



THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
OF NORTH HARBOUR

ANNUAL REPORT
2023 – 2024

Our Year in Review

↑ +13.7%



431

weekly Mass participation



109

Baptisms



120

Confirmations



32

Funerals

↓ -2.07%



189

Planned Givers

Percentages are based on 2022/2023 figures.

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CONTACT US

The Catholic Community of North Harbour

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FROM OUR PASTOR

Dear Parishioners,

As we embark on the Jubilee Year 2025, I am filled with a sense of excitement and gratitude for the journey we have shared together. Since my arrival in July 2023, the new parish team and I have been blessed to witness the vibrant faith and dedication of our parishioners. Your warm welcome and unwavering support have made this transition a joyful and enriching experience.

In this short period, we have accomplished much, and I am pleased to share with you our parish report for 2024,

This Jubilee Year is a significant time of renewal, reflection, and celebration. It is an opportunity for us to deepen our relationship with God, to strengthen our bonds with one another, and to recommit ourselves to living out the Gospel message.

The theme of this Jubilee Year, "Pilgrims of Hope," calls us to embark on a spiritual journey, guided by faith and trust in God's promises. As pilgrims, we are invited to walk together in hope, supporting one another and sharing the light of Christ with the world. This theme resonates deeply with our parish mission, and I encourage each of you to embrace this journey with open hearts and minds.



Fr Michael Belonio, OSA
Parish Priest

As we move forward into the Jubilee year, I am excited about the opportunities that lie ahead. We will continue deepening our faith, expanding our outreach efforts, and fostering a sense of community and belonging.

I encourage you to get involved in parish activities and ministries. Your participation is vital to the life and growth of our community.

I express my heartfelt gratitude to all of you for your unwavering faith, support and dedication. Together, we are building a strong and vibrant community of faith that reflects the love and light of Christ.

May God bless you and your families abundantly in the coming year.

With blessings and gratitude,

Fr Myk

Parish Priest, Catholic Community of North Harbour

CLERGY AND PARISH STAFF

Fr Michael Belonio, OSA

Parish Priest

Fr Jumbim Torres, OSA

Assistant Priest

Fr John Zhang, OSA

Assistant Priest

Jacky Worthington

Parish Manager

Jane Filacuridi

Parish Secretary (Tuesday - Wednesday)

Anne Ross

Parish Secretary (Thursday - Friday)

Ursula Halloway

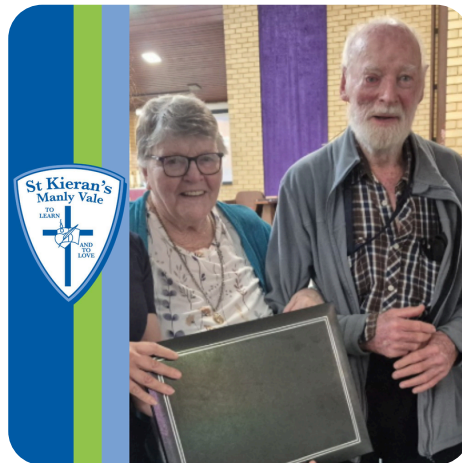
Catechists, Families and Sacraments

Sophie Taylor

Media and Communications

Marianne Kaw-Deveza

Music Ministry



For many years, Kevin Malone was a member of our Parish Team, serving as the OH&S Supervisor. He became well-known to the St Kieran's Catholic Primary School community, greeting students on arrival, ensuring they left school safely, and accompanying them to the oval during lunchtimes.

In 2024, Kevin celebrated his 90th birthday with special celebrations at St Kieran's school.

Kevin has since moved with his sister to aged care in Northbridge, where he is happy and healthy. He recently returned to North Harbour for a special Volunteers' Thanksgiving Mass, during which he received a book that the St Kieran's students and staff had made for him. Thank you, Kevin, for your incredible service and dedication over so many years!

FROM OUR PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

Early in 2024, following consultation with our parish community, our PPC adopted a refreshed Parish strategy, including mission, vision and goals. This redefined strategy is depicted below.



Linda Williamson and Steve Rush
Co-Chairs, Parish Pastoral Council

Parish Mission

Enabling people to encounter Christ through Scripture, sacraments and community.

Parish Vision

Growing our flourishing community in faith.



Mary-Anne Matthews
Secretary, Parish Pastoral Council

Goals for the next five years

Celebration of the sacraments is engaging and life-giving

We are a welcoming and vibrant community, embracing diversity

We nourish spirituality and nurture faith, meeting people where they are

We are empowered to act for justice and with compassion

Within the context of this refreshed strategy, the PPC have been supporting our Parish Priest and parish team, exploring future directions and progressing our parish vision. Key initiatives which our PPC and parish team have sponsored, initiated and/or progressed are contained on the following pages.

We look forward to discerning the progress of our parish goals throughout 2025.

Our PPC encourages you to become involved by sharing your ideas, skills, and gifts-of-the-Holy-Spirit, and perhaps by volunteering your time. Whether it's joining us for morning tea after Sunday Mass, helping with a parish ministry, joining a prayer group, or participating in parish events, every contribution matters.

We celebrate our parish's special diversity as we come from many different backgrounds. We are grateful for our parish's strong sense of community and thank each and every one as we all play a role in making our parish vibrant.

Your 2024 PPC team:

Linda Williamson (Co-Chair), Steve Rush (Co-Chair), Mary-Anne Matthews (secretary), Christine McCabe, Kevin Peters, Regan VanderWert-Walsh, Louella Covich, Adam De Bree, Ursula Halloway, Leanne Nicol, Maria Dunn and our school principals Anna Marsella and Louise O'Brien.

KEY PPC AND PARISH TEAM INITIATIVES 2023/2024

REFRESHED OUR PARISH STRATEGY: MISSION, VISION AND GOALS

In early 2024 our PPC adopted a refreshed Parish strategy, vision and mission and has begun to action our goals.

ESTABLISHED A PARISH LITURGY COMMITTEE (PLC)

This team of parishioners from various parish ministries works together to plan and coordinate liturgical celebrations in our community, such as the Christmas Masses and our well-attended Holy Thursday Passover meal.

SUPPORTED ALTERNATIVE PARISH CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES

Led by our Fr Myk, the PPC have been exploring alternative leading-edge approaches to consultation, leadership and broader parish engagement to support parish strategy. These will be further discerned, and the outcomes communicated, in 2025.

SUPPORTED CREATION OF PARISH PRAYER LEADERSHIP TEAM

Following the participation of our PPC members in the Genesis Compass pilot program, a Parish Leadership team was created to guide prayer activities in our community.

SUPPORTED PASTORAL DISCERNMENT NORTHERN BEACHES

Led by Ursula and Fr Paul, the PPC supported our parish's participation in this Diocesan project in 2024.

SUPPORTED PARISH COMMUNITY EVENTS

- School-led Pentecost Mass and family fun day.
- Celebration for parish volunteers (December 2024).
- Trialling name-tag Sundays
- Initiatives for school engagement with Parish life.

FROM OUR PARISH MANAGER

This year brought transitions within Parish staff. In February we bid farewell to Janette Davidson, our Sacramental Co-Ordinator, whose many years of dedicated service to the Parish and local schools left a lasting impact.

Ursula Halloway graciously expanded her role from CCD Co-ordinator to oversee Family and Sacramental Ministries.

Additionally, Sophie Taylor (nee Boffa) joined us in March to manage Media & Communications on a part-time basis. We congratulate Sophie on her recent marriage.

In May, Vicky Merillo brought vibrant music to our school and youth Masses. She has now left our parish to relocate with her family. We deeply appreciate her contributions and wish her the best.

Despite a general decline in Parish giving, recent months have seen encouraging improvements due to the introduction of tap-and-go machines and the Good Giving App. We sincerely thank all who support the Parish through giving or volunteering regularly or as they can.



Jacky Worthington
Parish Manager

Notable upgrades include new Parish Centre furniture and a freezer, funded through a grant secured via Federal Minister Zali Steggall's office. These improvements have enhanced our facilities, and we continue pursuing grants to address maintenance on our ageing buildings.

Special thanks go to Jane and Anne, our Parish Secretaries, for their compassionate and efficient service, and to the Augustinian Community for their continuing commitment to our Parish through their Charism of hospitality, friendship and community.

PARISH FINANCE COMMITTEE

The focus of the Parish Finance Committee is to be financial stewards for the Parish, maintaining transparency, fostering responsible fiscal management, and aligning our resources with the mission and needs of the Parish community.

One of our key areas of attention in 2024 has been the ongoing evaluation of the financial position of the Parish. This will ensure assets are effectively utilised to generate sustainable income, whilst undertaking a prudent approach to operational expenses. We are reviewing current assets and expenditure to identify potential areas for efficiency. Ensuring the ongoing development of Parish programs and services remains a top priority as we strive to support both spiritual growth and community outreach.

We are committed to improving communication with parishioners about our financial responsibilities and goals. Efforts are underway to enhance engagement through regular updates in bulletins, announcements, and targeted outreach.

Building trust and encouraging participation in Parish stewardship initiatives is critical to our shared mission.

The committee has also been dedicated to long-term planning, including maintenance of Parish facilities and potential future capital projects.

These discussions have been underway for an extended period, with financial sustainability being a key priority. They are being approached with a focus on meeting both current and future needs while honoring our financial constraints.

We express gratitude to Father Michael and all the Parish staff, volunteers, and all contributors for their dedication and support. Their collective efforts help ensure our Parish remains a thriving and welcoming community of faith.

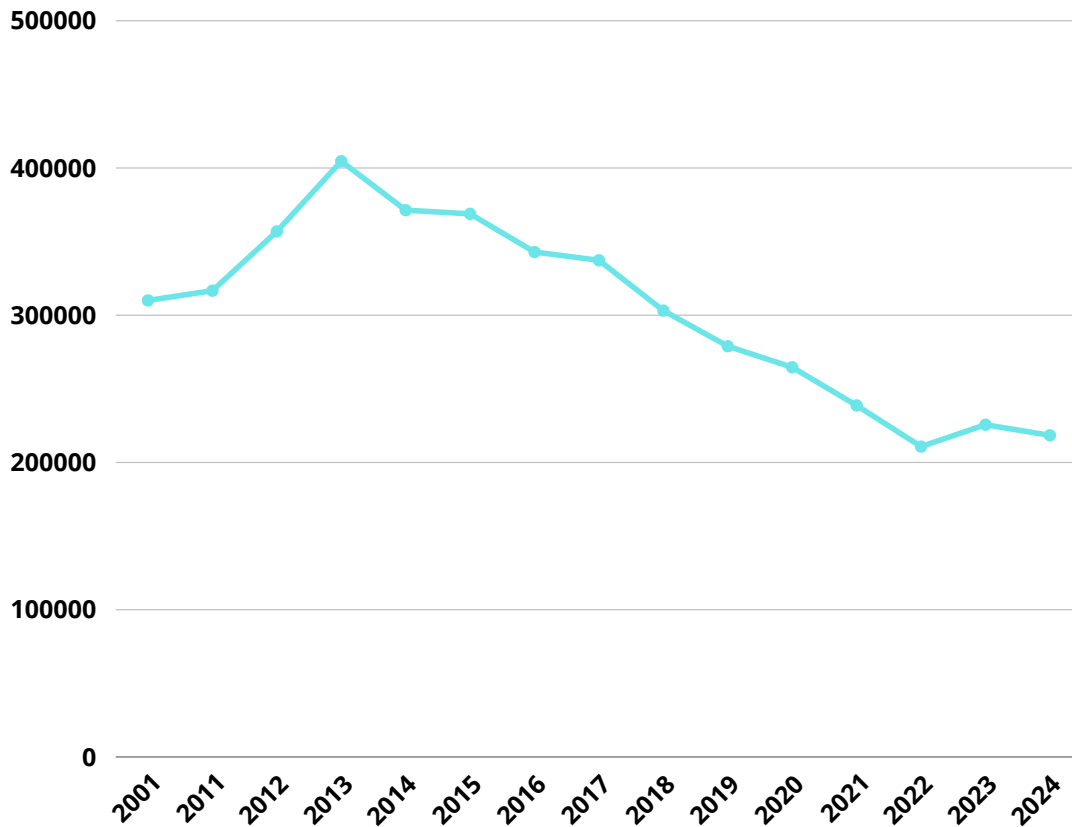
Thank you for your continued collaboration and your commitment. We look forward to updating the Parish with further progress in the months ahead.

Stuart Trueman
Chair, Parish Finance Committee

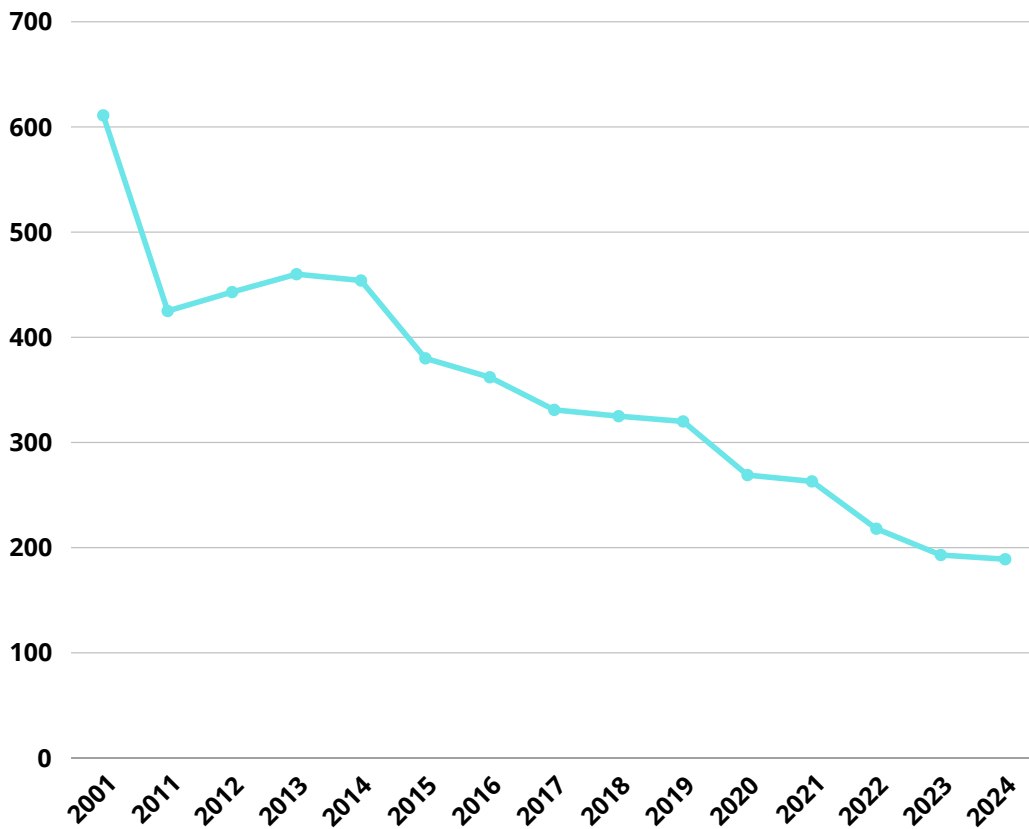
MASS ATTENDANCE: 2001 - 2024



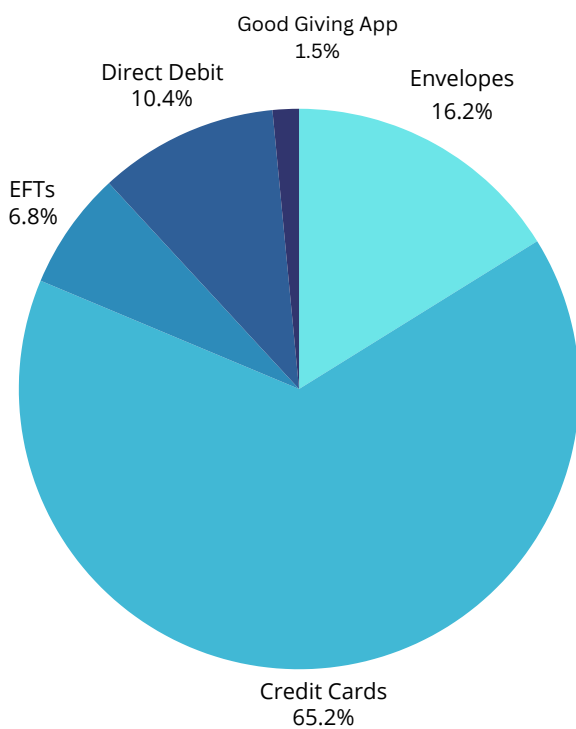
PARISH GIVING: 2001-2024



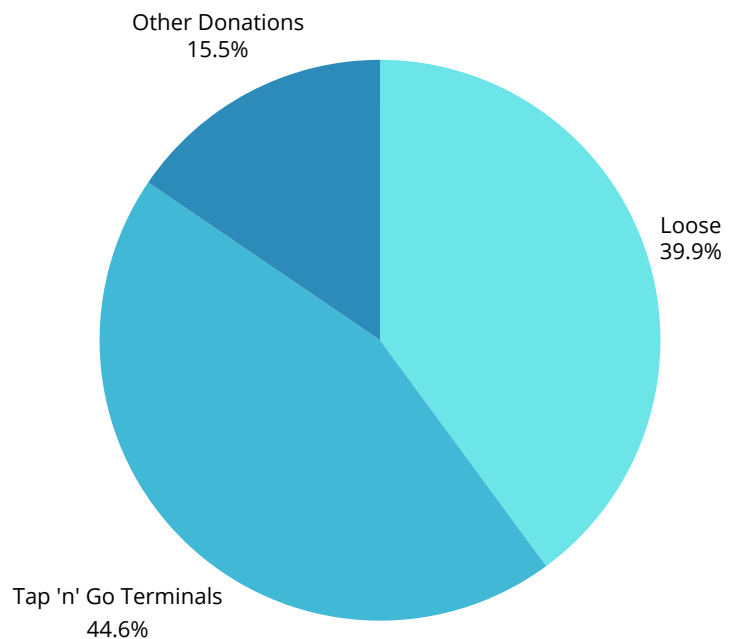
PLANNED GIVERS: 2001-2024



PLANNED AND UNPLANNED GIVING 2023/2024: PAYMENT TYPE

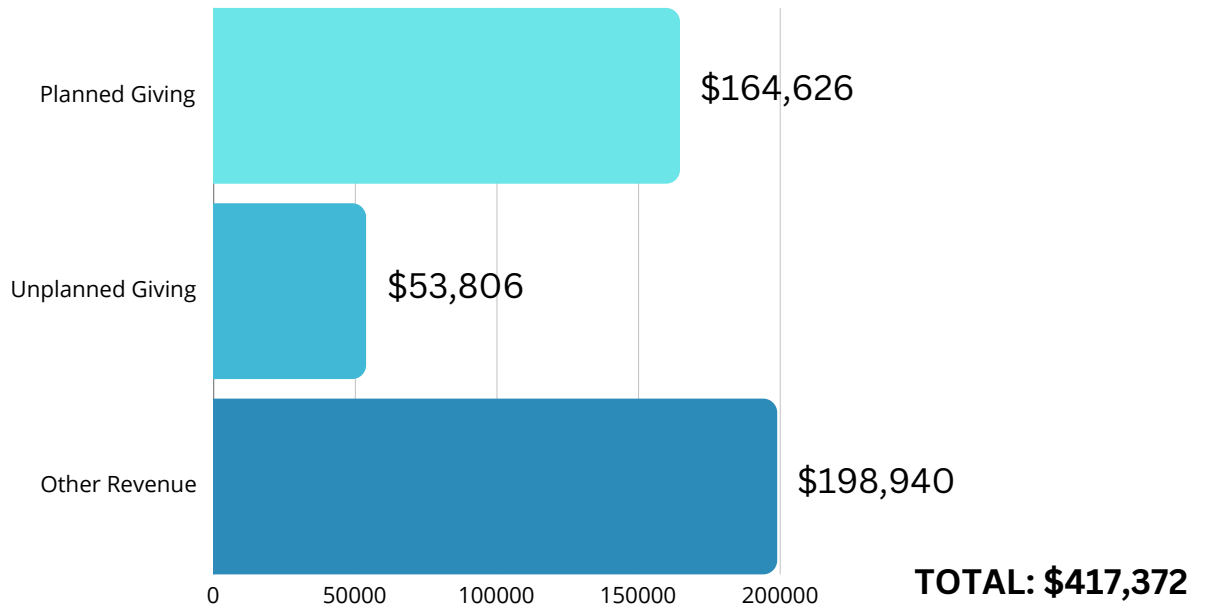


PLANNED GIVING

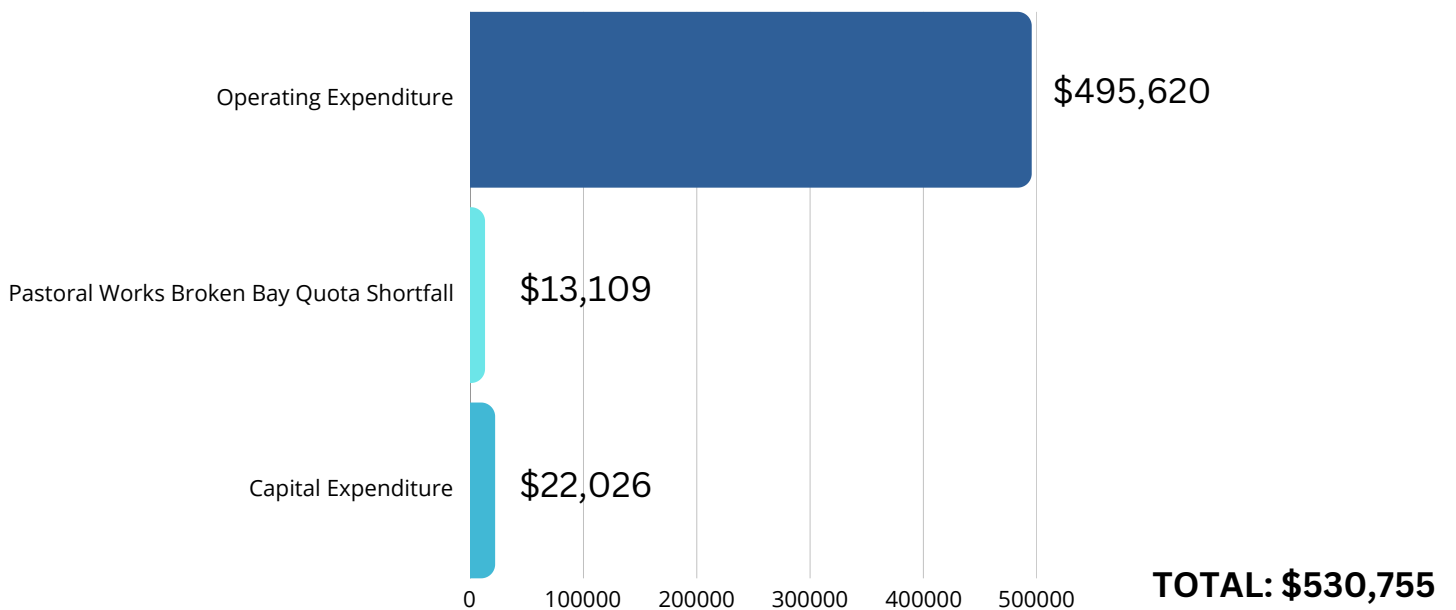


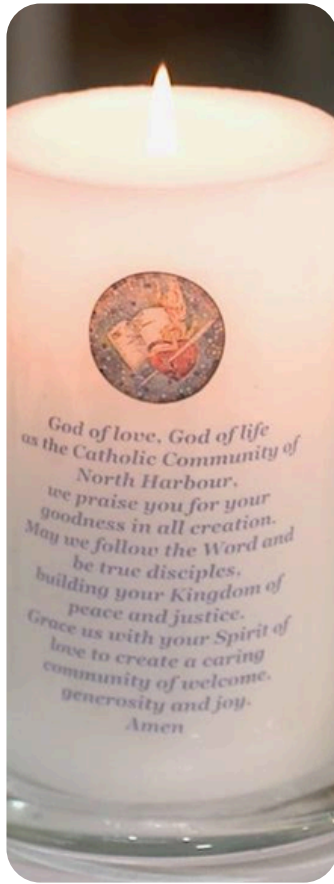
UNPLANNED GIVING

INCOME 2023/2024: BREAKDOWN



EXPENDITURE 2023/2024: BREAKDOWN






Worshipping Together

Liturgy and Music



SACRAMENTS AND FAMILIES

Children's Sacramental Program

In August of 2023, 120 children from approximately 15 different schools received the Sacrament of Confirmation from Bishop Anthony Randazzo. The Preparation Program is parish-run, school-supported and family-centred. Parents and children meet and work their way through a workbook. This journeying together and learning from each other is an essential part of building Family Ministry within the parish, and the relationships formed in these family groups are often sustained after the program has ended. In early 2024, the same children prepared for and received the Sacraments of Reconciliation (four sessions in March) and First Communion (six Masses in June). The day these children receive the Blessed Eucharist for the first time has the potential to transform their lives. It is a very special occasion for these families.

Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults

The RCIA Program, running from October in 2023 to Easter in 2024, was a wonderful experience for all involved. There were 9 Catechumens and Candidates, ranging in age and backgrounds.



Ursula Halloway
Sacramental Co-ordinator

The discussions had during the RCIA Preparation are a beautiful opportunity for formation, as we share our experiences and faith with each other. We journey together, learning from each other, teaching one another, and it is a very special experience for all involved. The preparation continues into Holy Week, with the participants' feet being washed on Holy Thursday night, and culminates in the Easter Saturday Candlelight Vigil.



RCIA Candidates participating in the Washing of the Feet during the Holy Thursday liturgy.

Baptism of Infants (0-6yo)

Preparation for Baptism of Infants takes place on 6/7 Sundays per year. Cathy and Chris Burrows do an amazing and thorough job of preparing first-time parents in the Baptism of their first child. There is a focus on parents being the first teachers of faith for their children, as well as the importance of being part of a faith community. There were 82 Baptisms of Infants that took place in both churches of our parish on most Sundays of the year.

Baptism of School-Age Children (7-11yo)

Twice a year, we run a Baptism of School-aged Children Preparation Program. Preparation consists of two one-hour sessions over two weekends, followed by the Baptism itself. This year, 27 School-aged Children were baptised in both churches.



Children's Liturgy of the Word.

Children's Liturgy of the Word (CLOW)

CLOW takes place at St Cecilia's Church twice a term in general, and at St Kieran's Church two or three times a term. It is held at both the 9:30AM and 5:00PM Sunday Masses. We have 15 very generous volunteers to lead CLOW, and somewhere between 6-15 children at most sessions.

Pentecost Sunday Family Mass and Mini Fete

On Sunday, 31st May, we invited families from our local Catholic and public Schools to join us for a beautiful Family Mass. Within the Mass, Prayers of the Faithful were said in different parishioners' languages of origin and written on the screen behind them: a beautiful way to honour our different journeys as we come together to celebrate the Eucharist. A count of people in the church totalled 340! A great success. After the Mass, children had fun with their parents at our mini-fete in the St Kieran's playground, which Mrs Anna Marcella kindly let us use. A jumping castle and simple games led by our catechists and Yr 6 children were a hit!

Family Masses

We have been trialling 5pm Family Masses every fourth Sunday of the Month at St Kieran's Church with lively music, CLOW and a light supper afterwards. We have been enjoying the company of a consistent group of parishioners and families who are attending. Young children are invited to play percussion instruments for the final song, which creates a lovely, chaotic end to the Mass!



A team of parishioners baked some delicious cookies for our Pentecost Mini-Fete in May.

Youth Masses

Students from St Augustine's and St Cecilia's have been supporting out youth Masses every second Sunday of the Month and, our wonderful musician, Victoria, has formed a choir/band with the help of the Stella girls and their teacher Nicola Chin.

Altar Servers

7 students from St Cecilia's, 1 from St Kieran's and 2 from high school have volunteered to become Altar Servers. Thank you to those children and their families!



Fun and games at our Pentecost Mini-Fete.

For any enquiries regarding Sacramental or Family Ministry, feel free to contact Ursula at families@nhcatholic.org.au

MUSIC MINISTRY

On behalf of the Music Ministry, the parish and community, I'd like to welcome our newest members: Victoria Merillo and Caroline Ng. Thank you very much for sharing your time and very valuable talent in music with the community. I pray that we can continually work together in the years to come.

Vicky has been leading the Children's Choir at St Kieran's Family Masses, and the Youth Choir for the Youth Masses every second Sunday of the month at 5pm at St Kieran's.

Caroline Ng is a regular parishioner who initially joined the Emmanuel group, but will now independently serve in both of our parishes.

In the latter part of this year, Branch of Jesse led by Terri Sedmak went on indefinite leave. I thank you for the many years that you have supported the ministry. We are grateful for all the time and talent you have shared to the community. We are praying for you always and hoping to welcome you back to the ministry in the near future.



Marianne Deveza

Music Ministry Coordinator
musicministry@northharbourcatholic.org.au

Lastly, to our current Music Ministers, thank you for selflessly and generously supporting our ministry and parish. It hasn't been easy this year, but you stood by and continuously supported the parish and the community. I honour you all for all the hard work you've put into serving both parishes.



Current Music Ministry Members:

Harvest led by Kevin Mascarenhas – 1st Sunday St Kieran’s 9:30am

Emmanuel led by Kathryn Williams – 4th Sunday St Kieran’s 5:00pm

Parish Choir led by Georgene O’Brien – 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th Sunday St Kieran’s 5:30pm Vigil

Filipino Choir led by Rebecca Torralba – 3rd Sunday St Kieran’s 5:30pm Vigil

Children and Youth Choir led by Victoria Merillo – 2nd Sunday St Kieran’s 5:00pm and School Masses

The Conmen led by Tim Boys and Peter Chiswell – 3rd Sunday St Cecilia’s 9:00am

Love Thy Neighbour led by Louella Covich – 4th Sunday St Cecilia’s 9:00am

Joshua 24:15 led by Celestine Singson (on-leave) – 3rd Sunday St Kieran’s 9:30am

Anushka Coutinho – 1st Sunday St Cecilia’s 9:00am and 2nd Sunday St Kieran’s 9:30am

Ben Marshall – 1st Sunday St Kieran’s 5:00pm

Samantha Browne – 3rd Sunday St Kieran’s 5:00pm

Caroline Ng





Leading Reflective Lives

Prayer and Spirituality



AUGUSTINIAN FORMATION ASSOCIATION

The Augustinian Formation Association (AFA) exists to support and raise funds for the training of Augustinian brothers and priests in the Australasian Province. It does this through varied activities and social functions. Other purposes of the group are to support the Augustinians in prayer, and to build up bonds of friendship among supporters of the Order.

AFA has had another wonderful, successful year with its fundraising, holding a Fun Walk and two dinners which were all very well attended. This year, AFA raised close to \$14,000 and it was a pleasure to hand over \$10,000 to the Order at our last function for the year. This would not have been possible without the support and generosity of AFA's members and friends, so thank you all so very much.

This year we were lucky to witness Fr Joseph Van Tu Nguyen OSA's Ordination to the Diaconate and Priesthood by Most Reverend Anthony Randazzo DD JCL. These moving and beautiful ceremonies took place at St Kieran's Church and were followed by celebrations in the Parish Centre.



Adriana Bowyer
AFA President

AFA wishes Fr Tu all the very best, as he has now left for Vietnam to take on his ministry there. We express gratitude for all he has done over the past 8 years here in Australia.

AFA would like to thank all our members and friends in Australia and overseas for their continued support throughout this year and we send our best wishes for a peaceful & Joyful 2025. God bless.



Fr Tu blesses his parents during his Ordination Mass in December 2024.

FRIENDS OF ST AUGUSTINE

In every Parish placed under the care of the Augustinians in Australia there has consistently been a unique bond between the community of priests residing in each place and the laity gathered around them. This is a result of a clause in the earliest written Constitutions of the Order (1244 AD) which gave an equal opportunity for priests, nuns and laity to participate in a communion of mind and heart for the glory of God and the service of God's people.

An Association for laity was formed 25 years ago in each of our parishes, open to those who wished to learn more about our spirituality by becoming a member and Friend of St Augustine. We took our cue from Benedict XVI. who even before he became Pope regarded himself as a great friend of St. Augustine: 'It is St Augustine whom I have had the great gift to know, so to speak, close at hand through study and prayer and who has become a good "travelling companion" in my life and my ministry.' (General Audience 2010).



Fr Paul Maloney, OSA
North Harbour FOSA Chaplain
paulmal@bigpond.com

It is through this study, prayer and gatherings, such as our "Afternoon Tea with Augustine", which takes place every few months, that provides us with the opportunity to learn, share and socialise. Our gatherings are always advertised and new members, or those just wanting to come along, are always welcome.

To quote Pope Benedict again: "When I read the writings of St Augustine, I do not have the impression that Augustine is a dead man..., but rather that I feel him as a man of today: a friend, a contemporary who speaks to me, who speaks to us with his fresh and current faith" (Audience 16.01. 2008)

CATENIANS

Last year, we held twelve dinners in our parish hall, all wonderfully catered for by our own Cathy except for a “Presidential BBQ” when Cathy was on leave.

The dinners provide opportunity for reflection and prayers for those in need, particularly Catenians and their family members.

We are able to donate to selected charities, including Mary MacKillop, Caritas and St Vincent De Paul.

We held some ladies’ nights dinners, with the highlight this year being the wonderful presentation by John McCarney’s brilliant grandson Cody on “Artificial Intelligence” which is a rapidly expanding worldwide phenomenon.

According to Cody “AI won’t replace humans ,but humans with AI will replace humans without AI!”.

Apart from the great collegiality these dinners create, our members are active each month, with great walks around Manly Dam, the odd excursion , lunches at local clubs and trivia at Balgowlah RSL when all are welcome.



Michael Bowyer
President

We are always looking for new members to join a very relaxed, caring and faith-based group.

You will see our “leadership” around the parish regularly:

Terry Hayes: Secretary

Greg Dunn: Provincial Councillor

Michael McMahon: Treasurer

Romano Di Donato: Catering Officer

Michael Bowyer: President

PARISH RENEWAL

In December 2023, Fr Michael approached a small group of parishioners to take part in a pilot project for Divine Renovation. We gathered in February to begin the module, Genesis Compass One - Missional Prayer - "The Spirit of God hovered over the waters." Genesis Compass is a tool developed by Divine Renovation to help parishes, pastors and parish leaders embark on a journey of parish renewal to recreate missionary parishes. Our parish's commitment to Renewal is being led by Fr Michael, with the support of the Augustinian clergy who are custodians of our parish.

This group meet weekly for five weeks with a final session to plan the next steps. One of the main actions was to establish a prayer leadership team for the parish.

Fr Michael gathered a group of parishioners to establish the Prayer Leadership Team on August 25, 2024. This team discerns, develops and leads the implementation of a variety of prayer practices in the parish. We continue to pray daily for parish renewal, and for the leadership, support and power of the Holy Spirit.



Catherine O'Donnell
Parish Prayer Leadership Team

Recently, Meditations on the Rosary for Parish Renewal was introduced. These meditations were prepared by Fr James Mallon, the founder of Divine Renovation. Small groups pray the meditations after Mass on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, and others join in at home.

In February 2025, the Prayer Leadership Team will take part in Genesis Compass Two - Form and Cast Vision - "Let there be light". This is an eight-week module, with some break time for prayer, discernment and planning.

Please keep the Prayer Leadership Team in your prayers. "Come Holy Spirit"



Inspiring Hearts

Education and Formation



ST KIERAN'S SCHOOL

St Kieran's school community has worked collaboratively with the parish team this year to bring the presence and love of Christ to our students and families.

The Family Mass on the third Sunday of the month has been well attended. Families have been highly involved in the liturgy through readings, offertory and enhanced by the lively music.

The Mass is more meaningful and family centric. We have enjoyed the opportunity to get together after Mass with school and parish families in the school playground for a pizza or sausage sizzle.

Thank you to the parish team for changing the Mass to 5pm, it has made a difference to participation and attendance.

We thank the parish team for working with us on the Sacramental programs. Ursula does such a great job co-ordinating this program and her support is invaluable.



Anna Marsella
Principal, St Kieran's Manly Vale



St Kieran's students at their swimming carnival (top) and on Pyjama Day raising money for Mary Mac's Place (bottom).

ST CECILIA'S SCHOOL

This year, we welcomed our new Kindergarten students and their families and new students and families in Years 1 - 6. We also welcomed several new staff members. The teachers focused on supporting students in their academic and social learning, spiritual growth and faith formation.

The religious life of the school provided opportunities to invite parents and families to join us for our Easter presentations during Holy Week, liturgies for Mother's Day, the Feast of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, the feast of the Assumption, and Grandparents morning and Father's Day celebrations. We have looked forward to these celebrations. Throughout the year we also had Fr John visiting classrooms, to enhance our Religious Education program.

The sacramental program included celebrations for Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation. Family Come Gather Masses are special occasions celebrated by all classes. These Masses involve children and their families in worship and liturgy and are an opportunity for parishioners to join with our school community.



Louise O'Brien

Principal, St Cecilia's Balgowlah

Students in Years 3, 4, 5, & 6 continue to attend the Wednesday morning parish Mass. In November we celebrated St Cecilia's Feast Day.

The school community has undertaken social justice and outreach initiatives such as the Gift Cook off and supported Caritas, St Vincent De Paul Society, Australian Mission and Mary Mac's Place. St Cecilia's has parent representatives on the North Harbour Parish Pastoral Council, an important link between the school and the wider parish.



St Cecilia's students with Fr John Zhang, OSA.

CATECHISTS

Currently, we have twenty-four catechist teachers with one leaving at the end of the year. We have thirty-nine Special Religious Education (SRE) classes in six public primary schools in our parish area, including Manly Vale Public School, Brookvale Public School, Allambie Heights Public School, Balgowlah Heights Public School, Seaforth Public School and Balgowlah North Public School. Teaching days are Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, with both morning and afternoon classes. Approximately seven hundred and fifty children attend Catholic SRE classes. Due to the new way of teaching in stages, we can combine some classes together. We are lucky to have Fr Jojo and Fr Huyao supporting our Ministry by visiting students in our classes.

In October of 2024, we held our annual Catechist Recruitment Drive with fruitful results. We gained seven new catechists and a mother at Balgowlah North has recently contacted me to say that she would love to join our Ministry too. Many of our new catechists will start as helpers and be trained by myself or other catechists.



Ursula Halloway
CCD Co-ordinator

Free training courses are offered online and face-to-face and are provided by the Diocese's CCD Team. They ensure that our Catechists are supported and are usually a fun way to spend a morning.

We also have absolutely beautiful formation days that all parishioners are welcome to attend. Brochures are left at the back of church and an ad in the bulletin is often included.

Being a Catechist typically takes up about one to one and a half hours per week, including travel time, and presentation of a thirty minute lesson. The teacher's manuals are very easy to follow and are an approved part of the NSW Curriculum.

We work under the banner of The Department of Education who have written a “Student Wellbeing Policy” in which it states that all students are ‘entitled to explore their spiritual beliefs in a safe, welcoming and accepting environment.’

Our Catechists meet at the beginning of each term. Prior to this, I receive information from the Diocese at a Catechist Coordinators’ Meeting and pass relevant information onto Catechists. Catechists can also report on their experiences and share ideas. Safeguarding is always of paramount importance.

Congratulations to Phillip Cooney who received an award for fifteen years of Service as a Catechist at the Annual Catechist Diocesan Mass. Phillip also received a posthumous award for his beautiful wife, Marina’s Twenty- Five Years of Service. An amazing, collective achievement by a dedicated, generous couple. A huge part of our Ministry is the friends that we make along the way and the great times we have together.

If you are interested in becoming a Catechist or would simply like more information, please feel free to contact Ursula on catechist@northharbourcatholic.com or 0423 595 204.



Phillip Cooney receiving a service award for himself and his late wife, Marina, from Fr David Ranson VG.



Catechists at St Kieran's Church.



Some of our catechists at our Christmas celebration.

ALPHA

Alpha is a series of sessions that explore life and faith in a friendly, social environment. It's designed to connect people, foster conversation, and have fun while deepening spiritual growth.

The Alpha Team organizes social gathering like the AFA Christmas in July, hospitality mornings, and community support activities, helping build a welcoming, inviting parish.

Alpha creates an "infinity chain" within the community: guests are invited to attend, then invited to join the Alpha Team, and later become active parish members, contributing in various ways such as serving at Masses or other Parish organisations.

Alpha relies on community support, with prayers and invitations to encourage participation. The program launched on a Friday evening in March with 18 guests, 5 new volunteers, and Fr. Paul as the spiritual guide.

Despite some challenges, 15 participants completed the course. The Holy Spirit Retreat was a highlight, and lives were transformed.



Lea Joris
Co-ordinator

Many guests joined the Spirit Group, and are continuing their spiritual journey. Nonetheless, the program was a success, with many attendees eager to become more involved in the Parish.

Running Alpha is a privilege and joy, as it fosters growth, connection, and a deeper understanding of the Christian faith. We ask for prayers and encourage you to invite others to experience Alpha.



ALPHA participants at a meeting this year.

SPIRIT

The Parish's Spirit program and group was launched in May 2024 for people who have recently completed the Alpha program within the past two years. It is run at 7pm on the last Friday of every month.

The group provides an opportunity for those who have completed Alpha to continue on their faith formation as well as being a launching pad for groups of parishioners wishing to meet regularly to enrich their faith and spirituality.

The Spirit Group is laity-led, with Leonie, Danielle and myself as co-leads. Our program leans on well-vetted Catholic and Christian materials. In recent months it has used: Pope Francis' *Prayer Catechesis*, Nikki Gumbel's *A Life Worth Living* videos, the Diocese of Wollongong's Faith Circle Resource, and direct excerpts from St Augustine's *Confessions*.

Activities have involved tracking back biblical readings that support the "Footsteps in the Sand" poem, singing Psalm 23 in Hebrew, praying with the words of St Augustine and exploring the tradition of American Gospel singing.



Steve Rush
Co-Lead



Caring for One Another

Support, Social Justice and Visitations



VINNIES MANLY VALE

The Manly Vale Conference is one of the busiest conferences on the Northern Beaches. Made up of eleven compassionate, well-trained volunteers, we are supported by the very busy Brookvale Office that services the whole of the Northern Beaches area.

We receive 5-12 calls for assistance weekly. 1 in 3 people are seeking help for the first time, 4 in 5 for food, and nearly half are experiencing housing stress.

St Vincent de Paul is unique in offering home visits, and we are grateful for the community's support, including St Kieran's School, St Augustine's College, Blackmores and our faithful parishioners. This generosity enables us to meet increasing demands, requiring at least \$20,000 for basic support. Hampers and vouchers have brought much-needed relief to families, restoring faith and hope. In addition to local support, we participate in a Twinning Program, assisting rural communities in Indonesia and Thailand.

We are always open to new members, with training provided for anyone over 18.



Lea Joris
President

This year, we welcomed Ronda Bergin, Kathryn Williams, and Elsie Naughton, while Catherine O'Donnell stepped down as President but remains a valuable volunteer.

We thank everyone for their generosity and ongoing support. We are grateful to the Augustinians, particularly to Fr. Michael, the Parish staff: Jane, Anne, Ursula and Sophie, and all who contribute. Your generosity truly makes a difference.

Take note that moving forward, there will only be one Appeal in our Parish: the Christmas Appeal. There will not be any Winter Appeal.

Please remember St Vincent de Paul needs your ongoing financial support and we welcome you to seek one of our members or use the QR Code to make donations throughout the year.

VINNIES BALGOWLAH

Our Seaforth/Balgowlah SVDP Conference members were once again overjoyed by the generosity of the St. Cecilia's parish and school community. The combined Winter and Christmas Appeals raised over \$6,220, together with the Sacramental Program participants donating \$760 in gift cards. This support is most appreciated. The 46 Winter Appeal hampers, packed by the wonderful school Mums, were delivered to very happy clients by our Vinnies members and volunteers.

The Balgowlah RSL Club has been most generous again, donating \$2,000 from their Club Grants Funds. This money allows us to focus especially on the children in the families we visit, providing them with school uniforms and shoes, sporting fees and equipment.

We are involved in the Twinning Program and have been supporting the St. Don Bosco Conference in Indonesia, with a \$200 regular donation. They send informative newsletters to us, acknowledging our support.



Lyn McNeil
President

We have greatly appreciated the help we have received over the last two years from an organization known as One Meal. They provide nutritious food relief to vulnerable members in our community. This extra food relief has been invaluable to several of our unwell and struggling clients

Our SVDP Conference is a happy and friendly group, who meet once a month, to support each other as well as our clients. Recently, certificates were presented to Brian & Gai Hamer for 15 years of dedicated service to SVDP. We have welcomed two new members this year, Pauline Gazzard and Merv King. With several members moving away we would very much welcome new members.

SOCIAL JUSTICE GROUP

Towards the end of 2023, a group of people came together to contribute to the formation of a Social Justice group for our parish. After many ideas were gathered, it was decided that for 2024 our parish would support four ventures: St Vincent de Paul, GIFT (Giving in Faith Together), LocalKind, and with the needs that Fr Abel comes across with his home visiting and giving of Communion.

St Vincent de Paul had a successful food drive and generous donations of Christmas Hampers though St Kieran's school. Members of our Vinnies conference make regular visits to those in need in our community.

LocalKind offers drop-in support, assistance and early intervention to vulnerable individuals and families, addressing many issues such as homelessness, domestic violence and refugee settlement. During 2024, our parish community supported a food drive and also held a Bunnings BBQ to contribute necessary funds for their amazing work. Our GIFT Program is in need of funds to continue to supply nutritious meals for those in need.



Christine McCabe

Founding member, Parish Social Justice Group
Committee member, Parish Pastoral Council

It was hoped that the parish could run another Bunnings BBQ to help this cause, but since GIFT is not a registered charity this was not possible. Further thought needs to be dedicated to finding ways to financially support this project.

Assisting Fr Abel with his valuable work also proved challenging, due to compliance requirements needing to be worked through.

In 2025, we hope to gain volunteers to our group, create an advocacy arm and possibly offer support to Mary's House Services, which provides immediate critical care to women and children experiencing domestic violence.

GIFT

The GIFT program has been very busy, providing meals to the Link Community Care Program. Many thanks to all who have supported this program, including our parent groups from St Cecilia's and St Kieran's, the Stella Maris girls, and the local Year 7 boys' group from St Aloysius'.

Our GIFT meals have become a valued part of the Link Community Care Program. Our clients appreciate the ease of our meals, which can be quickly heated for lunch or dinner. They enjoy hearing the story behind GIFT and are very grateful for our support.

The Link Community Care Program is entering its thirteenth year of service. GIFT has been a valued partner since 2014, providing nutritious meals to vulnerable people on the Northern Beaches.

In September 2024, Year 9 students Will and Jack sold cakes and baked items after Family Mass at St Cecilia's, with funds raised supporting GIFT programs. This was a great way to let people know about the GIFT program and no one left St Cecilia's hungry that day!

Through the generosity of our parishioners, Will and Jack raised \$335 - a fantastic outcome that goes such a long way to assist those in need.

Also in September, the parish ran, in conjunction with St Kieran's School, a BBQ, coffee and cake stall. This coincided with the NSW government elections, and all proceeds went to our program.

