

The Eyrie

St John The Evangelist Catholic Parish Heidelberg



CHRIST THE CENTRE OF CHRISTMAS

How do we prepare ourselves for the great gift of Christmas?
Are we ready to receive the new born king?

We might have the presents wrapped, the Christmas cake made, the guests invited, the tree and decorations colourful and shining BUT have we prepared our hearts and souls for this special celebration of joy?

The crib show us the beautiful simplicity of love, joy and hope. Mary and Joseph traveling to find a place of peace for Mary to give birth and they find this in a simple stable/barn with the warmth of animals .

Many of us are fortunate to have wonderfully happy celebrations at Christmas time. There are many though, who find this time of year hard, are short on funds, do not have close family

or friends and family live too far away. For some it may be their first Christmas alone without their partner or spouse. Like those that gave Mary and Joseph a place of warmth and peace may we invite others to share some joy and peace by the giving of our time to those less fortunate than ourselves. Giving to the Vinnies Christmas Appeal is another way we can share the gifts of Joy, Hope and Peace that Jesus has given to us.

(Details of how to donate are on the back page).

Welcome—a message from Fr John Pereira

Greetings to one and all, **being the new 'kid' on the block**, I was asked by Rev. Vinh to pen a few words to introduce myself. Well, I am Rev. John Pereira and I hail from Malaysia. I was ordained as a diocesan priest for the diocese of Malacca-Johore which is on the Southern part of West Malaysia. This year marks my eight years of priesthood and I am especially delighted and excited to serve here at St. John's, Heidelberg. I have met some of you over the course of these past few days and I already feel welcomed. I thank God for this opportunity and to Rev. Vinh for having me here. I hope and pray that, as a parish family, we'll journey and get to know each other more as time unfolds. God's blessings upon each and every one of you dear parishioners of St. John's. Godspeed." Rev John Pereira



GEMS

In 2017 I arrived in Melbourne from QLD., knowing only my sons and grandchildren! I decided to attend mass at St. John's and for a while my shyness caused me to feel very much an outsider.

Early in 2018 Fr Mario introduced me to Elizabeth & Jan as the ladies to approach as they were setting up an a Friendship Group. Although feeling a little reserved I decided to join. What a marvelous decision that has turned out to be. Six years on and we all agree Tuesdays are Terrific.

In the early days of the group we met on Tuesdays for 2 hours. During discussions we discussed activities and possible outings. We democratically considered a name for the group and after some hilarious discussion, which was a great way to introduce ourselves – the decision was made and thus - **GREGARIOUS, ENGERGETIC, MEMBERS OF ST. JOHN'S OR GEMS** as we are now known was born!

New beginnings – an opportunity to meet and socialize with fellow members of St. John's congregation. Over the years many people have joined and all have been made welcome.

Over the years (not during COVID of course) we have had combined movies and luncheons (Balwyn Theatre), Morning Melodies (Lower Plenty Hotel) African drum demonstrations and lessons, bus trips to Chocolateries, local nurseries and most recently The Tulip Festival.

We have luncheons at the Old England Hotel and Henry Barkly Hotel and interesting guest speakers. At year's end we attend the Christmas Melodies at the Concert Hall in the city. We have celebrated special events including, Footy finals which is usually very colourful, St. Patrick's Day and Mother's Day mornings and The Biggest Morning Tea for Cancer Research.

It seems the most popular activities (particularly in winter) is playing games– Scrabble and Rummykub being most popular. The Francis Xavier Room is a joyous place on Tuesdays and some GEMS are very competitive which brings much laughter and some don't want to go home! Sometimes we just sit and chat over morning tea.

We come from far and wide – Malta, Italy, New Zealand, Philippines, Netherlands and of course Aus. We invite you to come along and join this truly merry group and be part of this wonderfully friendly group in our parish.

We are extremely grateful and say a very big thank you to Elizabeth Williamson for the enormous effort she puts into every single week and for organising the outings we enjoy.

Bobbie Bartkus

We respectfully acknowledge the Wurundjeri People and their Elders past and present, the traditional custodians of this land on which our church and school stand. The St John's Community joins together in solidarity with our Indigenous brothers and sisters, working for justice and reconciliation.

GEMS



Off on a bus outing friends together

Above Back row: Maria, Pauline, Elaine, Barbara & Anna.

Front row: Louise, Ida, Betty, Toni & Claire

FUN & FRIENDSHIP



Above: Outing to the Tulip farm. The beautiful colours of the tulips and the fun and friendship certainly made up for the chilly weather.



Left: A regular Tuesday in St. Francis Xavier meeting room. Elizabeth front left who organises everything for us. The games we play bring out some competitive spirit and much joy and laughter.

Come along and join this happy friendship group we will make you very welcome.

PIZZA NIGHT



Saturday evening October 7th a Pizza Night was held in St. Frances Xavier meeting room after 6pm mass.

Around 30 people gathered for a social evening where parishioners got to know each other and have a meal together. All who attended remarked what a joyous little gathering it was, new friendships were formed.

Before the Pizzas arrived there was much getting to know each other better and the love and laughter was palpable. The pizzas took their time to arrive so Maggie went down collect them and together we all sang a verse or two of "why are we waiting" all in good spirits. Then Fr Vinh said grace.

The pizzas were delicious and devoured very quickly. After that sweets were served. Home made trifle, pavlova, lemon tarts along with ice cream were really enjoyed, some even had seconds!



It was lovely to see some new young families and some older familiar faces mixing together. We had some super waiters and waitresses even as young as a 6 yr. old helping deliver sweets to the tables. And what a good job they did.

Sincere thanks goes to Elizabeth Williamson for all her preparation work in setting up , making nametags, organising all the food and drinks and yet again giving us all a lovely opportunity to gather together in friendship as parish family.

Parish Picnic



Elizabeth made it easy and had nametags ready for us all!



Scrumptious servings, sunshine & smiles

On Sunday 29th October the weather was wonderful as parishioners enjoyed the Parish Picnic in the gardens of the Parish House. After desserts Fr. Vinh donned his sunhat and took out his traditional Vietnamese flute and entertained us by playing some excellent renditions of various well-known classical and religious songs. Many parishioners sang along and some played tunes on the guitar as well. It was a joyful afternoon of good food, fellowship, music and faith with glorious sunshine to top it off. Mary Peeris (our Parish Secretary) and Elizabeth Williamson (our Pastoral Associate) together with helpers did an amazing job setting up the tables and chairs and laying out the banquet of food for us all to enjoy. You could really feel the spirit working and building in our parish community. Familiar faces and newer faces and families joined in together to share this special social time together.

St. Johns Acting Principal—Ms Elizabeth Whiting

St John's School Vision is *"An inclusive Catholic community fostering a commitment to faith and nurturing a love of learning."*

Term 4

After two years as Acting Principal my tenor has come to an end. I feel most blessed to have led this community working in partnership with students, staff and families. I humbly thank all parents and carers for all their support as we worked in partnership for the growth and development of St John's students. I thank all members of the community for their kindness and welcome, as well as the positivity and gratitude community members share with our wonderful staff at St John's. The contribution of students and families to our community makes St John's a place of respect, safety and belonging, for this I am most grateful.

As Acting Principal over the last two years I have led a wide range of initiatives and changes to enable further growth in learning at St John's. Significant initiatives have included the major upgrade of technology in the school, changes to the specialist program to include one hour of Performing Arts and one hour of STEM

(Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and the enhancement of student leadership at St John's. Most importantly student learning has improved, evidenced by the year on year improvement in Naplan and high student engagement.

I thank St John's Leadership Team;

Acting Deputy Connie Bandiera, Learning Diversity Leader Judy Doupe, Learning and Teaching Leader Nicola Dunne and Mathematics Paul Tarabay and eLearning Leader Frank Cotela, for their commitment to our vision, their generosity, professionalism and encouragement as we worked together over the last two years. I also thank Adam Salemme for his leadership in Wellbeing and Faith in Education. We congratulate Adam as he commences in a new role at Peninsula Grammar as Community Engagement Leader.

My heartfelt thanks to our incredible staff for their trust, respect and support over the 2022 and 2023 school year as I have led St John's as Acting Principal. I thank our staff for the care that they have shown our students as they grow as learners and people of faith. I congratulate our staff for their commitment to their ongoing professional learning, as we look to improve our practices in support of improved student learning outcomes.

Thank you to Fr Vinh Nguyen for his pastoral leadership of our school as students celebrated sacraments and attended school and parish Masses. It has been wonderful to come together as a Pastoral Leadership team and serve those in our care.

I will return to the role of Deputy Principal where I will continue to work with the students, families, teachers and leaders at St John's, living our school vision and providing leadership in Learning and Teaching and Wellbeing.

Celebrating St John's Feast Day Taking Social Justice Action

St John, the patron saint of love, loyalty, friendships, and authors, was celebrated Monday 27 November. This special St John's Day celebrated the diversity of cultures in our St John's Community. Students, staff and families gathered on the basketball court at 9.05am for a Whole school liturgy followed by a parade and a presentation of cultures.

We thank students for highlighting and celebrating the many cultures. Students then moved into vertical groupings, meeting new students across the school from Prep to year 6. The day ended with a Whole School Cultural Diversity Assembly at 2.30pm in the hall, where a number of students and families shared information about their individual cultures and the ways they celebrate individual cultures.

PARISH CENSUS – OVERVIEW OF DATA

In Oct/Nov our Parish undertook a census to assist us in our journey forward so we know our parish family in more depth— who we are, where we came from and what we do.

As with the school report above where cultures were celebrated, as parish, we too, have much to celebrate in that the census data shows us that we are truly a multicultural parish and here is a list of countries where we have come from:

Australia, Mauritius, Portugal, Italy, Poland, Latin America, India, Malta, Macedonia, New Zealand, Malta, Malaysia, China, Philippines, Asia, Croatia, England, Ireland, Germany, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Peru, Serbia, Lebanon, Indonesia, Greece, Europe, Hungary, Burma, Columbia, Slovenia, Zimbabwe, Seychelles, France, United Kingdom.

The largest grouping from the nationalities given on the census card (and not all listed their nationality) were Australia 54, India 29, Italy 23, Chinese & Chinese Malay 16, Polish 15, Philippines 12, Sri Lanka 12.

As can be seen from the numbers below we have had some parishioners who may have been away or did not complete the census card. The cards completed show us we have 408 people— inclusive of 94 Children and 19 students or young adults.

Ages: Under 20 - 88 ; 20-50 aged group—122 50-70 age group—78; 70+ age group—120

Occupations: The largest group identified were 80 Retirees, then 40 in the Health Sector (including doctors, nurses, therapists, allied health etc.) 21 in Education sector, 16 in a broad range of management roles, 15 in engineering and building, students 10 and home duties 10 with other occupations noted as under 10 being— cleaning, hospitality, lawyers and accountants.

Summary: The results clearly show us that we have a large group of people who are now retired and a large group of health workers- which is not surprising having 4 hospitals in close proximity.

We have so many cultures to celebrate—a wonderfully diverse parish with so much to offer each other as parish family and the wider community. Thank you to all who completed the census.

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CONGRATULATIONS 70 YEARS

PAT & COLIN CHENOWETH

Pat and Colin met at dances at Sigfields Dance Hall in Glenferrie, they were married on the **26th September 1953** at Holy Spirit Church in Thornbury. Fr Brace married them and the reception was held at Thornbury Bowling Club. Some of the guests were not very happy with them having their wedding on Grand Final day especially as Collingwood were in the Grand Final. All were happy later when Collingwood won!

Pat grew up in Thornbury and Colin in Hawthorn. After their honeymoon—of only 3 days they moved in with their parents until 2 years later they bought a block of land in Glenard Drive Heidelberg and built their home there where they still live. Colin worked for the SEC for 47 years.

They had 5 girls who all went to St. John's and then on to Our Lady of Mercy College and Sienna College. Their family is their centre and has brought much joy to their lives. They have 12 grandchildren, 3 great grandchildren and now much to their delight they have one great great grandchild.. Sadly their youngest daughter Jacinta died at the age of 41 from cancer. Pat and Colin cared Jacinta's then 6yr old Riley for many years.

Over the years their regular holiday spot was Queenscliff in a caravan and all the girls enjoyed these family holidays. The family has had many joyous family gatherings at special times and past Christmas lunches would see well over 40 gather for a traditional roast dinner of huge beef roast (purchased at Eaglemont butchers) along with hasselback potatoes which were a favourite of all and the traditional Christmas pudding the recipe from Women's Weekly cookbook.



Pat and Colin have always supported parish functions, luncheons fetes etc. Pat fondly remembers the St. John's Mother's Club days when all the mums helped with the laming-ton drives and the fetes to raise money for the "extra" things that were much needed in the school. Parish functions too were always enjoyed.

They remember the timber yard where Leo's now stands, the Gasometers that were on the corner of Banksia and Lower Heidelberg Road and families including the Heffernan's, Todeschini and Watsons. They speak fondly of our Parish Priest over 45 years ago Fr Michael Sheehy who ran a big sacrificial giving campaign to assist the parish financially then and into the future.

Anne, Cathy, Maureen and Elizabeth their daughters all help to keep Pat & Colin (now both in their 90's) living at home in their community they love. Pat says a good motto for marriage and life is to -

"SPOIL EACH OTHER"

WELL DONE

PAT & COLIN



Survey of Parishioners

Parishioners were invited to participate in a written survey in September 2023. It comprised nine questions and space for additional comments. There were about 50 survey forms returned with more than 500 comments and suggestions. With so many comments and suggestions, ranging from the broad and general to more personal specific interests, this is headline summary of the responses.

St John's is highly valued

St John's is highly valued by its parishioners as a community and place of worship. Parishioners overwhelmingly observed that St John's is a reverent place of worship; engaging of the congregation; friendly, welcoming and inclusive. It is valued for its focus on the Eucharist; the traditional and respectful liturgies; and the centrality of the Mass, including weekday masses, reconciliation, adoration and the rosary. The prominence of music and the choir was remarked upon by many respondents. The outreach to the Primary School children was celebrated and encouraged.

The friendly, engaging manner of the Parish Priest, Fr Vinh, was cited in many responses. His homilies were praised and his openness to all welcomed. The work of many volunteers, especially our Parish Associate, is respected and appreciated. Post-Covid, there is a real sense of renewal and optimism. While recognising that there will always be ongoing challenges, the Parish is hope-filled. As one parishioner

noted in gratitude and belonging: "It is my local parish."

The welcome of families, especially those with children, the elderly and people of different ethnic backgrounds was noted.

The beautiful and historic Church of St John the Evangelist, including its many internal features and the surrounding gardens, is highly appreciated as central to the fostering of a Christian spirit and the encouragement of worship and prayer.

The community and social activities - including the Gems group, the morning teas, sausage sizzles and parish luncheons - are prized for building a spirit of community and camaraderie. The regular provision of information and encouragement through the *Bulletin* and the *Eyrie* are appreciated. There was strong sense that the parish is inclusive of people of many different backgrounds in the spirit of the 'universal church'.

There was also a desire not to rest on our laurels, but to build upon these achievements, as discussed below.

Building on our strengths

There were a range of suggestions about how to build upon what is highly valued at St John's.

Enhancing our Catholic faith:

There were various suggestions for enhancing the Catholic faith of parishioners. These ideas included: a range of talks, faith enrichment programs, bible talks, adult catechesis, missions, retreats and alpha course etc; a children's liturgy of the word and

special blessings for children; a youth ministry; a marriage course and spiritual retreats; an evening Mass and meditation; Divine office; and seasonal study groups. Enhancing the opportunity for private prayer - for example, dedicating the side chapel to St Mary of the Cross - was also proposed.

Welcoming parishioners:

While recognising the friendly, embracing nature of parishioners, there were suggestions for enhancing the welcoming experience. These included more people to welcome parishioners to Mass and hand out newsletters; and simple name badges for volunteers including those welcoming parishioners, serving morning teas or assisting in other ways and a medallion or sash for special ministers; more social events, such as trivia and movies nights; expanded communal activities - for example coffee and raisin toast after morning Masses and/or a cup of soup after evening Masses.

Outreach:

Many parishioners also stressed the evangelical mission of St John's. Suggestions included organised and regular visitation programs for elderly and single parishioners; a list of people who can assist with day-to-day living tasks such as trades people and computer advice; renewing the visitation program and Masses at the hospitals; and the preparation and distribution of a welcome brochure for the local community.

Continued.....

Building community:

In addition to the range of current communal events, there were suggestions for an annual fête or fair celebrating a particular feast day, perhaps with a range of ethnic foods; increased social activities between the school and parish; and more opportunities for the involvement of the teachers and parents of school children in the parish, such as a morning coffee for parents after school drop-off; and opportunities for more interaction between older parishioners and school children. While current prayers are inclusive, suggestions included special Prayers of the Faithful, and special Masses from time to time.

Structural suggestions:

Appreciating the rich history of the parish, members of the congregation were very supportive of the need to maintain and, when necessary, restore the structure of the beautiful, historic property. There were a number of current concerns mentioned: the provision of a new confessional; adequate heating and air circulation; the reconstruction of the steps to the church; and improvement of the lobby area; the upgrade of the toilets and the unobtrusive use of modern communications, especially for the elderly, school children and special uses such as funerals. Ongoing maintenance of the property, including regular cleaning, is also accepted.

Other issues:

Other matters mentioned included the provision of more electronic card readers in the foyer; the number of collections; an ongoing and updated list of tasks and volunteers; an art and craft stall, for example at Christmas time; and expanded music for the various Masses.

**Looking ahead –
the 175th anniversary**

The first Mass in the 'Heidelberg Mission' was held on 23rd May 1848 in the home of Alexander McKillop and Flora Ann MacDonald. Present at that Mass was their six-year-old daughter Mary McKillop.

The opening and dedication of the Church of St John the Evangelist took place on Sunday 14th April, 1861.

The 175th anniversary of the church of St John the Evangelist occurs on 14th April 2026, in about 2 ½ years' time.

Many suggestions were made for the celebration of this significant anniversary, embracing the establishment of a planning group, a calendar of events and preparation milestones. Specific suggestions included a Mass celebrated by the Archbishop and former Parish Priests, a luncheon or dinner, the publication of an anniversary book, an histori-

cal display, a plaque to mark the occasion, a time capsule, a Priests honour board, a special recognition of the contribution of the Sisters of Mercy to the parish and schools, historic talks, a concert, a school Mass and celebration, a coffee table book on the architectural features of St John's, a 'Back To' St John's event, historical snippets in the *Bulletin* and the *Eyrie*, a book-mark and so on.

It was also suggested that the anniversary could mark the beginning of a project of evangelisation in the spirit of St John and the mission of the parish. The need for an assistant Priest to enable and expand the missionary work of the parish, especially the chaplaincy to the local hospitals, was seen as a priority by many parishioners.

Appreciation

We thank the many parishioners who contributed their time and thoughts to this survey. It provides us with an invaluable opportunity to assess the role of St John's currently, and to explore how we can continue to enhance it as a home of spiritual, communal, family and individual enrichment in the coming years.

Giving thanks for all the help you have given me over the past year, and looking forward to continuing to work with and for you as one parish family in the challenges ahead.

As we prepare ourselves and welcome the celebration of Jesus' birth I wish you all a very blessed joyful Christmas. Fr Vinh



The Eyrie

OUR TEAM

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The views, thoughts and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the individual authors and should not be interpreted as theology or moral and ethical teaching.

Your articles and input most welcome

Please contact the parish secretary 0394571066

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Donations to the Vincent De Paul Christmas Appeal can be made in the envelopes in the church porch.

Please leave envelopes in the parish office or the sacristy.

UPCOMING EVENTS

St John's Volunteers Evening
Saturday December 9th Mass 6.00p.m.
Followed by a meal in the Parish House

Advent Reflection Group

Wednesday 6th, 13th and 20th of
December at 5.15p.m.
St Francis Xavier Room All welcome.

Second Rite of Reconciliation:
7.00p.m Tuesday 19th December

4th Sunday of Advent
Saturday 23rd December: Vigil Mass
6pm

Sunday 24th December :
Masses 8.30am, 10.30am

Christmas Eve
Masses at 6:00pm, 9.00pm
Carols 8:30pm

Christmas Day:
Monday 25th December -
Masses at: 8:30am, 10:30am

Feast of St John the Evangelist
Wednesday December 27th

Mass 9.15a.m.
followed by morning tea in the
Parish House.

**Solemnity of Mary,
The Holy Mother of God**
January 1st
Mass 10.00a.m.
