

# Cross & Keys

## Christmas 2025 – Newsletter of Saint Peter's Church



### St Peter's Christmas Services

#### Christmas Eve

6pm – 8.30pm – 11.30pm

#### Christmas Day

8.30am

### Christmas: God in the Middle of Things

Christmas arrives every year with its familiar mixture of beauty and busyness. For some, it is a season of reunion and joy; for others, it carries the ache of absence or the strain of expectation. Yet into all of this — the polished and the imperfect, the joyful and the messy — Christmas speaks a simple, astonishing truth:

#### God comes to be with us.

Not above us.

Not far from us.

Not waiting for us to be organised, serene, or spiritually impressive.

But *with us* — right in the middle of the real lives we live.



**Anglican**  
Church  
Saint Peter's East Maitland

The Anglican Parish of East Maitland  
**Saint Peter's Church**  
 49 William Street East Maitland

Serving the Communities of Ashtonfield,  
 East Maitland, Four Mile Creek, Louth Park, Metford, Pitnacree, Tenambit and the Hunter Region

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When Jesus is born in Bethlehem, nothing is ideal. The holy family are away from home, the accommodation is inadequate, the birth takes place among animals, and the first visitors are night-shift shepherds who smell of their work. Yet this is exactly where God chooses to enter the world.

And perhaps that is the most comforting message Christmas offers: that God is not waiting for the perfect moment or the perfect version of us. He comes into the world as it is, and into our hearts as they are — uncertain, cluttered, hopeful, weary, grateful.

**The light shines in the darkness**, St John tells us, *and the darkness did not overcome it*. That is the promise of Christmas. Not that darkness disappears instantly, but that it cannot win. Not that our struggles vanish, but that God is in them with us. Not that the world is suddenly fixed, but that the One who can heal it has moved into the neighbourhood.

This Christmas, may we each find a still moment to receive that gift again.

A moment of peace amid noise.

A moment of gratitude amid pressure.

A moment to say, "Lord, you are here — and that is enough."

And may the Christ-child, who comes in gentleness and humility, bless you with hope that grows quietly, joy that strengthens you, and love that surrounds you and those you hold dear.

**A holy and joyful Christmas to all.**



# New Beginnings

**W**elcoming Fr Andrew to Our Parish.

Every new beginning carries both excitement and uncertainty. It asks us to let go of what is familiar, to open our hearts to the unknown, and to trust that God is already at work in what lies ahead. In our parish, we are about to experience one of those sacred moments of renewal — the arrival of our new priest, Fr Andrew.

The coming of a new pastor is more than a change of leadership; it is a moment of grace. It reminds us that the life of the Church is always moving forward, guided by the Holy Spirit. Just as the seasons turn and new growth appears, so too the Spirit brings new gifts, new energy, and new perspectives to the community of faith.

Fr Andrew brings with him his own story, his own way of praying, preaching, and leading. Yet the heart of his ministry, like that of every priest, is to serve Christ and his people — to break open the Word of God, to celebrate the sacraments, and to walk with us in faith and love.

As parishioners, our call is to welcome him with openness and generosity, to share our stories, our joys, and our hopes, and to work together in building up the Body of Christ in this place.

Transitions like this can stir many emotions. We may feel gratitude for what has been, and perhaps some sadness at what we leave behind. That is natural — it is part of being a community that loves deeply. But faith invites us to see beyond the immediate change, to the larger story of God's faithfulness that runs through every season of our parish life.

As we prepare to welcome Fr Andrew, let us pray for him: that he may find joy in his ministry here, strength in our friendship, and courage in God's call. And let us pray for one another: that we may be renewed in our shared mission to love and serve as Christ loved and served.

New beginnings are never just about starting over; they are about growing deeper. May this new chapter in our parish life, with Fr Andrew among us, be a time of grace, renewal, and hope — a reminder that in Christ, all things are made new.

And let's not forget that Fr Andrew and his family are also undertaking a huge transition in their lives. Those who know Monica and the girls have already taken them into their hearts. Together they are a wonderful family and we will welcome them to their new home and new parish community.

### Ten Rules for Welcoming a New Priest

1. **Pray First, Always.**

*Begin and sustain everything with prayer — for your priest, for one another, and for the mission you share in Christ.*

2. **Offer Hospitality, Not Expectations.**

*Welcome your priest as a person, not as a replacement or a fix. Every priest brings unique gifts — receive them with openness. Expect and be ready to welcome change.*

3. **Be Patient.**

*Transitions take time. It takes months to learn names, and longer to know a community the way you do. Give your priest the grace to grow into the role.*

4. **Share Your Parish Story.**

*Help your priest understand the parish's history, traditions, and people — not just the structures, but the spirit that makes your community alive.*

5. **Communicate.**

*Don't assume your priest "just knows." If someone needs care, make sure that you pass this on. If you have a need speak up.*

6. **Encourage.**

*Your positive encouragement will help new life and leadership emerge.*

7. **Be Involved.**

*Your priest isn't here to do the work of the Church alone. Be an active disciple and partner in ministry.*

8. **Respect Boundaries and Humanity.**

*Remember your priest is a person — with limits, needs, and a life beyond the parish. Encourage healthy rest and friendships.*

9. **Give his family privacy**

*Though they might live on the Church campus, they need and deserve to treat the Rectory and its grounds as their private home and their private space.*

10. **Keep Christ at the Centre.**

*The priest is here to serve Christ's mission, not his own — and so are you. Let everything you do together lead back to Him.*

# ST PETER'S

## Christmas Carols

in the Church

Friday, 12th December, St Peter's hosted its annual Christmas Carols, with this year's festivities taking place inside the Church. The event was a wonderful opportunity for the community to come together and share in the spirit and joy of Christmas. The turnout was impressive, with the Church nearly filled to capacity as community members, friends, families, and parishioners gathered for the special night.



Kirsten Busby

The musical programme was a highlight, featuring the ever-popular Three Tenors, who captivated the audience throughout the evening. The Carols event spanned two and a half hours, during which everyone joined in singing, supported by the sublime Maitland City Choir, St Peter's organist and Musical Coordinator Thomas Barnes, and the exceptional soprano Kirsten Busby. Their performances made the night truly memorable.

A special mention also goes to the production team from Equip MultiMedia, who did an outstanding job with the sound and lighting. Their expertise showcased the Church's impressive acoustics and brought out the beauty of the historic building which stood radiant for the occasion. St Peter's, renowned as a significant and historical icon of the area, provided the perfect backdrop for this much-anticipated event.

The evening was graciously hosted by Fr Stephen, who welcomed everyone by offering a thoughtful reflection on the meaning of Christmas.



The Three Tenors



Hosted by Fr Stephen Williams





Throughout the night, the BBQ and drinks stalls remained busy as guests enjoyed sausages and refreshments, ensuring they were energised to continue their sing-along. A special highlight for the younger guests was a surprise visit from Santa, who delighted the children by handing out lollies with that trademark 'ho-ho-ho'.



Maitland City Choir



The BBQ gets a ride to The Church

After more community singing and a rousing finale of 'Sweet Caroline' Fr Stephen brought the evening to a close with a heartfelt prayer and Christmas blessing. As people departed, there were smiles all around, with everyone feeling uplifted and ready to embrace the joy of Christmas approaching.



A sincere thank you goes out to everyone who made this event possible. Such a successful evening could not have happened without the dedication of all the performers, partners, St John's Ambulance team, St Peter's parishioners, volunteers, and guests. Their collective efforts ensured a memorable celebration for all involved.

We would like to extend heartfelt thanks to our generous sponsors—Hunter ReadyMix Concrete, Maitland Toyota, and The Mutual.

Your ongoing support ensures the event continues to be a cherished tradition within our community. These Christmas Carols have become an integral part of our local story, bringing together families, friends, and parishioners in celebration each year.



Santa steals the show

Your partnership is sincerely appreciated by everyone at St Peter'.  
Thanks one and all - *Blessed Christmas!*





At the Clergy Deanery Meeting held on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> October, it was agreed that each Parish would plant either a tree or shrub for peace, not only peace for Gaza, but peace in general.

A place where people could come and pray for peace. The tree or shrub would have a plaque or sign telling people all about it.

After consulting with our gardeners at St Peters we decided to plant not one but three small Grevillea Legacy Flame shrubs, celebrating Legacy's Centenary of service in the garden up near William Street. The Shrubs were planted during the second garden working bee.

On your next visit to St Peter's you might like to have a look and stop and pray for peace.



## “Well, Mow me Down!”

Our dedicated mowing team has received an early Christmas gift — a new Ferris 500S mower. This upgrade is built for all terrain, it



smooths out rough, uneven ground so you can keep your eyes on the job—not the bumps! Mowing St Peter's lawns and keeping them lovingly maintained is a big job for a big mower and the 500S keeps things comfortable, steady, and efficient. Even better, it mulches as it goes so no manual picking up grass!

**Fr Stephen has given it his blessing so the team can mow with confidence and ease!**



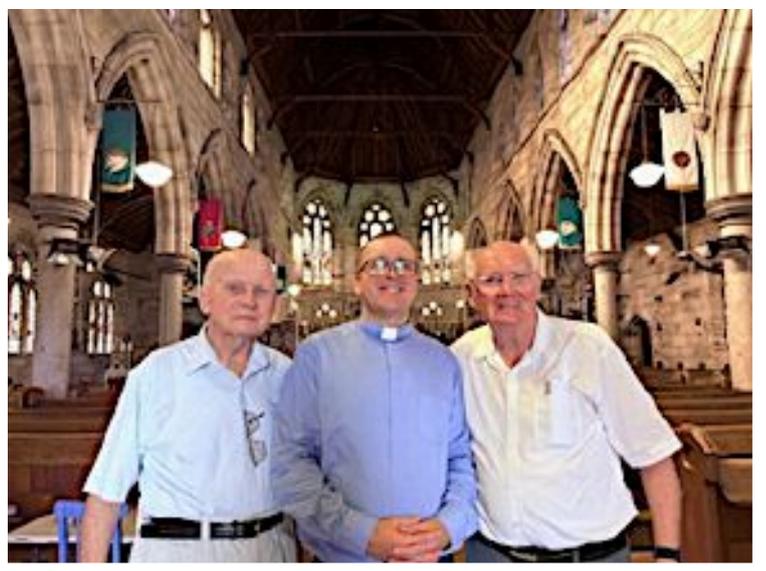
*Stephen McKinnon*

# Priest of God

What a whirlwind the last few weeks have been! I went from brushing off the ordination as 'something a while away' to it suddenly being upon me!

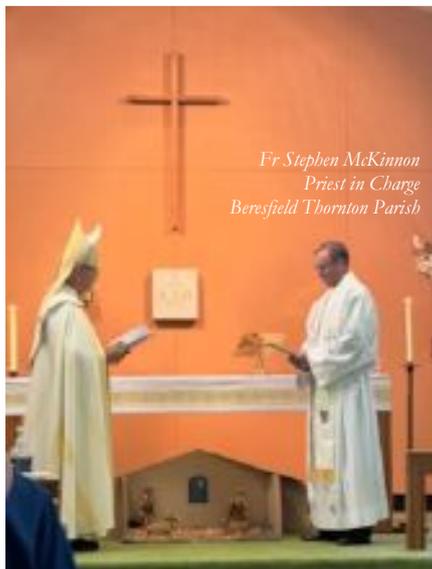
But what a wonderful time it was. It started with three restful days at Wangi, again enjoying the hospitality of Sister Laretta and Sister June at the Anawim Retreat Centre, where there was time to reflect, relax and swim in the beautiful Lake Macquarie. On Saturday morning, after an early morning swim, morning prayers and a farewell from the sisters, we made our way to the Cathedral.

Thankfully the heat remained at bay and the ordination service was comfortable and smooth. It was an uncanny yet profound moment to have so many hands laid on me, but it was particularly at this moment that I felt a real blessing and sense of belonging.



It was also such a blessing to share this service with the many people who had come to support me. There were of course many from St Peter's; a group from St Paul's Beresfield and St Michael's Thornton; my extended family and friends; some former colleagues and even a group of former students!

The next morning was my first Mass at St Peter's. With God's help and to His Glory, this went smoothly. I gave myself 6/10, however Geoff N gave me 10/10, so I'll happily average that out to an 8! Thanks so much for the lovely cake and many words of farewell.



*Fr Stephen McKinnon  
Priest in Charge  
Beresfield Thornton Parish*

The commissioning on Wednesday night was wonderful! Again, joined by family, friends, a couple of colleagues and several St Peter's parishioners, we had a relaxed but very meaningful service of commissioning, following by a supper that was fit for royalty! Thanks to the people of BT Parish for their wonderful hospitality!



*Lunch with Beresfield Parishioners*

So, there we have it. Now the page has been turned the new chapter begins! I would echo my words of thanks to the clergy and people of St Peter's: you have constantly encouraged and included me and this has meant a lot. I look forward to seeing you again as our paths cross. And of course, praise and thanks to our God, who through His grace makes all things possible!

## LENT BOOK

7pm Thursdays in Lent

*Be inspired by stories of faith from Anglicans across the communion.*

Sign up in January

*For more details contact office@stmatthiasandstjude.org*

More details coming 2026!

## Saint Peter's Columbarium

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Many of our friends and loved ones rest in the columbarium niches and memorial garden.



We invite all members of our local community to consider our columbarium as the final resting place for their cremated remains, where family members and descendants can visit.

For further details about purchasing a columbarium niche please contact the Parish Office.

Please pray for the souls of all those who have died since our last edition and their lives celebrated.

Lynne WARNER  
Cheryl ACKLAND  
Georgina WILLIAMS  
Pamela SAUBER  
Pamela SANSOM  
Brent TILSE  
Sydney WOOD



Margaret DUNN  
Beryl FRENCH  
Geoffrey GROVES  
Grace WILLIAMS  
June CLARK  
Pauline FAIRHALL  
June RUTHERFORD

# It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas .....



St Peter's Christmas Elves were at it again this year, full of decoration to ensure our Church looks and feels as beautiful as it can for the coming of our Lord.  
  
We give thanks for their fellowship and commitment.



Jan, Barb & Maureen



Fr Stephen, Carmel & Mavis



Richard, Rachel & 'The Choir'



Richard & Rachel

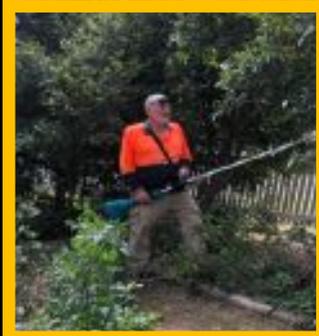


'The Boys' [aka Warren, Geoff & Morrie]



Rita our Eagle

# Worker Bees



Our fantastic gardening crew recently got together over two weekends to clean up the beds around the Parish grounds.  
  
A big shoutout to Bev and Chris, Warren, Richard, Wendy C and Wendy B, Rita, Morrie, Geoff and Marilyn.  
  
The contribution from everyone was remarkable with Warren and Chris outstanding.  
  
What a difference it has made!



**CHRISTMAS  
MARKET  
AND  
TOY SALE**



The much-anticipated Christmas Market was held on Saturday, 29th November, drawing a crowd of eager customers who lined up early to secure a bargain.

Throughout the year, our **dedicated volunteers** carefully identify and set aside items suitable for the sale, ensuring a diverse and appealing selection for the event. Their hard work and commitment make this annual market a reality, and we are truly grateful for their efforts. This year's market was an outstanding success, with the most important result being that everyone had the opportunity to purchase something special for Christmas, regardless of their budget. This achievement highlights both the generosity of our volunteers and the spirit of our supportive community.

**St Peter's Op Shop continues to be a favourite amongst a loyal clientele.** We are truly blessed to have such a wonderful team and a community that values and appreciates their work, which supports and contributes so much to St Peter's - Merry Christmas to all!



## St Peter's Pantry and Christmas Hampers

The dedicated team at **St Peter's Pantry** work tirelessly throughout the year assembling food parcels each week for members of our community who are experiencing financial or social hardship.

**Kate**, our *Senior Statistician*, documents the records with attention to detail. She carefully keeps track of the figures each week, providing a clear record of the impact we make to our community.

This regular Ministry is made possible through the generous donations received from key partners such as **OzHarvest, The Slow Food Network, U1R**

**Patisserie, and the East Maitland Bowling Club.** The **Parishioners of St Peter's** also play an essential role, supplementing donations and contributing food items throughout the year.

At Christmas, clients eagerly anticipate the delivery of Hampers, lovingly filled with a selection of treats to bring extra joy to the festive season. The hampers are thoughtfully stocked with all the essentials for a traditional Christmas meal, including hams, Christmas cakes and puddings, lollies, tinned fruit, and vegetables. Santa himself ensures that toys are included for the children, spreading happiness to those who might otherwise miss out during this special time.



### Pudding and Custard



A super big thank you to Sue and the team from the East Maitland Rotary Club for donating 80 Christmas Puddings and cartons of custard for our Parish Pantry hampers.

These are much needed and loved by our clients and

will bring a lot of happiness to a lot of families.

The ongoing success of **St Peter's Pantry's Christmas Hamper Program** is made possible through the generous support of community partners, including *Rotary of Maitland Sunrise, East Maitland Rotary, East Maitland Lions Club, and the East Maitland Bowling Club*. Their contributions are invaluable and deeply appreciated.

**Christmas Cake Thank you!**  
East Maitland Lions Club – by special delivery by Peter.



The volunteers' 100% commitment ensures that every aspect of the hamper assembly and distribution runs smoothly and effectively.

To celebrate the completion of another year of tireless service, the team gathered for a well-deserved lunch on hamper assembly day. This special occasion not only provided a moment of fellowship and gratitude, but also gave everyone the energy needed to complete their important work!

A heartfelt thank you goes out to all those involved—volunteers and partners alike—for their hard work and generosity. We look forward to coming together again in 2026 to continue supporting those in our community who need it most.



### St Peter's Serving Team Celebration Lunch

On Saturday, 29th November, the St Peter's Serving Team gathered for a well-earned lunch at Larg's. This gathering provided the team with an opportunity to unwind, catch up and appreciate each other's company, celebrating the commitment and spirit they bring to weekly worship at St Peter's.

Special thanks and gratitude were extended to Katrina, Rachel, Richard, Geoff and Reverend Wendy for their dedication to the Parish community.

The lunch also served as a warm farewell to Fr Stephen as he prepares to embark on a new chapter at Beresfield. The occasion was a meaningful way for the team to wish him well on his journey ahead.



If you are a user of Facebook please like and share our pages:

- ❖ East Maitland Anglican
- ❖ Op Shop St Peter's East Maitland



Parish Office hours are as follows:  
**Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 9am – 1pm**  
Outside of these hours messages can be left phone (4934 5303) and will be responded to as promptly as possible during opening hours.



### WEEKLY SERVICES

- Saturday 6:00pm - Vigil Eucharist
- Sunday 8:30am - Parish Eucharist + Morning Tea
- Wednesday 8:00am – Eucharist
- 1<sup>st</sup> Friday 10:30am – Eucharist



# BONUS PHOTO BOOK

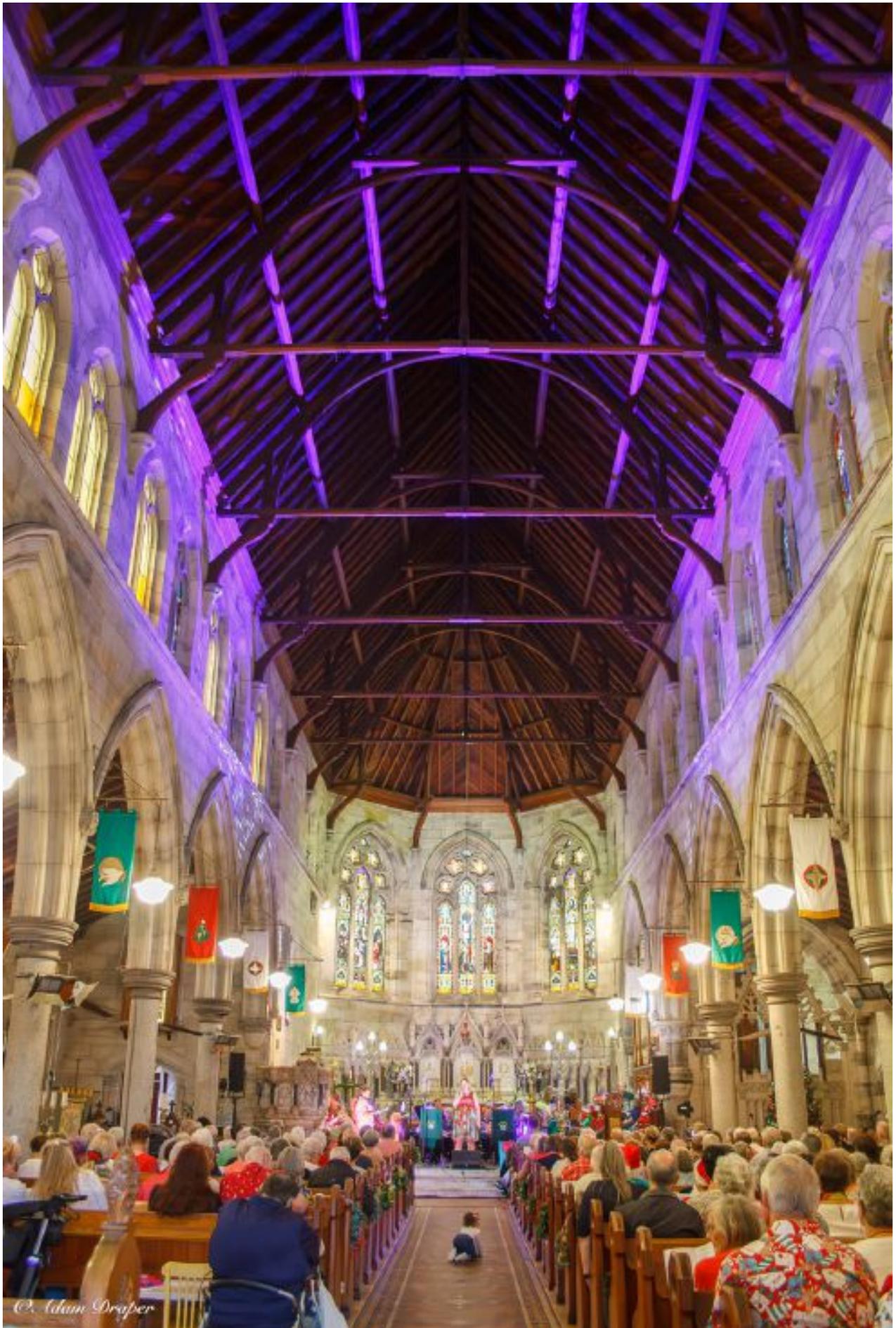
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