



St Swithun's
ANGLICAN CHURCH
PYMBLE

Ministry Plan
(2023-2027)

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1. Introduction

After a long and successful term under previous incumbent Rev Roger Chilton, St Swithun's Anglican Church Pymble seeks a season of renewal and generational change. While continuing to nurture and care for its existing members, St Swithun's intends to welcome many new members representative of the diverse community in which it is planted. Pymble's recent demographic changes of both age and culture must be reflected in the daily life and experience of our church.

Evidence of such change is indicated in the following statistics¹:

	Our Community	St Swithun's
Average Age	41	72
Retired from full-time work	25%	67%
Speak a language other than English at home	35%	9%

Notwithstanding some statistical discrepancies, St Swithun's has significant bridging work to do in order to continue carrying out its founding charge to 'make disciples of all nations' (Matthew 28:19-20).

In order to best understand our current situation and to consider possible ways forward, from June to August 2022 over 100 members of St Swithun's met together in workshops. Each workshop met twice on successive weeks. Groups were either online or in-person, and facilitated by Stuart Holman and Peter Copleston. Members of each Workshop were invited to make further written submissions after each meeting. Additional consultations and interviews were conducted with St Swithun's members and external specialists with knowledge of our particular situation.

The results of these Ministry Planning Workshops were compiled into a 134 page document and reported to the whole Parish in early September 2022. Members were invited to respond to this report.

A Planning Team of six people then met together with the task of distilling all this information into a Ministry Plan with clear priorities and objectives. The members of this team were Jane Pape, Ross Millar, Peter Copleston, Victoria Hayman², Andy Bell and Stuart Holman. The initial proposal from this group was presented to the St Swithun's Parish Council at their October meeting. Parish Council endorsed the priorities established by the Planning Team and asked that the 2023-2027 Ministry Plan be completed and presented to the November meeting.

This document responds to that request, and invites Parish Council to adopt the 2023-2027 Ministry Plan as a policy of St Swithun's Church.

¹ Sources: ABS Census, 2021; NCLS, 2021; and IDCommunity Resources, Ku-Ring-Gai Municipal Council.

² Victoria is an external facilitator and consultant, former Head of Strategy with IBM.

2. Vision

(a) Welcome | Nurture | Serve

St Swithun's is committed to being a healthy church that *welcomes* all, *nurtures* them in the Christian faith, and *serves* one another and our wider community. This Vision, previously articulated, is embraced by this Ministry Plan as a useful statement of the kind of ministry we prayerfully intend at St Swithun's.

(b) Values

Because we seek to be a 'Welcome, Nurture, Serve' *kind* of Church, we uphold the value of the following ministry initiatives:

(i) Outreach

We build authentic and compassionate relationships with our neighbours. In this context, we make the gospel of Jesus Christ widely known, through actions, words and invitations.

Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:42-47.

(ii) Belonging

We warmly connect newcomers into our distinctively Christian community. Our community will be marked by love, unity and diversity ; centred around the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 2:7-8; 1 John 4:11-12.

(iii) Maturity

We foster life-long learning of Jesus Christ in others and ourselves. This discipleship will be marked by transformational activities such as bible reading and prayer.

Ephesians 4:11-16; Colossians 2:2-7.

(iv) Care

We practically love the vulnerable and the hurting among us, as well as generously showing God's compassion for the needy and the lost.

James 1:27; Acts 4:32-35.

Each area of ministry of our church—whether congregations, Home Groups, Children's and Youth ministries, etc—should intentionally embody these values in all that we intend to do.

3. A Ministry Plan

(a) Purpose and Scope

This plan identifies the priority initiatives that will best enable us to advance our Vision and Values over the next 5 years. In this way, our Ministry Systems and Programs will be congruent, coherent, and coordinated.

(b) Review and Reporting

We will hold ourselves accountable to this plan and report progress at our Annual General Meeting. The plan will then be reviewed and updated annually, stretching forward another year. It will be a rolling 5 year plan.

4. Priorities 2023-2027

These are the initiatives, activities, programs or outcomes that we believe will have **the greatest impact in reaching our Vision** in the years 2023-2027.

Overarching Theme

a) Belonging to a living community

We want to be an open Christian ‘village’ that shares our lives together. This will connect with the families of Pymble who yearn for an inclusive community, where everyone is known and valued—including people from every culture and sub-culture, every kind of family unit, from multi-generational households to singles. **The key to being this ‘village’ is the quality of our relationships, energised by Christian love.** We will be personally known, nurtured, and connected across generations in a ‘goldilocks’ sized church (not too big, not too small).

In this way, St Swithun’s will present itself as a place of cross-cultural opportunity and community. It is to be *the* place to connect with new friends, to belong to a ‘village’ of families, to learn, and to find a new sense of ‘home’ in Pymble.

Prioritising our sense of belonging shifts priority away from the timing, quality and content of our Sunday Services. Instead of appealing to a ‘market’ of potential church-goers we will build relationships of Christian love and invite others join this same network. We will be happy for many to belong before they believe.

Over the next five years our emphasis will move from ‘attracting’ to ‘inviting’ new members into relationship; with us and with Jesus Christ.

i) Program

While it is impossible to program for a certain ‘quality of relationship’ the priority, nature and culture of our gatherings will support our living Christian community. The nature of our outreach will also change.

The following initiatives are to be promoted, trialled, evaluated as regular ministry programs:

1. **Hospitality.** Informal meals and hospitality outside of Sunday Services are to be modelled and encouraged. These are settings in which the qualities of Christian love become evident in our relationships.
2. **Shared hobbies,** holidays and activities are to be nurtured and promoted. This might include trips away together of all kinds: camping, skiing, golfing, foodies' weekends, cultural outings, bus trips and educational expeditions.
3. **Mystery Meals.** Members of St Swithun's will be invited to share a meal together, in groups of 8 or 9. These will all take place over the course of a weekend. Those who volunteer to host such a meal do not necessarily need to provide any food. Instead, guests are invited to bring a part of the meal. Guest lists are assigned by the Organiser with the intention of building cross congregational and inter-generational relationships as well as connecting new members in new relationships. 'The Mystery' is the identity of other guests to the meal!
4. **Combined Morning Teas.** The opportunity for socialisation across services needs to be built into our regular Sunday timetable. Perhaps once a month, a combined Morning Tea between the end of the Traditional Service and the beginning of the morning Contemporary Service will be hosted by members of both services (rubbing elbows in the kitchen is part of the process).
5. **Missional Home Groups.** Our existing Home Groups, and newly created groups, will be helped to engage in warmly relational outreach activities. Although Home Groups are often seen as the 'end of the welcoming process', they will also be helped to be the beginning of the process—another doorway into the life of St Swithun's for their friends who may not be ready to attend a formal meeting. This is part of what it means to be an 'inviting' church instead of an 'attractional' church.
6. **Equipping Everyday Missionaries.** The journey towards life-changing Christian faith usually begins with a friendship. Someone engages with someone in an everyday relationship—and in that context, God does his work of transformation. Sometimes this is slow. Sometimes it is fast. The key features of this process are prayer, intention, and a readiness to share important life stories. St Swithun's will supply training in this process of being an 'everyday missionary' at the shopping centre, at the golf club, the school gate, the bridge group, or wherever we find ourselves in everyday life.
7. **Everyday English Classes.** This existing program of language learning already embodies many of the qualities envisaged by our aim to build a sense of belonging to a living community. Emerging challenges must now be addressed in order to facilitate continued growth. Possible developments include:
 - i. **More teaching spaces,** which would require reviewing other ministry activities taking place on Thursday mornings

- ii. **More teachers**, are required with the following qualities: a love for people and community, an interest in new cultures, good communication skills, (some) teaching experience, trustworthiness, reliability, and a willingness to learn. Training is provided through the Anglicare Training Program.
- iii. **Strengthening links**, from the Everyday English course to our evangelistic programs such as Alpha (Mandarin) and our Friday Mandarin Bible Study. This will require us to identify and equip 'link volunteers' following Jenny's departure.
- iv. **Translation** at church services. This has already been taking place at our 10:30am service, and sometimes at our 9am service. A translation team, headed by Betty, is currently operating. The addition of translation services to our regular Sunday congregations is premised on a decision to pursue non-language-specific congregations. Our process of consultation and research has uncovered a clear preference for this pathway.

Many of these programs and activities are envisaged as 'engaging' rather than 'evangelising.' They are intended to open up possible gospel conversations, which form a pathway leading into a focussed evangelistic program such as Christianity Explored, Alpha, etc. As a recent example of this *belonging before believing*, a man with no prior church experience came to our Sunday morning service and was greatly surprised at what he saw. He remarked that it seemed like a great big family event, where everyone was known and cared for. The next week, he brought along his whole family to witness it. The following week, he joined our Christianity Explored program. His story continues to unfold!

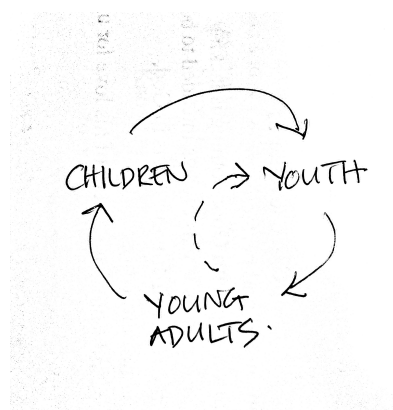
Focus Priorities

b) Growing Kids into Leaders

We will build the ‘best-in-class’ kids ministry that purposefully discipless children, through their teens, into the youth leaders of tomorrow. Every child will be nurtured into Christian maturity and ‘leadership’, enabled to use their unique gifts and talents in service of growing the next generation.

The use of the word ‘leadership’ in this sense refers to an influence and impact in the lives of others. It does not necessarily mean ‘out front’ or ‘speaking’ or taking responsibility for a group. Instead, we want each young person to develop a Christian concern for others such that they live with an intentional desire to see others ‘moving to the right’³.

‘Growing kids into leaders’ brings together Children, Youth and Young Adults under one ministry area, under the leadership of a specialist staff member-- a new Children’s and Youth Minister. We recognise that young adults are critical to leading and modelling this highly relational discipleship ministry; and that these same young adults will leave the Pymble area once they ‘leave home’. This reality requires a ‘recruit and train’ culture which engages each young person and empowers them to serve as each one matures.



As with any ‘virtuous circle’ we need to support the areas which start the wheel turning. In the short term, we will look to encourage ministry minded young adults to partner with our church to initiate this program. The focus, however, must be a longer-term investment in building incrementally from the bottom up; from children, into youth, into young adults.

i) Program Overview

New families will be welcomed through contemporary ‘Music for Preschoolers’ programs (upgraded from Mainly Music), Mother’s Groups, Kids Holiday programs (eg SwizBang) and after school groups. We must also establish a strong relationship with Pymble Public School, in addition to growing relationships with all local independent

³ The expression ‘moving to the right’ borrows from the language of *The Vine Project*, by Col Marshall and Tony Payne. It embraces the lifelong process of growing in Christian maturity, from conversion to glory.

primary schools. The details of such programs will be developed by our new Youth and Children's Minister, when appointed.

In the short term, we will provide program clarity to our current families. They will know what is available for their children and youth, and how each part of the program aims to foster the growth and discipleship of their family. St Swithun's will thereby develop a stronger sense of partnership with families, providing mutual support for parents.

In the short term, we plan to offer the following weekly programs, during term time.

Sunday Mornings

- **Creche.** A dedicated Creche Leader and a 'parent helper' will look after the 0-4 year olds in the Creche area. They will play, read bible stories, sing songs, have fun—all within a broad framework of Christian foundations. And maybe they'll also have a little nap!
- **SwizKids.** This is for children in Kindy up to year 5 (although parents of four year olds may elect to have their child in this group). Material from The Mustard Seeds program is currently being used with good impact, supplemented by other creative Christian resources. Hannah and Janet will lead this group for now. Senior Youth may elect to be trained by Janet and Cate as Junior Leaders.
- **Junior Youth.** This group is for youth in Years 6-9 at school. Emilia and Tim will lead this group in a bible study format. They will be following the sermon series on 1 John, and then into Luke's gospel during Advent. (This is the 'Junior version' of their mid-week Youth Bible Study for students in Year 10 and above.)
- **Senior Youth.** Youth in year 10 or above may elect to be trained as Junior Leaders for the term, or they may choose to remain in church with their parents. During the first 2 weeks of term, Youth will be invited to make their choice. This commitment is for the term.

Clearly delineated boundaries are encouraged for the membership of each group. This creates a better experience for everyone. Consistency builds trust and better relationships-- and ultimately a better discipleship experience for all. If a child would like to be in a group outside of the age ranges above, in consultation with their parents, we will seek to accommodate them.

Midweek Youth

Youth Bible Study. A midweek 'Home Group' experience of bible study for senior youth, run in a home by our Youth leaders.

Friday Evenings Youth

- **Youth Group.** The continuation and growth of our existing Friday Night Youth program will be overseen by Emilia and Tim and a new Children's and Youth Minister. They will work together to recruit, train and encourage a team of

(mostly!) young adult youth leaders. The primary purpose of this ministry is to grow disciples and build relationships with God and each other.

Other Children's and Youth programs will run, from time to time, in addition to these regular staples. Such programs would include:

- **Youth Camps**, two per year—likely KYCK and a 'Swiz' Camp.
- **LiT**: Leaders in Training Camp, developing future leaders.
- **SwizBang** (or equivalent) school holiday outreach program

ii) Facilities

During the 2023-2027 the PACE Centre will be converted into the focal point of our children's and youth ministries. This might include the remodelling of the yard space facing Bungalow Ave, including the backyard of 4 Merrivale, to include children's play equipment, a basketball hoop, outdoor seating, and a BBQ area. The current undercroft could be enclosed to provide additional 'year round' ministry space (subject to Planning Consent). The Ridley Smith room would move from being a 'blank canvas' to being a child-friendly ministry space. Other mid-week uses (eg Easy English) would not be precluded, but the space would prioritise children and youth.

Sunday morning logistics would need to be carefully resolved to make this work. Some of the implications would be:

- a) Morning Tea for the Traditional Service would be moved to the Hall and Lounge Areas.
- b) A 'crossover' Morning Tea after the Traditional Service and before the Contemporary Service (10:15am – 10:45am) is then possible in the Hall and Lounge areas.
- c) Morning Tea / Lunch after the Contemporary Service would be served in the PACE Centre, where parents would also 'collect' their children. The Contemporary Service, rather than the Traditional Service, manages the crossing Merrivale Road. Child drop-off by parents at the PACE still requires resolution (Class teachers cannot be responsible for children crossing the road).
- d) The Creche remains unchanged on Sunday mornings due to proximity to the parents in the Contemporary Service.

The church office and staff area would remain unchanged, although staff offices may be used as break out spaces or conference rooms on weekends.

Such a significant repurposing of our existing facilities would take some time to fully implement and involve considerable cost, but should be completed during the 5 year span of this Ministry Plan.

c) An outstanding traditional Anglican Service

We will build upon our current strength to offer an excellent and inspiring traditional style of Anglican service, widely known throughout the northern region of Sydney. Unique in our area, St Swithun's will further develop our traditional services with

excellent choir and organ music, Bible-based and Christ-centred teaching, authentic use of Anglican liturgy and a lively Christian community. Growing this reputation further will appeal to those who prefer a traditional style of worship, which is hard to find within a 20 minute drive. We aspire to offer Sunday services that, as people drive away after the service (whether they attend the 9am service regularly or occasionally or have visited us for the first time), they are saying, “That was a great service. I’m coming back next week.”

The creativity and energy needed to achieve such outstanding services week after week will require prayerful guidance from regular planning meetings, which may lead to more variety within the framework of the Morning Prayer and Holy Communion services. For example, in the musical realm:

- Extending the range of hymns beyond HTC (our current hymn book).
- Deleting a hymn when one cannot be found that fits with the theme of the service
- Foregoing a modern song, unless it fits with the theme of the service
- Sometimes singing larger parts of the Holy Communion service in a congregational setting that includes the Kyrie, Sanctus and Benedictus, the Acclamations – and not just the Gloria and Agnus Dei. (This would likely involve teaching the congregation some additional music.)
- Sometimes singing a psalm at Morning Prayer (possibly instead of a hymn) in a variety of settings: it doesn’t have to be Anglican chant!
- Accompanying the anthem on the piano when that is musically appropriate

Similar thought can be given to the different ways we might read the Bible lessons, pray the intercessions, preach the sermon, or how we might occasionally use a traditional / older liturgy – all so that each service is fresh and not set in a formulaic rut.

Demographically this should appeal to those moving into the “over 55s developments” which are becoming increasingly common in our area. Reaching out and connecting with new members in this way will mean renewal for our existing membership and volunteer base.

This ministry will continue to focus on our weekly 9:00am congregation, extending to occasional services such as Evensong and choral events.

The COVID pandemic required us to begin recording and broadcasting our services – something never envisaged in the church’s previous strategic plans. Presently we connect with about 160 screens each week, and so we conclude that church membership via technology is here to stay. We plan to continue offering our services online. Further development opportunities include:

- Building pastoral relationships with our ‘regulars’ and supporting them as we do others who come on site.
- Consider alternatives to the YouTube delivery platform which provide a better connection with our online congregation and the possibility of a more focussed audience.

- Technical development of skills and equipment so that we offer a similarly “outstanding and inspiring” standard of service online.

d) Excellent music, across multiple styles and formats

We will enhance and grow our reputation for musical excellence, creativity and joyful praise; across multiple styles -- including choral music (both traditional and contemporary), contemporary praise and worship music, and whatever other styles of music transcend cultural boundaries.

Rather than blending musical styles together, the unique characteristics of each will be respected and celebrated. However occasional “combined” services e.g. Lessons and Carols (before Christmas and on Good Friday), and on Christmas Eve, may feature music from different genres.

We envisage:

- A continued choral programme of Evensong, Cultural Foundation events and choir tours
- Establishing mutually beneficial relationships with the choirs of local independent schools. Although this may bring several challenges with it, exploring the possibilities with the schools may bring about creative solutions.
- Explore the possibility of establishing a children's choir
- Continuing our organ scholar programme
- Improve our advertising and invitational approach for seasonal music events such as Lessons and Carols, Cultural Foundation concerts, Evensong etc
- Contemporary Music Praise Nights, up to 3 per year.
- Profiling contemporary music at our Bannockburn Oval Carols and other public events
- Contemporary bands development through midweek rehearsals and the inclusion of ‘Junior Members’
- Development of a younger and more contemporary style of band at the evening Contemporary Service, which would appeal to Senior Youth. This second band would eventually integrate into our regular Services with a band A / band B approach.

Ongoing work in this area of our ministry will consider how we measure our progress and success.

e) Nourished by God's word

We will enrich and deepen our engagement with God, through his word, in community. We want this to be a transformational experience, impacting our 'heads', 'hearts', and 'hands'. This will occur through our Home Group bible studies, our sermons, teaching and personal devotional bible reading. In this way, we yearn to know God in ways which are life-changing, rather than merely academic-- while maintaining intellectual credibility in the public square.

We will be taught by gifted and trained men and women; who also provide rich resources for personal reflection and edification, so that we become mature Christians able to also teach one another.

i) Program

In addition to current biblical preaching, teaching and discovery programs in our weekly services and Home Groups, the following are to be implemented through 2023-2027.

Growing Disciples:

Growing Disciples is an online personal discipleship program, providing bible reading notes and video-format daily devotionals. Throughout the year, participants cover the entire bible, from Genesis to Revelation, at whatever depth they choose—from 'just the highlights' through to reading every verse of the bible in a year. The program launched 3 years ago at St Andrew's Roseville and has begun to engage a global audience. The same program will be re-launched at St Swithun's Pymble in 2023, as a joint program led by the staff of both churches. For a sneak preview, go to www.growingdisciples.net.au

Home Group Leaders Training:

Our Home Groups are the most highly valued ministry at St Swithun's across all age groups⁴. The recruitment, training, equipping and encouraging of our Home Group Leaders is foundational to the enduring success of these groups. Four training seminars per year will be offered for existing Home Group Leaders. Further, we will develop a leadership pipeline for future leaders, provided tutelage under the care of existing leaders and with specialist training.

PTC course:

We will offer one unit of the Moore College Preliminary Theological Certificate each year. This may be offer in conjunction with other local Anglican Churches.

Lecture series:

We desire to enrich our knowledge of God's word, and our engagement with our wider community, through an annual lecture from a prominent author or speaker on a topic of current debate or interest.

⁴ NCD Survey, 2019. NCLS 2021 rated it second, behind 'Traditional Music and Worship Style'.

f) Care for all of life

St Swithun's will extend compassionate pastoral care to all members of St Swithun's, whether at home or in care, whether able to attend services or not. We will do this by developing teams which connect people together in a network of practical compassion.

Our pastoral care will also look beyond the current members of St Swithun's to local people in challenging circumstances, who may be ready to connect with God through their difficulties. We will especially reach out to families in transition (relocating countries and/or changing jobs, families in crisis), offering practical Christian love.

i) Program

Much of our day-to-day Pastoral Care takes place in the context of our Home Groups—which is appropriate where everyone has a role to play. Spiritual nurture and practical care, proactively supplied by trusted friends, is able to meet the challenges of many life situations. But sometimes greater levels of expertise, experience or professional care are required. The St Swithun's Pastoral Care team will be developed to provide appropriate care in these circumstances.

In order to expand the capabilities of our Pastoral Care team, intentional recruitment and training will be put in place. Those with existing qualifications and experience will be invited to join this team, enabling us to expand the work currently lead by Chris Hollister and Fran Durand.

Coordination of this ministry throughout our church network will require the development of trusted and clear pathways of communication between Home Group Leaders and the team.

Further equipping for this vital ministry will be offered through an accredited course in Pastoral Care, offered onsite at St Swithun's. Men and Women, across all age groups, will be encouraged to participate. Possible training facilitators include Anglicare and Mary Andrews College.

This will enable appropriately trained volunteers to engage in pastoral visitation to both hospitals and homes.

Further initiatives will include:

- Expanding the reach of our Meals and Care program.
- Re-introducing our 'Baby Care' packs for new born members of St Swithun's.
- Introducing a digital 'check-in' system at all regular church services so that sensitive follow up for both our Pastoral Care team and our Belonging team is supported by accurate attendance data.

5. Sunday Program

i) Rationale

The current St Swithun's Church building feels full at about 140 people, with parking becoming problematic (and a limiting factor) when a congregation reaches about 120.

The congregations in our church building start to feel a 'comfortable momentum' over about 60. Our optimal weekly congregation size is therefore 60-120. After that, we need to plant new congregations.

Our 9am Traditional service is healthy and has been growing steadily. Although some of this growth is the result of transfer from other churches, this is a service which should continue to grow and so we propose the relaunch of an 8am Holy Communion to 'create space' at 9am. This would take place only when 9:00am reaches an 8 week rolling average of 120.

The current 10:30am Contemporary Service has now entered a steady growth phase, with a refreshed approach to children's and junior youth ministry. This has been greatly supported by excellent Morning Teas with ongoing 'fun' for kids, meaning that several are lingering on at church until 1pm on many Sundays. Radical change for this service could therefore cruel the 'green shoots' of growth now visible.

The 10:30am starting time for this service is often not met. Although much effort has gone into achieving this, delaying the start time until 10:45am would seem to open up the opportunity for a 'crossover' time of fellowship between the conclusion of the 9am Traditional service and a 10:45am start for the Contemporary Service. The long tail to the current Contemporary Service morning teas suggests that a slightly later start would not be overly problematic.

ii) Proposed Program

8am Holy Communion. A 45 minute prayer book service of Holy Communion.
(commencing when 9am Traditional has an average 120 attending)

9am Traditional Church. Following our existing pattern of Holy Communion and Morning Prayer.

10:15am Morning Tea (Shared monthly, subject to operational issues)

10:45am Contemporary, with Kids and Youth up to year 9, followed by a 'sit-down' lunch (one per term)

Evening Contemporary, attractive to Youth above year 9, their parents, and Empty Nesters. This service is intended to provide future expansion capacity for older families of the morning contemporary service. Further research is required to determine whether this should commence at 5pm or 6pm. This service would be followed by a 'sit-down' evening meal once a month.

The timing of the implementation of any changes to our existing program of services is subject to further consultation and broad agreement.