



Food For Faith Charitable Trust Annual Report April 2023-March 2024 & Update

These notes accompany the third annual accounts for the *Food for Faith* Charitable Trust, formed in July 2021.

Fr John O'Connor identified a need for digital 'food for faith' resources for people struggling to find local spiritual nourishment for their faith. A Charitable Trust was formed to enable John to achieve his vision of providing resources that resonated with a wide range of people. With the financial support of many generous donors, our third year of the *Food for Faith* Trust has achieved steady growth with ongoing interest from online subscribers across Aotearoa New Zealand as well as a following in Australia, North America, the Philippines and in Europe (especially in Italy.)

The following notes give an insight into our April 2023 to March 2024 operations, with some explanation of how your donations have been used. We also wish to bring you up to date with events from April to November this year.

To ensure that FFF continues to reach more people John has always recognised that your prayer and promotion is needed, alongside the Trust's need for financial support. As the Food for Faith Trustees, responsible for all administrative aspects of the Trust including making sure that finances are available for the mission, we invite your continued prayer, your promotion, and your financial support.

Thank you to all who have given so generously in the past year. Thank you

especially to those who have committed to contributing regular amounts monthly. It is helpful for maintaining the content and for our future planning. If you can give a more substantial amount to the *Food for Faith* mission this would help us greatly in planning ahead. Please contact John directly if you would like to discuss this mission or ways you can support it.

Seasons of Advent/ Lent and other daily blogs

The daily reflections for Lent and Advent continue to be popular. There was a significant increase in direct traffic between Lent in 2023 and Lent in 2024. These emails have a very committed audience and comments are positive. Linked to the blogs were many local Café gatherings. These continue to be an effective outreach for FFF especially in the warmer weather.

Homily Studio weekly podcasts

The podcasts recorded each week are an interesting and useful half hour aimed at providing an additional resource for preachers and a peoples-based perspective for others seeking to appreciate the readings for each following Sunday. From a team of more than 20 people representing a wide range of occupations and experience, the Homily Studio invites two or three people to participate in a conversation which links scripture passages to making meaning for our lives today. Not only have these podcasts been used by parish liturgy committees in their liturgy preparation, and by people for support of their personal prayer, they have at times been listened to by a full congregation in the absence of a preacher. The Homily Studio is available on all major platforms (Spotify, Apple, Pod bean etc.)

Lectio Divina daily prayer podcasts

There is a steady loyal following for Lectio Divina prayer podcast meditations on the readings for each day. While ongoing finance is required for the Lectio Divina platform, most of the daily work in recording and editing for these and other podcasts is

carried out by John as a way of saving about \$400.00 per week.

The total expenditure for these is \$2,740

Website monitoring, technological support and hardware

The use of the *Screenweave* IT company has enabled the FFF website to host a greater variety of digital ministries, *Mailchimp* to manage the growing email subscription lists, website maintenance and back-up when the website fails. The purchase of some hardware has been important for John's use.

The total expenditure for these is \$12,042

Administration for the Trust

With the growth of the FFF mission and the requirements of our Charitable Trust status administration is necessary to ensure that all Trust and administrative aspects are attended to including data entry, emails, phone, research, minutes, receipting, postal, basic accounts, letters and payments.

Our mission continues to grow and develop. We are committed to ensuring our processes are well managed by Catherine Gibbs (FFF Administrator) and Triona Doocey (donor liaison and receipting) and they have the resources necessary for a permanent administration structure. Miscellaneous costs such as postage, domain name, bank fees, Charities Commission reporting are regular small items.

The total expenditure for these is \$6,843

Personal Formation

The FFF Trustees appreciate that John is the prime provider of content and needs access to ongoing formation and reference material. It was pleasing to note that John's request for five months sabbatical was approved by his bishop. Over 100 FFF followers responded in March to John's call for some financial support to travel and learn. John is deeply grateful for the generosity from so many FFF followers.

To stay up to date several subscriptions are required as resources for the FFF mission. These include monthly subscriptions to Universalis for Lectio Divina scriptures; Zoom; Microsoft; and Apple.

The total expenditure is \$13,020

Other items

Café Gatherings

As mentioned above when well over two thousand people are receiving a daily Lent / Advent email, café gatherings across the country and even beyond New Zealand can easily be advertised and promoted. Outside the Lent and Advent seasons such publicity is not currently possible. Given that so many people appreciate the opportunity to meet informally to share their experience of faith in life, our hope is for funding which will enable an interactive FFF webpage which will give people the opportunity to initiate and attend these gatherings.

Publications

Alongside the central FFF Mission, John has now published two books, the first, ***Food for Faith***, is a selection of his reflections written over the past ten years. The response has been favourable leading to John offering an invitation earlier this year for people to write up to 400 words sharing one personal experience of God. Ninety contributions have been received and in November 2024 these have now been published under the title ***Fifth Gospel Living***.

Because current FFF Trust finances cannot cover publishing and associated costs John has taken this on as a personal project.



UPDATE

APRIL TO NOVEMBER 2024

Five months sabbatical leave

Between April and September John used his sabbatical leave as a time of reflection and renewal after almost forty years as a priest and looking towards the future in a changing church and a changing world.

He was seeking to discover ways to re-connect the many baptized Catholics with an enriched relationship with Christ and the Church. A very helpful news item on CATH NEWS NZ picked up this theme, and a significant number of people responded with encouragement and curiosity in the hope that some practical initiatives would ensue. John used the sabbatical time to research similar services provided elsewhere in the world and seek inspiration for what would be beneficial for FFF followers.

John packed a variety of meaningful activities during his time away. These included collating and editing his latest book *Fifth Gospel Living* (see details above); attending an intensive course studying Italian language; leading a retreat with sisters in Venice; ministering to a community in the north of Italy; attending the annual Rimini Meeting for *Friendship among people* as well as visiting family in Scotland.

Special Podcasts

To keep FFF followers up to date while in Italy John made two podcasts. *John on sabbatical* was podcast on the 16 July blog and an *Interview with John O'Connor* by Merv Duffy was published on 22 July on the National Liturgy website.

<https://nlo.org.nz/news-and-events/media-releases/nlo/>

Fundraising

During this year the trustees have been in conversation with a skilled person with fundraising experience to help explore

practical ideas and research ways to enable our online mission to reach more people. We recognise that FFF is a homegrown New Zealand ministry offering fresh creative considerations about our Christian faith. John encourages engagement from a variety of voices, and we are hoping for an enduring presence using social media platforms.

At our October Trustees meeting we asked that John write to all those on the FFF database seeking financial support. Concerned at the low level of financial resources, the Trustees were aware of the great potential of the FFF mission if reliable funding was available. Since that request on 16 October there has been a very generous response enabling us to progress a strategic plan for 2025 and beyond.

In Closing

Thank you so much for giving Food for Faith your feedback, interest and practical support. The trustees are delighted with the financial donations they have received over the past months. Your gifts have meant that the vision of the Trust and the *Food For Faith* mission has been able to be sustained. We're hopeful that with donors ongoing support, especially following John's most recent request, that the Trust's mission will continue to evolve. We have some exciting plans in store and you are our best advertisement for *Food for Faith* so tell your friends and family about us. If you have any questions about this content please contact one of the Trustees.

Ngā mihi mahana ki a koutou - Warm wishes to you all.

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Food For Faith Trustees
7 November 2024