

Partnership Parishes of
Holy Spirit Thornbury East & St Anthony's Alphington,
St Joseph's Northcote, and St Mary's Thornbury

2024 Annual Report



Our vision: A joyful, inclusive community led by the Holy Spirit.

Our mission: To be the Good News of Jesus Christ by serving others and caring for all.



Northcote &
Thornbury
Catholic Parishes



Mass centres:

Holy Spirit Church
248 Raleigh Street, Thornbury Vic 3071

St Anthony's Church
45 Railway Place, Alphington Vic 3078

St Joseph's Church
140 Westbourne Grove, Northcote Vic 3070

St Mary's Church
1 Rossmoyne Street, Thornbury Vic 3071

Message from the Parish Priest

Cities built on hilltops cannot be hidden; they shine for everyone, just as stated in Matthew 5:14-15. The statement '*The parish is the heartbeat of the church*' emphasizes the parish as the fundamental and vital unity where people find faith, community, and encouragement to live out their Christian lives. It is a sacred space where individuals and families gather as a worshipping and serving community, connect, find belonging, and grow in their faith.

Our Partnership Parishes carry a legacy of more than 100 years. St Joseph's Northcote officially began in 1893, St Anthony's Alphington in 1915, St Mary's Thornbury in 1923, and Holy Spirit Thornbury East in 1953. In 2022, these faith communities officially partnered to form a single community in mission. We are now a community led by the Holy Spirit, striving to be a joyful and inclusive Church. Our mission is to share the Good News of Jesus Christ by serving others and caring for all.

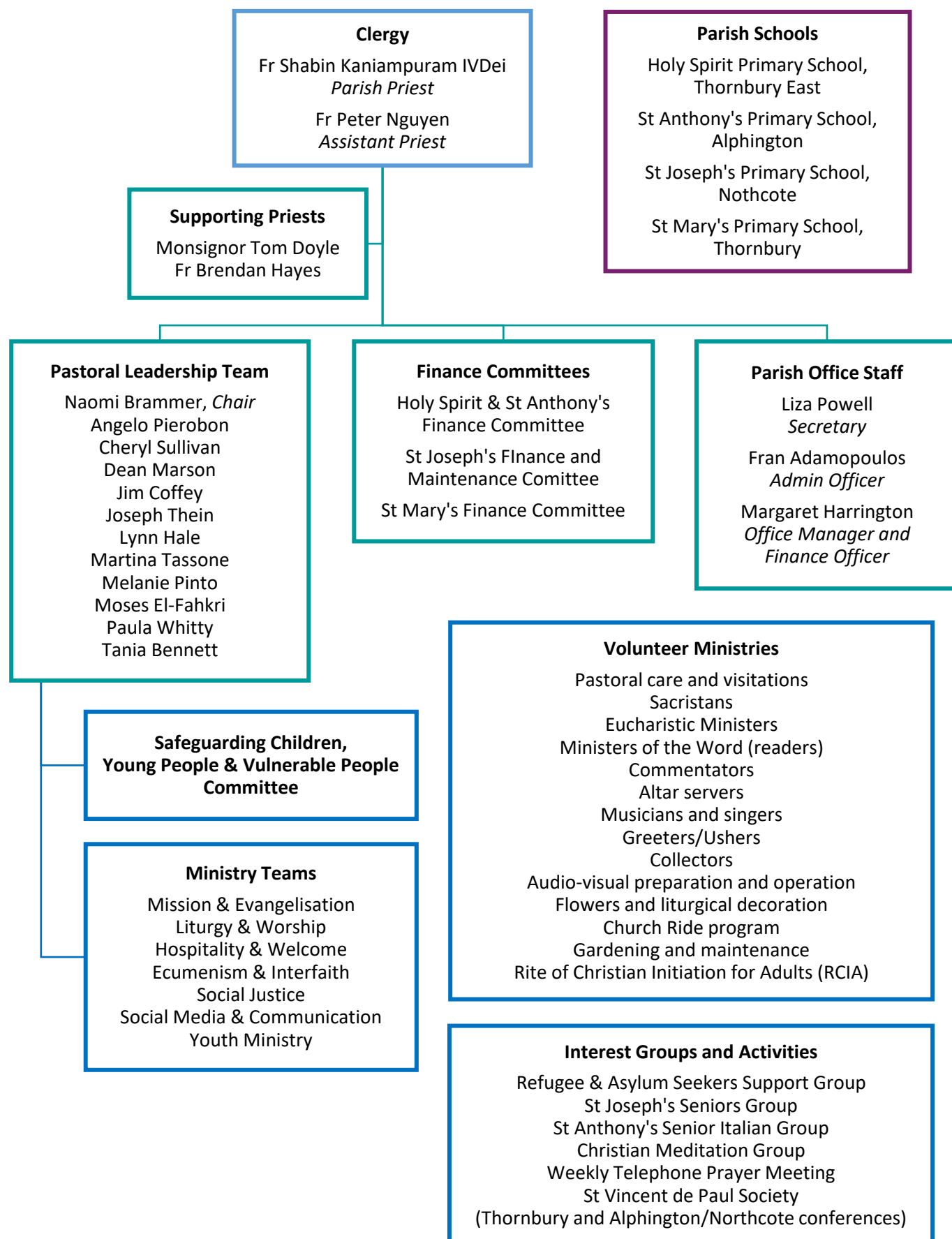
Coming together as partnership parishes was a new experience and a new beginning for all of us. We have worked together on this journey for the last three years, and it has been a journey of Grace. This annual report for 2024, presented by the Pastoral Leadership Team, shows how far we have come in our mission.

Today, we live in a world that is markedly different from the environment in which many of our parishes were created fifty or a hundred years ago. The partnering of our parishes in 2022 presented an opportunity for a reframing of our thinking, supporting one another, walking together in a synodal way, and sharing our resources to bring renewed life – ensuring our local church communities become more vibrant and vital for God's people.

Our vision and mission as partnered parishes, rooted in our encounter with Jesus, fuel our renewal and lead us toward vibrant and vital parish communities. Our journey is synodal, with Jesus Christ at the centre. While this journey may be challenging, it is also joyful. Together, we are building an authentic and joyful Christian community, one way being through our self-giving love.

Chapter 2 of the Acts of the Apostles serves as a model for an authentic, self-giving Christian community, highlighting true friendship in the Holy Spirit, where people are loved for who they are and encouraged to grow as followers of Jesus Christ. Thank you all for being part of this new journey – parishioners, dedicated volunteers, ministry groups, school staff, families, parish staff, and our priests in the community. **Let us journey together in this mission.**

Parish Leadership Structure, Ministries, Groups, and Schools



Pastoral Leadership Team

Our partnership parishes' Pastoral Leadership Team (PLT) consists of our clergy, Fr Shabin and Fr Peter, and representatives from our four communities. In 2024, these representative members were Angelo Pierobon, Cheryl Sullivan, Dean Marson, James Casey, Jim Coffey, Joseph Thein, Lynn Hale, Martina Tassone, Melanie Pinto, Mirella Pace, Moses El-Fahkri, Naomi Brammer, Paula Whitty, and Tania Bennett.

The role of the PLT is to serve our parish communities by ensuring that the views, needs, and concerns of our parishioners are understood and considered in decisions that impact on the life and faith development of our partnership parishes. We provide advice to Fr Shabin and feedback and support to our existing parish groups, while also seeking opportunities to bring our communities together in faith, service, and worship. To reflect our partnership parishes' commitment to safeguarding children, young people, and vulnerable people, each PLT meeting includes a discussion of safeguarding matters and any relevant information, training opportunities, or changes in legislation as a standing agenda item. We also receive regular updates from our ministry teams, finance committees, and parish primary schools through their representatives on the PLT.

In all of our decisions, we strive to be mindful of our parish vision of a joyful, inclusive community led by the Holy Spirit, and our mission to be the Good News of Jesus Christ by serving others and caring for all. These vision and mission statements are printed at the top of the agenda for each PLT meeting as a reminder of our responsibility to encourage and promote a vibrant, vital, and viable community now and into the future.

In 2024, we contributed to creating a joyful and inclusive community by supporting parish events such as:

- St Mary's End of Centenary Year Mass and Twilight Concert
- our parish feast days celebrating Our Lady of Lourdes, St Joseph, St Anthony, and Pentecost
- the Summer Partnership Parishes session for readers and Eucharistic Ministers presented by Fr Elio Capra, and the Winter Partnership Parishes session featuring Colin Carter, both of which were well attended
- a combined music ministry workshop led by Daryl Barclay
- the thanksgiving Masses and farewells for Fr Dixon Kuriappilly, Mirella Pace, and Maria Zacchardi which, although somewhat sad occasions, allowed us to come together and give thanks for the Christ-like way that Fr Dixon, Mirella, and Maria have served our four communities.

Our decisions also helped enable our parishes to serve their communities more sustainably by endorsing:

- the decision to rent St Anthony's presbytery to retired priests as an additional source of income
- the installation of "tap-and-go" devices at St Joseph's and St Mary's churches, to enable parishioners and visitors to make donations using a debit or credit card
- a thanksgiving campaign that was run across all four of our communities in October.

With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we also took time during our meetings in 2024 to:

- consider questions, requests, and suggestions put forward by parishioners and respond accordingly
- facilitate discussions within and between our ministry teams, and provide feedback on their proposals and initiatives
- listen to reports and reflections from PLT members on external workshops, seminars, and events they attended during the year
- reflect on what it means to be a "vibrant parish", how our communities are already embodying those characteristics, and the needs and challenges we face in helping our parishes to flourish and grow.

As we look back over the past year in our wonderful parish communities, we see many reasons for hope and joy. Thank you for your ongoing prayers, support, and participation in parish life.

Naomi Brammer, Chairperson

Holy Spirit & St Anthony's Finance Committee

The Finance Team for the Parish of Holy Spirit and St Anthony's has members from both communities. We are a small team and meet quarterly to discuss issues such as investment accounts, general finances, and repairs and maintenance that is required at both properties.

St Anthony's has had an ongoing issue with our three-phase power which powers our beautiful organ. The costs for this repair were very high and so it has taken us a while, but it is finally fixed which is wonderful. Split system air conditioners in Holy Spirit church have been replaced this financial year.

The gardens at both churches are massive and need continual work and effort to maintain. Holy Spirit has a wonderful group of people who mow and cut back regularly, which ensures the site looks great. St Anthony's was very thoughtfully planted by Martin Troy, a wonderful parishioner, and though it needs cutting back regularly it always looks good. Both churches are in a good state now.

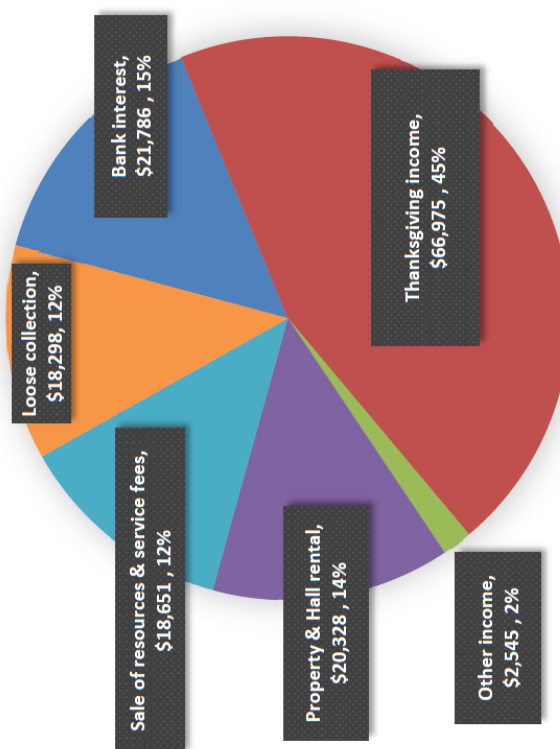
The Holy Spirit Hall is rented frequently to parishioners for baptism parties. Paul Samanna manages this for us and does an excellent job ensuring that all Child Safety and Duty of Care protocols are met. We have just installed a new oven in the hall which will help regular users and also the primary school children, who use this for their canteen. With both presbyteries rented out it means that we have people on site, using the facilities.

Margaret Harrington, Chairperson

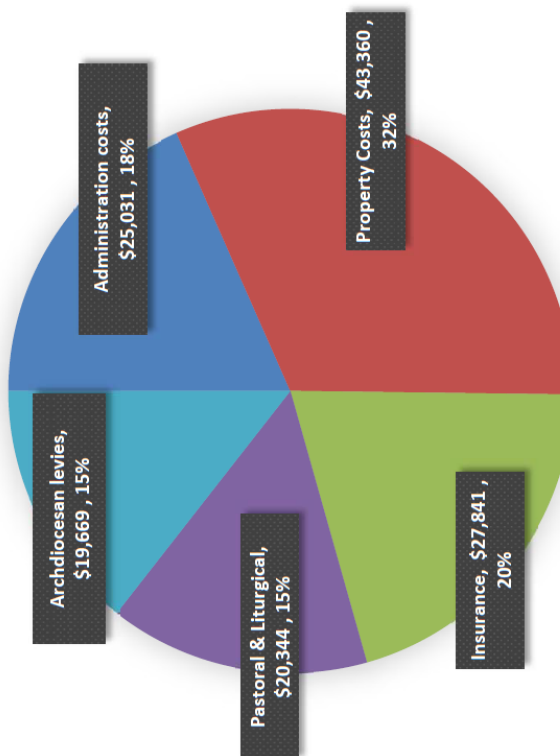
Holy Spirit & St Anthony's Parish Alphington January to December 2023

Income	2023	% of Total	Expenditure	2023	% of Total
Thanksgiving income	\$66,975	45.1%	Administration costs (Staff costs, stationery, telephone, office expenses)	\$25,031	18.4%
Property & Hall rental	\$20,328	13.7%	Property costs (Utilities, Rates & taxes, repairs, etc)	\$43,360	31.8%
Sale of resources & service fees	\$18,651	12.6%	Insurance	\$27,841	20.4%
Loose collection	\$18,298	12.3%	Pastoral & Liturgical costs (Church requisites, Liturgical expenses)	\$20,344	14.9%
Bank interest	\$21,786	14.7%	Archdiocesan levies	\$19,669	14.4%
Other income	\$2,545	1.7%	Total Operating Expenses	\$136,245	100.0%
Total Operating Income	\$148,583	100.0%	Net Operating Surplus	\$12,338	
Donations for capital purposes	\$14,207		Loan repayments (interest is included above in Administration costs)	\$16,865	
Total income including Capital donations	\$162,790		TOTAL Net Cash Surplus for the Year	\$9,680	

OPERATING INCOME



OPERATING EXPENSES



2024 financial results are currently under review, and are expected to be available in mid-2025

St Joseph's Finance and Maintenance Committee

This committee consists of Fr Shabin, Fr Peter, Moses El-Fahkri, Tony Bolzan, Elizabeth Baldo, Frank Doherty, Angelo Pierobon, Margaret Dimech, the primary school principal Mary Kearney and the combined parish accountant Bernard Negline. The committee's intention is for church maintenance and improvements to be sustained from income of parishioners' sacrificial giving. Fortunately, the income is supplemented by rental of the Presbytery to Cabrini Health and hiring of the Parish Hall and tennis courts.

Financially, St Joseph's is holding its own despite declining income and higher expenses. Bernard has reported a small surplus of \$13,823 in 2024, lower than the budget of \$29,918.

Maintenance is a constant issue.

- Michael Zacchardi undertakes many maintenance jobs voluntarily and the committee appreciates his assistance. Just one job was the painting of "Clergy Only" in the car park that looks very professional.
- This year there were leaks to the steeple and roof of the church. Tony Bolzan spent many hours with varying roofing plumbers to find the source of the problem. Frank Doherty suggested a new plumber and both leaks are now repaired.
- The brick wall outside of the church was damaged. Although insurance was claimed, it was not enough to replace the wall completely. Angelo Pierobon sourced a bricklayer who repaired the damage for a reasonable cost.
- Tony also arranged for a graffiti remover to clean the walls of the property.
- The lines on the tennis courts were repainted professionally after feedback from the tennis coach (who hires the venue for teaching local children).
- A new gardener was employed through Elizabeth Baldo's intervention after a neighbour's complaints were received about the vegetation growing outside the tennis courts fence. It seems to be under control at this time.
- An electrician was sought to fix lights around the church. Angelo again found a great contact who replaced the damaged lights and also added lights that improved the appearance of the church at night. You may like to visit after dark and see the roof, steeple, and statue beautifully displayed.
- A new St Joseph's statue was erected in the courtyard on the eastern side of the church. Moses El-Fahkri voluntarily covered the expense, and it is now behind a fence to prevent further damage.
- A new cabinet for the music area was installed and it has improved the quality of the sound throughout the church.
- There was a leak from the baptismal font after the taps remained on accidentally and the carpet was completely soaked. Elizabeth hired a carpet blower, the water was removed and prevented mould from growing.
- The committee has been concentrating lately on improving the Parish Hall. A committee working bee removed the old curtains during a spring clean of the hall. Elizabeth sourced new blinds for the windows and pictures for the walls. Frank replaced an internal door, wooden timbers in the ramps, and a rotten pole on the corner of the hall. Our next object is to repaint at least internally, if not externally, if possible. With the renovations, we intend to hire the space out further to add to the parish's income.

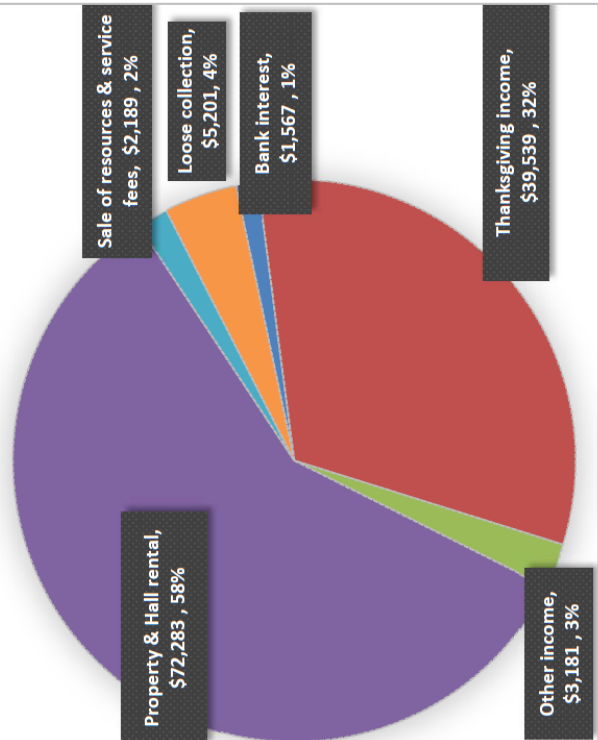
We are always looking for people with building skills to volunteer their services. Maintenance is costly and our budget can never cover the continual repairs to a historic church like ours. Please contact the committee through Fr Shabin or speak to any of the committee after Mass if you are available. You would be very welcome.

Margaret Dimech, Chairperson

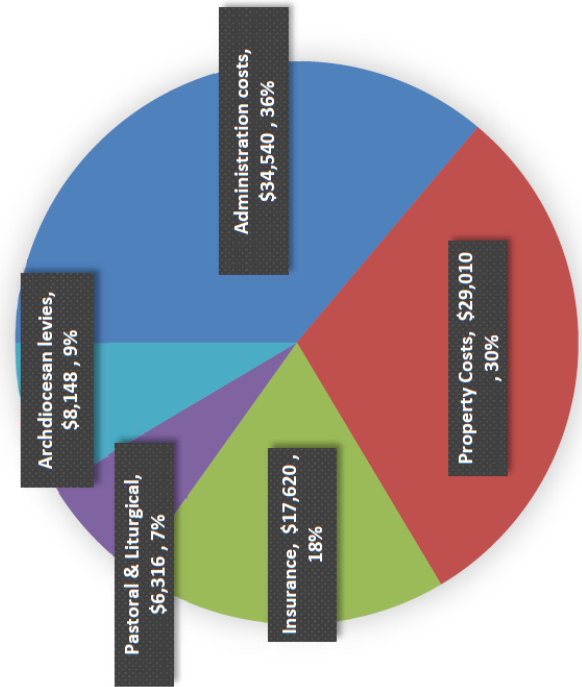
St Joseph's Parish Northcote January to December 2023

Income	2023	% of Total	Expenditure	2023	% of Total
Thanksgiving income	\$39,539	31.9%	Administration costs (Staff costs, stationery, telephone, office expenses)	\$34,540	36.1%
Property & Hall rental	\$72,283	58.3%	Property costs (Utilities, Rates & taxes, repairs, etc)	\$29,010	30.3%
Sale of resources & service fees	\$2,189	1.8%	Insurance	\$17,620	18.4%
Loose collection	\$5,201	4.2%	Pastoral & Liturgical costs (Church requisites, Liturgical expenses)	\$6,316	6.6%
Bank interest	\$1,567	1.3%	Archdiocesan levies	\$8,148	8.5%
Other income	\$3,181	2.6%	Total Operating Expenses	\$95,634	100.0%
Total Operating Income	\$123,960	100.0%	Net Operating Surplus	\$28,326	
Donations for capital purposes	\$644				
Insurance claim	\$13,362				
Total income including Capital donations	\$137,966		TOTAL Net Cash Surplus for the Year	\$42,332	

OPERATING INCOME



OPERATING EXPENSES



2024 financial results are currently under review, and are expected to be available in mid-2025

St Mary's Finance Committee

The role of St Mary's Finance Committee is to plan and manage the financial responsibilities of the Parish. The committee approves major expenses and oversees the running and maintenance of all Parish assets.

The main activities and initiatives of the committee during 2024 have been:

- securing the financial stability of the Parish
- transferring accounts to new accounting software, and the appointment of a new accountant
- putting into place a long-term tenant for the former convent in Mansfield Street
- investigating ways to maximise return on the property at 787 High Street including liaising with an architect, the Archdiocese, and property managers
- approving capital works.

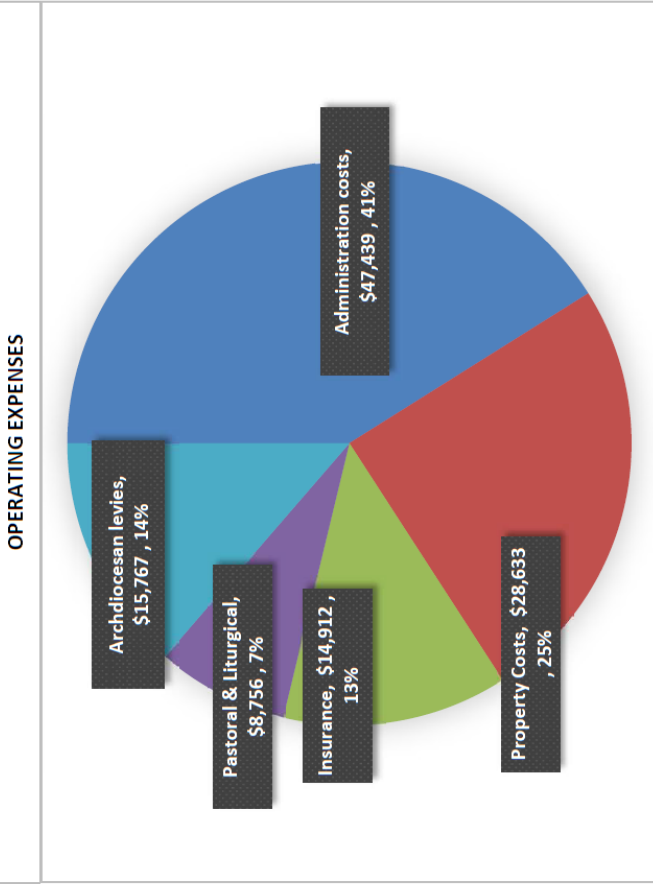
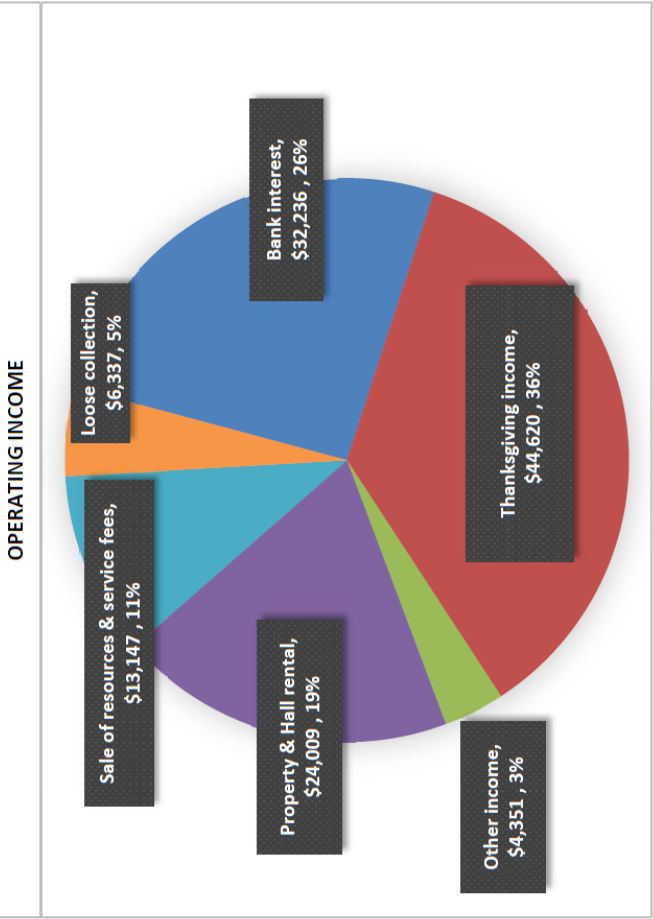
The parish is now in a very stable financial position. We hold cash reserves of over \$1,000,000 and with minimal debt. The two major assets are the property in Mansfield Street, which is now leased, and the shop front in High Street, which is vacant. We anticipate major improvements to the shop front before we could expect to lease the property. For the year ending 31 December 2024 we returned a profit of \$101,575, representing a significant improvement on the past few years, which produced losses or, at best, broke even.

We believe that our role is to provide the means by which the Pastoral Leadership Team can act to fulfil our parish vision and mission statements. We consider the parish mission in our decisions. We looked at making our assets available to charitable organisations, and continue to liaise with the Archdiocese about this. Unfortunately for a number of reasons (including costs and planning permission) we have not been successful.

Ross Italiano, Chairperson

St Mary's Parish Thornbury January to December 2023

Income	2023	% of Total	Expenditure	2023	% of Total
Thanksgiving income	\$44,620	35.8%	Administration costs (Staff costs, stationery, telephone, office expenses)	\$47,439	41.1%
Property & Hall rental	\$24,009	19.3%	Property costs (Utilities, Rates & taxes, repairs, etc)	\$28,633	24.8%
Sale of resources & service fees	\$13,147	10.5%	Insurance	\$14,912	12.9%
Loose collection	\$6,337	5.1%	Pastoral & Liturgical costs (Church requisites, Liturgical expenses)	\$8,756	7.6%
Bank interest	\$32,236	25.9%	Archdiocesan levies	\$15,767	13.7%
Other income	\$4,351	3.5%	Total Operating Expenses	\$115,507	100.0%
Total Operating Income	\$124,700	100.0%	Net Operating Surplus	\$9,193	
Donations for capital purposes	\$250				
Total income including Capital donations	\$124,950		TOTAL Net Cash Surplus for the Year	\$9,443	



2024 financial results are currently under review, and are expected to be available in mid-2025

Parish Office

Over the past two years we have had a few changes of staff in the Parish Office. This has occurred for many reasons, but we are hoping that things will settle down over the next few months. After 35 years Mirella Pace, our Pastoral Associate, and Maria Zaccardi, our office support person, both retired. The celebrations for their farewell were a true indication of how the parishioners viewed their work over the years. Maggie Joste who had been the Parish Secretary at St Joseph's wanted a position closer to home (Caroline Springs), and who could blame her.

We now have Liza Powell in the front office, who handles all the secretarial aspects of the Parish Office. This means she is front of house and speaks to the majority of those who call looking for information about baptisms, weddings, funerals, and sacramental programs. She prepares certificates and ensures that items are placed into the church baskets for Masses on the weekend.

We have just employed Fran Adamopoulos to assist as an Admin Officer. Fran is preparing the bulletin each week and ensuring that anniversaries, deaths, and many parish events are displayed appropriately in the bulletin.

Margaret Harrington has worked in the Parish of Holy Spirit and St Anthony's for many years and as Office Manager oversees the staff and the procedures and protocols of the office. Margaret's other role is the finances. As only Holy Spirit and St Anthony's are amalgamated, it means that three sets of books must be kept. St Mary's and St Joseph's are still stand-alone even though we are working together to have an inclusive office.

Fr Shabin and Fr Peter spend a lot of time in the office, supporting staff but also carrying out their own work.

Fr Shabin as Parish Priest has meetings with a variety of people including those preparing for funerals, Archdiocesan staff, and community leaders. One of Fr Shabin's main roles is working with our parish schools; he does this by meeting regularly with Principals and Religious Education Leaders to support them and also to plan the faith content of the schools in our parishes.

Fr Peter has taken up the role of Sacramental Program Coordinator, which is the first time we have had a priest in this role across the parishes. He has organised a Sacramental Team to assist him and planned a new program, which is beginning now with the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Fr Peter also meets with all the baptism families as they begin the faith journey for their children.

We live out our parishes' mission to be the Good News of Jesus Christ by serving others and caring for all, by being accepting of everyone who approaches the office for advice and support. We also try to create a caring atmosphere in the office. Our focus over the past two years has been to streamline the parish office and we have done this by having one parish office, a Google calendar, one web site, one phone number, and two email address that reach all the employees. We talk and plan like we are one, and we hope this makes parishioners feel included and listened to and part of the wider parish. Part of our mission is to also care for our priests, and ensure they aren't overloaded with calls and diary events. As we work as one we continue to pray that our priests feel our support in caring for four churches each with their own culture, history, and community members.

Margaret Harrington, Office Manager and Finance Officer

Safeguarding Children, Young People, and Vulnerable People Committee

Our Partnership Parishes have a commitment to ensuring the safety of children and vulnerable people in our community.

In the words of our Archbishop, *'We are resolutely committed to ensuring that all those engaged in the Church are aware of the inherent vulnerability of children and young people, and that they acknowledge their own responsibility to promote the dignity of children and young people and their fundamental right to be respected and nurtured in a safe environment'*.

At every Pastoral Leadership Team meeting of our Partnership Parishes, Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults is a standing item. The Pastoral Leadership Team is kept informed with the latest from the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne (CAM) and Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd (ACSL). This keeps the team abreast of changes to child safety policy and legislation, as well as upcoming talks, presentations and symposiums on child safety. ACSL publishes a monthly newsletter. Likewise, CAM has regular Safeguarding Units for the benefit of the archdiocese parishes.

Safeguarding our young and vulnerable is a life-long task that goes to the heart of our parishes. We have resolved to strengthen our commitment to children by placing their safety front and centre in our mission. Archbishop Mark Coleridge tells us, *'Safeguarding our young and vulnerable goes to the heart of the church'*. Safeguarding is a life-long challenge for all and there is never room for complacency or cynicism.

The principles of Safeguarding include empowering young and vulnerable adults, prevention, protection, proportionality, partnerships, and accountability. Our priests, staff, and volunteers are aware of and understand these responsibilities. These principles are upheld at all times in their actions and processes used in their roles.

An information session is forthcoming for staff, volunteers, and parishioners.

The 11 Child Safe Standards

- **Standard 1:** Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.
- **Standard 2:** Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
- **Standard 3:** Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
- **Standard 4:** Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
- **Standard 5:** Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
- **Standard 6:** People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
- **Standard 7:** Processes for complaints and concerns are child-focused.
- **Standard 8:** Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
- **Standard 9:** Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
- **Standard 10:** Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.
- **Standard 11:** Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

Moses El-Fahkri, on behalf of the Safeguarding Committee

Mission & Evangelisation Ministry Team

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is always one of the main works of evangelisation in Catholic parishes. It's the main way in which new people join the Church when they are older and are making the choice to become a Christian.

We've had a couple of great years with the RCIA. We've welcomed some wonderful and inspirational people into the Church. Members of the team journey with the candidates over several months, helping them to understand what Catholics believe, who Jesus is and what it means to give their lives to Jesus. We try to welcome the candidates and share with them the joy of our faith. Sharing our faith with new people is a wonderful way of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ.

This year (2025) we will welcome Aaron Fletcher into the Church at St Joseph's at the Easter Vigil. We already have 3 or 4 people enquiring about being part of the RCIA program next year. Please pray for them!

With the retirement of Mirella Pace last year, the RCIA team is now Cheryl Sullivan and Jim Coffey. If you would like to be part of this rewarding ministry please speak to Fr Shabin or Fr Peter about it.

Alpha Course 2024

From February to April 2024 we ran a very successful Alpha course. It was well attended.

Alpha gives Christians, and people who want to find out more about Christianity, the chance to ask "Is there more to life than this?". To answer this question we turn to Jesus, the core teachings of the Christian church and to life in the Holy Spirit. Everyone who participated gave great feedback about how positive and uplifting the experience was. Thanks to parishioners Marissa, Mirella, Jim, Fran, Mona, and Audrey who generously volunteered their time to organise and run the course.

We did not get enough people to run a second course in 2025, but we will be looking forward to running Alpha again in the parishes when we can.

Formation and Courses

Members of the Mission & Evangelisation Team had the opportunity in 2024 to reflect on our own faith, our call to preach the gospel, and our priorities as a team, by participating in courses offered by the Archdiocese and the Conversations with God series facilitated by one of our own parishioners, Jim Brown.

Mission and Evangelisation is EVERYONE'S calling

Jesus gave every believer the mission to '*Go out to all the world and proclaim the Good News*'. This is our main job as Catholics. Every parishioner can help in the task of mission and evangelisation by having the courage to talk to people you meet, people in your family, people you work with, socialise with, do business with, about how much Jesus means to you. Sharing the joy of our faith with others can lead them to ask "why are these Christians so filled with love and joy?" and lead them to want to find out more about the Catholic faith.

So please take the little opportunities that come along in your daily life to be joyful witnesses of the love of Jesus and if people show interest in your faith invite them to come to Mass with you or put them in touch with the RCIA team.

Jim Coffey, on behalf of the Mission & Evangelisation Ministry Team

Liturgy & Worship Ministry Team

The Liturgy & Worship Team is committed to enriching the spiritual life of our parishes by planning and enhancing our liturgies. Our aim is to make them prayerful, inclusive, and celebrated in a joy-filled, welcoming, and reverent atmosphere.

The team is made up of representatives from each of our four churches and we strive to ensure the voices of our parish communities are heard and reflected in our worship across all three parishes, while respecting the unique traditions and characteristics of each church. In 2024, the team met quarterly to plan, reflect, and review liturgies for the Church's key seasons as well as many special celebrations held across our churches.

Key Highlights & Events

- St Mary's Closing of Centenary Year and Twilight Concert with Gen Bryant (11 & 18 February)
- Pieta Lenten Program small group series (Lent)
- Calling & Commitment talk hosted by Fr Elio Capra (7 March)
- Continued involvement and participation in Ecumenical Way of the Cross at All Nations (29 March)
- Review of Triduum and Christmas mass times, with recommendations for discussion in 2025
- Move from reading anniversaries aloud in mass to silent prayer with names displayed overhead
- Consolidation of healing and anointing Masses to one monthly Mass at St Anthony's, with St Joseph's continuing a Seniors Mass on the last Friday of the month
- St Anthony's Feast Day with Blessing of Bread and Luncheon (23 June)
- Ministry Refresh, Renew & Introduction evening (16 October)
- Music Workshop led by Dr Daryl Barclay (30 October) – a key outcome was for all church choirs to unite to sing at respective Feast Days in 2025, directed by Dr Barclay
- Advent Workshop talk hosted by Fr Brendan Hayes (5 December)
- Christmas Eve Masses with participation of children in the nativity play (24 December)

Looking Ahead

A key focus for 2025 is to engage more parishioners in our celebrations, which includes encouraging greater participation from families in our school communities. We are also focused on making liturgical responsibilities more sustainable and will continue to work to harness the talents across our four churches in a way that fosters a balanced approach that supports both our clergy and our community.

Gratitude & Acknowledgments

We are deeply grateful to Fr Shabin, Fr Peter, and our supporting priests Monsignor Tom and Fr Brendan, for their spiritual leadership and guidance. We are also appreciative for the insight and support of our seminarian Andrew Tran.

A heartfelt thank you to the many volunteers who gave their time as lectors, Eucharistic ministers, altar servers, choir members, and to those who lovingly prepared the altar, decorated our churches, and supported in countless ways behind the scenes throughout 2024. Thank you for your dedication and hard work – your contributions bring depth, meaning, and beauty to our liturgy and worship.

Finally, thank you to all our parishioners for your engagement and support, which help make our worship vibrant, joyful, and welcoming. If you would like to get more involved as a volunteer, please contact the Parish Office.

Paula Whitty, on behalf of the Liturgy & Worship Ministry team

Hospitality & Welcome Ministry Team

At the heart of every vibrant parish is a spirit of welcome, where all who walk through our doors feel at home. The Hospitality & Welcome Ministry team is dedicated to fostering this sense of belonging across our four churches. Representatives from each parish community gathered on four occasions throughout the year to share ideas and strengthen our commitment to hospitality.

A key focus in 2024 was to build upon the wonderful tradition of welcome already present in some of our churches by introducing, or reintroducing, church greeters. Greeters/Ushers play an essential role in creating a warm and friendly atmosphere, offering a smile, a kind word, and guidance to those who are new or returning to our faith community. We are very grateful to those of you who have faithfully welcomed parishioners for many years.

Key Highlights & Events

- Greeter/Usher introduction and refresh evening (26 & 27 June)
- Introduction of Winter Talks series – An Evening with Colin Carter (25 July)
- Introduction of warm welcome for first-time visitors and encouragement to connect after Mass
- Promotion of the Church Ride program to help more people attend Mass with ease
- Development underway for a newcomer Welcome Pack (set for 2025)

Looking Ahead

Our focus ahead is on encouraging a spirit of welcome that extends beyond the church doors. We hope to deepen our culture of welcome by encouraging every parishioner to see hospitality as a shared responsibility, by creating more opportunities for connection within our parishes, and by strengthening outreach to new members and those who may feel on the margins of our parish life.

Gratitude & Acknowledgments

Thank you Fr Shabin and Fr Peter for laying the foundation for a welcoming and hospitable parish through your leadership. A big thank you to Mirella Pace, Pastoral Associate and a key member of the team, for the significant role you played in delivering on the ministry's goals in 2024 – we are extremely grateful.

Thank you to all new and ongoing church greeters/ushers. A special thanks to Arcare Aged Care for their donation of 12 umbrellas, ensuring our greeters/ushers are well-prepared even on rainy days!

We sincerely appreciate Colin Carter for his engaging talk and discussion at our inaugural Winter Talk. Our special thanks to Therese Rahme, parishioner of St Mary's and owner of Juju's Deli (750 High St Thornbury), for the generous and delicious catering, which made the evening even more enjoyable.

Thank you to the committed volunteers who organise monthly tea and coffee sessions after Mass, creating a valuable opportunity for connection. Additionally, we are grateful to those who assist parishioners with transportation to and from Mass, ensuring everyone can participate in our community.

And thank you to all our parishioners who cultivate a spirit of joy and warmth by reaching out to connect with others even as simply as offering a smile and a hello. A welcoming parish starts with each of us, and small gestures can make a big difference.

Paula Whitty, on behalf of the Hospitality & Welcome Ministry team

Ecumenism & Interfaith Ministry Team

The World Day of Prayer was celebrated at St Mary's church on 1 March 2024, with a focus on Palestine.

Our partnership parishes also participated in the ecumenical Stations of the Cross at All Nations Park on Good Friday. Before this event much work was done to update addresses and contact people from local churches. Leaflets were dropped and a minister from the Uniting Church visited the Parish Office. The attendance at the Stations was the best in many years and food was provided after the Stations.

There was an ecumenical carol singing event with a combined choir held on 14 December 2024. Some of our local choir groups supported this.

Pope Francis visited Indonesia in September 2024 and he reached out to the local faith communities. The Muslim leaders were appreciative and commented how we must build solidarity in our complex world.

Lynn Hale, on behalf of the Ecumenism & Interfaith Ministry team

Social Justice Ministry Team

The Social Justice Ministry Team is in the early stages of planning activities moving forward.

Guided by the Holy Spirit, our aim is to encourage and promote actions that help people within our parishes and schools, as well as out into the wider community.

Over the past year our parishes have supported causes including:

- Asylum Seeker charitable work, including food and vouchers
- St Vincent de Paul Christmas Hamper donations
- Project Compassion fundraising campaigns

We are soon to contact our parish schools, to connect with their student-based Social Justice committees. We will be inviting them to coordinate with the Social Justice Ministry Team so that our parish communities can support initiatives within our schools, and also so we can invite our schools to support projects within our parishes.

We believe that partnering with our school students can encourage them to grow into caring, considerate and generous individuals willing to serve others, and further strengthen bonds between our schools and our parish communities.

Dean Marson, on behalf of the Social Justice Ministry team

Social Media & Communication Ministry Team

Parish Website Transition to PACEM

- In July 2024, the website for our partnership parishes officially transitioned to PACEM (the Archdiocese of Melbourne's parish management application), integrating all churches under a single platform: <https://www.melbcatholic.org/s/hosan>
- This change means that individual church websites are no longer maintained separately.
- The unified website ensures parishioners can easily access our parish news, bulletins, activities, sacraments, and Mass times in one place.
- The transition aims to improve accessibility and consistency of information across the parish community.

Social Media Platforms

- Our partnership parishes maintain two official social media accounts:
 - Facebook
 - Instagram
- Both platforms operate under the name "Parishes of Alphington, Northcote, Thornbury, and Thornbury East".
- These social media pages serve as a hub for:
 - parish news updates
 - Church news and connections with the Archdiocese of Melbourne, as well as updates from the Catholic Church in Australia
 - reflections and spiritual content
 - promotion of parish activities and events.
- The goal is to enhance engagement and communication within our partnership parishes.

One of the primary challenges faced in managing social media content is the limited time available to create and maintain engaging posts. With numerous tasks requiring attention, finding sufficient time to consistently update social media platforms becomes increasingly difficult.

Youth Ministry

Since September 2024, our partnership parishes have been blessed with a youth-led Mass at St Mary's Thornbury on the first Sunday evening Mass of each month. This initiative was born out of a desire to create a space where young people can come together in prayer, find support, and deepen their faith within our community. The Mass has become an opportunity for spiritual growth and a deeper sense of belonging for all involved.

Youth-Led Mass

- initially involved five young people (four under 18 and one university student)
- youth actively led the Sunday evening liturgy
- numbers in the congregation have been increasing
- Vision: to cultivate a community where young people connect their spiritual lives with God and others

Commitment to Spiritual Growth

- primary goal remains to foster a lasting relationship between young people and God
- support for both their academic commitments and spiritual development

Challenges Faced

- limited availability of young members committed to the group due to school commitments
- difficulty in organizing additional activities due to scheduling conflicts

Plans for 2025

- Prayers of the Faithful: dedicated prayers for youth and families on the first weekend of each month across the four church communities
- Australian Catholic Youth Festival 2025: participation in the Melbourne event in November
- Youth Music Band: formation of a music group from the existing youth members to enhance the Youth Sunday Mass experience
- Sacramental Program:
 - sessions for children every Sunday at 4:15pm
 - encouragement for families to attend Mass together after catechist classes

Conclusion: While there are challenges in increasing participation in the youth-led liturgy, the youth ministry remains an essential part of our parishes' mission. With ongoing support, we are committed to nurturing a faith-filled community where young people can deepen their spiritual journey while successfully balancing their academic and personal lives.

Pastoral Care and Visitations

It was a busy year in 2024 in our partnership parishes led by Parish Priest Fr Shabin, our Assistant Priests Fr Dixon (until he left) and now Fr Peter and co-ordinated within our parishes by:

- Rosemary Bolzan at St Joseph's
- Mirella Pace at St Mary's
- Pauline Egan at Holy Spirit and St Anthony's.

Our parishioners who can no longer attend Mass due to:

- illness keeping them at home
- being in a nursing home
- being in hospital

were still very much included in our parish community with visits by our priests and a wonderful group of volunteers who truly invoke what it means to serve others and care for all with visits that could be on a weekly to monthly basis, bringing with them news of the parish and conducting a communion service.

When responding to a request to visit a sick parishioner in hospital, one of our priests would go if anointing was required otherwise a visitation volunteer would be sent.

Visitation is a big part of our parish vision, and its ongoing work is due to and with much thanks to the wonderful pastoral people who take on this important role in our partnership parishes.

Pauline Egan, Pastoral Minister Holy Spirit & St Anthony's

St Joseph's Seniors Group

The Seniors Group at St Joseph's has been meeting since the 1980s. We meet the last Friday of the month at 10.30am for Mass and morning tea. We gather in the side chapel for Mass and then at the back of the church for morning tea. It is good to have parishioners from our four communities, and it is a lovely way of getting to know each other. Our seniors especially enjoy having the opportunity to be with Fr Shabin and Fr Peter in a relaxed atmosphere. It is surprising how life stories are shared over a cuppa and delicious cakes and sandwiches.

At our September gathering in 2024 we remembered Pat Hauser, a long time St Joseph's parishioner, who had recently died in NSW where she had gone to live to be closer to her family. Our usual group was joined by some of Pat's friends, and it was a great morning of reminiscences and laughter.

In December each year we have an anointing Mass and our Christmas lunch. All parishioners are invited to St Joseph's Parish Centre. The Mass is always beautiful, the lunch delicious, the singing by St Joseph's school children much appreciated and the visit by Father Christmas quite hilarious. The profit, after expenses, is donated to the parish.

Maria Ang, Joan Reid, Maree Carboon, and Carmel Jakowenko, Seniors Group Volunteers

St Anthony's Senior Italian Group

The Italian Group at St Anthony's has been working together for over 25 years to raise funds and hold social events for the parishioners and wider community.

We have held many lunches, dinners, and dances and have celebrated St Anthony's feast day every year. Our raffles have raised a great amount each year which we give to the Parish Priest to support any parish projects he has during the year.

We support our parishes' vision of being a joyful, inclusive community led by the Holy Spirit – as a group we want to encourage all the parishioners from our four churches to join us at any of our planned events. We want to spend time together as a “big family” to enjoy each other's company with food and drink. If you would like to join us, please do, we would love to meet you.

Lina Robino, Leader of St Anthony's Italian Group

Refugee & Asylum Seekers Support Group

In 2024 all our activities were directed towards supporting the Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project (BASP). Their work is well documented in a regular newsletter and their website. Sr Brigid Arthur, their Director, is a very well-known advocate within our community. In supporting their work we really feel we are able to best utilise the generous donations from our community and parishioners can be confident that all goods, donations, and money are being used in the most effective way possible.

Each month parishioners donate goods – we are directed by the staff at BASP as to what is most needed. Over the past two years we have been asking for weekly donations of rice, cooking oil, sweet biscuits and washing powder. Our very generous parishioners provide good quantities of these items and once a month volunteers gather them together and deliver them to Albert Park to the BASP head office.

Some parishioners give regular donations of money and we have the funds which we raised at the Indian Dinner in late 2023. We donated some of these funds over the year in the form of a direct donation which goes towards the payment of rent for asylum seekers and we also donated a large number of \$50 Woolworths cards so that the BASP clients can purchase fresh food and also have the dignity of some choice.

At Christmas, as has been our habit over the last few years, we put together gift packs specifically for men, containing some basic essentials. This was done in collaboration with Sr Arthur, as many of their clients are young, single men. Parishioners were invited to “buy” a bag (in effect sponsor it) to help cover the costs. We were also the recipients of a large donation of goods for the bags.

The children at St Anthony's helped to pack the bags which was a great way to spread the word about our efforts and to involve the wider community. All the bags were collected and delivered in mid December by a volunteer, for distribution by the BASP staff.

At Masses late in 2024, members of our group gave a short summary of our activities, in order that parishioners are kept informed.

Many thanks to all!

Marisa Reid, on behalf of the Refugee & Asylum Seekers Support Group

Holy Spirit Primary School, Thornbury East

Holy Spirit has continued to strengthen its relationship with the Parish and the sister schools in the partnership that we are part of. Our involvement in sacraments and regular parish liturgies has given us opportunities to engage with the broader community and share in the faith journey of those in our school.

During 2024 we celebrated three of the sacraments with families in our community.

- Our Year Three students celebrated their First Reconciliation in March.
- Year Four celebrated First Communion in August.
- Year Six celebrated their Confirmation in June.

As preparation for each of the sacraments, students participated in a sacramental preparation program in class and were expected to attend a parish Commitment Mass in the weeks leading up to receiving the sacrament. Families were invited to join us for a family formation evening with their child and these were all well attended. As part of our preparation work with families we used the services of Eloise Meyer from Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS). Eloise facilitated some meetings for us and was very supportive of the staff and families at our school.

Our Year Six Confirmation Program included a visit by Bishop Terry Curtin who spent time with the children in preparation for the sacrament. Students also visited the Mary MacKillop Centre in the city as part of this faith formation program.

All classes at Holy Spirit are rostered to attend the normal Thursday morning parish Mass and it is great to see the relationship that the children are developing with the Italian Community who regularly attend this Mass.

Throughout the year there were many opportunities for the whole school community to celebrate special occasions at Mass. The whole school attended:

Beginning of School Year Mass	Ash Wednesday Mass	Pentecost, Holy Spirit Day Mass
Feast of the Sacred Heart Mass	Assumption of Mary Mass	End of Year Mass

Individual levels also celebrated with the community through the Prep Welcome Mass at a normal parish liturgy in November and Year Six Graduation at the very end of the year. These are always great celebrations that are enjoyed by all in our community and parents always make the time to join us for these celebrations.

Students from Holy Spirit, under the leadership of our Student Social Justice Leaders, are active in supporting important works in the Parish through the St Vincent De Paul group and the donations we provide to support their work with those in need. Our Social Justice Student Leaders have led the Project Compassion campaign this year in ensuring we are aware of the extended needs of others around the world.

The Religious Education Leader from Holy Spirit attends all parish Religious Education meetings as part of our commitment to quality communication and shared understandings across the Parish.

Many special celebrations are also part of our school year. Our community gathered to perform the Stations of the Cross before Easter and we held our Liturgy of the Light service after Easter Sunday to celebrate the new life that the Easter season brings. Our school also actively supports and encourages children's involvement in the parish annual Christmas Nativity play.

Our Life and Faith approach to curriculum at Holy Spirit ensures that Religious Education is always part of the focus of our learning. We are committed to continuing to work closely with the Parish and our neighbouring schools to grow the culture of faith and learning that we currently enjoy.

Rob Costin, Principal

St Anthony's Primary School, Alphington

St Anthony's is an inclusive and vibrant Catholic learning community empowering all to be critical thinkers, compassionate and resilient citizens (Vision Statement). Our Catholic Identity is an integral part of who we are and what we stand for, there is a continuous focus on its growth and development. It is a priority in our planning and execution of activities throughout the year. Our community bring Christ and our Seven Attributes to life through word and action. We strive for not only personal best but also encourage others to do the same.

Led by the Religious Education Leader, students, staff and families work together to ensure God's presence is not just abstract or distant, but actively present and accessible in the world and in human experiences. The sacramentality of everyday life is celebrated through the sacred world created by God and rituals which express his presence.

The success of our work was evidenced in our 2024 MACSSIS (Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools School Improvement Surveys) data which saw the staff's perception of the principal's faith leadership and Catholic Identity of School Life increase to 88% from 67% the year before. The students' perception of the School's Catholic Identity rose from 59% to 67%. The perception of families was consistent at 68% compared to 63% the previous year.

Throughout the year we gathered regularly as a community for prayer and reflection. Liturgies were planned and experienced at both school and parish level. Examples included Holy Week Liturgies, Class Masses, Family Week Mass, Advent Prayer Services, and End of Year Gratitude Mass. Our Sacramental Program is highly regarded and anticipated, with students at Year 3 celebrating Reconciliation, Year 4 First Eucharist and Year 6 Confirmation. Each Sacrament includes a formation evening for candidates and families, a Commitment Mass and retreat. A visit from Bishop Terry Curtin for our Year 6 confirmands and class peers was both entertaining and informative.

Celebrations are an important part of connection and a sense of belonging. We celebrated often! A few highlights included:

- our Twilight Fair, a wonderful example of building social connection with the wider local community
- our Mothers' and Fathers' Day annual breakfasts, stalls and classroom activities
- students delighted in making cards to celebrate Monsignor Tom Doyle's 90th Birthday
- Catholic Care Family Week, which was a flurry of activities with immediate and extended family members
- an amazing St Anthony's Feast Day, beginning with a whole school liturgy (priests were away at their conference hence no Mass), then students participating in organised sport and physical activities facilitated by an outside agency and a pie lunch provided by our Parents and Friends Committee.

Our Social Justice Captains and the Student Representative Council were instrumental in the success of our social justice programs and fundraising. Human Dignity, one of the Catholic Social Teachings, underpins our outreach work. We worked with our local St Vincent De Paul, participating in the Blanket Drive and Christmas Hampers. We collected funds for Caritas through Project Compassion and Catholic Care during Family Week. We collaborated with the Refugee & Asylum Seekers Support Group to pack the Christmas toiletry bags, complete with student-made gift cards.

Our students, families and staff worked collaboratively with creativity, passion, determination, and hard work to make our school the incredible place it is. A place where we *'Never see a need without doing something about it'*; the essence of what Mary MacKillop stood for and who she was enacted.

Tania Bennett, Acting Principal

St Joseph's Primary School, Northcote

I would like to reflect on the achievements of St Joseph's School throughout 2024 and to express my gratitude for the ongoing support of our entire community. 2024 has been a year of growth, success, and a profound sense of togetherness.

A Fabulous Team of Educators

At the heart of St Joseph's School is our outstanding staff. Their dedication to the craft of teaching is second to none. Every day, our teachers and support staff go above and beyond to provide an environment where our students can thrive, not just academically, but spiritually and emotionally. The sheer determination of our staff to raise the profile of the school has led to significant achievements and a school year filled with successes. I am deeply proud of the exceptional work they do and the care they show for every student.

Successful Liturgical Celebrations

This year, our school continued to be a vibrant community of faith, with many successful liturgical celebrations. These included the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation, which were celebrated with great reverence and joy. These sacred moments provide our students with opportunities to deepen their relationship with God, while also strengthening the sense of unity within our school and parish. The involvement of students, staff, and families in these celebrations is a testament to our shared commitment to Catholic values and spiritual growth.

Strong Enrolment Growth

We are thrilled to report that St Joseph's School finished the year with healthy enrolments. We welcomed 32 wonderful new Prep students, and our total enrolment stands at 189. At the end of 2024 we had confirmed 34 enrolments for Prep 2025 – indicating that this growth will continue. This is a significant achievement and a reflection of the positive reputation that our school continues to build in the community. Our school is now close to capacity, with waiting lists for Grades 5/6 and 1/2, which is a testament to the hard work and commitment of our staff, as well as the trust that families place in St Joseph's.

Successful Community Engagement

A key contributor to this enrolment growth has been the sheer determination of our staff to engage with the local community. Our visits to the local kindergartens and the implementation of the pre-school phonics program have been hugely successful. These initiatives have allowed us to connect with young children and families, providing a seamless transition to school life and laying the groundwork for future enrolments. We are delighted that these efforts have contributed to increased enrolments for the upcoming year.

Looking Ahead

We remain committed to providing an inclusive, supportive, and faith-filled learning environment for all of our students. We look forward to continuing our work with the parish community, building on the successes of the past year, and embracing the opportunities that lie ahead.

Thank you once again to all of you for your continued support. Together, we will continue to nurture the growth and development of our students, ensuring that St Joseph's School remains a beacon of excellence in education and faith.

Mary Kearney, Principal

St Mary's Primary School, Thornbury

Taken from Chris Ray's annual report to the community...

I entered my third year as Principal of St Mary's with great confidence that every child enrolled at our school would be given every opportunity to learn to their potential.

I continued to be impressed by the dedication of the staff, their eagerness to prepare thoroughly for the children's learning, and their willingness to support each other to meet the needs of the children.

There is something special about the children at St Mary's. They have a genuine gratitude that is on display to each other and to all they came into contact with. They have a desire to be the best learners they can be and to help others to be their best.

Our parent community is supportive and acts in the best interests of all the children. I believe the community at St Mary's epitomises the concept of *'It takes a village to raise a child'*

There is a focus at St Mary's on genuine learning and on the wellbeing of our students. These things are easily seen and heard constantly around the school. We can see the emphasis on learning dispositions, and the children are able to articulate the importance of each of the dispositions. The children are able to talk about their learning in such a way that clearly demonstrates they understand how they learn best.

The children support each other in their learning and in making good behaviour choices. These things haven't come about by accident. The staff place great importance on developing these dispositions, these positive growth mindsets with the children. Our parents are a wonderfully positive support for the children and staff.

This section of the report has been prepared by Mary Kearney, current Principal

At the end of Term 3 2024, Chris Ray retired. On behalf of the entire school and parish communities, we extend our heartfelt thanks for your years of dedicated service and leadership. Your commitment to our school community has made a lasting impact, and we are deeply grateful for the positive changes you've helped shape. Wishing you all the best in your well-deserved retirement.

During Term 4, Kevin Gleeson was appointed as Interim Principal. We would like to express our sincere thanks to Kevin for stepping into this role and providing strong leadership during this time.

Although the position was advertised, Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) was unable to find a suitable candidate. I was then Principal at St Joseph's in Northcote and was approached by MACS to take on a Lead Principal Role and lead both St Mary's Thornbury and St Joseph's Northcote. This new structure was implemented in Term 1 2025.

Mary Kearney, Current Principal



Partnership Parishes of
Holy Spirit Thornbury East & St Anthony's Alphington,
St Joseph's Northcote, and St Mary's Thornbury

Parish office: 45 Railway Place, Alphington Vic 3078

Email: adminANT@cam.org.au, financeANT@cam.org.au

Phone: (03) 9484 2907

Website: <https://www.melbcatholic.org/s/hosan>



Northcote &
Thornbury
Catholic Parishes

