

# ANNUAL REPORT

ST MICHAEL'S NORTH CARLTON | 2023

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*PROCLAIMING CHRIST, BUILDING COMMUNITY,  
SHARING HOPE, SERVING OTHERS*



[www.stmichaelsnc.org.au](http://www.stmichaelsnc.org.au)

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## INTRODUCTION

On 18 June 2023 it was announced that the Vicar of St Michael's, Steve Webster, had accepted an invitation to move on to a parish ministry in Bendigo. He will use up outstanding leave before taking up this new role. During the interregnum (or time before a new appointment is made), Acting Vicars (formerly called Locums) have been appointed by the bishop. The search for a new vicar follows a process laid down by the Parish Governance Act of the Diocese. The Acting Vicars will serve for 3 days per week.

The appointed Acting Vicars are:

- Rev'd Chris Appleby (September)
- Rev'd Len Firth (2 October to November 19).
- Rev'd Gordon Preece (From 20 November)

A Nominations Committee (previously known as an "Incumbency Committee") responsible for recommending a new vicar is convened by Bishop Genieve Blackwell (Maringatha Episcopate). It includes the elected nominators from the parish. St Michael's representatives are Dianne Shay and Chris Ward together with church warden, Su-Hsien Kuan. They will prayerfully seek to interview suitable candidates. The Archbishop will consider the recommendation of the committee, and has the ultimate responsibility of appointing the incoming vicar.

During the last year we have had two baptisms and three confirmations at St Michael's. Attendances at services range from 20-55 for the 10am service and 3-15 for the 5:30 service, with an average of 8-9 livestream screens most weeks. The services and/or sermons can have up to 40 views on YouTube each week. Key services that were celebrated include Epiphany BBQ picnic; Aboriginal Sunday, Ash Wednesday, Naidoc Week and Farewell to the Vicar.

## LIFE AT ST MICHAEL'S

### Sermons

St. Michaels is blessed with able preachers in Steve W, Chris A and Dianne S. This year we learnt about Gospel and Work: Working with Jesus in mind, and Transforming your work

Caring for each other through Prayer, Encouragement, Availability, Contact and Example (acronym PEACE!)

Everyday Faith as expressed through Gratitude, Maturity, Assurance, Grace, Peace, Help

How the people at the margins of the Roman empire were attracted to Jesus and his radical message

How to love like Jesus through his encounters with different people as told in the Gospels

St. Michaels maintains a library of recent sermons recorded on youtube. You can access the above and previous sermons through our website - <http://www.stmichaelsnc.org.au/sermon-catalogue/>

*“The community and teaching at St. Michaels has helped me appreciate the uniqueness of every person, even when they are not like me. It has helped me be more gracious in my dealings with other people during stressful situations, hopefully reflecting the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

*Su-Hsien K, Project Manager*

## **Mission and Outreach Partnerships**

St. Michaels have ongoing partnerships which aligns with our Vision and Mission statement with the organisations below

### **Asylum Seekers Resource Centre**

We have been a long time partner with ASRC, even though they are not a Christian organisation. In addition to financial support, we have a monthly collection at the church for the asylum seekers, and we knitted beanies and scarves for winter. Check the Thursday community newsletter and website for more information.

### **Church Missionary Society**

CMS train and send missionaries to work within specific communities in the Northern Territory and across the world. We partner with CMS through financial giving and prayer. Specifically, we support a missionary family in Asia with whom we have had a long term relationship. Every year, we are invited to Summer Under the Son conference

### **Barbara May Foundation**

The Barbara May Foundation seeks to improve the health of disadvantaged women in sub-Saharan Africa. We partner with Barbara May Foundation through financial giving. This past year, we were invited to breakfast with Dr. Andrew Browning to celebrate International Midwives Day.

St. Michaels also partner with **Bush Church Aid, Ridley College, Scripture Union** with some financial support and through prayer. In addition, every year, we are invited to support **TEAR** initiatives around Christmas.

*“The sense of community; and the preaching, being a bible-led church, has been very strong. That’s been really encouraging to me this year.”*

*Maryann L*

## **Looking forward in the short term**

During the interregnum, we are carrying on with our current ministries and programs. In addition, we would like to explore the opportunities in the following three areas:-

Reviewing and encouraging small groups – The nature of how we interact and form communities have changed over the years, especially with the availability of conferencing technology to every person which has made it very possible for forming connections over long distances. In addition, we recognise that not every one is interested in being part of a “home group” or “bible study group”. In 2024, we would like to explore how we can encourage each other through groups.

Reviewing and encouraging music teams, especially at 5:30 service

Develop and run a midweek pilot Easter themed program for parents and children who might be interested. There are about 80 kids and their parent or carer that have been to playgroup this year and we also have had expressions of interests from people who go to kinder-ballet.

*"Something I've really appreciated about St Michael's is the focus on the radical nature of Jesus' love. Radical because it includes everyone, it overturns hierarchies, and it lifts up the powerless. I've tried to remember that love by attempting to support and include those with whom I disagree, rather than launching into an explanation of why I think they're wrong and expecting that will suddenly change their mind. And I remember that God's love includes me, even when I feel like that's the most radical idea of all."*

*Elizabeth R, Journalist*

## ASSISTANT MINISTER

KIM M

"What people really need is a good listening to", Mary Lou Casey.

As a midweek Chaplain I get to experience the many occasions families come through our gates. In fact it's chatting to people who go past the gate too. For the Listening to the Heart prayer sessions one day I was in the front garden collecting leaves when a dad and his two children walked past. His daughter was interested in the playground and I invited them in. I mentioned if they'd come past that morning they could've joined in on playgroup. The next week dad and his two kids turned up to playgroup. At the Kid's Christmas Day Service last year a local family came along for the first time. Then in the new year mum and their youngest turned up to playgroup. Ballet classes are still happening throughout the school terms and it's just beautiful getting to know the families and watching the kids growing and learning together.

I'm privileged to hear and share many stories throughout the whole week. The highs of new babies, milestones reached and new ventures, amidst the challenges of managing children, illness, and going back to work. Remembering all the names at Playgroup is hard work. Engaging with a child who has previously had behavioural difficulties, priceless. I'm just sorry not everyone gets to experience the joy of midweek ministry with an enthusiastic team and supportive team.

Meeting neighbours and chatting to church members who drop in to tidy the garden or practice music is a gentle and slower type of engaging to the hustle of speed chatting on a Sunday!

You may have noticed the vine mural taking shape on the Wells Room wall. Jacqui Wagner's creative eye and persistence along with several helpers have allowed this project to take shape. We're almost ready for bookshelves and books. This reading space will continue to be available Sundays during church services for families, and once finished the aim is to also be available to everyone across the whole week for reading, meditation, meetings, and hopefully story time for the wider community in the new year.

### Child Safe

St Michael's is known as a safe space. Safe fences, safe activities, safe staff and volunteers. Having everyone involved in children's ministry up to date with all checks, training, and codes of conduct signed, allows us to confidently run programs and be transparent. Whether the programs revolve around our Sunday services or midweek activities, everyone who comes onsite is aware of St Michael's Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and where to find our policies and procedures.

All those currently on a ministry roster and actively involved have completed the relevant courses and checks. For the training this includes: 48 people for Level 1; 14 for Level 2 (required for all ministry to children & young people); and all Parish Council members, ministry leaders and clergy for Level 3. The Anglican Diocese of Melbourne (ADOM) have undertaken a large amount of work helping to make the process of meeting the new 11 Victorian Child Safe Standards much easier. In June this year we ran an update session regarding the new standards and how we're implementing these standards here at St Michael's.

The register we're required to keep is an active document that's never fully completed. Checks are renewed, new people are added to the list and like this year new policies and codes of conduct needed to be signed and marked off. A huge thank you to everyone who just gets on with doing all that needs to be done. This is more than compliance, it's an important pillar in our ministry to our church members and wider community.

Thank you to Steve Webster and the Parish Council who have unequivocally supported and championed the importance of the training and messaging. Catherine Merry, our Child Safety Officer, and Shelley Knight keeping records up to date, are both a great team to work with.

### **Preventing Violence Against Women (PVAW) Program**

Earlier this year, St Michael's signed up to the Preventing Violence Against Women (PVAW) Program run by ADOM. The initiative is to support church leaders and communities to respond to and help to prevent violence against women. The activities of the program reflect a whole of church approach to preventing violence against women. They include:

- \* Providing training and mentoring for church leaders
- \* Developing resources and tools for church communities
- \* Developing best practice policy and governance procedures, and
- \* Connecting churches with specialist local service providers.

A whole of church training session was arranged for October this year, however due to several factors it's been postponed until early in 2024.



I'll be bringing a team together from St Michael's to review how we currently fair across some equality measures. And then between January and July work through an Action Plan based on the review. Melbourne University will be reviewing the outcomes of this program towards the end of 2024.

The 16 Days of Activism is an International campaign starting on November 25th, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and through to December 10th, the International Day of Human Rights. There's a community walk against violence, Evensong at the Cathedral, and a prayer guide available.

### **Prayer - gathering to reflect and pray**

Listen to the Heart

Several prayer sessions were held in the months leading up to the referendum. They were run on zoom and in person, at night and during the day, to give access to as many people as wanted to join. We felt this was an important time to pray for God to be in control, for the country to be respectful in how we conducted our conversations, for messaging to be clear, and to pray for the gaps in health outcomes for First Nations peoples. These continue to be our prayers as we walk forward together.

## Lent

Common Grace invited Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Christian Leaders from across the country to lead a series through The Lord's Prayer during Lent. We appreciated the meaning behind the adaptation of the words for The Lord's Prayer as they unfolded from those First Nations leaders. Here is The Lord's Prayer as reflected on during lent.

*We give adoration, praise and glory to God for the power that His name holds.*

*We ground ourselves in the truth, goodness, justice, and compassion of God and his kingdom, a kingdom where the restoration and reconciliation of right relationships brings forth flourishing.*

*Father, give us today our daily damper and seed cakes—all that we need to sustain us physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.*

*"I think St. Michaels has helped me to be better at recognising where I have a lot of control or leverage in a situation, and where I don't. This helps me be more deliberate in my responses."*

*Melanie R, Lecturer in Applied Maths and SES Volunteer*

## CHURCH WARDENS

ANNE W & SU-HSIEN K

Su-Hsien K & Anne W, as Warden's for the past 12 months have endeavoured to provide oversight for worship at St Michael's, including maintenance of the Buildings/Property, the Finances, and general Good Order (as per the Warden's duties ). We started the year in earnest developing a new vision and action plan process, however, following the announcement of the Vicar's departure and subsequent interregnum period, much of this has been put on hold and will be re-visited when a new vicar is appointed. Throughout the year, we have been most grateful for the support of Steve W, our acting Vicars Chris A & Len F, and members of the parish council in all our undertakings. It is clear there will be both challenges and opportunities for St Michaels in the coming year. It is also clear that together, St Michaels will respond to each one with thoughtful prayer and agility. Key highlights for the past 12 months include:

### **Maintaining Buildings / Property** (current Care & Maintenance; Future Planning)

- With the assistance of Steve M, a new tuner was engaged to undertake a tuning of pipe organ. We thank Steve for his ongoing care of this heritage listed instrument.
- Replacement of Livestreaming and Audio-visual components as identified - new laptop, internet cabling, stage lights, music stands, powered amplifiers etc. Cameras used for live streaming have been fixed to walls in church – better stability and reduces trip hazard.
- Guttering in Williams Hall has been repaired following a water leak during a storm.
- Significant investment was undertaken in the restoration of the Vicarage upstairs sash windows late 2022. We are aware the ground floor sash windows will need similar work undertaken in the future, and will consider this as part of a larger Smith trust grant application in 24/25, along with other vicarage expenditure, such as the picket fence.
- Sincere thanks to the volunteers who have tended the garden across the year, including, but not limited to: Lawrie S, Audrey L, Chris B, Paul P, Dianne S, Cindy S, Greg D, Dion M & Anne W, Chris & Di A, Steve W, Chris, Peter S, Andrew & Janette A, and to any others we have missed. Also a note of thanks to Warren T, for assisting with a sturdy installation of the Yes banner and all those who contributed to the lawn mowing roster.



## **Finances**

In the absence of a formally appointed treasurer, this was mostly managed with the Bookkeeper (Kerryn) regularly reporting back our finances. Sincere thanks are also extended to Su-Hsien K for proactively stepping into this element of the warden's duties.

- Ongoing discussions to establish a finance-type-committee to develop budgets and approve payments. Su-Hsien has been added as an authoriser of payments, along with previous treasurers (Peter S & Shelly K). Rhonda E also approved to set up payment. We are thankful to Mr Shario Baghaei MIPA AFA, who has undertaken a professional financial review for the year ending 30 September.

## **Good Order**

- Continual exploration of options to improve sound quality within the church during in-person services.
- Purchased replacement of linen and silver-plated vessels for Holy Communion.
- Commenced documenting an outcome plan to address key topics raised in the AGM. This included a big thinking approach – working towards a 10-year plan for St Michaels.
- Kim has continued assist St Michael's to be a leader in the area of child safe practices – for which we are most grateful. She led a Safe Church refresher session for the parish in June, providing an update on the child safe standards.
- The Volunteer Register is maintained, with Kim M and Shelly K continuing to add new volunteers and monitor for expired WWCC's. All people participating in various ministries have completed their required training (Level 1, 2 or 3); and the register has been submitted to the diocese as requested.
- Staffing: We are thankful for Rhonda E's efficient work in the office. Mia D (Playgroup Assistant) finished in June, as her uni placements took precedence. Her absence is noticed by the play group team, as recruitment to her role has been unsuccessful to date. Kim's contract has been extended for a further 12 months at three days/week. A large send-off for Steve and Penne was co-ordinated and enjoyed by many. A generous collection was also received as collection for a farewell gift, which has been received by Steve with gratitude.
- The Dance school has returned to similar Hall Hire arrangements as previous years, and there continue to be enquiries for occasional/ad hoc hall bookings.
- Safety Compliance Inspection was competed in June, with recommendations being actioned.
- A proportion of time over terms 1 & 2, was spent exploring and investigating formats for a new children's ministry. In the process of working up the plans, it became evident there were limited volunteers available to assist at this time, which prevented its progress. We are hopeful this may be progressed early next year.
- Warden's SOP manual has been drafted (to sit alongside the Internal Controls document). Warden's SOP contains a schedule of audits; compliance procedures and record keeping.

With blessings

Anne West & Su-Hsien Kuan

Church Wardens

*"Beyond the sense of belonging to a community of like-minded people, St Michaels continues to encourage and support me in my faith journey. Yes, I am frequently challenged by the weekly sermons, and inspired by our mission on the wall; but mostly I am grateful for the Prayer team, who lead our prayers each week. Through them, I am continually reminded of God's ever-present graciousness, forgiveness, goodness, mercy and power."*

*Anne W, Occupational Therapist.*

## PARISH COUNCIL

ANNE W

St Michael's Parish Council meets with the Vicar regularly to govern matters of evangelism, discipleship, and pastoral care in the parish. Grounded in our mission of Proclaiming Christ, Building Community, Sharing Hope, and Serving Others, we have worked collaboratively over the past 12 months, to fulfil this purpose.

This year Parish Council met predominately via Zoom, with a couple of face-to-face members as the situation allowed. Members included Alex Pierce, Mary Ann Lyttle, John Sewell, Jack Verdins (Minute Taker), Barb Ward, Steve Webster (Vicar), Su-Hsien Kuan (Warden) and Anne West (Warden) & Len Firth (Acting Vicar).

Parish Council commenced the year embarking on a **Vision Action planning process** looking at short term (pastoral care, 5:30pm service, Lenten gospel message), medium term (midweek ministries, mission co-ordination,) and long term (10years+) planning. A process to consult the parish about St Michael's future was developed but paused following the Vicar's resignation. Some of these themes were subsequently explored through the parish consultation. A significant amount of work was done in the first term by staff investigating a variety of approaches and experiences of other churches in the development of a possible **Midweek Ministry Proposal**. The aim was a trial with up to 10 families, with a program of music and a story time. Unfortunately, this was not able to proceed due to insufficient resources at the time.

The period of Lent allowed for St Michael's creativity to be expressed through the **Easter Art installation** on the front lawn. This became a catalyst for discussion about one's faith journey, a curiosity to neighbours, and an attraction for playgroup and other users of our space. A big thank you to all who were involved in this.

Parish Council remained steadfast to our **Reconciliation** commitment. Whilst the formal Reconciliation Action Plan group came to a natural conclusion, there was an evolution of the **Listening to the Heart group**. St Michaels hosted an evening with Rev Glenn Loughrey (in May) to talk about the referendum, and later in the year Parish Council formally endorsed a position on the Indigenous Voice to Parliament referendum and the display of a "Yes" banner on our boundary fence.

Finally, Parish Council took an opportunity to be part of a Diocesan project aiming to strengthen our understanding and general processes in the **Preventing Violence Against Women** space. We are grateful for Kim's work in this space and expect to hear more about this project in the coming year.

The **opportunity to serve the church** with an amazing group of people is one of the great privileges of Parish Council. To this extent, I wish to formally thank those who were part of this process this year, including the sage and wise support from Chris Appleby and Len Firth in their respective positions of Acting Vicars, and the practical support of Jack Verdins for his timely circulation of the minutes after each meeting. A **special thanks** must be extended to Jack Verdins and MaryAnn Lyttle for their generous service on parish council over the past six years, and who, in accordance with the governing rules, are retiring. We also extend our best wishes to John Sewell who retired from parish council due to his health.

Anne West—Chair, Parish Council

## FINANCES

SU-HSIEN K

### Actual results for FY 2022/23

It has been another challenging year, with our income again unpredictable and changes in office staffing.

Our income this year was \$264,087, 6% above budget.

Our expenditure was \$273,659, 10% under budget. This does not include outstanding payments of \$6,347.75 to our mission partners.

We made a net loss of \$9572. This is covered by our cash reserves.

We hold \$114,045 of cash in the bank as of 30th September 2023. This mostly comprises of \$66,391 in the ADF Cash Account and \$45,605 in St. Michael's Main Account. Our total liabilities are \$20,878.

The following is a summary of our income and expense:

#### Income FY23

Playgroup	7,304
Giving	224,397
Hall Rental	14,903
Donations	16,759
Interest	724
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>264,087</b>

#### Expense FY23

Assessment	33,987
Maintenance	25,409
Ministry	6,956
Missions	14,586
Office	25,787
Staff	151,119
Utilities	15,815
Capital Improvement	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>273,659</b>

Each year the parish council forms and adopts a budget to support the ministry objectives for the year ahead on behalf of the congregation. It is reported to the annual meeting and communicated to the congregation alongside any vision/action plans to encourage giving required to meet the proposed expenditure targets. The budget helps the parish council and staff to keep expenditure (and, to some extent, income) on track in through the year. A summary of our budget forecast for the 2023-2024 financial year is set out below.

### Budgeted Income:

#### Income FY24

Playgroup	7,500
Giving	233,280
Hall Rental	12,000
Donations	12,900
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>265,680</b>

## Budgeted Expenses:

Expense FY24	
Assessment	32,772
Maintenance	11,700
Ministry	4,080
Missions	14,586
Office	23,660
Staff	156,747
Utilities	12,950
Capital Improvement	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>256,495</b>

This budget assumes no increase in hall hire and minimal change in overall offertory from the 2022/23 year. This budget adopted by the parish council assumes that a new vicar will start around Easter and includes the office assistant role for 8 hours per week and the assistant minister for three days per week.

This budget has not included the maintenance works required to uplift the vicarage in preparation for the new vicar. This will need to be reviewed in January with the wardens once the works are agreed to. This work will be funded from the ADF fund of up to \$40K, leaving \$25K for emergencies.

We will monitor our income and expenses closely over the coming year and may adjust these settings if our finances require.

Su-Hsien Kuan

## PLAY GROUP

CATHERINE M

It has been another great playgroup year even though we have had to deal with fewer staff due to study placements, holidays and, of course, Steve's absence.

The number of children attending is regularly in the 40's (on one occasion it was 56) which means there are 80+ people on site on a Tuesday morning. This has been a wonderful challenge to us, wanting to provide safety and enjoyment for all of these families.

The program is laid back: we set out toys and activities for the children to participate in and use different sets of activities each week. Some of the toys are favourites so these are put out more often. We check the toys and outdoor equipment regularly to ensure they are clean and working well.

Tea and coffee are provided for the parents and carers of the children. Morning tea, which includes fruit, bread and water, is provided for the children. This is served usually on tables with chairs at approximately 10:45 AM. It is lovely to see new children get used to the routine of morning tea and gradually begin to sit well at the table, eat their own food from their own plate and ask for more if they need to.

Special activities have been enjoyed including the Christmas party and encouragement to

come to the Christmas Fiesta. We also farewelled Steve in August and regularly promote other activities at the church such as ASRC donations. Because the church has number of things on display, it provides us with an opportunity to chat to people about the church's activities, for example, the Voice referendum.

Families sometimes come to play group irregularly but it's usually because they have been unwell or away. We often hear how much they want to come and love to bring their children. Parents have made friendships at playgroup and we often hear that they have met up with each other during the week. They also promote play group to their friends and we sometimes have extra families attend because of their external friendship groups.

Our staff is fantastic! Gillian in the kitchen and serving morning tea; Shelley sorting out the admin side; Mia setting up and putting away all the toys; Janette taking hold of all the crafty activities and Kim having conversations about often difficult subjects, about which parents may have no-one else to talk to.

We have welcomed back Hilary Toppin and Garry Philpott has committed to helping out every second week. It's wonderful to have extra hands and friendly faces.

The Christmas Fiesta is on 10 December and our playgroup Christmas party will be on 12 December.

Thank you for your continued prayers for our playgroup families and for us

Catherine Merry - Playgroup Coordinator

## RECONCILIATION ACTION GROUP

JANETTE A

The Reconciliation Action Plan group at St Michaels formed in 2015. This began a work in the heart of us all to learn and embrace the truth of history, and work towards reconciliation with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander brothers and sisters. A Reconciliation Action Plan was formed for St Michael's, which has changed the way we meet together, opened us to commitment and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples through Common Grace, and engaged us in working for justice and reconciliation beyond the church.

In 2020-2022 the Reconciliation Action Plan group sustained commitment to justice and learning from our Indigenous Brothers and Sisters. Listening and responding to the Uluru Statement from the Heart has gained new urgency as a referendum on constitutional change was announced in October 2023. At a state level, the Yoorook Justice Commission is engaged in hearings that enable the truth of Indigenous experience through the generations to be heard.

The Reconciliation Action Plan group at the beginning of 2023 consisted of: Barry McGaw, Mary Ann Lyttle, Sharyn Young, Andrew Allen, Peter Summers, Denise Nichols, and Janette Allen (chair). We had lengthy discussions about the way forward. We saw the need for acknowledgement that St Michael's people have grown in their knowledge and understanding of the injustice of white settlement and ongoing relationships with Indigenous Peoples. Individually, we also knew that people are supporting Common Grace, and engaging with issues and information prayerfully and practically.

We thought it was time to fundamentally change the RAP group.

We proposed that instead of a group of people broadly interested in and responsible for the direction of Reconciliation Action, there could be a new way of working. We suggested that individual members of St Michaels' may have felt a deep interest and a God-lead concern for specific issues. These might be (but not by any means exclusively be):

- The Referendum regarding an Indigenous Voice to Parliament
- The Yoorook Justice Commission
- The battle to raise the age of criminality from 10, and other matters regarding the implementation of the 1991 Royal Commission into Indigenous Incarceration
- Marking dates, seasons, and responding to calls for Worship from Indigenous People
- Support for Common Grace and their initiatives

We put this concept to the St Michaels community in February, 2023. We have now disbanded the RAP group.

The RAP group structure is distinct and has had a representative on Parish Council, which has therefore provided a means of accountability and also an avenue for informing and asking the wider congregation for action. The proposal to have representatives for different initiatives would mean that those individuals would need to approach Parish Council when necessary to gain approval for proposed ideas and activities, or to request assistance.

As 2023 rolled on, the momentum grew surrounding the referendum on constitutionally recognising an Indigenous Voice to Parliament. Denise Nichols and Nicola Reynolds spearheaded an initiative to increase public knowledge of the history and issues at stake for First Peoples. This was supported by several parishioners who used materials to host kitchen table discussions (see separate report). This action, together with Nicola's fundraising for translation of YES materials into community languages, is a clear indication that recognition of the need to respond to our Indigenous brothers and sisters is alive and well in the St Michaels community, affirming the decision to dissolve the RAP group.

At the point of writing this report, Parish Council has yet to determine whether St Michaels will commit to further financial support for Common Grace. Our initial commitment for three years has ended. This is a matter of some urgency and it is hoped that the St Michaels community will express a desire to continue supporting and partnering in the work of Common Grace, which addresses fundamental issues affecting First Nations people including over representation of Indigenous people in jails, youth detention, family violence, and climate change. The people of Common Grace: Gershon Nimbalker (National Director), Safina Stewart, Bianca Manning and Ellaina Wellsman, have all expressed great sorrow and concern in recent days. They need active partners to demonstrate love and care and repudiate the rejection that is a key reaction to the recent referendum result. You can read Safina and Bianca's response here: [https://www.listentotheheart.org.au/referendum\\_result](https://www.listentotheheart.org.au/referendum_result)

It is the hope of all previous RAP group members that St Michaels members will pay continued attention to issues surrounding the now failed referendum, and local state initiatives to recognise and respond to First Nations calls for justice, and that members of St Michaels will continue to have open hearts toward

learning from our First Nations peoples.

We leave this important avenue of response to Jesus' command to 'love our neighbours as ourselves' in your hearts and hands.

Janette Allen (ex-chairperson), St Michaels now dissolved RAP Group

## **LISTENING TO THE HEART**

**DENISE N & NICOLA R**

In February 2023 St. Michael's RAP group determined to close after eight years with the group agreeing that it had fulfilled its objectives over that time.

With the (then) approaching Voice to Parliament Referendum coming up later in the year, Nicola Reynolds, Denise Nichols, Anne West and Kim Messieh created the Listen to the Heart working group. Members of the congregation met once a month for informal discussions after morning church where anyone could share ideas or raise concerns in relation to St. Michael's involvement in the upcoming Referendum.

Among the activities that evolved out of the working group over the next months (and built on the previous work of the RAP group), were:

- installation of a banner displaying support for the YES vote on the St Michael's perimeter fence, following the Parish Council of St. Michael's unanimous approval
- creation and implementation of a Roadmap to the Referendum with a program of activities over the 6 months in the lead up to the October 14 Referendum
- facilitation of 9 Kitchen Table Conversations with an estimated 50 plus participants from across community groups, book clubs, friends and families of St Michael members
- established a relationship with Mary Crooks AO and the Victoria Women's Trust, who curated the Kitchen Table Conversations program
- Kim Messieh facilitated the prayer opportunities both online and in person at the church with a focus on reconciliation, support for Indigenous community, political leaders, our Indigenous partners Common Grace and Anglican Christian leaders
- created a dedicated service focusing on the VOICE before the Referendum
- created a webpage with various resources to provide accurate information on both sides of the issue.
- supported Nicola's 'Walk for Together Yes' fundraiser, which raised just under \$6,000 (\$5,803 at time for writing) for the Victorian Women's Trust 'Together Yes' Campaign. Funds raised were used to help translate information into 11 foreign languages and distributed across Australia. Nicola walked over 400km with a group of pilgrims on the Ignatian Camino in Spain and promoted the campaign widely through St Michael's, Jesuit and Victorian Women's Trust channels – and via the pilgrims themselves, with generous donations being received from fellow American pilgrims.

In addition, Denise has been on the Diocesan Reconciliation Working Group which focussed on supporting Rev. Canon Uncle Glenn Loughrey who had been set apart by the Archbishop of Melbourne as the Diocesan Education Coordinator for the Voice Referendum. In May Uncle Glenn spoke at an Archdeaconry Area meeting at St. Michael's hosted by Bishop Genieve Blackwell with 50 attendees from about five parishes.

Denise Nichols and Nicola Reynolds





## WALKING GROUP

AUDREY L

The St. Michael's Walking Group has continued even through Covid lock downs when we walked in twos. We started with church members but quickly included friends, neighbours... all welcome!

There are two ability groups. Every Tuesday, rain or shine, fast walkers head off at 8:00am eventually ending at a prearranged cafe where the slower walkers who depart at 8:30 join us around 9:15am.

Since Covid most of our walks are local but we occasionally car pool to other locations such as the river walk mentioned in the photo below.



To join us phone or text Audrey on 0432 091 446 on Sunday or Monday to find out the departure location of each group.

Audrey Lile



## CONTEMPLATION AND BIBLE GARDEN REPORT

GREG D

In the past 12 months the various 'Bible' species plants have continued to grow and bear fruit. Apart from general maintenance (pruning and collecting of flowers, fruit and nuts) the main upgrade has been about increasing the moisture holding capacity of the soils. This has required a generous application of clay breaker and dolomite followed by a generous coverage of fine mulch. The main ongoing issue has been keeping up the watering during the hot months. Many thanks to those who have spontaneously both watered and weeded the garden. The main issue seems to be, after observing the plants suffering from water stress, is the competition (nutrients and water) with the creeper fig which covers the lane fence and the constant maintenance required of the automatic watering system.

Future maintenance of the garden will include the repotting of the papyrus, the removal of materials that distract from the purpose of the space and also moving the red grape vine from the north facing position to the west facing side adjacent to the unused front entrance.

Consideration can be given to inserting a physical barrier between the creeper and fruiting figs. Generally there needs to be ongoing awareness raising regarding both the physical and online use of the garden for rest, harvesting, contemplation and information, also suggestions on how to enjoy the amenity of a vibrant and productive garden.

It would be good if members of St Michaels who are keen gardeners and are able to assist with watering please let Greg know so as to have a team of people on hand to help water all of the church grounds especially during the hot months.

Greg Davies

## NATIONAL TRUST: PIPE ORGAN

STEVE M

**National Trust of Australia (Victoria) – supporting the Pipe Organ**

The pipe organ has been heard a bit more this year with the end of covid restrictions and regular in person services, a welcome change for quite a few in the 10:00 am congregation and joining online. There have been a few developments in the past 12 months to report:

- Jeremy Smith (principal of Jeremy Smith Organ Builders, <https://www.jeremysmithorganbuilder.com/>) has been appointed to take over the routine tuning and maintenance of the organ. This change was undertaken with guidance from John Maidment of the Organ Historical Trust of Australia, who was Consultant for the instrument's restoration in 1996-97.
- St Michael's National Trust organ appeal account has been revised and re-signed to bring it into line with current National Trust appeal account arrangements. This continues to provide tax-deductible status for donations towards the organ's maintenance and repair.
- As a result of this review, the National Trust has offered to broaden the scope of the appeal account to include all St Michael's heritage assets, since the Carlton North property has a Heritage Overlay in the City of Melbourne Planning Scheme. It would enable donations for building maintenance and restoration of heritage structures to attract tax deductible status. This has been referred to the Parish Council for review with St Michael's new Minister when established in their role.

The organ appeal account contains \$1,245.08, enough for 18 months' tuning and routine maintenance in normal circumstances. All organ maintenance costs since the 1997 restoration have been met from donations, mostly from parishioners.

While the organ is in good condition generally, the accumulation of dust and dirt internally since the restoration has got to the point where thorough cleaning is becoming increasingly necessary. We are investigating funding sources to support this work. Virtually all of the 749 pipes need to be removed, everything vacuumed and the pipes replaced, each in its correct position. This would also enable repairing or replacing anything that is identified as requiring it.

Pipe organs can be played successfully by competent pianists with some guidance, and persistence in routine practice. Hannah Bourne successfully completed a component of her Duke of Edinburgh award earlier this year with a practical program of regular practice sessions playing the organ, culminating with a successful assessment performance.

I am more than happy to provide an initial familiarisation session or two to any pianists interested in having a try on the organ. The pedals are not essential, and in my opinion are not as difficult to play as they might look! They are just scaled up keyboards with 'black' and 'white' notes suitably sized for feet. Have a closer look next time you're nearby! If you're interested in having a go, or just a closer look, please get in touch. I have also compiled a two page "How to play the organ" document which explains what all the knobs do, and which ones to use for whatever sound you're after.

Steve Manders

## KID'S CHURCH

DIANNE S

At kid's church we welcome children of pre-school to primary school ages. In consultation with parents a decision was made in 2023 to hold kid's church on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month only. This was a difficult decision but made due to very small numbers of children attending semi-regularly. A self-learning email is shared with families on other Sunday's generally aligned to the adult learning time. This program hasn't always aligned for when visiting children have been at church which is something we'll consider for 2024. Activities are also kept on hand at the church ready for extra children attending on Sundays when kid's church isn't scheduled. We found that a combination of worksheets and crafts were the best combination for these activities. Our 1st Sunday sessions have used a series called Bible Bites, exploring the parables of Jesus and what we can learn from each parable for today.

This year we were also blessed with some 'graduating' Sunday schoolers who were confirmed. We pray every blessing on them for their journey of faith long into the future.

Kid's Church sessions are led by a small team of volunteer teachers who are accredited in compliance with child-safety qualifications required by both the State Government of Victoria and the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne. A huge thank you to Jacqui, Shelley, Cindy, Janette and Dianne for leading this important ministry in our church community. I especially want to recognise the wonderful contribution of Janette for her many years of faithful, fun, fantastic ministry to children at St Michael's. So many kids have been blessed by her laughter, enthusiasm and gentle leading to faith and understanding of what it means to follow God. All the best for the next phase in rural Victoria, Janette.

Dianne Shay

### Contact Us

Len Firth - Acting Vicar (2 October - 19 November 2023)  
[lfirth@melbourneanglican.org.au](mailto:lfirth@melbourneanglican.org.au)

Kim Messieh - Assistant Minister  
[kim@stmichaelsnc.org.au](mailto:kim@stmichaelsnc.org.au)  
0474442615

Rhonda Edmonds - Office Admin Assistant  
[office@stmichaelsnc.org.au](mailto:office@stmichaelsnc.org.au)

Catherine Merry - Playgroup Coordinator  
Playgroup Team  
[princeshillplaygroup@gmail.com](mailto:princeshillplaygroup@gmail.com)

Hall Hire enquiries - [office@stmichaelsnc.org.au](mailto:office@stmichaelsnc.org.au)

The church office is open Tuesdays and Wednesdays 9.30am - 1.30pm. Contact the acting vicar or a church warden for church site access.