

**St John the Evangelist**

**Gordon**

**Strategic Plan 2005**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Fr Keith Dalby arrived at St John the Evangelist Gordon in late 2004 to be the spiritual leader of the congregation. He found many strong features to the parish but there was no clear blueprint to the ongoing development of the congregation. To this end he appointed a small team to take responsibility for developing a strategic plan for the parish.

A process was developed which aimed at encouraging as many parishioners as possible to become involved in designing the future for St John's. The key components of the consultation process were a parishioner survey, a 'Healthy Churches Check' and a strategic planning day. These activities, along with discussions with members of the clergy and others, formed the basis of the vision and the strategic plan.

Our Vision is

Believing that we are called by God as his people in this place we are committed to being a vibrant community of people of all ages, worshipping God joyfully and being actively engaged with the broader community being faithful in ministry and stewardship of the Gospel.

Utilising the Healthy Churches Check methodology to make an assessment of the current 'health' of St John's, it was identified that St John's performed well against some of the seven marks of a healthy church but there were other areas that required further attention. Its strongest mark was "does a few things and does them well" and the area requiring most attention was "seeks to find out what God wants

Many ideas were generated through the surveys, workshops and reviews. These were documented and collated. It was found that seven goals (themes) emerged around which the ideas could be categorised.

The proposed seven goals are:-

1. Energise the spiritual core of St John's enabling individuals to feel God in their lives
2. Become a more open and inclusive church, strengthening the ties between parishioners and sustaining newcomers
3. Expand the appeal of St John's to build a more diverse parish of supportive communities
4. Build stronger links with the broader community
5. Promote St John's more effectively
6. Generate increased financial resources
7. Build our people resources

These goals are contained in the strategic plan, along with key activities to achieve the goals, and timeframes.

Successful implementation of the strategy will depend on high quality, motivated people with appropriate governance to guide us through the as yet undefined risks to success. A governance framework is proposed with the team reporting to Parish Council.

## **OUR VISION**

Believing that we are called by God as his people in this place we are committed to being a vibrant community of people of all ages, worshipping God joyfully and being actively engaged with the broader community being faithful in ministry and stewardship of the Gospel.

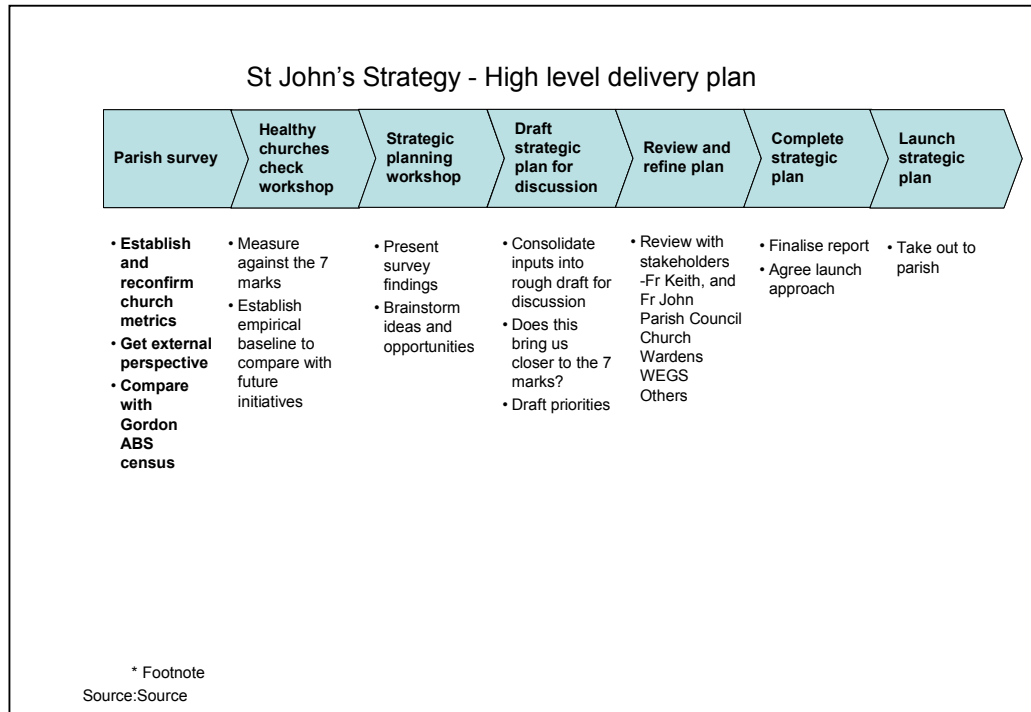
## **OUR MISSION**

Our mission, given to us by God, is to present all people of this parish mature in Christ on the day of the Lord achieved by growing in Christ through:

- Worship of God in word and sacrament
- Participation in small group ministry
- Music & Choir
- Proclamation of the Gospel
- Baptism and Discipleship
- Teaching and instruction of all in the Word of God
- Nurture of those within our care
- Seeking out the indifferent or those who have lapsed
- Reaching out into our community and being proactive within it to show forth the light of Christ
- Being good stewards of all that we have
- Ecumenical relations
- Being a welcoming community
- Involvement in the wider Anglican community
- Involvement in Synod

## OUR PROCESS

A specific team consisting of Belinda Howell (lead), Robertson Wright, Fr Keith Dalby, Kathryn Wotton, Jenna Joester and Tony Sattout were charged with the responsibility of managing the process and delivering the strategic plan to Parish Council. The stages of the process are broadly outlined below. The process commenced in March 2005 and the final report was delivered in November 2005.



### **1. Parish Survey**

The survey was delivered to over 300 people on the parish roll during April/May 2005. 123 responses were received in time for analysis, some others followed later. Thus the response rate was around 33%.

The survey provided a demographic profile of the respondents and a measure of their satisfaction with aspects of church life. It also allowed parishioners to communicate many ideas for the development of the parish.

Over half the respondents attend a service at St John's each week, with 75% in total attending at least once a month. Hence the findings largely represent the views of the committed congregation.

#### ***Demographics***

86% of the congregation is aged 50 or older, with over half of the congregation aged over 70.

24% live alone, whereas others live with a spouse, children or parents

#### **Relationship with St John's**

73% have been associated with St John's for more than 10 years. Only one respondent was new to the parish in the last year.

There is an almost even split between attendance at the 8am and 9.30am services

### **Role of the church**

86% agreed the role of the church in spiritual guidance, providing opportunities for spiritual growth and fellowship, providing young people with an understanding of Christianity and conducting baptisms, marriages and funerals.

Over 70% agreed with reaching out to bring others into the community of faith and providing social activities relevant to parishioners.

A much lower number, 43%, believed the church should actively engage with issues of social justice.

### **Satisfaction**

*Respondents were asked to give ratings from 5(highest) to 1(lowest).*

There is a high level of satisfaction with the **services**, 77% rating them 5 or 4.

The **clergy** scored highly, with 82% rating them 5 or 4. Scores for specifics were also high

- communication from parish/Rector: 72% at 5 or 4
- friendliness of clergy: 75% at 5 or 4
- availability of clergy: 65% at 5 or 4

**Interest groups** were less well regarded, only 43% scoring them 5 or 4

**Friendliness of other parishioners** rated 5 or 4 among 65% of respondents

**Office staff** rated highly, 77% scoring them 5 or 4 for friendliness, and 71% at this level for availability.

One respondent added in a score for **church music**, 3 for the choir and 5 for the organist.

### **Meeting needs of different age groups**

Many respondents didn't feel confident in answering this question with responses for each segment varying from a low of 59% up to 75%.

<b>Segment</b>	<b>% scoring 5 or 4</b>
Youth under 18	21%
Young adults	18%
Families	36%
People in the workforce	18%
Retirees	66%

The full survey and graphs of the key findings are in Appendix A.

Also in Appendix A is the qualitative input from the survey, the comments made by respondents, grouped by topic.

## 2. Healthy Churches Check

The Healthy Churches Check (HCC) is a guide for churches to identify their strengths and weaknesses and discover what action to take in order to develop the health of their church. It was developed within the Durham diocese in the UK and has been used by many congregations in Britain. (Warren, Robert, 'The Healthy Churches Handbook', Church House Publishing, 2004).

The HCC allows churches to assess themselves based on the seven marks of a healthy church. A summary of these marks and their characteristics is contained in Appendix B.

The HCC took place at St John's on Saturday 21 May 2005 with around 50 members of the congregation attending.

There was general agreement on the main strengths and weaknesses. The parish scored most highly on the marks: 'does a few things and does them well' and energized by faith'. Its lowest scores were for: 'seeks to find out what God wants', 'outward looking focus' and 'faces the costs of change and growth'.

Scores on 'operates as a community' and 'makes room for all' indicated a divergence of views amongst parishioners.

<b>Mark</b>	<b>Net score</b>
1. Energised by faith	10
2. Outward looking focus	-25
3. Seeks to find out what God wants	-33
4. Faces the cost of change and growth	-16
5. Operates as a community	4
6. Makes room for all	5
7. Does a few things and does them well	21

Extensive discussion about St John's performance on each of these marks generated many ideas for the parish. The action lists, and further details of the scoring of each mark, are included in Appendix B.

## 3. Strategic Planning Day

The Strategic Planning Day took place at St John's on Saturday 28 May, with around 50 members of the parish participating. The day built on the discussion from the Healthy Churches Check and considered directions for the parish under eight topics:

- Mission & Ministry – what sort of church we want to be
- Spiritual – services, Bible study, prayer
- Social – activities for parishioners
- Community – outreach, social engagement
- Communication – promotion, publicity
- Church fabric – preservation of buildings, cemetery, grounds
- Resources – people skills
- Financial – sources of income

The notes of ideas from the planning day are contained in Appendix C.

#### 4. Findings

From the parish survey, the Healthy Churches Check, the Strategic Planning Day and other discussions the following themes emerged.

- a. There is a **strong attachment to St John's** from most of the current congregation who feel considerable love and goodwill. Many parishioners have been associated with St John's for a long time and value its traditional style of worship. They recognize however that St John's has some deficiencies and generally they are keen to see these worked on.
- b. There is generally consensus on the role of the church: overwhelming agreement on the core spiritual purpose and activities and a significant majority believing that community outreach and social activities were part of its role.
- c. There is a **high level of satisfaction overall** with the current services and clergy. Both Fr Keith and Fr John are highly valued.

Parishioners value the sacramental worship at St John's and its traditional style – this is core to why they come to St John's. However there is some concern that we don't become too Catholic, that ritual doesn't obscure the message.

The 8am service has a clear identity and an appreciative congregation.

The identity of the 9.30am service is not so clear: is it an APBA service for adults, is it a family service, how much emphasis should be given to children? This is causing some dissatisfaction.

The 6pm service needs to be rethought.

Notwithstanding the high level of satisfaction there are a number of suggestions for ways to grow the spiritual dimension of St John's eg additional services, prayer groups etc.

- d. St John's currently **appeals to a limited demographic** (a significantly older skew) and it is recognized that this needs to change for the health of the parish. The main demographics not catered for:
  - Young people (teenagers and young adults)
  - Families with young children
  - Men and women in the workforce
  - Other ethnic backgrounds

Other groups we don't cater for sufficiently include the housebound, the disadvantaged and broader Gordon working community.

The small number of people of these demographics who do attend St John's find that social activities for them are limited. Many ideas have been put forward.

While it is recognized that St John's attracts, and caters best for retirees, there are nonetheless many suggestions for how activities for this group could be improved.

- e. We are **not as friendly and welcoming** as we could be. This was attributed to: "typical Anglican reserve", aspects of the services and existing groups may appear cliquish to non-members. There was a desire to see greater interaction between people who attend the different services.

- f. We need to have a **stronger place in the community**. We have an historic position on the North Shore which isn't reflected in our profile today. We should be more involved in the broader community through relationships with other churches and schools, more activities on site at St John's and through our pastoral care.
- g. We need to **promote ourselves more**.
- h. **Music is a strength we could develop further** for worship and use to generate community engagement eg concerts, recitals
- i. We should **leverage our history** and our precinct to create a source of income for the parish

## **STRATEGIC PLAN**

<b>1. Energise the spiritual core of St John's enabling individuals to feel God in their lives</b>		
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Activities and Actions</b>	<b>Target date</b>
<b>a) Define the positioning and content of each regular service and begin additional services responding to parishioner needs</b>	Develop the 9.30am service as a family service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Grow the Sunday school</li> <li>▪ Integrate baptisms</li> <li>▪ 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday to be unique service</li> </ul>	End 05
	Position 6pm as a contemporary service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consult with attendees to develop liturgy</li> <li>▪ Consider combining with other parishes for youth services</li> </ul>	Q1/06
	Expand the healing service	Q1/06
	Schedule selected new occasional services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evensong</li> <li>▪ All Souls</li> </ul>	Q1/06
	Liturgy for each service to be reviewed annually	End 05
	Recruitment and training plan for servers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop server training manual</li> <li>▪ Identify and train servers</li> </ul>	Q1/06
	Education program on the liturgy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Include in sermons, pew sheet and Parish Review</li> <li>▪ Workshops on prayer and liturgy</li> </ul>	End 05
<b>b) Create more opportunities for spiritual growth</b>	Increase number of prayer and Bible study groups	Q2/06
	Occasional lectures/courses/seminars eg 'how to pray', 'finding faith'	Q1/06
	Parish Retreat	End 07
	Parish Quiet Day	End 06
<b>c) Leverage our musical capabilities to attract worshippers and deepen the spiritual experience</b>	Promote our musical director and support her in new initiatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Devise strategy and annual programme</li> </ul>	Q1/06
	Expand the choral component of service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop a junior choir</li> <li>▪ Invite visiting choirs</li> <li>▪ Recruit more choristers</li> </ul>	Q1/06
<b>2. Become a more open and inclusive church, strengthening the ties between parishioners and sustaining newcomers</b>		
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Activities and Actions</b>	<b>Target date</b>
<b>a) Hold activities/initiatives which allow the different congregations to get to know each other</b>	Devise annual plan of additional social and spiritual activities	End 05

<b>b) Develop a visitor welcoming process that respects the different needs of different personalities</b>	Map the process and roles required	End 06
	Identify and train 'welcomers'	End 06

**3. Expand the appeal of St John's to build a more diverse parish of supportive communities**

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Activities and Actions</b>	<b>Target date</b>
<b>a) Develop a plan to build teenage participation, ensuring focus is on growing disciples for Christ</b>	Plan/ publicise G-force activities for each term Review as part of plan the role of sport to attract youth.	Q1/06
	Have periodic combined youth activities with neighbouring churches eg St Swithun's, St Matthew's, Gordon Uniting	Q2/06
	Nurture existing G-force participants as leaders of the future and the nucleus of a young adults group	ongoing
<b>b) Develop a plan to build young adults participation</b>	Regular social events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Find a core group to initiate activities</li> <li>▪ Build on monthly Devotion at St James's Turramurra</li> <li>▪ Have periodic combined activities with local churches</li> </ul>	Q3/06
	Develop and promote Bible study activities	Q2/06
<b>c) Encourage families with young children to participate in church life</b>	Make the church service more family-friendly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consult with parents for ideas</li> <li>▪ Promote the crèche</li> <li>▪ Create an activity area for younger children during services</li> <li>▪ Hold a children's service monthly at 9.30 (?)</li> </ul>	End 06
	Consolidate program of family friendly activity incorporating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consultation with parents</li> <li>▪ Annual sports day &amp; picnic at Bicentennial Park</li> <li>▪ Monthly barbecues at the church after 9.30 service</li> <li>▪ Parish dinners with child-friendly food and entertainment</li> <li>▪ Church camp</li> </ul>	End 06
	Provide babysitting/childminding (at home or in central location) to allow parents to have social activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Dinners eg at Greengate</li> <li>▪ Cinema nights</li> </ul>	Q2/07
<b>d) Build fellowship opportunities for people in the workforce</b>	Identify current parishioners in the workforce, availability and interests	Q1/06
	Set up informal day/evening meetings as basis for planning other activities	Q3/06

	Aim to provide support in specific areas such as work issues; work/life balance; depression, stress and work related health issues; dealing with family issues etc <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Formal seminars/talks</li> <li>▪ Personal/group support</li> <li>▪ Assistance in obtaining professional advice</li> </ul>	Q3/06
<b>e) Make St John's more appealing for different ethnic groups</b>	Provide community services at St John's to attract other ethnic groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Analyse gaps not filled by other churches</li> </ul>	Q1/07
<b>f) Maintain and expand activities for the retiree age group</b>	Develop plan	End 06

<b>4. Build stronger links with the broader community</b>		
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Activities and Actions</b>	<b>Target date</b>
<b>a) Use our premises to hold community oriented activities</b>	Develop plan of musical activities such as concerts, recitals	Q1/06
	Develop plan of educational activities	Q1/07
	Develop community based professional services eg: legal support, counselling etc	End 07
<b>b) Expand our pastoral care capabilities</b>	Develop additional nursing home services	Q1/06
	Create a team of people to support frail elderly parishioners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Occasional transport</li> <li>▪ Phone support</li> </ul> Map parishioners' locations to develop coherent pastoral visiting plan and appoint local pastoral visitors	End 06
<b>c) Leverage our history to connect with the community and ensure our church fabric is maintained</b>	Develop resource material about the church and graveyard	Q2/06
	Establish a Heritage Trust Fund to receive donations/fundraising proceeds	Q2/06
	Launch the St John's Heritage Appeal targeted at the broader Ku-ring-gai community	Q4/06
	Develop a series of promotional and fundraising events	Q4/06

<b>5. Promote St John's more effectively</b>		
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Activities and Actions</b>	<b>Target date</b>
<b>a) Upgrade our printed communications</b>	Develop a visual identity for St John's	Q1/06
	Develop a promotional brochure	Q1/06
	Upgrade the Parish Review	Q2/06
	Develop a Welcome Pack for new parishioners	Q2/06
<b>b) Make better use of our website</b>	Review site architecture and content	Q1/06
	Ensure site is search-engine optimized	Q2/06

	Build content as a resource for both parishioners and history buffs	Q4/06
	Build a robust process for updating the site	Q1/06
<b>c) Develop a media relations strategy</b>	Issue regular press releases/ invitations to North Shore Times, FM103.2 etc	Q2/06
	Place advertisements in North Shore Times for special services	
<b>d) Build a contact strategy with local MPs, councillors etc</b>		End 05
<b>e) Further develop links with Ku-ring-gai Historical Society, Friends of Tulkiyan, National Trust</b>		End 06
<b>f) Develop variety of content for main signboard</b>	Renew older sign board	Q2/06

<b>6. Generate increased financial resources</b>		
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Activities and Actions</b>	<b>Target date</b>
<b>a) Build the congregation</b>	Refer plans above	
<b>b) Review commercial arrangements</b>	Review offertory system	Q1/06
<b>c) Establish Heritage Trust Fund</b>	Refer plans above	

<b>7. Build our people resources</b>		
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Activities and Actions</b>	<b>Target date</b>
<b>a) Expand the number of clergy</b>	Appoint additional assistant priest	End 06
<b>b) Appoint a part-time youth worker</b>		Q1/06
<b>c) Appoint a publicity officer</b>		Q1/06
<b>d) Identify the skills and experience within the parish</b>	Audit skills, experience and interests of parishioners	End 05
	Develop our database capabilities to manage this effectively	Q1/06
<b>e) Encourage leadership</b>	Develop and implement leadership training program, materials and mentoring for leadership roles in church	Q1/06

## **CURRENT INITIATIVES**

In order to make an informed assessment of future focus it is important to understand what initiatives are currently undertaken within the Parish. Below is a partial list of the current activities undertaken by the parish. Clearly the parish is very active (evidence for the seventh mark “does a few things and does them well”). Care should be taken to ensure that the good work continues but that room can be made for the new goals.

### Children’s Ministry:

#### Sunday School

- Toddler Group
- Beginning School Group
- First Communion Group
- Confirmation Group

Religious Instruction to students of Gordon East Public School

### Spring Fair

Fund Raising, fun community activity and opportunity to work together to achieve a common goal

### Car Raffle

Fund raising opportunity for the parish

### St John’s Choir

Expand our worship experiences and praise God in song as well as word

### St John’s Church Foundation Trust

Trust established to receive donations and bequests of gifts such as money, shares or real estate. The capital is invested with income distributed from time to time to support parish initiatives and upkeep. Priority determined and managed by Parish Council.

### Women’s Evening Group

Active group in fund raising and craft activities as well as fellowship and an opportunity to deepen relationships

### Caritas

To provide fellowship opportunities for young and working mothers

### OP Shop

Community outreach together with providing the opportunity for supporting missionaries and the parish. Spin off benefits include substantial income, and recycling goods to those that can use them

### Men’s Fellowship Group

The men meet to discuss current topics as well as past experience. An opportunity to support each other and build relationships

### Garden Group

Care for our beautiful church grounds

### Women’s Association

To provide fellowship opportunity for women.

Sidesmen & Servers

Assist in the celebration of our Sunday services

G Force

Fellowship for our young teenage population. An opportunity to build Christian friendships and develop a personal understanding of the bible

Bible Study

An opportunity to explore and expand our understanding of the bible and its application to our lives in the modern world

Cemetery Working Group

Care for our historic and beautiful Cemetery

Pastoral Care Group

Attend to the pastoral needs of our elderly community unable to join us at our Sunday Services

Flower guild

Ensure our church is decorated with beautiful flowers for Sunday Services

Parish Office Team

Ensure the successful administration of Church Affairs

Prayer Groups & Prayer Fellowship

To expand our prayerfulness as individuals and as a parish and offer prayer for those in need

Synod Representation

Represent the interests of St John's at Synod

Ecumenical Representation

To work with local churches in the expansion of God's work

## **GOVERNANCE OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN**

This plan must be a living, breathing tool for it to be successful and therefore needs to be owned and nurtured. The following is proposed –

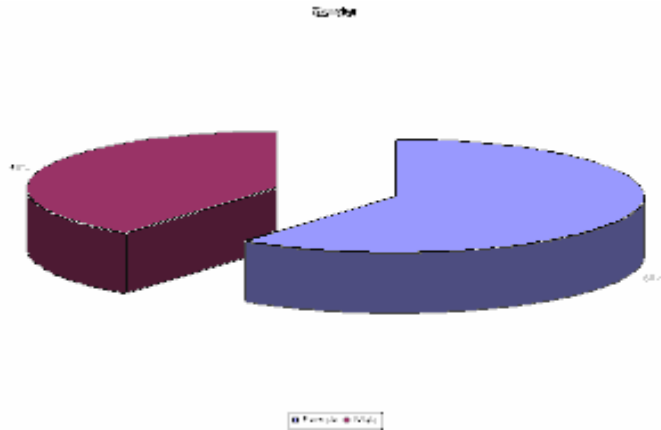
<b>Review strategy</b>	Once every 2 years and at a change of rector (next planned review 2007)
<b>Ownership of strategy</b>	Belinda Howell and Tony Sattout
<b>Reporting to</b>	Parish Council
<b>Frequency</b>	Midyear review to Parish Council and detailed annual report
<b>Form of update / report</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Strategy implementation and summary report</li><li>▪ Status of each initiative against plan</li><li>▪ Challenges and opportunities with action plans</li><li>▪ Recommended next steps for approval</li></ul>

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion development of the strategic plan has been a rewarding project for those involved in its design and implementation. The plan very much reflects the input received from those parishioners who participated, guided by the Rector, Fr Keith Dalby. The plan reflects where St John's needs to go in order to fulfil the vision that has been chosen. It should be recognised however that the plan is an ambitious one, and very dependent on members of the parish being prepared to take personal responsibility for its implementation. If it is left solely to the Rector, or to members of the strategic planning team, the results will be limited

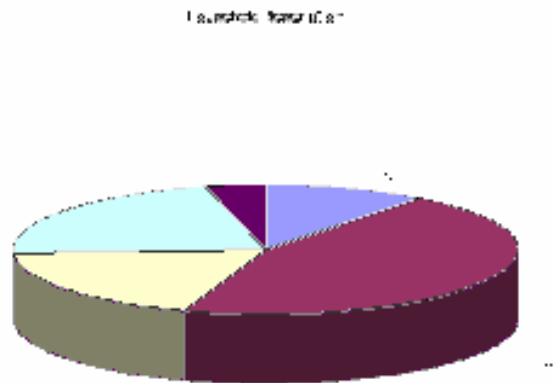
## There were 120 Respondents

- This approximately reflects the Gordon census demographics of 54% female, 46% male
- There are approx 6000 residents in the census
  - 77% speak English only
  - 12% Chinese population
  - 20% school age
- There are no other group of statistical significances



Note Spouse, no children, at home. Consistent with our parish mature age distribution

1. Those that are partnered – greatly exceed the singles
2. Should the services we provide be in proportion with the demographics? (Receive mode)
3. Should the services we provide utilize the capacity and wisdom we have abundance of? (Give mode)

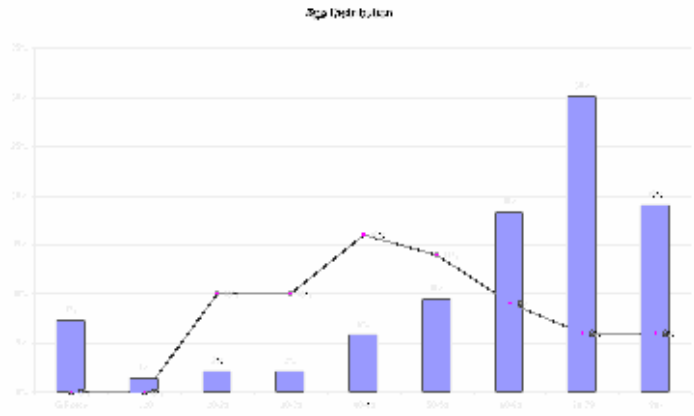


Bars represent survey participants

Line graph represents Gordon demographics

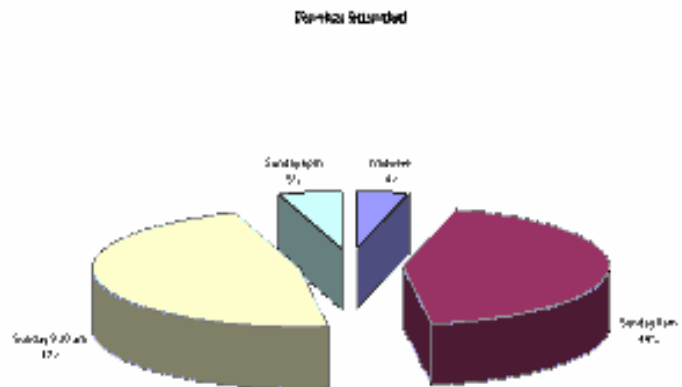
Observations

1. Lack of representation below 60 years of age (under representation compared to Gordon census)
2. We have a strong group above 60 years (exceeds Gordon census)
3. This represents a lot of wisdom to share
4. Does this give an indication of our ministry focus?
5. Should we cater for the mature or utilize the mature to cater for under represented areas?

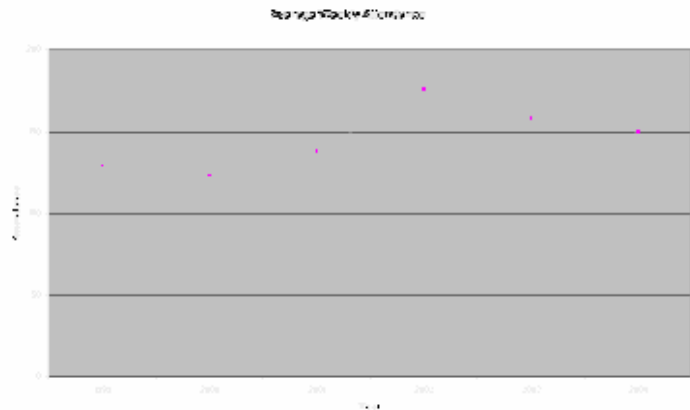


Clearly have 2 very strong services

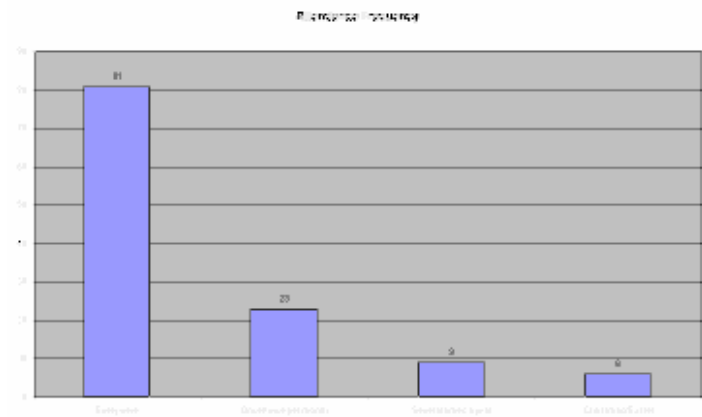
1. Sunday 6pm is a strong service for other parishes yet for St John's it is not appealing
2. The attendance records suggest that Sunday 6pm had the potential but needs to be nurtured



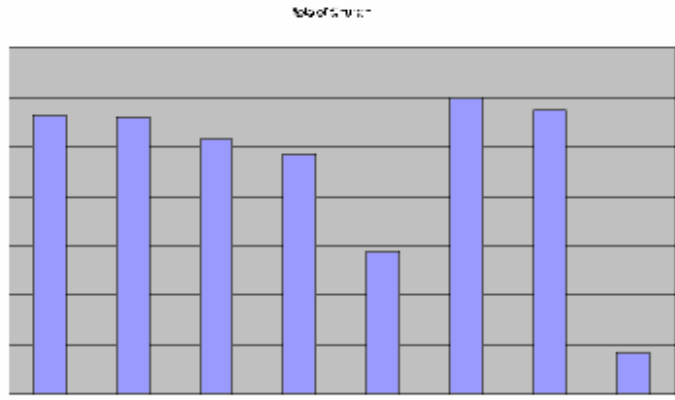
1. Moderate trend upwards.
2. 2002 spiked upwards with the introduction of Sunday evening service
3. 33% of Gordon claim to be Anglican
4. 65% of Gordon claim to be Christian
5. Easter / Christmas attendance 550+



1. Sample is skewed to regular attendees. Very healthy commitment by those that completed the survey
2. Those that come regularly are satisfied with the service attended
3. Do not have a good picture of those that are not regulars



1. All scored strongly except social justice?



Consistent profile for not for profit organisation

