



GEORGES RIVER LIFE CHURCH

ANNUAL REPORT

2026



CHURCH LEADERSHIP REPORT

Welcome to the first Annual Report in June. This has come around very quickly and as I reflect on the past six months, Psalm 23 has very much been an anchor. I say with utmost confidence that Jesus is our shepherd! What we do cannot be about us. He leads, He gives rest, He refreshes, He guides. He is ALWAYS with us!

We write this report with gratitude for His faithfulness, and with honesty that this has been a year of gentle nudges to lean in closer to God and we are thankful for Ben's leadership as Senior Pastor.

This annual report covers a shorter period than usual – reflecting our decision to shift the Annual Church Meeting from the end of the year to mid-year. It is a change made for good reason, aligning our reporting with best practice for our annual audit and supporting us to plan further ahead. We trust this rhythm will serve both the congregation and leadership well into the future.

These six months have been marked by quiet determination to press more into Him. Ben has embraced his role as Senior Pastor with wisdom and pastoral care, and we are grateful for his steady leadership through a significant season of organisational change. The work of reshaping our staff team has been done and will continue to be outworked as the year advances (*see Appendix for new staff structure*). We are thankful for the grace shown by staff and congregation through that process.

Chipping Norton continues to develop as an expression of our discipleship culture, and we are grateful for the dedicated team serving. Life Care's reputation and reach in the community continues to grow. Mission Month in May again reflected the generosity that characterises this church. Every dollar given and every prayer offered in support of those beyond our own walls matters deeply.

This has also been a season of significant governance and structural work. We received legal advice regarding the church's legal structure and have been working through the implications carefully and prayerfully. Financial principles to guide the CLT's stewardship decisions have been developed by our Finance Committee and our budget planning now forecasts for 2027, which is six months ahead of what we have done previously.

We have strengthened our risk management frameworks to mitigate our known risks. Most of this work is not visible in a Sunday service, and yet some things are, such as the perimeter fence restricting access to the carpark and driveway at Peakhurst.

To all of you, thank you for your continued faithfulness, generosity and grace. You are a church that reflects the love of Christ in ways that continually encourage us in the work that we do. It is not the shouting from the rooftops, but rather the coming alongside, to pray, to be, to walk with, to love well those around us, our community. We are here for the long term, and we hold that with confidence in the One who has this church in His hands as we move into the fullness of His plans for Georges River Life Church.

MARGARET THOMPSON
CLT CHAIR





SENIOR PASTOR REPORT

It feels both quick and significant to already be gathering again for another Annual Church Meeting (ACM) after moving to a mid-year ACM rhythm last year. While only six months have passed, we have already seen God's faithfulness in clear ways.

As we began 2026 together, we sensed a clear invitation from God to **fix our eyes on Jesus**. Before strategies, plans, budgets, or goals, we wanted to centre ourselves again on the person and presence of Jesus. **That conviction has continued to shape our church throughout the year.**

Across GRLC, I see a growing culture of people learning what it means to love God, love others, and make Jesus known. Not simply as a phrase we say, but as a way of life. It is showing up in our conversations, our serving, our generosity, our discipleship, and our care for one another.

One of the clearest signs of this has been **prayer**.

Earlier this year, more than 140 people engaged in our prayer and fasting journey, with many choosing to fast as they sought God together. This was more than a strong response to a church-wide initiative. It was evidence of spiritual hunger. And it has been encouraging hearing from those who now practise fasting as a regular rhythm in their life. As Senior Pastor, it is a joy to lead a church that wants the presence of God more than simply the activity of God. A church that seeks His face and trusts His hands. **We remain convinced that prayer is not peripheral to the life of the church, it is foundational to who we are and who we are becoming.**

Across our two sites, we are seeing new people walk through our doors carrying questions, hurts, curiosity and spiritual hunger. Some are returning to church after years away.

Others are exploring faith for the very first time. **GRLC continues to be a place where people can encounter Jesus and take their next step with Him.**

New people are connecting into services, teams, discipleship pathways, pastoral care, and community. More importantly, **people are finding belonging** with 48 new people across our sites coming within the last 6 months and now calling GRLC home. Individuals and families are not just coming to church - they are building relationships, discovering purpose, and finding 'their people' as they take steps in following Jesus. I have lost count of the foyer conversations where people have said, "this feels like home".

Another significant encouragement has been the strengthening alignment between Life Care and Life Church. We are seeing the fruit of shared mission, shared vision, and shared heart. One of the most encouraging outcomes has been seeing people connect through a community support service and then begin engaging in the life of the church itself. This is becoming more and more normal.

This matters because we believe people need practical support and spiritual family. It is through both that people don't simply experience the love of Jesus and are invited to live in it with others. The growing partnership between Life Care and Life Church continues to strengthen our ability to care for people holistically and reflect the love of Jesus in tangible ways.

We also continue to pursue our vision of being a **multiplying, multisite church along the Georges River.**

We believe healthy multiplication begins long before a new site launches. It begins when disciples are formed, leaders are developed, and a church learns to continually say "yes" to Jesus and His mission. It starts when we choose to think beyond ourselves and make room for the people God is yet to reach.

For that reason, this season has included several important steps in preparing for the future. Our recent staff restructure has helped position our team more intentionally around long-term mission and multiplication (*see Appendix for new staff structure*). We have also continued investing significantly in leadership development across many of our volunteer teams.

One particularly encouraging development has been the launch of our Emerging Leaders Cohort with Samantha, Aedden, Mairead and Josiah. These four developing leaders are currently undertaking intentional training, discipleship, and ministry development together. This leadership initiative reflects our forward-minded vision.

Healthy churches do not simply maintain what exists; they intentionally prepare for what God may entrust to them next.

As we have navigated these changes, we have also been reminded of something that has always been true of GRLC: we are a church family.

At GRLC, staff transitions are always felt deeply because we feel more like family than colleagues. The gratitude, sadness, and sense of loss we experience when people finish reflects the genuine love and care we have for one another. It is both a hard and a good thing. I am grateful for the way our church continues to honour, support, and pray for those who have served faithfully among us.

As we look ahead, **our prayer is not simply that GRLC would grow larger, but that we would grow deeper in Jesus, healthier in community, and more courageous in mission.**

Thank you to every Partner, volunteer, leader, staff member and all the people of GRLC - young and old - who continue to serve, pray, give, care and faithfully follow Jesus.

It is a joy to follow Jesus with you.

Love to you all,

BEN RUSIN
SENIOR PASTOR



PEAKHURST REPORT

Over the past six months at Peakhurst, we have experienced great joy as we have continued to witness God at work. What I have particularly sensed in this season is a growing expectancy and a deeper hunger to pursue Jesus together as a church. It has been encouraging to see a new softness and a fresh openness to the Spirit along with a willingness to lean in together, with a shared recognition that God is moving powerfully in and amongst us. I continually hear people say to me, with great excitement, “God is surely up to something!” Here are a few things that I am grateful for as Site Pastor:

Our ‘Prayer & Fasting’ series was particularly meaningful as we sought to make space for God and step into the invitation to hunger more for God. It has been great to hear encouraging testimonies - including stories of people trying fasting for the first time, others experiencing a renewed openness to the Holy Spirit, and others seeing answers to prayer. Our desire to become a people of prayer continues to draw us into dependence on Him.

Every week, we have been privileged to welcome visitors into our community, with approximately 26 new people in the past 6 months finding a home at Peakhurst. It has also been wonderful to see many people finding a place to serve. This includes 10 new Small Group Leaders, several new River Kids Leaders, and people across both our AM and PM congregations moving into Worship, Integration, Service leading, Playgroup and Administrative roles. It is always a joy to see people discover places to serve that align with their passions and gifting.

Our younger generation has continued to inspire us as they lead, serve, and go after Jesus. Both our Young Adult camp and Youth camp earlier in the year saw over 110 of our young people worshipping and seeking Him, and we are grateful for the many volunteer leaders who walk alongside this next generation as they learn what it looks like to wholeheartedly pursue Jesus.

We have continued to see a beautiful alignment between Life Care and Life Church, with the distinction between the two communities becoming increasingly blurred in the best possible way. At our most recent women's event, more than a third of attendees were women connected to our Life Care community or friends who had been invited. It has also been a delight to see some of our Life Care friends arriving early on Sundays to join us for our AM church service.

Connection and community life within the Peakhurst site has continued to grow through both men's and women's socials. I have loved seeing a genuine shift in the way people seem to be enjoying and prioritising connection with one another. Our termly men's dinners at Club Rivers regularly see more than 60 men gathering together, while the women have enjoyed rich connections through a variety of social events throughout the first half of the year, including walks in the park, dumpling making, high teas, brunches, and dinners.

In a season that has involved significant staff change and transition, we have continued to experience the faithfulness of God and His steady hand guiding and directing us. We remain deeply grateful for His provision, presence, and leadership as we continue to move forward together. There is still much work to be done, and we continue to keep Jesus as our vision – as we seek to be with Him, become more like Him and do what He would do.

LARA WATSON
SITE PASTOR





CHIPPING NORTON REPORT

The first half of 2026 has seen a continuation of the growth and building that God is directing in this season. I strongly and consistently feel God directing us in two main ways in this season: to build on the foundation of the first five years, and to deepen a sense of ‘belonging’ in our culture. This is shaping a considerable amount of my focus and attention as site pastor, and what we are doing as a team.

What does this look like in practice? We continue to value and celebrate who God has shaped us to be; the sense of family (with the joyous and slightly chaotic vibes this brings!), the profound value of inclusion, the deep commitment to hospitality – this is us and this will not change. However, a season of growth and building will continue to bring change to how we operate as the systems and processes that have brought us here will not be the ones that take us where we need to go next. Indeed, new teams and processes to shape pastoral care and integration will be a major focus of the second half of the year. We are pursuing belonging by focusing on strengthening our Small Group ministry, helping people find a team to serve in, and planning and implementing an integration pathway. All of this is how we respond to what God is up to and inviting us into.

We have also, with greatly mixed emotions, celebrated the impact of Malcolm and Kerrie as Malcolm has transitioned out of his pastoral role at the end of May. Malcolm’s work in leadership of our site has been instrumental in much of what I can celebrate above. And while we hope to see Malcolm and Kerrie again soon, after a very important break, his pastoral role will be missed in our site.

God is growing our congregation: we have welcomed 22 new people into our Chippy family so far this year. God is growing our leadership: I love seeing people like Kathy and Joel step into new leadership roles! Additionally, we have had the privilege of

watching Aedden, Mairead and Sammy step seamlessly into new leadership roles in our site as part of our Emerging Leaders cohort (also showing us the strengths and benefits of our multi-site model!). God is growing us spiritually: I loved the stories that came out of us practicing prayer and fasting together as a church. I also loved celebrating our first adult baptisms as a site, having the privilege of watching Carol and Bing publicly declare their faith in Jesus and their intention to live as his disciples! And I suspect, in the midst of unimaginable tragedy, God is continuing to grow our capacity to journey through the ups and downs of life as a church family.

Not everything in the first half of the year has been easy, but I am confident of God's ongoing presence, activity and leading in the midst of it all. God is clearly building His church, and I am excited to see where He takes us in the year ahead!

MATT GRAY
SITE PASTOR





LIFE CARE REPORT

Over the past six months, we've seen something really significant happening across Life Care.

Not just growth in numbers - but growth in people, connection and community.

We've continued to meet people in really hard places. Financial pressure, housing instability, domestic violence and isolation are the lived reality of many people in our community right now.

At Christmas, we saw this all come together in a really special way.

December was a special time - across Peakhurst and Chipping Norton, we distributed 260 Christmas hampers and 600 school backpacks, helping families during what can often be a difficult season. What stood out most wasn't just what was given - it was the connection that was created.

Through card-making, Christmas wreath workshops, and shared celebrations at Café Connect and Community Connect, we saw people connecting and finding joy and belonging around the table.

Life Care would like to thank Octavio Montoya, whose work building our custom Community Connect database is helping us better understand and capture the impact of our service.

One of the biggest shifts we've seen this year has been relational connection, with nearly 80% of people receiving food hamper support also engaging in Community Connect and Café Connect.

This is where Life Care is evolving into not only a service people access, but also a community people become part of.

And that doesn't happen without the church.

It happens because volunteers keep showing up, people take time to listen, and our church community continues to give generously. This year, 67% of our Annual Appeal came directly from our church community.

I've also loved seeing people move from receiving support to contributing back into community life through programs like 'Food for Life' - cooking meals, sharing recipes, teaching others, and building friendships.

Demand certainly isn't slowing down (we recently experienced our biggest hamper day on record), but neither is the opportunity for us as a church to continue creating spaces where people feel seen, supported and like they belong.

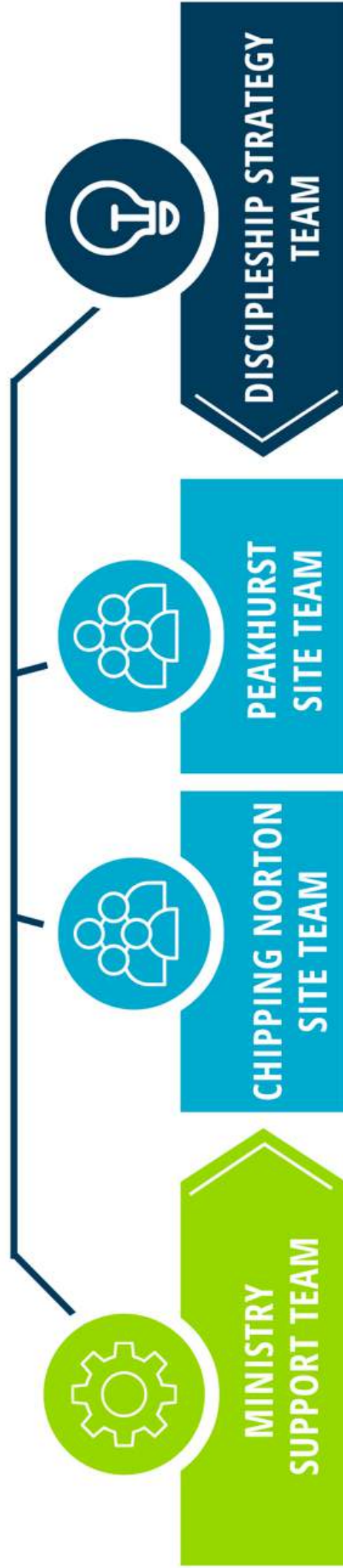
The alignment between Georges River Life Church and Life Care is stronger than ever. We are seeing more and more that this is not separate work, but a shared mission lived out together in practical, relational and faith-filled ways.

Thank you to the Life Care Board, our incredible staff team, and our amazing volunteers and supporters. Your compassion, consistency and generosity make all of this possible.

KAREN POWER
LIFE CARE CEO



CLT
BEN

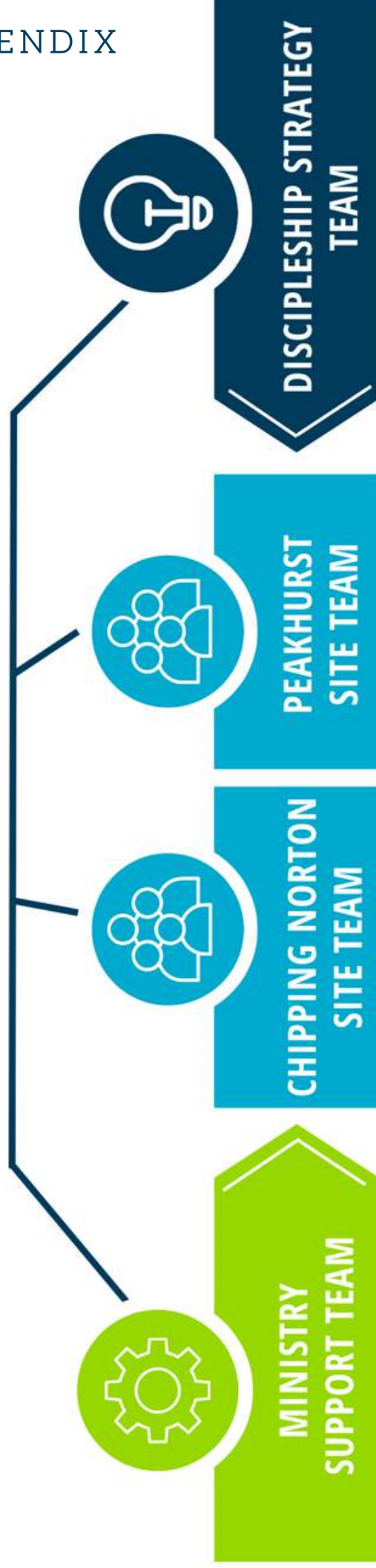


Ministry Support
Team Leader:
Glenn Power

Chipping Norton Site Pastor:
Matt Gray
Peakhurst Site Pastor:
Lara Watson

Discipleship Strategy
Team Leader:
Sophie Brodie

CLT > BEN



The ministry support team are focussed on the operations of the church and enable all sites to live our our mission and vision.

This includes the functions of Safe Church, Finance, Property, WHS, Communication and Digital media.

This is a **centralised** function supporting all sites.

The Site teams are focussed on people, championing and implementing discipleship in the local site.

This includes the leadership of the people all generations through the site's rhythms, pastoral care, integration and worship.

This is a **localised** function, unique to each site.

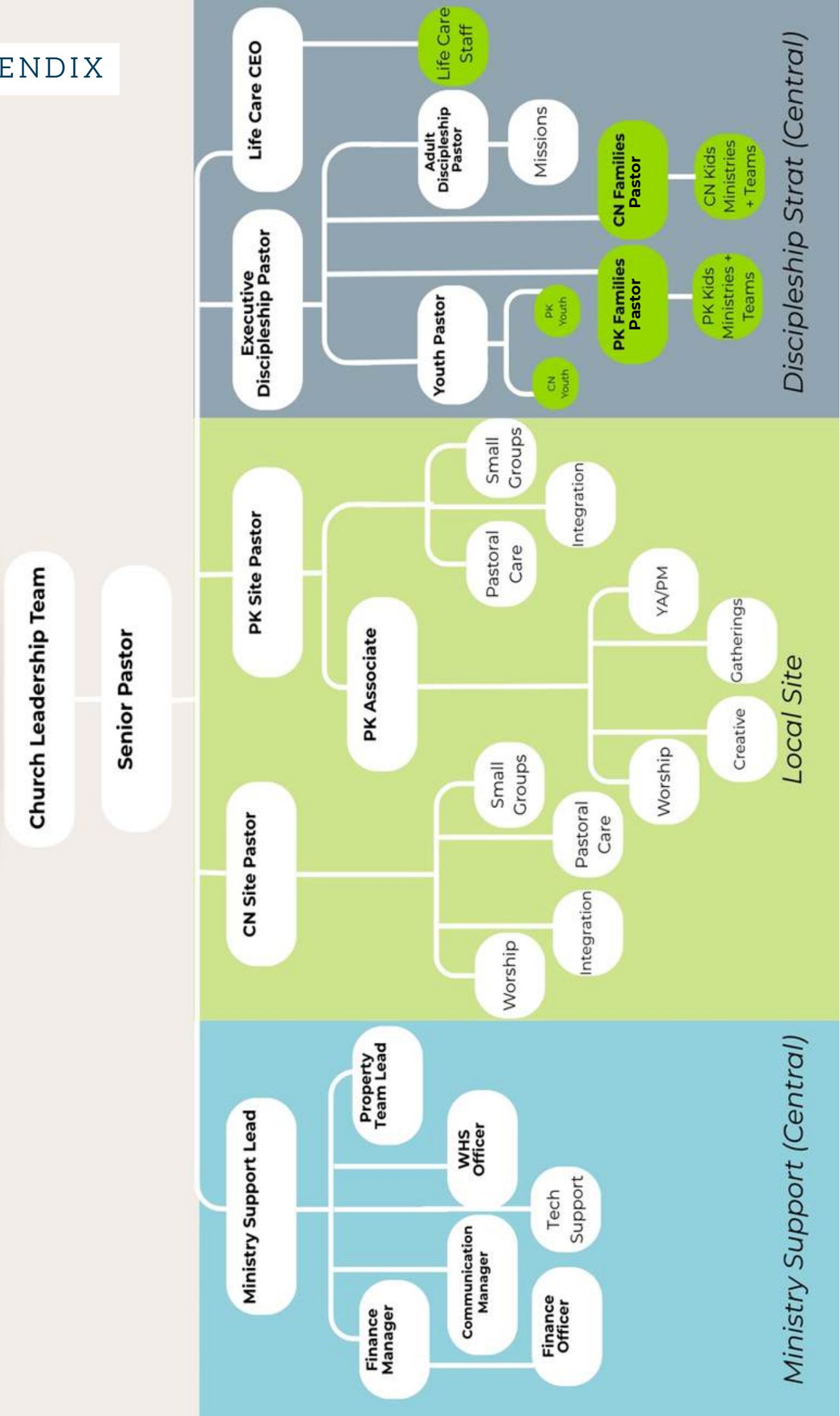
The Discipleship strategy team are the engine room for strategy and culture.

This includes the development of strategic discipleship plans, models, frameworks and practices for all generations.

This is a **centralised** function leading all sites.

Georges River Life Church
Restructure May 2026

APPENDIX





GEORGES RIVER
LIFE CHURCH

23 Stanley Street, Peakhurst NSW, 2210

02 9153 6300

info@grlc.org.au