



Support us by joining the
REGULAR CHURCH CONTRIBUTION PROGRAM

The Blessing of Giving

As the shutdown of churches began in March last year, I found myself thinking, “This COVID-19 Pandemic has come at the worst time”. But I cannot imagine that there will be or has ever been a good time for a pandemic. So, after my initial feelings of frustration and then wallowing I’m now getting on with the things that need to get done. This pandemic as well as the assignment of Fr Tuyen to Vietnam and the isolation of Fr Peter made me rethink and prioritise our ministries.

I don’t need to tell you that our parish, even before the pandemic, was already operating on a shoestring budget. With church buildings closed for 8 weeks last year and the offering plate inaccessible, we were operating in the negative. We have no choice but to suspend our monthly loan repayment. The funds we received as part of the government assistance— the stimulus package and Jobkeeper for our staff—were heaven-sent. “Get them giving online,” says every article I have read on church fund development. While this might work for some, many in our parish, for a variety of reasons, do not give in this way. So, what else can we do to encourage giving - to encourage stewardship for all - during the time of a pandemic?

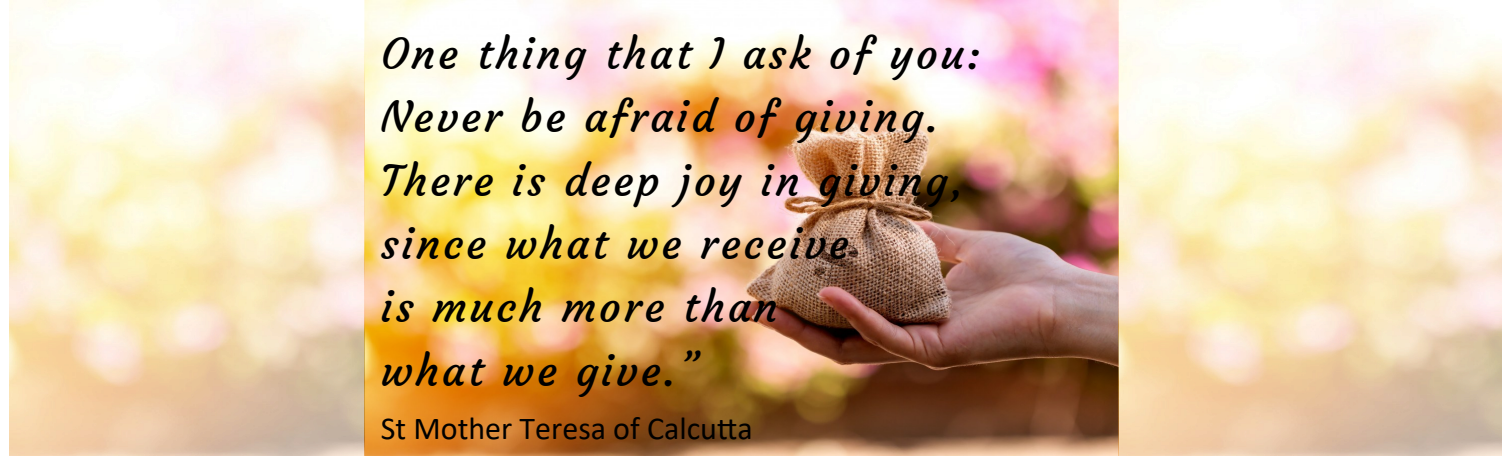
The goal of stewardship is not more giving - it’s the development of a spirit of gratitude and generosity. Giving is not about how much money you have, it’s about how much faith you have. With the scenario we are in, it is high time that all of us young and old reflect on the true meaning of stewardship.

We are all part of God’s mission to care for the world by using all the gifts God has given us. As our response to his love and generosity, we cheerfully give back to God in ways that are meaningful and significant. We participate in God’s call to be stewards of all our resources and to be the hands and feet of Christ Jesus.

What does this practically mean during the COVID-19 Pandemic? We recognise that some of our parishioners find themselves without income, or reduced wages, or an unpredictable future due to the pandemic. As a matter of fact, St Clair and Erskine have felt the financial burden of Coronavirus in Western Sydney. But it is not the time for panic and anxious thoughts of where resources will come from to not only sustain the ministries of our parish. Truly, this is all in God’s hands. God’s got this.

*“Each of you
should give what
you have
decided in your
heart to give,
not reluctantly
or under
compulsion, for
God loves a
cheerful giver .”*

2 Corinthians 9,7



*One thing that I ask of you:
Never be afraid of giving.
There is deep joy in giving,
since what we receive
is much more than
what we give.”*

St Mother Teresa of Calcutta

I would like to thank the Finance Committee, the Grants Team and the newly created Fundraising Committee of our parish for their hardwork in these difficult times. The Finance Committee has been working hard to use our money wisely and also the Grants Team who sought numerous government grants to further the parish's important works. Most of all, I would like to thank everyone who heeded our call last year to give electronically—Direct Debit or by using our Tap & Go machines.

This year we observe the Year of St Joseph. It is time for us to ask for his intercession, as Protector of the Augustinians and Patron of the Universal Church. We ask him to watch over us as carefully as he watched over Jesus.

As we commence this new year, we have turned our attention to budgeting and planning for the coming 12 months, and you are a huge part of this. There are many ways that you can help enable the liturgical, sacramental, pastoral and charitable works of Holy Spirit Parish. One way is to contribute via a **Regular Parish Contribution** (also known as *Planned Giving*) via the two collections at Sunday Mass.

The finances of the Parish depend on the financial contribution of all the members of the Parish, according to what they can afford. This is our only source of income. Unfortunately, our parish has no other income generating assets.

This week we promote the Regular Parish Contribution program. I hope all of you will take up the challenge and be active members of this wonderful community through prayer, good deeds and financial support. I am extremely grateful for your generosity in supporting the parish in so many ways.

Regular Parish Contributions (also known as Planned Giving) are the backbone to our financial security. Through these Regular Contributions you are supporting our Augustinian priests (1st Collection) and the maintenance of the parish buildings (including electricity and insurance), administration of the parish,

support of ministries exercised for the parish and for the remuneration of staff (2nd Collection).

As we move more and more into a cashless society, some parishioners prefer to contribute to the Parish Regular Contribution Program **electronically**. If you are not already part of this, we encourage you to join; if you are an existing contributor we encourage the transition to **electronic giving** - the reason being that the provision of envelopes costs a significant amount of money - money that we know could be used more effectively to extend the church's ministry and works.

In the midst of these current difficult circumstances, we kindly ask you to re-evaluate your current Regular Contribution and at the same time consider enrolling as an electronic giver to ensure financial survival and future growth of our parish. You can nominate to provide a regular electronic contribution for one or both collections. Attached in this letter is the Regular Church Contribution form. Once completed, please email it to accounts@holyspiritstclair.com.au or mail it to the Parish Office.

In addition to regular giving to the parish, parishioners when able, can also provide one off gifts in the form of Donations or Bequests. A gift in your will, no matter how big or small is one way you can personally advance the work of the Parish.

We can never take our parish for granted, and this campaign enables us all to reflect on how much our parish community means to us, and on how much we wish to invest in its future.

This is your church and your parish—we depend on your financial support to grow and nourish our parishioners.

May God bless you always.

Fr Michael Belonio, OSA
Parish Priest

February 2021

SUCCESSFUL GRANT APPLICATIONS IN 2020

\$22,000	Refurbishment of parish kitchens, sacristy and storage room
\$5,000	Purchase of office laptop and furniture
\$62,218	Installation of automated carpark gate, CCTV, solar-powered security lights and security door
\$28,667	Upgrade of the Church's audio and video systems, installation of hearing loop

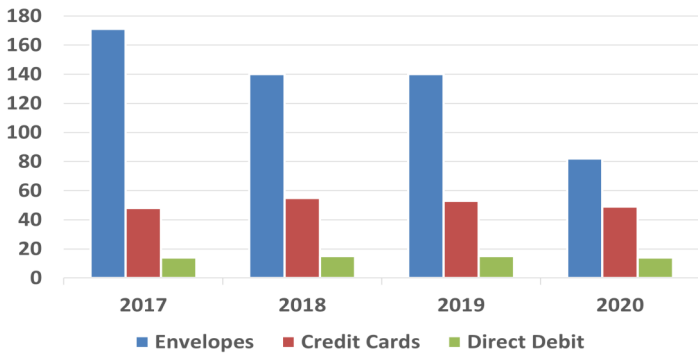
WHAT ARE THE GRAPHS BELOW SAYING:

- ◇ Total number of regular givers is down
- ◇ Average weekly planned giving envelopes down
- ◇ Covid-19 Government support ending in March 2021 (We received a total of \$ 66,075 in 2020)
- ◇ Only 43% Planned Givers do so electronically (Direct Debit and Credit Card)

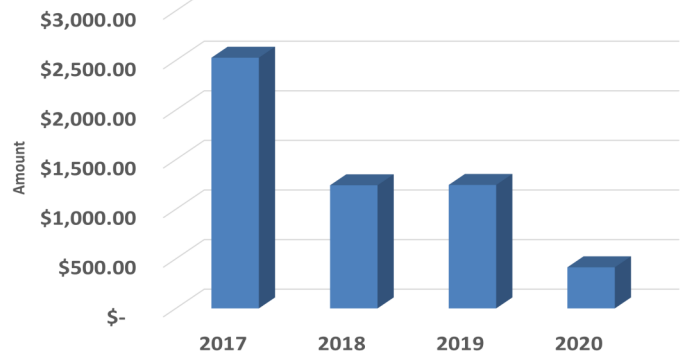
WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU?

- ◇ We are appealing for your support to replace the shortfall

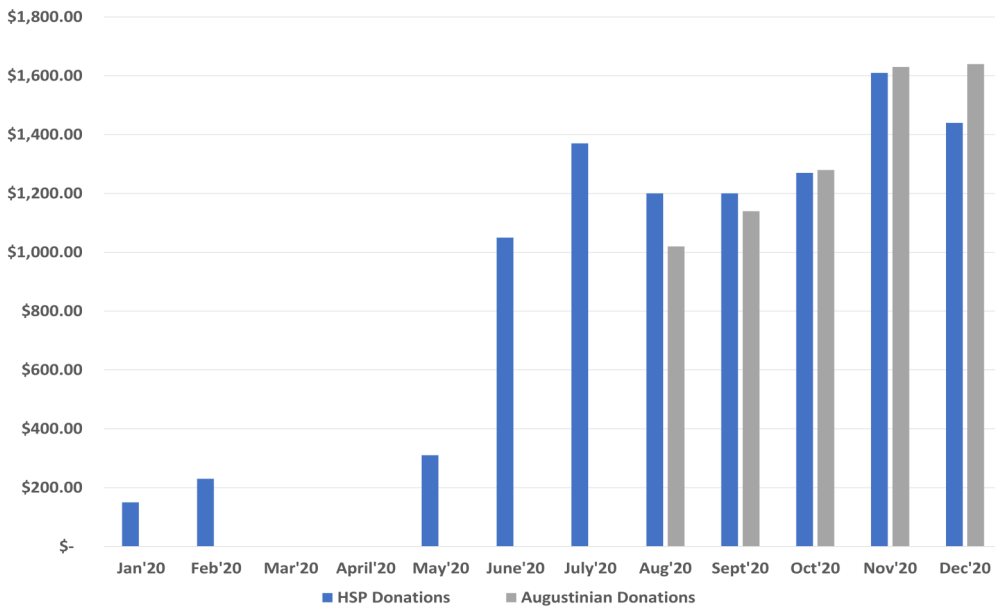
Number of Parishioners who are in the Regular Church Contribution



Average Weekly Planned Envelopes Given January 2017 to December 2020



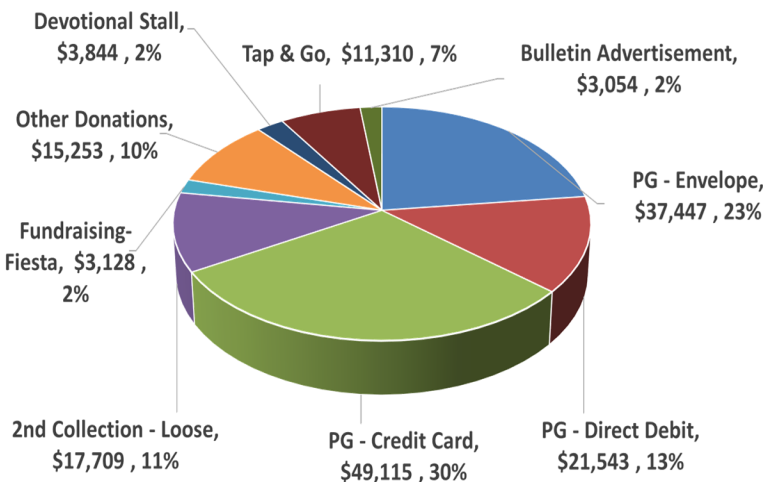
Tap & Go Summary January to December 2020



HOW CAN YOU HELP?

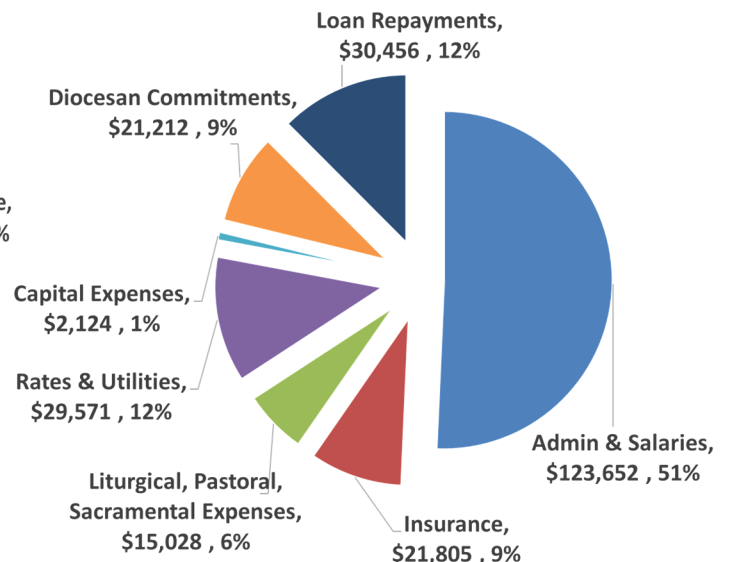
- ⇒ Join as a regular contributor
- ⇒ Increase your current contribution
- ⇒ Use the Tap & Go Machines
- ⇒ Sponsor maintenance and development projects
- ⇒ Buy your devotional gifts from our piety stall
- ⇒ Consider our Parish in your will
- ⇒ Move from Planned Giving Envelopes to Electronic contributions

INCOME FROM JAN - DEC 2020



TOTAL INCOME: \$ 162,403

EXPENDITURE FROM JAN - DEC 2020



TOTAL EXPENDITURE: \$ 243,848

N.B.: Income does not include Jobkeeper and Gov't Stimulus

“Each one of you has received a special grace, so, like good stewards responsible for these varied graces of God, put it at the service of others.”

1 Peter 4.10



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why is the Planned Giving Program Important?

Just like a household, or a business, the Parish has many expenses to meet throughout the year. It must cover payments for items such as insurance, repairs, electricity, telephones, rates, maintenance and hygiene. In 2021, our insurance bill increased to **\$22,549** – covering more than 6 weeks of our mass collection! And given that our Parish Centre is almost 40 years old, the costs for repairs and maintenance are also substantial.

Like many Parishes, we are also servicing a loan when we had the church building renovated in early 2000. It is amounting to \$30,456 per annum commitment.

With the insurance and loan repayments alone, that already equals 3 months of our current mass collection.

The Planned Giving Program, therefore, is essential as it allows the Parish to budget, and with some certainty know that it can pay, for expenses that fall due during the year. It also enables the Parish to plan for, and prioritise, specific projects, and highlight where expenditure may need to be deferred or further fundraising undertaken (for example, in the case of the Solar Panels Project).

Is There an Immediate Need to Boost the Program?

The short answer is yes!

For the year 2020, our Parish's recurring expenses were \$187,444 (76% of total expenditures - *see page 3 for details*). With cost increases, the uncertainty of 'loose second collections' and the cessation of government stimulus, we estimate an additional \$80,000 income would be required per year. If all current

givers increase their pledge by approximately 10% and give electronically, then we could achieve some of our targets for the coming years.

Further, to cater for the growing number of repairs and maintenance projects and to provide pastoral support for the expanding needs of our Parish community an increase in the number of participants in the Regular Parish Contribution Program is needed.

Do We Have Any Other Sources of Income?

We do not have any other sources of income apart from the weekly collections. Fortunately, we have been successful in our grant applications last year, but these cannot be used for the current operating expenses.

Is It Just About the Money?

Most definitely no.

Our Parish exists to support and form its community, and to evangelise the Word of God. We are extremely fortunate and grateful for the many, many hours of work performed by scores of volunteers – from cleaners to catechists, from collectors to counters, from electrical works to repairs and maintenance works. Nonetheless the reality is that funds are still required to support their work, the work of your Parish staff, and the work of your Priests. This need increases annually.

Who could/should make a contribution?

- Are you new to our Parish community? Have you just started attending mass again recently or more regularly? Do you visit our parish regularly?
- Do you just contribute your loose coins on the plate when you are at

mass? Would you like to consider a more regular contribution?

- Have you finished school or uni and recently begun working, and now feel able to contribute even if only in a small way?
- Do you have children at our Parish Schools, and wish to help support the Parish better?
- Are you a current envelope contributor? We especially appreciate your continued support and ask if you can consider increasing your pledge or give electronically?

Can My Contributions be Direct Debited from my Bank Account?

Yes.

The Diocese allows for direct debits from an individual's bank account. This gives the added benefit of allowing a parishioner to tie their contributions in with pay-days if that is more suitable. It would assist the Parish greatly if many more Parishioners were able to take up this service, given what has been highlighted in this pamphlet.

How does it work?

If you are interested, please complete the attached form or visit our parish website.

Frequency can be weekly, fortnightly or monthly on a date of your choice.

Do you have any questions?

Contact Mila Llamas
(Parish Accounts Manager)
A: PO Box 103 St Clair 2759 NSW
E: accounts@holyspiritstclair.com.au
P: (02) 9670 8222

Thank you for your support!