



Food For Faith Charitable Trust Annual Report April 2024-March 2025 & Update

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

Since 2011 Fr John O'Connor had been writing for a FFF blog, before further clarifying a need for more accessible digital (website) '*food for faith*' resources for people seeking 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 fourth 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.)

This report gives an insight into our April 2024 to March 2025 operations, with some explanation of how donations have been used. The final section will also bring you up to date with events from April to November this (2025) year.

To ensure that FFF continues to reach more people John has always recognised that prayer and promotion are needed, alongside steady 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 monthly amounts. It is helpful for maintaining activity, and content as well as enabling us to more judiciously plan. If you can give a more regular or 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 our mission or ways you can support it.

Advent / Lent and other daily blogs

The daily reflections for Lent and Advent continue to be popular with increases in direct traffic between Lent in 2024 and Lent in 2025. The emails have a very committed audience and comments are positive.

Linked to the 2025 posts were local café gatherings held across the motu. These continue to be an effective outreach for FFF, and we are happy to announce that before the end of the year a 'café gathering' page will be uploaded enabling people to advertise and promote FFF café gatherings as a one-off or regular outreach of the FFF mission.

Podcasts (Lectio Divina and Homily Studio)

The **Homily Studio** podcasts recorded each week are an inspiring half-hour conversation aimed at providing an additional resource for preachers and for all people seeking to prepare for the liturgy of the following Sunday or reflect on and make further sense of it.

From a team of more than 25 individuals representing a wide range of occupations and experience the Homily Studio invites up to three each week to participate in a conversation which, using the scriptures of the Sunday as a starting point, helps people to prepare for, or reflect on the Sunday readings. 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.)

There is a steady and loyal following for **Lectio Divina** prayer podcast meditations centred on the Gospel reading for each day. It is encouraging to know that this FFF Lectio Divina has polled at number one of the ten Best New Zealand Faith Podcasts worth listening to in 2025. (Apple Rating 4.8/5 Facebook 1.6K)

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 money.

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.

Screenweave is called on at all hours to fix the inevitable technical hitches, giving welcome advice about which platforms and technical resources to use to further our FFF mission.

The annual expenditure for these is \$11,048.

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.

We also wish to gratefully acknowledge the professional guidance and support we receive from Trish Batchelor on fundraising and Ted Wypych for preparing our annual financial statements which are included with this report.

The annual expenditure for these is \$5,581.

Personal Formation

The FFF Trustees appreciate that John is the prime provider of content and needs access to ongoing formation and reference material. In recent years this has included retreats in America and attending different gatherings both in New Zealand and in Europe.

In January we decided to allocate \$3000 per annum for John's ongoing personal formation. (See more in the **Update** below.)

In the previous Annual Report, we shared the variety of ways John spent his sabbatical. This included study, research, pastoral ministry and a holiday. John wishes to express his deep gratitude for the generosity of donors who enabled him to spend this one-off opportunity for reflection and renewal after almost forty years as a priest.

In September on his return to New Zealand, John published his second book *Fifth Gospel Living*. As more people found inspiration from the new book John opened up an opportunity for more contributions to create a third book. (See **Update** below for more on this initiative.)

Subscriptions

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 annual expenditure is \$8,271.

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 this daily publicity is not as easily possible.

Given that so many people appreciate the opportunity to meet informally to share their experience of faith in life, we reached a sufficient funding level to enable an interactive FFF webpage giving people the opportunity to initiate and attend these gatherings. (See **Update** below for more on this initiative.)

Strategic Plan 2025-2028

In January this year the Trustees met together to develop a strategic plan for the next five years. It was a useful exercise in clarifying our vision, purpose and outcomes. The plan can be viewed on our website. Though we meet monthly online, this face-to-face meeting was our first, and an occasion for the individual trustees to meet each other in person.



UPDATE

APRIL - NOVEMBER 2025

Formation Work

John acknowledges that ongoing formation works both ways as his engagement with many people is also personally enriching.

In the months since John finished with the National Liturgy Office last year his weekly programme includes retreats, formation seminars, and Mass Supply for parishes across the Christchurch Diocese.

Recently John has been appointed as the Diocesan Missioner for the Christchurch diocese with an encouragement for him to continue this formation work both locally and further afield.

In April 2025 John attended a priest's retreat in America. Later in July he returned to the north of Italy attending the annual Rimini Meeting for *Friendship among people*. John has directed retreats in Australia, and the Philippines.

Publication

The next edition of *Fifth Gospel Living* is being collated and edited. Instead of a printed book the Trustees have endorsed the idea for wider dissemination of these contributions through a website connected to the FFF website. We envisage this to be the best way to present new work in the future. You'll receive notification of this new website shortly.

Café Gatherings

Given the strong interest in café gatherings over the last two years, work has been completed to develop an interactive webpage on the FFF site. This will make it easier for subscribers to enter their own relevant details including any last-minute changes to times and places. We expect this page will be published with Advent resources.

Short videos

John has been trialling creating a few short videos aimed at providing a modern take on an old concept. Already the FFF YouTube channel has a significant number of brief videos on a range of topics. There has been a call for John to produce more informal, brief and chatty clips enabling people to have a more casual insight into the activities and inspirations of the days in the life of a diocesan priest ministering both in his home diocese of Christchurch and further afield. These will begin within the next few weeks, hosted mostly on the FFF Facebook platform.

Fundraising

At our October Trustees meeting we asked that John write to all those on the FFF database seeking financial support. Based on our key objective to grow the Trust's overall reach, serving young people alongside our older audiences, both inside and outside the institutional church, the Trustees recognise how important a reliable funding stream is.

Resignation and new trustee

Fr Merv Duffy has been a trustee since we began in July 2021. Merv has provided professional expertise and guidance over that time. We wish him well for his new role as Provincial for the Marist Order.

We are happy to announce in this report that James van Schie has accepted to join our team of Trustees. James brings a wide experience of the New Zealand church and his personal enthusiasm for the FFF mission. James will join us later this year.

In Closing

Thank you so much for giving Food for Faith your feedback, interest and practical support. The trustees are grateful for the financial donations received over the year. Your gifts have meant that the vision of the Trust and the *Food For Faith* mission has been able to be sustained. We are hopeful that with donors' ongoing support, the Trust's mission will continue to evolve. You are our best advertisement for *Food for Faith* so do tell your friends and family about us. If you have any questions about this content please contact John or one of the Trustees.

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

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Food For Faith Trustees

3 November 2025