



Ministry Reports 2023

Gosford
PRESBYTERIAN
Church

Review of 2023 from the Elders (Session)



The elders and Ministers met regularly during 2023 at our meetings known as Session Meetings (a Presbyterian term). Meetings are normally on first Tuesdays each month. The role of the Session is generally "the promotion and supervision of the spiritual life of the congregation in regard to worship, pastoral care, Christian education, evangelism, and mission, and the oversight of all the agencies within the congregation." That description is found in "The Code" - and that is a book of how our we operate as a Presbyterian Church (it can be found at the PCNSW website).

Another way you describe the role of Session is to lead our church according to our Mission Statement "Knowing Jesus, Loving People, Changing Lives".

The elders greatly appreciate your prayers, encouragement and suggestions as we undertake that role. The Session is also the responsible body to the Australian Charities and Not-for Profits Commission. (ACNC).

The past year was busy. We welcomed Jamie Mackenzie, his wife Amy and their boys in January. It is great to see how well Jamie and family have settled in with us and adding to the life of our church community. Jamie attends Session meeting and we are currently moving to formally elect him as an elder so he has a full voting voice at meetings.

Meetings of the elders usually begin with a devotion, prayer and some sort of equipping for elders. Matt Ham is the "Moderator" of meetings. Much time is spent on ongoing but important matters like meeting Breaking the Silence guidelines (ie

prevention of abuse) and approving various events, job descriptions etc. (also see the full BTS info online at PCNSW). The elders had a day to plan and pray in June.

As part of an ongoing desire for Session to consult with the congregation, we also had a planning day in September where Ministry Team Leaders (MTLs) and others met. We also invited the MTLs to join the elders every second Session meeting and we were grateful for their contribution, faithfulness and insight.

During the second half of 2023 we resolved commence a new Night Church again and move to one morning service. This is a big change and we understand it changes our "normal". We have been very pleased by the support of the congregation in this change. It is very encouraging to see the enthusiasm for this new service. Please be patient and love and encourage one another with our new Sunday arrangements!

The elders welcomes your input as we plan and lead the congregation. Feel free to contact us by email (elders@gosfordpc.com.au) or a letter the box at the rear of the church, phone etc.

Finally, if you are not aware, the current elders are: Geoff Crocker, Robin Hodson, Cameron Johnston, Zac Mamo, Allan Moore, Bob Oliver, Matt Sandeman and Roger Stonehouse.

Bob Oliver
Session Clerk



Hope Explored

Hope Explored is a 3 week course, of about 2 hours each session, put together by Christianity Explored Ministries that traces out the hope that is held out in the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is designed for those who are interested in finding out more about Christianity.



We began hosting this course in 2022 with little interest, but in 2023 we ran the course 3 times over March-April, June and November-December with an increasing number of visitors in attendance each time. During the November-December sessions we had 3 regular visitors attending. This may have been due to a focus on evangelism in the sermon series and Growth Group studies in Term 3. Indeed, one of the resources made available for Growth Groups to work through was this Hope Explored course. As such, a couple of Growth Groups became more familiar with the material.

We met on Friday evenings from 6.30pm to 8.30pm at the church building up in the offices.

The team that helped set this up and run it consists of Bernie Pors, Graham and Fiona Gibbs and myself. I am very grateful for their efforts and support in this ministry.

The plan is to resume running this course from Term 2 in 2024, given the focus in Term 1 on transitioning well with the changes of service times.

Matt Ham
Senior Minister

Pray:

- Please be praying that many would be moved to commit to bringing their friends and family along to hear of the hope we have in Christ.
- Pray that people would be saved as they hear and believe. Pray also for the team who have faithfully committed and served in this space.



Growth Groups

Growth Groups are regular small group Bible studies that meet throughout the week and in various places (and online) from Ourimbah to Erina to Woy Woy. In 2023, there were 17 groups made up of people from various ages and stages.



Generally, the Growth Groups aim to strengthen those present in their knowledge of Jesus and to provide support for each other.

In terms of strengthening, the groups have been working through Bible study material prepared by a number of competent people in our church family, that run concurrent with the sermon series. Last year those series included the final chapters of Genesis and the Gospel of John, the book of Jonah and the first half of Zechariah. In Term 3 where the sermon series focused on 'Reasons for God' the Growth Groups were encouraged to engage with one of a number of resources designed to stimulate and encourage evangelism. Those resources included the Hope Explored course, the course 'Reasons for God' based on Tim Keller's book of the same name, and Sam Chan's book 'How to Talk About Jesus: without being that guy'. These were met with varying degrees of enthusiasm.

In terms of supporting each other, a number of Growth Groups have not only prayed regularly for those in need in their groups, but offered practical care and help. Indeed, a number have commented that they love their group and count it as a highlight of their week as they meet.

Matt Ham
Senior Minister

Pray:

- Please pray for all the GG leaders as they prepare each week, lead in studying the Bible and facilitate the support of their group members.

Gospel Beyond Gospel Team (GBGT)

The GBGT exists to advocate, support and promote cross-cultural ministry outside our local church; understanding ministry to be that which is directly Word-based and that which supports it.



To this end the GBGT have regularly prayed for and planned events and spotlights during church services to raise the profile of the link missionaries and missionary organisations that we support as a church. These included:

- Rick and Tracy Rempel with Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF),
- Rick and Kayleen Manton with APWM (Australian Presbyterian World Mission) Indigenous Ministry,
- Langham Partnership,
- Rob and El Falls with APWM Talua Theological Training Centre in Vanuatu,
- Granville Pillar with Global Scholars in Hungary,
- Igal Vender with International Mission to Jewish People (IMJP) in Tel Aviv,
- James Thomas with Global Recordings Network,
- Bible Society,
- Matt Crocker at Wallsend Presbyterian Church,

- Rhys Ewing with Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students (AFES) at Ourimbah and Newcastle Uni campuses,
- Liz Moore with African Inland Mission (AIM).

\$15,000/year from the church budget has been allocated to support these various missionaries and missionary organisations. Given Granville Pillar's retirement as an APWM missionary with Global Scholars, his financial support of \$2,000/year has been evenly relocated to Rhys Ewing with AFES and Liz Moore with AIM.

On July 24th, Langham Scholar, Crystal visited our church and spoke of her work in putting together a Hebrew Grammar in Chinese. This was well attended, informative and encouraging.

In the lead up to and on the weekend of the 1st September, the MAF Father's day promotion by John Oakley and Glenda Carter, although downscaled, was still enthusiastically received, raising \$2,000 in total.



The GBGT hosted a Barnabas Fund Aid event at the church building on the 5th September. A number of people from various churches attended. The team was a little disappointed at the quality of the presentation.

Apart from events, GBGT also emails weekly Link Missionary prayer profiles to growth group leaders to help their groups regularly pray for our link missionaries. This material has also been used for the monthly prayer meeting, prayer diary, and for service prayer leaders.

Jane Dixon indicated she no longer wanted to be a link missionary of GosfordPC and so has been removed from our list.

With the changes mentioned above, the Link Missionary Poster on the church hall wall has been updated.

Finally, there was an offer made to send Jamie Mackenzie to Talua Theological Training Centre in Vanuatu, to establish links with Rob and El Falls for the purposes of forging a pathway for the youth in our church to experience short term mission in the future. This conversation is live and ongoing.

This year we are already looking to host a number of our link missionaries. Firstly in March, Rick and Tracey Rempel will be spending time with us updating us on their work with MAF. And in April, Christina, the CEO of Global Recording Network accompanied by James Thomas who specialises in maintaining and upgrading the 5fish app, will be visiting to update us. We are very thankful for the willingness of these missionaries to spend time informing us and encouraging us in the work that they are doing for the sake of the gospel.

The GBGT consists of Liz Moore (clerk), Jo Oakley, John Oakley, Glenda Carter, Ruth Myers, Ross Perusco, Carrier Turner and Matt Ham.

Matt Ham
Senior Minister

Pray:

- Thank God for the way we have been able to support in prayer and finances these various link missionaries and missionary organisations.
- Thank God for the tireless efforts of the GBGT in advocating for and promoting our various missionaries and missionary organisations.
- Pray that God would be raising up more people to join the GBGT.
- Pray that God would raise up people from amongst our own church family to support and send into cross-cultural ministry.

Music Team

Our prayer is that the music in the service on a Sunday will encourage, inspire reflection on God's word and ultimately be an expression of our collective worship and praise of our great God and King.



Psalm 96 :1-2 "Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, praise His name; proclaim His salvation day after day."

During 2023, our music team continued to faithfully serve during our Sunday services, with some bands playing at either 9am or 10:45am, and others playing for both services back to back. The team's service is evident on a Sunday, but I'd also like to acknowledge the significant investment in time and energy that goes into preparing for the Sunday gatherings. The band members and their respective

leaders spend time thinking about song choices, trying to find songs that complement and integrate with the theme of the bible passage for the week. There is also time spent practicing the songs at home, and then on a Sunday musicians arrive at 8am ready to rehearse with each other, and also work with the tech teams (sound, computer and live stream teams). Chris Trethewy and I would like to say a big thankyou to all the musicians for your efforts and service to the music ministry, we have enjoyed serving our great God alongside you in 2023.

It was so exciting to see our youth band serving more in 2023 - praise God for their energy, faithfulness and enthusiasm in serving through music at the 10:45 service - you guys rock! We can't wait to see how God uses you at the new night service starting in March 2024!

Colossians 3:16 - Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

Cat Roldan
Ministry Team Leader



Pray:

- Praise God for the musicians in our church, for their skills and willingness to serve in the music ministry.
- Praise God for the team of faithful people in the tech team and behind the sound desk and computer - the music team couldn't serve without them!
- Please pray for the new service times and for all those who serve, that the services will be Christ focussed and all glory will go to Him.
- Pray for the musicians of our church, that God will be continuing to grow us spiritually, and that our skills will be used for His glory.
- Please pray as we move into the new service times, that the transition will be smooth and the music ministry will continue to grow and flourish, to the glory of God.

Welcoming Team

The Welcoming Team continued with bright faces to welcome both our regulars and newcomers when they come to our Sunday services. The welcome they receive makes a difference to the way they engage with both our church, and with God. Welcoming and building a caring community is the responsibility of all of us. The Welcoming Team continued to work for this in 2023.



In 2023, our focus was on improving our welcoming practices and helping those who have not yet settled into a growth group to do so, fostering a stronger connection with our church family, and knowing God better. I also want to plan to review our methods of following up with new visitors. However myself haven't improved anything in this area.

As we struggled with the system of the print out name tags last year, we did try to just use the computer to do so, and it was a bit better. However the system itself still sometimes dropped off. So now we plan to change the print out name tags to permanent name tags in 2024.

However, God is the one who make things work, from the data showed, our church attendance in 2023 increased 15.77% more than 2022. This such a great news for us and very encouraging. We are looking forward in 2024 to welcoming more brothers and sisters into our church community and making stronger connection together and to know God better.

Challenges: Need to give more attention to following up with newcomers and caring for those who do not know many people or have not yet settled into a group. Also Welcoming team should be more involved with newcomer's lunch events.

Another challenge is, as new church services happen soon, two welcoming team, morning and night will serving very differently, might need to adjust the way what we doing now to adapt to the new changing.

Grace Hou
Ministry Team Leader



Pray:

- Pray that newcomers to our church will feel welcomed in Jesus' name, not only on their first visit but over time as they become part of our community.
- Give thanks for the dedication of our Welcoming Team who served in 2023.
- Pray for more church members to notice those who are wandering around and help them connect and settle into our church and growth groups.
- Pray for a smooth transition to the permanent name tags.
- Pray for the new church service changes to reach out to community and bring more people to know Jesus and become His children.

Connect

Connect is a unique ministry aimed at inclusion and connection with young families of our wider Gosford Community. It is a programme blessed by God which encourages our GPC church family to invite those who don't have their trust in Jesus along to church to hear the Gospel, enjoy some family-friendly fun, whilst sharing in relaxed conversations about our Lord and Saviour.



God brought leadership stability and a strong group of servant-hearted helpers to serve the Connect ministry in 2023. Since I joined GPC in 2015, I have loved being involved in Connect and it is a privilege to lead this important outreach programme.



This ministry is simply not possible without an incredible team standing beside me and I thank God for all those willing to serve - from Matt leading in service and song, for setup helpers, the welcoming team, crafters, game organisers, conversationalists, kitchen assistants and our amazing youth.



Connect ran to its revised structure of 3-5pm on a Saturday afternoon throughout 2023 and these were held in April and September to the theme of 'Jesus is the Life' and 'Jesus is the Rock'. Children could participate in multiple craft activities for the entire session, which were available concurrently with fun, group games. We had interesting Bible talks, and GPC children loved sharing the songs they learn in Kids Church with our guests, which was a wonderful witness to those who don't know Jesus.



For our December session we trialled the combination of the annual Christmas Carols service with Connect on the same afternoon and this was a great success in both attendance and logistics. The 'Christmas Extravaganza', which focused on the theme of angels, condensed the busy end of year calendar and we pray for God's guidance as we consider this again for 2024.

Attendance numbers at each Connect event pleasingly saw us meet or exceed previous events. The revised structure and an increase in volunteers, has allowed for more intentional and deeper conversation with children and families, particularly with the significant number of non-GPC attendees which is encouraging.

Laura Brodyk
Ministry Team Leader



Pray:

- Pray for God's continued hand in the Connect ministry and for wisdom in leadership and direction for 2024.
- Thank God for the provision of all those willing to give up their time for Connect to fulfil our mission of knowing Jesus and loving people to see lives changed.
- Pray this ministry continues to be fruitful and provide an opportunity to share the gospel, connect with others and build lasting community and fellowship.

GPC Youth

Youth are not simply the church of tomorrow; they are the church of today. There is much to thank God for at GPC Youth. This year we have seen significant numerical growth of teenagers attending on Friday nights, teenagers growing in their depth of knowledge and understanding of what it is God has done for them and how they might navigate as faithful pilgrims in this thing called life. We have seen teenagers looking beyond themselves, serving within the wider body of believers in Children's Ministry and Tech Ministry. Youth Leaders finishing and Youth Leaders starting.

In April we went with a bit over 20 young people to Katoomba for a Youth Conference with 2,000 other teenagers called KYCK. It was a great time away, enjoying a few awesome days singing songs, eating donuts and being reminded of the joy we find in Jesus in the book for Mark. We saw teenagers give their lives to Christ for the first time and other recommit – continue to pray for them as they begin and continue to follow Jesus. A HUGE shout out to the leaders that helped out, especially Robin and Colleen Hodson for jumping in last minute due to other leaders getting Covid and to Chris and Sally Trethewey for cooking up a storm for 25 hungry young people.



In 2023 we covered a lot! Reflecting in Term 1 on our identity in our series Ephesians: I am. God's love and mercy for the unlovable and unmerciful in Jonah as well as a three-week series thinking through the Supernatural in Term 2. In Term 3 we thought through how it is we might live faithfully in Babylon through the book of Daniel: In the Lion's Den and finished with a series on relationships called Real

Relationships. The year finished with a series through the book of Mark reflecting of The King who Served.

One of my personal highlights has been the number of teenagers who over the last 12 months have stepped up to join teams and serve within the church. Many in the Tech and Av team, others regularly in Music Ministry, while others still have committed to serving teaching and making disciples of the littlest members of our church week in and week out at Kids Ministry. I am forever thankful for how they have taken the gifts and the gospel that has been given to them and looked to give that to others.

In January of 2024, we took a dozen of our senior youth to Leaders in Training (LIT), over five days our senior youth made incredible friends, learnt great skills in ministry and in diving deeper into the Bible. Thank you for those who paid for or supported those who went.



2023 also saw a return of a Youth Discipleship program at 10:45 as well as our School Lunchtime Groups at Gosford High, Henry Kendall and Narara Valley. The 10:45 Youth Program – Fuel – saw too many ham, cheese, tomato croissants eaten, leadership was learnt and Bibles were opened and discussed. While the Lunchtime Groups saw Christians encouraged and a high attendance from non-

Christians wanting to explore or ask questions, to think through Christianity. One of the non-Christian girls told me during the last week of 2023 that it was her 'favourite part of the week and the only reason she came to school in the last week was to come to Christian Lunchtime Groups.'



A MASSIVE thanks to our awesome Youth Ministry Team: For Zach and Ash, who have served for a long time in Youth Ministry and finished up at the end of last year. For Kira who has been serving in Youth Ministry for over 15 years!! For Sam Hodson and Dan Roldan who jumped into leading this year and have been an invaluable part of the team. For Bug and Meg continue to give time and energy to make disciples of the young people in our church. For Matt Ham and Sarah Shelley who have been so generous in jumping in to help serve and lead as we have had need or demand with the increased numbers. A huge thanks also must be given to the partners of those team members, those that have sacrificed Friday nights with their loved ones and date nights that sweaty, nervous, overconfident, anxious teenagers might love and learn to trust Jesus more.

Jamie Mackenzie
Assistant to the Minister

Pray:

- Thank God for the teenagers he brought along each week and the topics they have learnt about this year
- Pray our youth can continue to grow in their love of and trust in God
- Thank God for KYCK and LIT, the time the kids spent together, what they heard from the Mark, and
- the encouragement it was for them to see other teenagers living for God
- Thank God for the leaders serving in this space, and that more would join the team

Kids Church

Kids Church is a ministry that happens each week at Gosford PC during our Sunday Services, where kids aged 0 to 12 years old can learn about our awesome God! With us establishing a new program for 0- to 2-year-olds (Creche) and transitioning to having all kids programs at one service, it has been a busy but exciting year!



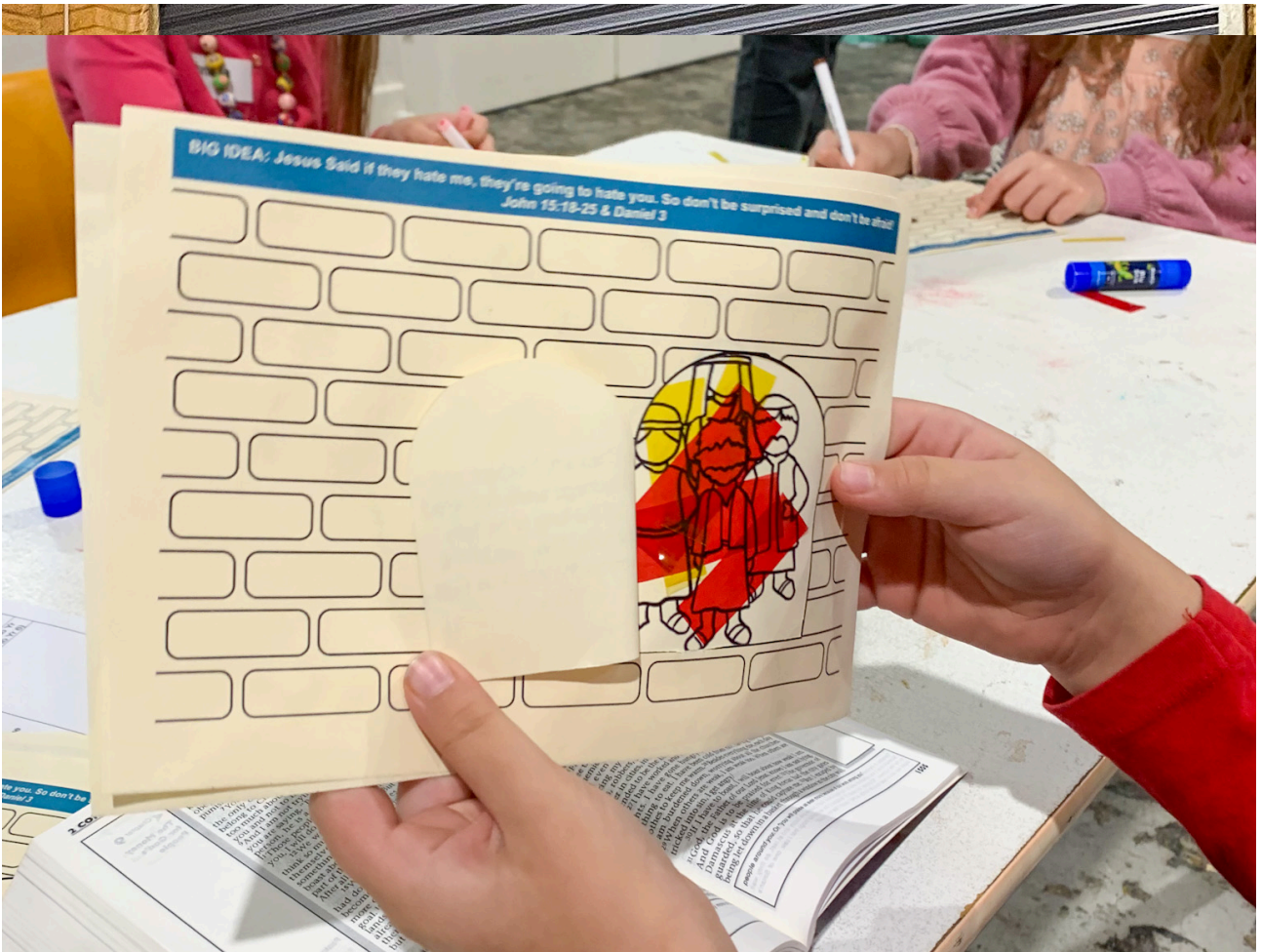
If you asked me to describe Kids Church in 2023 in three words, I would say disco, expansion, and dependence.

For our Flames and Fireflies groups, we spend 10 to 15 minutes together before the start of our lessons to pray and learn memory verses and songs. Our overarching theme for this year saw us relate all of these things to a disco ball, with the idea that

together we (the mirrors) reflect Jesus' light to the world. Matthew 5:16 tells us to shine our lights before others so that people may know and glorify our Father in heaven, and we got our kids thinking about how they can be doing this in their own lives.

We spent time in Term One looking at people who in the past had reflected Jesus using the book "Everyone a Child Should Know" by Clare Heath-Whyte and learning about some of our link missionaries. Term Two saw us wanting to be prepared for brightly shining our lights by understanding key truths in the Christian faith, where we worked through a question and answer each week from the Kids Catechism. Term Three had us gearing up for Connect by praying for people we wanted to invite along and trusting God as we talked to them because of the power the gospel has. The Colin Buchanan song "Go Go Go in the Gospel Power" helped remind us of this throughout the term. And finally, Term Four saw us thinking about the source of light that makes our disco ball shine – Jesus, and the many names and titles he has, particularly as we went into Christmas. It is safe to say, the disco ball theme was something kids and teachers LOVED and our prayer is that kids will continue to remember this and shine Jesus' light to all people!

The expansion we saw this year was remarkable! God has been continually faithful to our kids ministry, and especially this past year in growing it. We saw 10 new kids, across all age groups, begin to attend regularly – praise God! We also saw our leadership teams grow with the addition of more helpers and teachers. I was



particularly encouraged by seeing some of our youth girls, Grace, Phoebe and Anya, step up into these leadership roles. Each week, they helped with running discussion groups, craft and games, and built great relationships with kids. I am so thankful for these girls, and our wider kids church team, for their willingness to serve our God in this way!

In all things we did this year in Flames, we continued to seek God's wisdom and depended on him. Making changes, like moving to one service, and selecting material (mostly from external sources like KidsWise) enabled myself and us as a wider team to grow in our trust and reliance on God. He continues to provide and sustain us and as we look to this coming year, we aim to grow more in our dependence on him.

I am so thankful for this past year – grooving under a disco ball has been such a joy. But 2024 has some exciting changes in store, and I am keen to see the direction (under God's navigation) it will take.

Meg Trethewy
Kids Church Coordinator

Pray:

- Thank God for the reminder disco balls are that we all work together to reflect Jesus' light to the world
- Pray kids will take all opportunities to reflect Jesus' light in their lives and depend on God fully
- Praise God for growth and ask for more kids to know Jesus (if that is his will)
- Thank God for the leaders and helpers who serve in this ministry – and especially the youth girls this year
- Pray our team will continue to grow and be sustained by God
- Pray for Kids Church as we navigate changes in 2024 with new service times and age groups
- Pray for Meg, Kirsty and Sarah as we depend on God for how best to love and serve the kids our of Church



Media Team

In 2023, our awesome Media Team looked after the live streaming of Sunday services, clocking up over 63 hours of broadcasting! This was our third year of regular live streaming and the volunteers continues to serve with enthusiasm, creativity and faithfulness. We held two training sessions during the year and have started learning some new skills in photography and basic video editing, allowing us to share more content to our social media, website and YouTube pages. We added a new camera platform to the auditorium (with thanks to Hunter Maughan for building it!) and worked on our audio mixing skills.



Anecdotally, we hear of newcomers to church having viewed our services online before attending in person. The online services are also used by church members who need to miss a week of in-person attendance owing to ill health or travel. And of course there are those from our community who are unable to regularly attend in person, and it is a privilege to be able to share our services with them in this way.

On average, Sunday services are watched live online by approximately 15 - 20 households, and a similar number access the recordings afterwards. We always love seeing comments from people joining us online and it is a big encouragement to know who is tuning in. In 2023 we established a WhatsApp group to facilitate mid-week conversations and support for those who are unable to be at church in person. It has seen varying levels of engagement and is a helpful, although limited, point of contact with people from our church family who need to remain at home.

Alison McCann
Communications Coordinator

Pray:

- Continue to pray for people in our church family who need to remain at home on Sundays, that they will feel connected and cared for through this ministry.
- Please pray for our team as we adapt to two new church service times, with many from the team attending Night Church and continuing to serve at the Morning Service.
- Pray that we will be able to take advantage of the opportunities an online presence offers for connection and sharing the gospel.

Playgroup

During 2023 playgroup continued to run fortnightly on Tuesday mornings from 10am – 11:30am. The kids enjoyed a bible story, songs, craft/sensory activities, free play and morning tea while the adults enjoyed a cuppa and chat as well as playtime with their kids.



Alison McCann and I continued leading the group and Alison finished up serving at playgroup at the end of 2023. A big thank you to Alison for the care, creativity and encouragement she brought to all of us at playgroup over the past few years.

Praise points for 2023:

- God's kind and faithful provision for everything we have needed.
- Lovely morning teas provided by Robyn Rogers and Narelle Moore each fortnight.
- Some playgroup mums getting involved in leading the bible story, songs, craft and
- helping with set-up. Thank you to Kirsty, Tanya and Cat Roldan for helping out with
- this during 2023!

- Seeing the kids growing in faith and joy in God.
- Growth and deepening of friendships for kids and parents.
- Families from the community coming along regularly and expressing a sense of belonging within the group. Others visiting on and off throughout the year.
- Opportunities to share about Jesus with some families who don't usually go to church.
- Soft play equipment and the new floor have helped create a fun and welcoming environment.
- Fortnightly mum's bible study on non-playgroup weeks. This has allowed us to dig deeper into God's word and pray together. Thank you to Rosemary Williamson and Kathy Stringfellow for leading our group!

Thank you!!

Lizzie Pors
Ministry Team Leader



Pray:

- Pray for confidence for mums from playgroup (Tanya, Amy, Laura and Shermaine) who have kindly agreed to help out on a roster for leading the bible story, songs, craft and helping with set up during 2024.
- Pray for good health for kids and families so that they can keep attending during winter months when there is more sickness around with colds and flu.
- Pray for wisdom for programming that will allow the kids at playgroup to meaningfully engage with God's word and enjoy worshipping Him.
- Pray for opportunities to share about Jesus with community families and to express His love for them.
- Pray for growth in attendance at bible study and provision of ways for the kids to be entertained so we can focus without too many distractions.

English Conversation Group & ESL Bible Study Group

In these 'last days' between Jesus' time on earth, and when he returns in glory to be acknowledged by every person that he is the King of all people, God involves us in his plan to take the good news of Jesus to the ends of the earth. He wants all people to have the opportunity to become part of God's multicultural family. He will bring people from every language to worship before his throne in heaven.

One of the ways GPC has been joining God in this task since 2014 is through the English Conversation Group that meets each Friday morning. Some of those who participate have come to Australia to stay. They are looking for friendship, community and skills to better navigate their new society. What an opportunity for them to be introduced to a community of people who love Jesus, to feel loved and valued by that community, and to hear about Jesus. Our church has been blessed, so we can in turn be a blessing to others.

Some of those who participate may only stay in Australia for a few months or a year and then return to their home country. They go back, having experienced something of Jesus and his people, just as the crowd did at Pentecost. For many of them, there is little opportunity to hear about Jesus in their home country. Just as some of the Pentecost crowd took Jesus with them, our prayer is that some of those who have been part of our group take Jesus with them to places like Mongolia, Kazakhstan, China and Japan.



Some of those who participate already know Jesus and are excited to meet and talk about him. Other have never heard of Jesus or the Bible and are curious to find out. Others may come from a culturally Christian background but don't know God's saving grace. Still others have a different religious background, such as Islam or Hinduism. We find they are much more interested in talking about religious topics than most Australians! What an opportunity God has given us!

In 2023 our numbers continued to slowly grow after the closures of Covid. We had participants from China, Mexico, Brazil, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Argentina, Colombia, Peru, Ukraine, Russia, Taiwan, North and South Korea, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and the Philippines. Over the year 54 people participated.

Our team in 2023 was Jo Oakley, Nico and Marieka Vos, Dave Jackson, Soomin Lee, Mariki Nel, Geoff and Kerry Crocker, and Mark and Kathy Stringfellow.

Some of our topics focused around cultural markers such as New Year, Australia Day, Anzac Day, the Coronation, NAIDOC Week and the referendum. The festivals of Easter and Christmas provide a wonderful springboard. On other days we focused on learning about life in Australia through topics such as winter fire safety, bushfire preparedness and examining the \$10 note. (Do you know who is featured on it?) During the second half of 2023 we looked at an overview of the big story the Bible tells us, from Genesis to Revelation! We enjoyed some fun activities such as making Anzac biscuits, morning tea at Nico and Marieka's house, a bushwalk to the Bulgandry Aboriginal site and Christmas lunch.



The ESL Bible Study Group is one of our church Growth Groups, catering for those for whom English is a second language. During 2023 we dug into the Bible passages preached in church and grew in our love and understanding of God's plan. Hope Explored provided a solid understanding of the hope, peace and purpose that faith in Jesus gives us. We had 5-9 people in the group each week. Some of those who were curious about Jesus from the English Conversation Group joined us. We are building relationships as we share lunch sometimes and enjoy some social time together.

Joanne Oakley
Ministry Team Leader

Pray:

- Just like the disciples at Pentecost, our team are out of their depth trying to show love and share the message of Jesus across cultures. But God isn't. Pray we will have the passion that the disciples had to share Jesus and be sensitive to God's Spirit in the way we do it.
- Pray God will open the eyes of those who come to meet Jesus.
- Pray God will provide the people we need to be able to build relationships of trust and love.



Knowing Jesus. Loving People. Changing Lives

