

Pentecost or Whit-Sunday



St. John's Cemetery:

On Tuesday, I am thankful for the time given by Kathy & Philip showing me the Church cemetery. I appreciate their work in caring for the Cemetery. Over the years, there have been different people involved in caring for this legacy regularly. Historically, St John's has had designated working-bees to complete specific tasks required in the Cemetery. The Parish was served well by Jill Lyons, who researched and became the author of "Pioneers at Peace", the story of St. John's Cemetery, Gordon.

I will discuss with the Wardens, who have responsibility on two fronts, as Wardens, and the 'trustees' of the Cemetery. They have contracted Conor, who keeps the lawns and edges in good order. As we can all appreciate, there are times when caring for the Cemetery requires support in undertaking specific tasks or work in the Cemetery. A working bee has generally been the answer.

WEGS

The ladies had their first meeting for the year and their first meeting since the pandemic which placed a halt to their regular meetings. It was good to meet those who attended on the 10th of May. It was an opportunity to meet and hear from others. As the Rector, I shared about my family, work, and the various parishes where Melinda & I have served. It was like a trip down memory lane. All those present were all very gracious in their listening and asking the occasional question. An area of questions asked, were concerning the 'liturgical fabric' and their deterioration. I am pleased to say I have contacted 'Beth' who plans to come and look at what we have and then make her recommendations. Beth has been serving many groups in this capacity, including costumes etc., for large drama groups.

The Mission of the Church:

How would you answer this question that I have asked several people since becoming the Rector of St. John the Evangelist Gordon? What is our Mission? What I have asked is not a trick question; Rather, I have been seeking to understand the parishioners of St. Johns grasp on the priorities of the Parish. Their answers also have further shaped where I believe God wants me to lead you.

As you know, I take a practical approach to many aspects of life. This practical approach also means seeking God and his wisdom to navigate towards being

a healthier Church. The following classification can assist in identifying the Health of the Church.

Classification	Description
A	Growing numerically yet financially unviable
B	Growing numerically & financially viable
C	Plateau numerically remaining Financially viable
D	Declining numerically & financially viable
E	Declining numerically & financially unviable

The optimum position is 'B' – this is defined as a Church that is both growing numerically and financially viable. The classification of a parish or congregation is not an end in itself. The end goal is how, under God can each category move into a healthier position? The "B" classification is the ultimate goal. The following table gives the differing approach to each of the areas.

Classification	Suggested Action
A	Guidance and financial resources
B	Encouragement and financial resources
C	Rethinking and realignment of the priorities of the Church
D	Reinventing and prioritising
E	Rebirthing and guidance (no financial rescue)

We have all heard many times – the pandemic has changed our society, this is true. Parishioners have been absent through the forced closure of the Church doors and because they were deemed to be in the vulnerable category. There have also been the new phenomena of people experiencing 'church at home' through the Live Streaming of Church Services. Live Streaming is not a

replacement for attending Church Services. Church Services provide a high level of fellowship which cannot be gained or experienced through Live Streaming. Experience of church through Live Streaming will not be abandoned, yet a goal is to have everyone enjoying the fellowship in God's house together as we come together as the people of God to worship Him.

What classification would you give St. John's? We can rule out categories' "A", "B", and "E". Through the distortion of the pandemic, St John's looks like it may be in the category "D". Yet, the numerical distortion was before the pandemic and distorted through the loss of the previous Rector. The reality for St John's is a parish that has Plateau numerically at the same time remaining financially viable.

Each of the five categories has its challenges and joys. To move from being a parish that has Plateau numerically to one that is growing numerically has its challenges. The first is to own the category and then accepting the reality of the changes required.

The process of doing this requires rethinking and realignment of the priorities of the Church. I must stress that this process is not looking at what we call churchmanship. Regardless of Churchmanship, the process of change will require rethinking and realignment of the Church's priorities.

The question you may be pondering – to what do we realign our priorities to? When you think of St. Johns – what do you desire for the Church to be known for? All

Churches must ultimately expect to point people to the Saviour. Those within the life of the Church will continue to mature in Christ. People outside the Church are to be encouraged to come to the Saviour Jesus Christ.

We are custodians of the various Buildings and Resources. St John's is a beautiful Church. My experience is that the people of St. John's love God, love the Church and genuinely display care for one another. Next week at the combined Service, we take another step in allowing the deepening of our fellowship with one another.

Priorities of the Church

As an Anglican Church, I believe we rightly have three main areas of focuses:

- i. The priority of Mission,
 - ii. The priority of People,
 - iii. The priority of Community.
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- i. **The priority of Mission** places gospel mission as the Church's central purpose, an objective not just for the collective or for a specialised few, but for all Christians. As every saint worships God in all of life, not just when they gather, they will naturally serve as witnesses to the Gospel in both word and deed. I once heard it said that the way we live our lives is like a 'living Bible' to others. Another author once stated: "the average person will give more credence to what

the Christian shares if they believe that he or she is a person of integrity".

- ii. **The priority of People** is reflected in churches that are effective in Gospel-focused ministry as they remain long-term, low-key, and relational. Successful ministry is not sudden and glamorous. It happens as Christians share their lives with other Christians and seekers alike. "Ordinary" Christians can take responsibility to do ministry work rather than being driven by programs. Our church activity is centred on people and their particular gifts, talents, and abilities.
- iii. **The priority of Community.**
Do you view the Church as an extended family that authentically lives out the Gospel together? The Church is more than gathering once a week to proclaim the Gospel from a pulpit. We are to reflect the Gospel daily as we share in life together. This kind of Community creates a sense of belonging, and it is alluring to those who have not experienced the Christian faith. An inclusive and welcoming Church will require speaking in ways that can be understood and allow others to feel like they belong. Just as extended families grow by producing new nuclear families, local churches grow by forming links with other Churches and missions, including 'Church planting' or commencing new congregations.

The joy of living our lives for Jesus. The joy of entering into deeper fellowship with God as we worship Him. The joy of sharing with other members of the Church as we get to know them. Notice that all the priorities commence with the individual's heart. The heart expresses the way we show our love for God.

Combined Service:

Next week, Sunday the 30th, there will be a combined Service, a Service of Holy Communion. I have merged different liturgies together for this occasion, which I pray will encourage all. This Order of Service is only for the Combined Service and will not replace the usual patterns of worship. One of the aims behind the Combined Service is to give further opportunities for fellowship in a fun way. You will also notice that the Combined Service is seeking to address the priority of the Community.

Bible Studies

What a joy it has been to commence two new Bible Studies. Bible study allows for *training and experience* of each of the three priorities. The Young Adults Bible Study meet on Wednesday Evening at the Rectory. It was a good enjoyable beginning, and I look forward to a few more people joining this week.

The Thursday Morning Study has recommenced, and we have been meeting at the Rector's Office. This coming week this Study will be hosted at the Rectory. Please note the list of Bible Study Groups are in the Bulletin. If you would like to join a group, please contact myself, the Rector.

Prayers for Whit-Sunday

To the, O Christ, O King exalted, we offer up our due praise and unfeigned hearty thanks for that thou has sent down and dispersed abroad thine own Holy Spirit to restore and renew the spirit of men, to be the first dedication of thy Catholic, Apostolic Church on earth, and the first publishing of the gospel to all lands, the bond of unity, and giver of light and life; to whom with the Father and thee, one blessed Trinity, be ascribed all might, majesty, dominion and praise, now and for ever. Amen.

We praise thee, O God, as we remember today how the Holy Spirit the Comforter was given to the first disciples, to make them strong witness for thee in the world. Strengthen us, we pray thee, by the same Holy Spirit, that we may think rightly, speak truthfully, and live bravely, to the glory of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Parish Prayers Compiled by Frank Colquhoun:*

Finally, thank you for praying for me as your Rector. Please continue to pray as I give leadership to the Parish. My prayer is that my leadership will reflect my love and reverence for our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

God's Peace and Grace be with you.

Fr. Robert H.