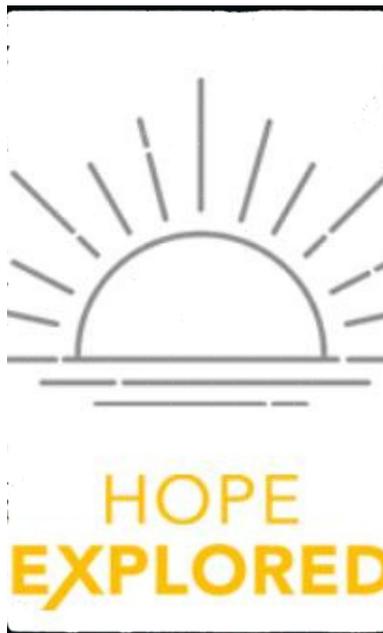


### Experience Easter at St Stephen's

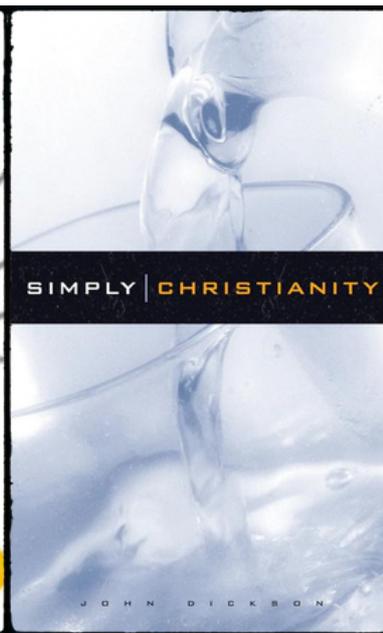
This Easter, we want to reach those in our community who have never set foot in a church building before. To this end, we are running a never-done-before Thursday night event called 'An Easter Walkthrough' in partnership with a Christian Creatives organisation, EXALT. We hope that this event would not only help people engage with the Easter story as they follow the footsteps of Jesus on his last day, but also be intrigued to find out more at our Good Friday and Easter Sunday services.



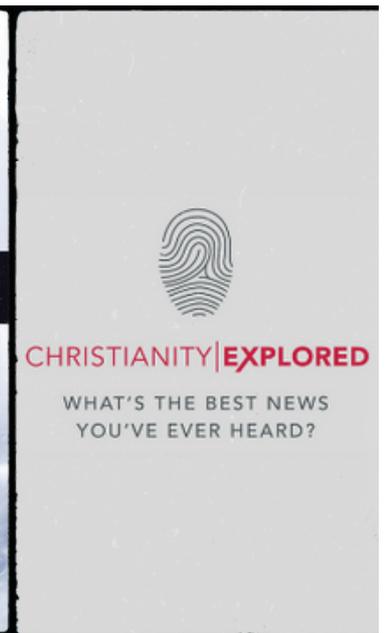
### Evangelistic Courses in 2022.



May 2022



Term 3



Term 4

How can you engage?





### 3rd Mission Priority

## **GROWING THE YOUNG IN THEIR DEVOTION TO GOD'S WORD**

Over the last year, we have taken several significant steps in growing the young in their devotion to God's word. These include:

- Recruiting 16 new leaders including 5 junior leaders.
- Introducing a bible-based curriculum into the preschool program
- Splitting Sunday Kids into two groups.
- Rebranding the Sunday Kids programs to align the names with our vision and mission and make them more accessible to outsiders.
- Moving to a teams model for Sunday Kids has allowed for more consistent teaching for the kids and better support for leaders.
- Training for kids and youth leaders.
- Our first 'Friday Fun Day' saw several youth invite their friends to Half Past Six (Our Youth Group).

These changes have led to better teaching as a part of our desire to grow their devotion to God's word. We give thanks for all that God has done. Even amid another year of lockdowns and the uncertainty that has brought.



Gumnuts - Creche Program





### 3rd Mission Priority

## **GROWING THE YOUNG IN THEIR DEVOTION TO GOD'S WORD**

### Looking ahead

We are working with leaders from Half Past Six and Playtime to come up with plans for both groups. We want to reach more people in our community. We will be working closely with Gordon on how to up the evangelistic temperature in our church families to see this happen.

Secondly, to help those who do attend to take the next step in their spiritual journey. We want clear pathways for growing people to take.

Thirdly, we are investigating the viability of afternoon kid's clubs, with the hope to start one next year. This would allow us to reach more families in the community, provide a next step for Playtime contacts and a regular group of students going into the youth ministry.

Finally, we want to establish the Sunday afternoon Senior High GaP Group as a viable option for students in Years 10-12.



### How can you engage?

Join the team of  
Leaders

Encourage your children  
to regularly attend and  
bring friends





## 4th Mission Priority

# CELEBRATING TOGETHER FOR THE GLORY OF CHRIST



As those who have been called from death to life (Eph 2:1-9) and saved by grace, we exist to glorify Jesus (John 3:30). Our gatherings are celebrations together for the glory of Christ.

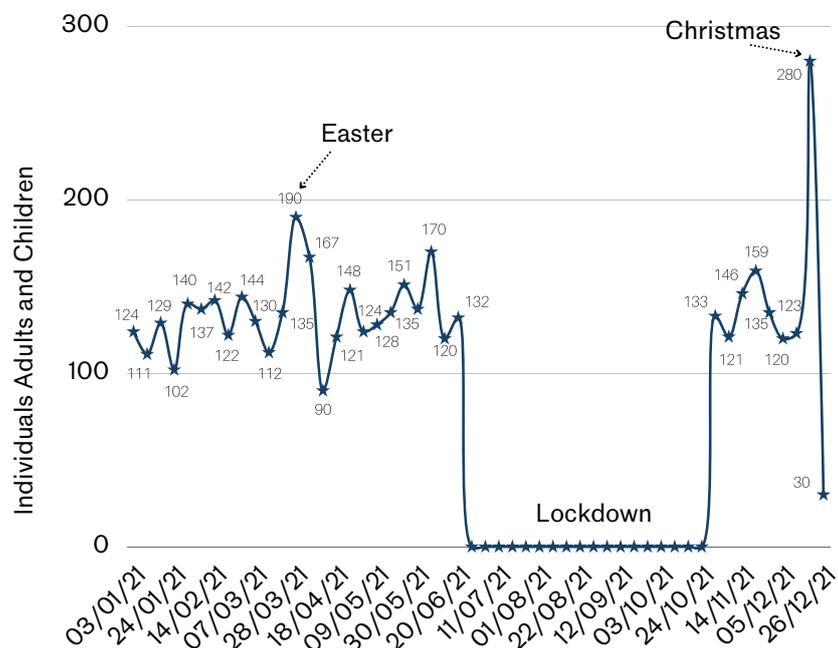
### Carols on the Grass

At Carols on the Grass, music was provided for us by the Come and Sing Community Choir, a small contingent from the Willoughby Public School Concert Band and some St Stephen's musicians. The event included dinner for all, and activities for children. It was an opportunity to connect with many people from the local community but also a chance to celebrate together and offer the hope we have through our God who took on humanity and entered our broken world to save it. We had 300 attendees, with a number of contacts and their families from Playtime attending.



### Sunday Services

Our Sunday services have generally been growing and gathering momentum even as we ride through the Omicron wave. We hit 103 on Feb 13 for the 9:45am service and 36 for 5:30pm service. In March, due perhaps to some wet weather average attendance has been hovering around 20-25 for 7:45am, 70-90 for 9:45am, and 20-30 for 5:30pm.



2021 Attendances



4th Mission Priority

## CELEBRATING TOGETHER FOR THE GLORY OF CHRIST



A significant ongoing task for the 9:45am service is the shift from a roster-based system to service teams. Recruitment of church members into various service teams (eg. Music, AV, Welcoming, Kids and Youth) was the major emphasis for February. We are now at a stage where these teams have formed and now need time to gel and develop spiritually healthy team norms. We want every part of our Sunday Services to be embedded with God's Word, not just our when we listen to the word preached, but also as we serve each other as the body of Christ.

### 5:30 Celebration Dinners

Throughout 2021 we held seven dinners about once a month (no dinners during the 2nd lockdown) where we had a meal and heard from one congregation member about what God is doing in their lives at the moment. We then had everyone else share something to celebrate about what God is doing in their life with the people around them and then pray in thanks for each other. We generally had most people from the service stay for dinner, and there was a warm atmosphere each time.

### Looking ahead

We want the year ahead to continue develop the following cultural attributes:

1. Serving together in teams where we spiritually support one another.
2. Embedding the Bible in all that we do. (ie. All our service teams and ministries.)
3. Celebrating together as a church family over food.

How can you engage?

Join a service team

Be regular at our gatherings



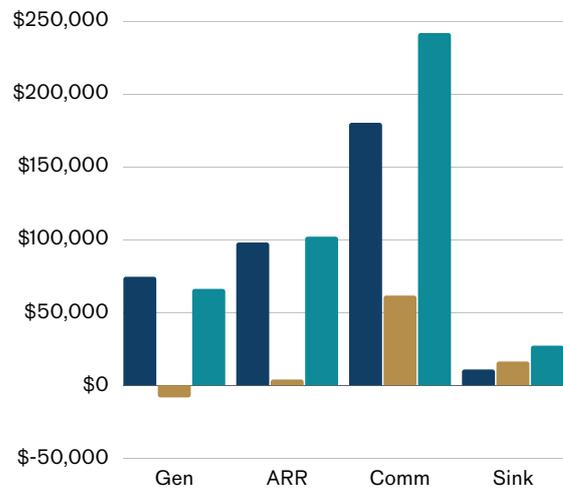
# From the Treasurer

## FINANCE REPORT



It has been a very good year and the Lord has blessed us financially.

- General fund (Gen.) – had a deficit of \$8k, compared a budgeted deficit of \$40k. Income was \$8k better than budget and the wardens and staff tightly managed expenditure such that they were \$25k lower than budget.
- Asset Replacement Fund (ARR.) – this increased by \$4k and now stands at \$102k.



- Commitment Fund (Comm.) – this increased by \$61k and now stands at \$242k. During the year we received a gift and a number of bequests.
- Sinking Fund (Sink) – this increased by \$16k and now stands at \$27k.
- Across all funds the total is \$436k.

### The Year Ahead

- We are in the second year of the 555 Plan. We are hoping 75% of members will increase their giving in 2022 by 5%.
- The budget assumes an overall increase in giving of 5%, thereby enabling the Gift Day target to be reduced to \$50k. (2021 target was \$75k)
- Budget result for 2022 is a deficit of \$28k and this will leave the General Fund with a carry forward surplus of \$38k.
- The sale of Laurel St and purchase of two apartments will be reported in the 2022 results.

### How can you engage?

Increase your giving  
by 5%

Consider a  
bequest to the  
Church



# MANAGEMENT REPORT



## THE PAST YEAR (2021)



- New fans installed (Government grant received).
- New sound desk and advanced software installed to assist in live streaming of services.
- Adjustment to 4 upper windows to allow ventilation once COVID restrictions eased.
- Installation of Solar Battery. (Grant received)
- Installation of Camera for Streaming.

- Standing Committee approved an amendment to the Willoughby Land Sale Ordinance 2020 to allow further development on our main site.
- Laurel Street property sold in December 2021 for \$3.52 million.
- Purchased 3 bedroom apartment on Helen Street, North Lane Cove



## Looking forward to 2022



- Upgrading of sound/AV system using some funds from sale of Laurel Street house (provided for in the Ordinance).
- Repairs to slate roof and northern barge board damaged during high winds and storm in late 2021 (through insurance).
- Upgrading of electrical power outlets to improve safety around various devices.

- Investigate and purchase 2 bedroom apartment using funds from sale of Laurel Street property which will be initially leased.



We will be investigating possible uses of the tennis courts with any development to use funds from the sale of Laurel Street property.





## Mission Report

# LINK MISSIONARIES



St. Stephen's has a long history of proving support for local, interstate, and overseas Mission families. This has continued through the last 12 months.

### Our Link Missionaries are at present:

1. Ben & Sally Bathgate (Luke, Cordelia, & Rose) - Church Missionary Society CMS
2. Mikey and Lil Bayliss (Raphy, Max and Zelda) - Pioneers North Asia
3. David Blackman (Paul and Simon) - Wycliffe Bible Translators (WBT/SIL)
4. Graeme Costin (with Faith) - Wycliffe Bible Translators (WBT)
5. Roger & Amanda Kyngdon (Ada, Eliza, Benjamin & Emily) - Bush Church Aid Society (BCA)
6. Al & Liz Walker (Amy, Kate & Sophie) Serving in Mission (SIM) - East Asia
7. Kylie Zietsch Church Missionary Society (CMS) South Africa - Johannesburg Bible College (JBC)
8. REACH SRE Board - Providing SRE Teachers to Willoughby Girls and Chatswood High.

### Mission Giving

- |                                  |            |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Amount from General Offertory | - \$19,000 |
| 2. Mission Gift Day              | - \$20,500 |

### Distribution:

- |            |           |           |           |
|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| • Bathgate | - \$6,000 | • REACH   | - \$3,000 |
| • Blackman | - \$6,000 | • Zeitsch | - \$6,000 |
| • Costin   | - \$3,000 | • Walker  | - \$6,000 |
| • Kyngdon  | - \$6,000 | • Bayliss | - \$3,000 |



April 2021- March 2022

# COMMUNITY CARE COMMITTEE REPORT



The Care Committee exists to help us open our hearts, minds & wallets to those in need within our church and moving outwards to the local community, motivated by what God has done for us in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

## Examples of meeting specific needs:

- Partnership with St Basil's in Anglicare Mobile Pantry;
- Helping a church member in financial distress;
- Helping an elderly member with domestic needs which were getting too difficult and transporting others to and from church;
- Supporting a church member through NDIS management;
- Providing meals for sick church members plus transport for those who cannot easily get to doctors appointments;
- Helping source labour to aid disabled members with household maintenance when required;
- Providing care packages to local residents of nearby community housing;
- Developing welcome packages for people who move into our area;



Community Pantry

If you would like to be involved in this ministry contact Liz Cooper (9:45am Service) or one of the staff.

