



Thursday 28th September 2023

Dear brothers and sisters at Figtree,

Greetings in the risen and reigning Lord Jesus Christ. Firstly, we want to **thank you** for your generosity shown in funding our Mission Partners at our recent **World Missions Conference**. So far, we have raised over \$96,000 of our \$116,000 mission target. Your generosity, coupled with raising nearly \$120,000 for our **Gift Day** ministry and mission projects earlier this year, is cause for thanksgiving to God. We are humbled and delighted by the attitude of God's people at Figtree Anglican Church as we continue, by His enabling, to **"build a community of grace committed to making disciples of Jesus"**.

Thank you, also, to the nearly 80 people who joined in giving time and service to our **working bee** recently. We achieved much under God, and through the organisation of Stuart Milling, whom you will join me in thanking especially. The building and site God has entrusted to our Figtree family now looks suitably spruced up for the arrival of Spring! Now let's ask Him to fill it!

1) Commitment Series

Having concluded our September series, **"Flourishing as a Figtree Family"**, in October we shall be looking at Paul's Letter to the Philippians and exploring what it means to give **"All to Jesus"**. Please read ahead, pray in preparation for the series, and pray particularly for Robin as he seeks to orientate us, under God, for 2024. We shall be challenged in how to give "All to Jesus" from what He has given us in the areas of Excellence (in totality), Everything (tithes and treasures), Everyone (our testimonies), Engagement (talents) to impact Eternity (time) all for His glory.

One area we shall explore is how we give financially, not only as a **Living** legacy in our weekly and monthly tithes and offerings, but also in planning for **Retirement** with our superannuation gearing, and the importance of making an allowance for a **Homecoming** gift (in other words, the allocation of a bequest when we die to invest in future generations at Figtree).

In 2023, we offered for prayerful consideration, a budget uplift for the staffing component of \$110,000; around a 10 per cent increase in budget from 2022. By God's grace, so far in 2023 we are currently within 5 per cent of budget across eight months for offertory. If we lift our giving slightly, we can meet budget. Our Ministry Team is now rightly geared with permanence in contracts and parity in remuneration. Whilst this process has resulted in an uplift in staffing expenses for our current Ministry Team, it has brought us rightly into line with diocesan recommendations. We are grateful to the wardens and our treasurer for their careful, prayerful oversight in these financials.

2) Coming up in 2024

Next year promises to be an exciting time. **Mary Pickford**, our Children's Minister, will have completed a term serving in both our Kids Ministry and SRE. We hope to see the Lord raise up new interns for training, including a Ministry Intern for **Kids Ministry**. We had hoped to appoint a **Generations Minister** for our church in 2023. Whilst we have advertised twice, and Robin has approached many candidates, we wait and continue to pray for the Lord's provision and timing.

We need to let you know, given the shift in remuneration across the team, to cover the costs for a Generations Minister role we need to explore a budget uplift for offertory of about 8 per cent for 2024. As a guide, to meet this portion of the full budget compared to our 2023 budget would require a family or individual to pledge on average, \$5,200 a year (\$100 per week). This lift in giving would be on average around \$7.50 per week ... or one cup of coffee. Let us emphasise that this amount is an average. Some of you give above this amount, while others are not in a position to pledge as much. These figures, whilst not prescriptive, are provided in the hope they will help as you consider your own generous response.

In summary, we are asking you to consider **an 8 per cent increase in tithing for 2024**.



In 2024, our hope is to commit ourselves to ministry and mission projects in the month of March building towards **Gift Day**. This could include a tax-deductible project for SRE, faithful property stewardship and some fun ministry options! Some 2024 projects will sign off on former commitments, while others will pave the way for some bigger items for which we shall need to save in the years ahead.

Our site (both older and newer buildings) will be available in 2024 for both church and community use, as envisioned back in 1983 and again in 2004 when each building was opened and dedicated. During our Ministry Team calendar planning day earlier this month, we booked in events for our church family and for local schools, charities, and ministry and mission partners. Your Ministry Team and Parish Council will begin to explore site development options into the year ahead as we continue to seek to use this gift of God "for the church and community 24/7".

As we delight in being the one Parish of Figtree, we continue to seek the Lord's direction for how best to serve those in Mount Kembla and leverage the Soldiers' and Miners' Memorial Church site to connect with the needs of the local community. We can imagine a new service in the vicinity, but this will need prayerful, dedicated people and innovative development options to be explored.

Finally, wonderfully, on Sunday 1 October we shall "soft launch" a small Mandarin-speaking fellowship, born of a long-term LifeGroup onsite under Anny Cao and her team. We do so in the prayerful hope God will continue to bring more people under the gospel heard in their heart language.

3) Into the Future

At the General Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Sydney this month, those gathered embraced and endorsed the Archbishop Kanishka Raffel's **Purpose and Priorities** for the next five years. Grounded on 2 Corinthians 4:5, "*What we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake*" we now say, "***We're for Jesus***". Our continuing purpose as Sydney Anglicans is given to us by God in the Scriptures; that is to **make disciples**. So if "We're for Jesus", who is Jesus for? Arguably, we would contend "Jesus is for Everyone!" So, as the new Vision MAT (Ministry Area Team) prayerfully discerns our next steps at Figtree, aligned with the diocesan mission, but with a distinctive Figtree flavour, let's pray we may capture the wind of the Spirit in our collective sails as we prepare to set course and weigh anchor!

Along with the Vision MAT, our other Ministry Area Teams continue to meet, pray, dream, and make practical progress for good governance at Figtree. There are still opportunities for you to join these growing groups. Each member of your Parish Council is serving with a Ministry Team member on these teams alongside recruits and volunteers from across the church family. We have representatives from all services involved. If you feel the Lord may be calling you to participate and you would like to know more, just let Robin know and direct you to the appropriate team leader. We rejoice to see all at church with our God-given gifts engaged (1 Corinthians 12).

This month, the Ministry Team is preparing goals for the future in preparation for annual reviews. This is a time during which the wardens and Robin meet individually with the Ministry Team for review, celebration, thanksgiving, analysis, identifying development needs, and equipping. This is to ensure that every member of church may be engaged and spurred on to excellence to contribute in "equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). In November, the team will then spend two days away to plan and pray.

Finally, consider how Paul earlier in his letter to the Ephesians confirms his dependent prayer for God's grace to His church (Ephesians 1:17-23) and how dependent they and we are at Figtree on God's grace to be at work among us for spiritual growth. So let us pray in faith as we remember, ***We're for Jesus... and Jesus is for Everyone!***

Yours in His service,
FAC Lead Team and Parish Council 2023