



Camberwell South Anglican Church

*A history of the church's second half-century
1969 – 2018*

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Foreword

In an epilogue to the *History of the First 50 Years of the Anglican Church of St Mary, Camberwell South*, published in April 1968, the author, Geoffrey Harrison, speculated on what the next half century would bring to St Mary's.

'It is our fervent hope and prayer,' he wrote, 'that the ancient landmarks here may be preserved, and that our Church in the power of the Holy Spirit will forever go forward, having learnt the lessons of the past, and prove a spiritual and moral force in the life and service of the community in the future'.

That the author's 'fervent hope and prayer' has been answered is not in dispute: St Mary's – now known as Camberwell South Anglican Church – has continued to go forward, at times thriving and outward looking; at times faltering and inward-looking.

Times, demographics and community attitudes change, but the church's mission as it embarks on its second century is the same as it has always been: to be a vital, open and welcoming place, which burns as a bright beacon of hope in the local community, proclaiming Jesus Christ's loving sacrifice for humanity.

David Ashton
August 2018

Chapter 1

The late 1960s and the 1970s

As the 1960s drew to a close, dramatic demographic changes became evident in the district surrounding St Mary's Anglican Church. At the same time as many of the church's traditional supporting families were moving away from the area, a great influx of non-British migrant families, particularly Greeks and Italians, were starting to move in. Few of them seemed to be potential parishioners.

This phenomenon was not unique to Camberwell: many very strong Anglican parishes throughout the eastern suburbs were in similar circumstances.

In the middle 1960s, at the time the incumbent, Rev Kenneth Roberts' unexpected death, the parish had been very soundly based. Among the church agencies were a large Mothers' Union, a Young Wives' Group, a choir, a Girls' Friendly Society (GFS) group, the Church of England Boys' Society (CEBS), a vigorous Horticultural Society, an active Sunday school and boys' and girls' gymnasium groups. The church also participated in a Meals on Wheels program.

For a year or two into the '70s, most of these groups were maintained. Then almost simultaneously the church lost its secretary, its Sunday school superintendent and the entire staff of the Sunday school, two vestrymen, and the GFS leader. These people, who with their families had been among the most active of St Mary's parishioners, departed after little or no action had been taken to alleviate various problems they were experiencing.

With the Sunday School bereft of teachers, the mothers moved in, led by Lesley King, and with the support of Joan McCrea and Doreen Grisbrook.

Among the parishioners who remained at St Mary's, there was evidence at the time of antagonism towards the church ministry. There were obvious problems in the parish, not least the strained financial circumstances in which the church found itself in 1976.

St Mary's Gazette made its first appearance in 'duplicated form' in February 1969, with an apology on page three from the vicar, for 'an unbalanced issue, without the virtue of attractiveness'. He was confident, however, that the *Gazette* would improve 'as we gain time and experience'. Miss Vera Jones was to edit 'all parochial items' for the *Gazette*, and Mrs D Radnell would receive 'any personal items of parish interest'.

The February 1969 *Gazette* included tributes to the late Mrs Helen Sutton, who had been very active in the church choir and the horticultural society for many years. Mrs Sutton died just before Christmas 1968. 'She has now reached that heavenly peace, the reward of all who believe, and her life's work could be the yardstick by which we should try to measure ours,' wrote 'D.R.', on behalf of the Horticultural Society.

In the April 1969 edition of the *Gazette*, the vicar reported that on the eve of celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of St Mary's, the founding vicar, the Rev C R C Tidmarsh, who had been the incumbent for the church's first 36 years of existence, had 'passed into the rich fellowship of the church in Heaven'. The breaking of this link with St Mary's earliest days, was a significant one for the church as it marked its half-century.

Statistics quoted in the *Gazette* of March 1973 revealed that there were 6400 acts of communion over the preceding year, 24 baptisms, 14 marriages, 53 burials, and six young people were presented for confirmation. Eight years later, at the AGM of 22 February 1981,

the vicar reported a much lower annual figure for acts of communion – 3573 – although church attendances had risen from 4963 to 5880 in the 1980/81 year.

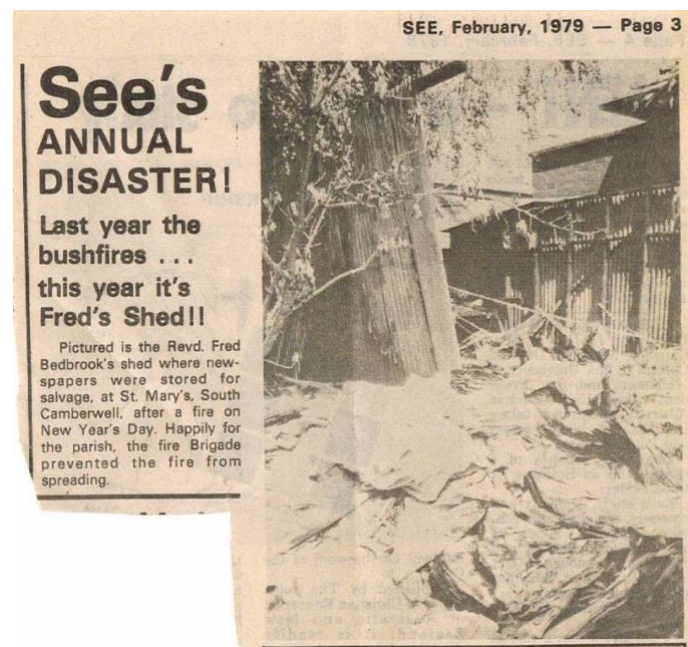
As the 1970s rolled on, and despite the departure of church leaders, organisations such as the Horticultural Society the Young Wives' 'Department', the Girls' Friendly Society, the Mothers' Union, and the Church of England Boys' Society (CEBS) enjoyed good participation rates.

Long-term St Mary's parishioner, Albert Vickery, was president of the football club from 1960 to 1973, and still takes a keen and active interest in the affairs of the club.

One of the church's major fundraising initiatives during the 1970s involved collecting and bundling newspapers, which were sold to the company now known as Australian Paper. Funds raised were largely used to pay off the church's pipe organ, a capital cost which was ever-present in church financial reports during the '70s.

Albert Vickery said Australian Paper used to pay the church a 'reasonable amount' for the newspapers, but later when another company began buying the papers, the price was much lower and newspaper collecting was no longer viable. However, the paper collecting efforts were by no means in vain: the funds raised helped to pay off the organ by September 1978, to the relief of the vestry.

Collecting the papers was a major operation. Albert Vickery said at peak times there were 10 collectors going around on a regular route. People would put the papers out, and parishioner Reginald St John's house was the central collecting point. Everything had to be tied in bundles that could be easily lifted. Later, the church shed became the collection point for the papers, but it was also sometimes occupied by homeless people.



A fire on New Year's Day 1979 destroyed newspapers intended for recycling.

St Mary's Cricket Club won the premiership in their grade of the East Suburban Churches Cricket Association in 1969/70. In the grand final the team led on the first innings, and victory was assured when the final day of the match was washed out. The *Gazette* reported that the rain was largely due to 'the activities of the witch doctor (vicar)', though the Horticultural Society, which held its Autumn Show on the same day, had different reactions to the torrential rain.

The Horticultural Society was still thriving in the 1970s. The concentration was on flowers at the society's annual shows, but some vegetables were exhibited as well. The shows were big events, spreading from the Manley Hall into the Tidmarsh Hall, and even into the Men's Club at the rear of the church. The Horticultural Society was started to give the men an interest, in a similar vein as groups such as the Mothers' Union did for the women. Meetings were held monthly and visiting speakers gave talks on a variety of horticultural topics.

Veteran parishioner Jack Broadbent was famous for his dahlias, and received awards from gardening organisations for the excellence of his blooms. Albert Vickery said men used to 'fight tooth and nail' to produce the champion dahlia, or the prize beans or tomatoes. When the gardeners won awards, Albert said: 'You've got no idea – it was like they'd won a Rolls Royce!'

One year, Albert grew some dahlias and was so proud of them that he submitted them in the show. But when he asked Horticultural Society stalwart Alf Radnell what he thought of Albert's dahlias, Alf answered: 'They're quite a good exhibit, but they're more the cabbage variety' – in other words, they were most unlikely to pick up an award!

The garden show raised considerable funds for the church, but once the driving forces behind it such as Jack Broadbent and Geoff Harrison died, the society started to falter, and eventually disappeared during the 1980s.

As well as his close involvement with the Horticultural Society, Jack Broadbent was a vestry member for many years. He was church treasurer from 1941 to 1979, a churchwarden from 1949 to 1979, was closely involved with the football and cricket clubs, and with his fine baritone voice, was a prominent church choir member. The multipurpose room under the church was later to be named the 'Broadbent Room' in Jack's and his wife Gwen's honour.

John Amor was the vestry representative for St Mary's Community Service Group from 1970 to 1974. This was an outreach group of about six men, which aimed to provide material help and practical advice in the name of the church to people facing financial, health or family problems, whether or not they were members of St Mary's (and most were not).

The group achieved a high profile in the early 1970s with a campaign for Camberwell City Council to become involved in social welfare. A packed gallery in the council chamber watched as council narrowly voted to appoint a full-time social worker.

St Mary's Community Service Group members were excited by this achievement, and John Amor offered council the church's assistance for anyone the social worker might wish to refer to the church. Although Amor received frequent phone calls from the newly-appointed social worker, St Mary's was not permitted to have any contact with the social worker's clients: St Mary's was treated merely as an anonymous source of money for handouts. This led to a rapid depletion of the group's finances and ultimately a loss of enthusiasm among its members.

Rev Fraser Withington, the fifth vicar of St Mary's, succeeded Rev Roberts in 1966 His incumbency would continue into the mid-1970s. Withington had a reputation for being a vigorous man, and this was evident in his early years in the parish.

At the church AGM in February 1970, the issue of the urgent need to update the vicarage was raised. The vestry said it was in 'fair condition', a view not shared by the vicar, who described it acerbically as 'completely lacking in convenience, warmth or room for family living'.

By July 1971, the wardens made the decision to replace the building entirely. 'The vestry could hardly have reached any other conclusion, in the light of the architect's estimate that some rebuilding and complete renovation of the present inadequate dwelling would cost in the region of \$14,000,' the wardens reported in the *Gazette*. To put this estimate in perspective, a weatherboard Californian bungalow in nearby Radnor Street sold for \$14,750 in the same year.

After considerable debate, the Vestry decided to 'engage A V Jennings to build an excellent "stock" model house, which fulfils every requirement for a vicarage house'. To the great relief of the vicar, the new vicarage was completed by February 1972.

A quirky incident was recorded in the *Gazette* of August 1971. Under the heading of 'A thief in the night', the vicar was 'confounded and intensely annoyed' to report that the vicarage letter-box had been stolen. 'Someone, seeing the box with its accompanying "vicarage" sign, had removed it during the night,' lamented Rev Withington. 'A sad comment of our so-called "respectable" society of today,' Withington concluded.

A parish Fair had been held in 1967, raising \$2500 for church funds, and after a two-year gap, another Fair was held in 1969. The need for such a fair was spelt out starkly in the *Gazette*: 'Not only must the Vestry continue to raise money, but we must have it in ever-increasing amounts'. The 1969 Fair raised \$1250.

The 1972 'Grand Fair' was officially opened by actor Leonard Teale, who praised the 'mateship of people working together in a common interest'. It raised \$1150. By 1976 the Fair proceeds were \$2200, with the Vickerys' trash and treasure stall contributing the lion's share (\$1043-28) of the total.

This family-run stall, involving father, mother and children, was to continue to provide a significant percentage of the Fair's funds, year after year. By 1979 the Fair proceeds totalled \$4024, with trash and treasure contributing \$2222, or about 55 per cent of the total.

Late in 1973 the previously thriving Sunday School had been disbanded, as had the choir. The vestry resolved to look into the reasons for the demise of these activities. By the June 1974 vestry meeting, a choir of eight parishioners had been formed, but by the 1975 AGM, there was still no Sunday School, despite 'tremendous efforts by the vicar and others'. However by August a Sunday School was up and running again, albeit in the hands of a roster of parents.

Of even greater concern to the vestry had been the large debt the church was carrying. For example, at the December 1972 vestry meeting, the church's total debt stood at \$26,253.62. Twenty per cent of the debt at that time (\$5344.99) was the shortfall on the organ fund. Vestry considered allocating \$344.99 to the organ fund to reduce it to an even \$5000.

By March 1974, the financial situation was described in the *Gazette* as 'critical', which meant that 'we must all do some serious thinking about our own attitudes ... and ask ourselves *just what we can do individually* to improve the situation.' In April, the vestry recommended a campaign to increase envelope pledges by 33 per cent. At this time there were 340 families or single parishioners on the parish list, living in 117 streets.

At the vestry meeting on Wednesday 14 March 1973, 55 years after the establishment of St Mary's, a significant event took place. The vicar welcomed Vera Jones to vestry, and 'made note of this historic occasion, being the first time a member of the fairer sex has become a member of the vestry of St Mary's'.

Vera Jones and her sister Maisie were St Mary's stalwarts for many years. So committed to St Mary's was Vera that she bequeathed her entire estate to the church, for which Frank Roberts was executor. Roberts worked to ensure that funds from the estate were used in St Mary's best interests.

With the precedent set in vestry, another woman, Eunice Raymond, joined the vestry at its March 1974 meeting. The same meeting resolved to send a letter of appreciation to Harry Pearson for his 50 years of service to the church as a vestryman and churchwarden.

As well as Vera Jones, Eunice Raymond and the vicar, members of the vestry in March 1974 were Roy Manley (vicar's warden and lay reader), Jack Broadbent (churchwarden and church secretary), John Barnes, John Covill, Nelson Cox, Barry King, Frank Roberts, and Albert Vickery.

At the 14 March meeting, the church's total debt was reported as \$25,984.34 and funds owing on the organ had been reduced below the \$5000 barrier to \$4527.21. By October 1974 the debt was still a daunting \$25,822.45 and \$3690.29 was still owing on the organ. The *Gazette* repeatedly cautioned that a successful November Fair was essential, 'in view of our need to maintain a sound financial situation'.

It was the time of the 'first oil shock', when many oil exporting nations proclaimed an oil embargo, leading to a quadrupling of oil prices and severe effects on the global economy. The position was exacerbated by the 'second oil shock' of 1979 when the price of crude oil doubled.

In Australia in 1974, the economy stalled, government spending escalated and consumer prices rose rapidly. All of this hit home at the local level, and St Mary's was of course not immune from the effects of the economic downturn.

The times were testing and the world was trying to come to terms with a totally unfamiliar economic situation. There was hand-wringing in the August 1974 issue of the *Gazette*. 'It is doubtful if there has ever been a culture so radically preoccupied with the world,' wrote the vicar, 'and a world for which "God is dead".'

Change was also imminent in the incumbency. Reporting to the church's 1975 AGM, Rev Withington said there was 'still some chance of a change of local priest', but that although he wished to remain as incumbent, 'a change might be for the good of himself and the parish'. At the same meeting, tribute was paid to retiring church treasurer, Jack Broadbent, for his decades in the job. Broadbent died in 1980.

There had been rumblings about the vicar's performance. At the August 1975 vestry meeting, Eunice Raymond spoke of the 'dismay' of some elderly parishioners whom the vicar had not visited.

By the May 1976 vestry meeting, the vicar had advised Roy Manley that he would be leaving the parish, but could not say when. However, by the end of the year his 10-year incumbency period at St Mary's was due to expire, so even if no precipitative action were taken, Withington's tenure could be terminated at that time.

Meanwhile, said Roy Manley, 'there are a number of prominent ministers who have shown interest in our parish'. Vera Jones asked if other adjoining parishes were 'suffering as we were' and Albert Vickery replied that they were not.

Barry King said the situation was becoming critical. 'We could see the parish going rapidly from solid to needy,' he said. 'The last straw was when we revived the church Fair to boost revenue, and all turned out to help. Fraser Withington went to Flemington.'

Withington departed in 1976, and was replaced by the Rev Fred Bedbrook on part stipend, assisted by the Rev Alf Donnelly, a retired priest (non-stipend). Rev Bedbrook was a professional accountant, and he immediately set about retrieving the church's finances. Barry King said Fred Bedbrook was 'great', and 'things turned under him'.

It was no fault of Fred Bedbrook's, but during his incumbency the church shed, full of precious, revenue-raising newspapers, burned to the ground, an incident which even made the daily papers, with the journalists no doubt sensing a story in a conflagration which involved their 'product'.

In 1977 a new financial program was introduced, with parish giving lifted onto a higher plane.

Among the other achievements during this time were:

- The beginning of a program of restoration and maintenance, including the replacement of the ceiling in the Manley Hall.
- The introduction of a new prayer book and hymn book (though the old prayer book was retained for some services – see below).
- The removal of pews from the baptistry and its conversion into a side chapel.
- St Mary's accepting the responsibility for religious instruction at Camberwell South Primary School, with the vicar supervising a team of instructors. This responsibility continued into the 21st century.
- The revival of the Sunday school, which went on to gain in strength for quite some time before going into decline again.

In late 1978 the new Australian prayer book had arrived and was being used in the church, although the old 1662 prayer book was not discarded. The 1662 book was still used on the first and third Sundays of the month at 8am, at 10am on the fifth Sunday, at midweek services and at all home communions.

In September 1978, parishioners learned that the Rev Bedbrook, their vicar of just over two years, who had qualifications in financial management, was to become secretary/accountant of the Australian Clergy Provident Fund.

'Mr and Mrs Bedbrook have endeared themselves to us all,' wrote Roy Manley, 'and have earned our congratulations for their magnificent work in the varied aspects of parish life'.



Rev Victor Maddick

The Rev Bedbrook was succeeded by the Rev Victor Maddick in February 1979. As the 1980s dawned, the excitement and optimism of the brief Bedbrook era was to be dampened slightly, though the financial base was much sounder. The theme was to be one of consolidation and modest development.

Chapter 2

The 1980s

As the 1980s dawned, the excitement and optimism of the brief Bedbrook era was to be dampened slightly, though the financial base was much sounder.

Parishioner Barry King said Vic Maddick 'made a great impact in the parish, although in a different way from Fred Bedbrook. His learned sermons were outstanding.'

The big-picture theme during Maddick's incumbency was to be one of consolidation and modest development; and happily, at the start of the decade the wardens could report that St Mary's was in good shape. Reporting to the AGM in February 1981, the Vicar spoke of 'steady progress, which is the mark of a living parish'. Church attendances (at the Sunday and Wednesday services) had risen from 4963 to 5880 over the previous year. The new Australian Prayer Book was providing enhanced opportunities for lay participation in services.

Vestry members at the beginning of the new decade included (as well as the Vicar) Mary Brodie, John Covill, John Gray, Geoff Heeps, Barry King, Roy Manley, John Manton, Vic McCrea, Chris Morris, Eunice Raymond, Roma Sell, Frank Roberts and Albert Vickery.

The wardens, Roy Manley, Frank Roberts and Albert Vickery, reported that the 1980 church Fair had raised a record \$4000, on a day of 'delightful fellowship' between parishioners and visitors. They reported that church property was in 'a good state of repair', with a better sound system in place in the church; and outside, the garden of remembrance was now enclosed by a brick wall. A major item of expense in 1981 was the \$11,000 it would cost to refurbish the lower hall toilets, which was to be financed by a loan from the Diocesan Rolling Fund.

But there was a sad note: having given St Mary's two excellent years, his 'uneven health' had led the Rev Victor Maddick to decide to take an early retirement. Maddick retired on 28 February 1981, and the new Vicar – the Rev John Wight, coming to St Mary's from St James, Sydal – was inducted by the archbishop on 20 May 1981.

In August, Wight spoke in the *Gazette* of the 'quality and atmosphere' of St Mary's, which 'undoubtedly enriches our worship'. He saw evidence of 'considerable warmth and love in the congregation'. He was pleased that there was a pastoral care group. 'If its work develops well,' he said, 'it will be of great importance to parish life'.

But shadows were looming. Times were becoming tough as 1981 unfolded: the world was heading into some of the worst economic conditions in 40 years. This was reflected in a report to vestry on the Planned Giving Program, which lamented that parishioners participating in the program had 'set their sights too low'. Just 25 per cent of pledges were \$5 per month and over, and 15 per cent were just a solitary dollar.

Disturbingly, the church continued to depend too much on the proceeds of the Fair to keep it solvent. John Wight wrote in the November 1981 *Gazette*: 'I wish it were possible ... that our efforts were able to be directed towards helping people in need, or for missions or for some kind of community service. But this is not possible, because we are absolutely dependent on the income from our fete to cover deficiencies in our normal operating revenue.' Fortunately, Fair proceeds continued to climb: in 1981 the Fair raised \$6000, an increase of 50 per cent over the 1980 Fair.

Pastoral care was to become an issue as Wight's incumbency unfolded, but this was the honeymoon period as he settled in to the new job and started to make his mark. At the April 1982 vestry meeting, Wight was commended for his Mothering Sunday and Easter services.

Change was accelerating. The first two years of Rev Wight's incumbency were marked by a continuing loss of older families from the parish, through the deaths of senior family members or through families departing from the community.

Property values meanwhile increased dramatically in the neighbourhood and throughout Melbourne, helping to change the character of the area once more. South Camberwell was rapidly becoming an expensive area in which to buy. As well, it seemed that many of the new families moving into the area had little interest in becoming church members.

Compounding this, many families which the church had acquired as new parishioners seemed less inclined to become 'every week' churchgoers, and church attendances began to decline.

Three members of the church's founding families also died at about this time, with Gwen Broadbent dying at 97 and Margaret Harrison at 87 during October 1981 and Grace Shilcock, Lorna Vickery's mother, in June 1982. There was sadness at the loss of these elderly parishioners, and there was a sense of poignancy that links with the church's earliest days were becoming more tenuous as the decade wore on.

It was a time when traditional ways of conducting Anglican services were beginning to change, with less emphasis on the formal way services should be conducted. The clear demarcation lines between Protestant churches, and even between Protestant and Roman Catholic churches, were beginning to blur. An ecumenical service was held at St Mary's in November 1980.

But some 'Christian' sects were seen to be well beyond the pale, though attempts were made to understand the sects' way of thinking. The February/March *Gazette* announced that there would be a series of Lenten addresses on the 'sects', entitled 'Christian Deviations'. Seventh Day Adventism, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses and Christian Science would be dealt with. 'Looking at these aberrations from the mainstream of Christian doctrine may help us to appreciate the way in which "orthodoxy" is established,' said the *Gazette*.

Cares about the flagging Australian economy and the continuing arms race between the Soviet Union and the West were cast aside in the middle of July 1982, when parishioners were invited to 'take your sporrans out of mothballs' and participate with enthusiasm in 'St Mary's Highland Fling' in the Lower Hall. 'Haggis and bagpipes and Scottish dancing from St Andrew's Ladies' Pipe Band' were promised. The event was a great success, with 100 people present, and the Vicar commented whimsically: 'I did not notice any anti-haggis reactions'.

Back to reality, and concerns deepened about the church's deteriorating financial state. The Vicar wrote: 'The situation that has been foreseen for a long time is now rapidly approaching, that income will be grossly inadequate for satisfactory operation of the parish in 1983'. He said vestry had decided, after due consideration, to seek the support of outside consultants to develop a planned giving program early in 1984.

Newspapers were still faithfully being collected, bundled and sold for recycling, with proceeds now devoted to repaying a loan taken out for rebuilding the toilets in the lower hall. But too often the papers were not properly bundled, and the task to tie them properly fell to the ever-faithful Lorna Vickery, with very little help coming from her fellow parishioners.

The recyclers demanded that the papers be properly bundled, and without Lorna's work the newspaper collection operation would probably have ground to a halt. It finally did so, in 1983.

In October 1983 there was another sign of the growing acceptance of the Australian Prayer Book, as the vestry decided that commencing in November 1983, the 1662 prayer book would only be used on a monthly basis, albeit during a trial period.

On finances, there was a little more optimism at the 1984 AGM, held on 26 February, at least from the Vicar. He reported that the financial situation had improved as a result of the institution of the Planned Giving Programme in April 1983. The Vicar anticipated 'still further gains' during 1984.

There was sadness at the closure of the Garden Club, after almost 40 years. St Mary's sold the extensive shelving which the Garden Club had filled with blooms and vegies at its shows over so many years to St James' Anglican Church in Glen Iris.

Frank Roberts became Vicar's warden, replacing Fred Doidge, who became a people's warden, and Chris Morris, Ian Curry, Brian Goodwin and Paul Orchard were added to the vestry, accompanying Florence Kendall, Barry King, Lesley Laing and Vic McCrea.



*Voluntary kitchen 'staff' at many a St Mary's event –
Norma and Hugh Grayson, Dot Porter, Mavis Draper*

Lunch after the AGM was provided by the hard-working Norma Grayson and her Thursday Evening Group. Although she rarely attended St Mary's services, Norma, supported by her husband, Hugh, and usually by her group of ladies, provided delicious food at many a church function over a long period. She frequently made or paid for all the food herself, never expecting recompense.

At the May 1984 vestry meeting, finance committee chair Chris Morris painted a different financial picture from the Vicar's rosy one at the AGM, reporting that church income was being adversely affected by a \$1500 reduction in Planned Giving funds. An urgent direct mail campaign was set up, leading to optimism that planned giving could show an annual increase of about \$7000.

Vestry resolved that the lower church hall be renamed the 'Manley Hall', to recognise the services provided to the church by the Manley family over many years. Frank Roberts reported that Roy and Clair Manley were 'thrilled' at the honour bestowed on them. At the Patronal Festival, held on 11 November, and attended by 91 parishioners, the hall was officially named the Manley Hall.

Meanwhile the design and shape of the *Gazette* had been changed, with a stylised drawing of the church included on the cover, drawing favourable comments from the vestry.

Along with Norma's Thursday group, other church agencies at this time included a Contact and Care Group (led by Helen Roberts), Women's Fellowship (led by the ubiquitous Lorna Vickery), and Armchair Travellers (led by Mary Adams).

Ecumenism was still in the air, with the minister of Camberwell Uniting Church inviting members of other churches join his people in home groups during Lent to discuss a new book, *The Spirit, Giver of Life*. Rev Wight encouraged St Mary's people to participate. 'It is extremely important that we respond positively to invitations of this kind,' he said. On the world scene, the 1984 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity took place from 31 May to 10 June.

In September, organist Bob Craven left St Mary's after 12 years in the position. He was to become organist and choirmaster at St James', Dandenong. Craven had become frustrated with the small numbers willing to sing in the choir, although those who were members of the choir were enthusiastic in their work. Craven's wife, Judy, had been an active church member at St Mary's.

Len Kirchner became the new organist/choirmaster late in the year, and there were high hopes that the church choir could be rejuvenated and reinforced with the addition of new members. But by May 1985 the Vicar felt moved to appeal to the parish for more support for the choir. 'There surely must be among our people just a few who enjoy singing sufficiently to give a small amount of time in this way,' he wrote. But the appeal mainly fell on deaf ears.

The October *Gazette* had reported a shortfall of receipts against expenditure of \$5900, but noted that the deficiency would 'close' substantially as the year proceeded; however there was a continuing reliance on a good Fair result to help make ends meet. An arrears of about \$1700 in pledges was noted. Hard work ensured the [1985] Fair was indeed a success, with receipts totalling more than \$7500.

The financial position was not helped when the chapel altar candlesticks were stolen, and insurance only partially covered the replacement cost of \$150, leaving an \$80 shortfall. In the *Gazette*, the Vicar wondered if a parishioner might make up the shortfall.

However, a financial report tabled in the March 1985 *Gazette* was more positive, describing the 1984 financial year as 'satisfactory... with both income and expenditure about \$1000 above budget, with an almost balanced result, as planned'.

On the national scene, there was a federal election on 1 December 1984 at which Prime Minister Bob Hawke's Labor government was returned. The economy was recovering, with growth in activity, employment and real income, a reduction in inflation and an improved investment outlook. A long-term drought had ended.

The Vicar was cautiously optimistic about the way ahead for the nation, and more particularly for the people of St Mary's. He wrote in the March 1985 *Gazette*: 'It is very easy for us, when our livelihood and future is not immediately threatened to be insensitive, even unaware, of the great uncertainties in which many people here and in other countries are placed. In many ways the future for our world is still very clouded with uncertainties and dangers.'

In April 1985, when the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Robert Runcie visited Melbourne, St Mary's organised a bus to enable parishioners to attend a Great Festival Eucharist, held appropriately in Melbourne's Festival Hall. About 40 parishioners and guests participated in the Festival Eucharist, but the verdict was that the ageing venue 'left a lot to be desired' and that the event left them with 'mixed feelings'.

The next day, Dr Runcie attended a special ecumenical service of prayer and thanksgiving in St Patrick's Cathedral.

The Armchair Travellers' group had teetered a bit towards closure in 1984, but by mid-1985 it experienced something of a revival, led by those stalwarts Lesley Laing and Norma Grayson. The Laing and Grayson names popped up everywhere; in early preparations for the Fair (for which Lesley was convenor), in the Thursday evening group, in plans for the Mothers' Day cake and plants stall in Hartwell, for Meals on Wheels, for an annual Christmas party for senior citizens (Norma was organiser) and in many other areas of parish life, including the Evening Group (of which Norma was honorary secretary) and the social committee (of which both were active members).

Maintenance of the church and the vicarage was a constant but necessary issue at vestry meetings. At the May meeting, there was discussion about the vicarage re-painting (now completed), restoration of the Manley Hall roof guttering and concern about the floor in the same hall, and plans for new heating in the Tidmarsh (upper) Hall.

At the same meeting, the ever-faithful and gracious Florence Kendall reported on the Intercare church care group committee, involving about 10 churches, on which she was St Mary's representative, and of which she was deputy president. Along with Frank Roberts and Chris Morris, Florence was also the church's Synod representative.

The issue of full or part-time ministry at St Mary's was raised at the 1985 church AGM. Finance committee convenor Chris Morris spoke of the 'demanding and challenging task' the church faced if it were to maintain a full-time ministry based on its current income sources, which remained 'over-dependent on the results of the church Fair and the generosity of its participants, together with other givers'.

Meanwhile the church's Contact and Care group, led by Helen Roberts, continued to work behind the scenes. Its mission, as stated in the *Gazette*, was 'to help in time of need with basic problems such as food, shopping, transport to appointments or church, friendly visiting of the sick or isolated, etc.' In August, the group conducted a successful pastoral care seminar, which attracted 42 people from St Mary's and also from a variety of parishes and denominations.

New vestry member, young Kate Roberts, was a mover and shaker in the field of encouraging young people to take an interest in church matters. In July 1985 she got 15 young people together to rehearse for a play, Alan Hopgood's *And the Big Men Fly*. It was performed in October, and judged by the vicar to be 'great fun, well produced, and acted remarkably well for so young a team'. As ever, the indefatigable Norma Grayson and her 'girls' came up with a delicious meal.

There was great sadness at St Mary's around the middle of the year when an era ended with the death of Roy Manley on 19 June. He had been admitted to Sandringham Hospital for surgery earlier in the year, and at first appeared to be recovering well.

Roy had served on the vestry for 35 years, and was vicar's warden for 10 years. As well as his great record as a lay minister, his wise and benign presence was a most important influence on the church for well over three decades. Outside St Mary's, Roy had been a respected teacher and school principal, as well as serving for many years as secretary of the Victorian High Schools' Past Principals' Association, and with energy and leadership in a wide variety of other fields.

At year's end, brows were once again creased over financial matters. The church treasurer, John Amor, wrote in the *Gazette* that the church was likely to have a budget shortfall of around \$2000, despite an excellent Fair result of more than \$7500.

Lesley Laing decided to step down from the position of Fair coordinator, a decision Vestry accepted with regret at its February 1986 meeting, recording a minute of 'deep appreciation' for Lesley's energetic leadership. At the same meeting the Vicar was also praised for his 'interest and attention to his duties'. Geoff Heeps was appointed Fair coordinator, with Lesley agreeing to provide support.

Early in 1986, the Sigley name started to appear in church documents, with Glenys becoming the new coordinator of the junior Sunday school, assisted by Marilyn Stryker, Thelma Swifte and Sandra Barnes. Rod Kitchin led the intermediate division, helped by Suellen Gray and Judi Coffey. By mid-year, Sunday school enrolments had reached 37, with as many as 23 children attending on one morning, although numbers in the very youngest group were small.

Hall hire was both a source of revenue and of maintenance issues. But the vestry was concerned that the church had no public liability insurance, some tenants had left the halls in a dirty state, and the Toddler Kindy Gymparoo group which hired the Tidmarsh Hall complained that the children were picking up splinters from the floor – they politely requested that the floor be sanded.

Even the ever-patient and gracious Norma Grayson stressed at the 1986 AGM that those who used the Manley Hall kitchen must clean it, and that she was 'sick and tired of cleaning up after previous users'.

Ernie and Glenys Sigley invited parishioners to a 'Get to Know You' barbecue lunch, which was to take place after the Harvest Festival service at St Mary's on 4 May, on a vacant block of land they owned next to their home in Atkins Avenue. It was to be the first of several occasions on which the Sigleys hosted church events. As well, Ernie would often give his time and talents as MC at events held at the church.

The barbecue and games were a major success with children and adults enjoying cricket and other games in beautiful weather, and many people taking the opportunity to get to know their fellow parishioners. Unfortunately, however, there were few Sunday school children and parents present, although this group had been a major 'target audience' of the 'Get to Know You' initiative.

After the success of the youth group play in the previous October, Kate Roberts continued to plan young people's activities, including a trivial pursuit night, ten-pin bowling, a youth service at St Paul's Cathedral, and a health foods night.

There were continuing concerns about the 'life and growth' of St Mary's, and rumblings about the Vicar's performance.

A parish consultation was planned, under the direction of Rev Tom Binks, director of the diocesan Department of Christian Education. As well, the Vicar agreed to discuss 'the aspirations and concerns that we share' with the Regional Bishop; and the Vicar and wardens resolved to 'resume more regular meetings (probably monthly)' to enable two-way communication of issues affecting the Vicar and the parish.

The consultation was set for 27-29 June, 1986. Tom Binks wrote to parishioners that 'there is a need for the parish to review its past, evaluate its present, and plan its future'. He encouraged parishioners to 'be in it yourselves, and do your part by committing full time to

the two sessions'. In the event, about 30 parishioners took part, a 'reasonable' attendance, in the Vicar's view. Further discussions were required, and Tom Binks promised to 'look in' again during September.

Replying to a letter from vestry members, Archbishop Penman said he had spoken to Bishop Butterss, who told him that the wardens had resolved to meet with the Bishop to discuss matters of concern. 'It seems to me that as long as this is under way it would be inappropriate for me to become involved ...' He was 'very concerned for the situation in the parish', and assured the vestry of his 'prayers and deep concern'.

Bishop Butterss attended the November vestry meeting, and said that he had been in constant contact with the Archbishop, the Vicar and wardens regarding the incumbency and the Vicar's performance. He had considered 'all remarks and criticism from both sides', and that not all he had heard was negative. As a parish, he said, 'we need to be less negative and more positive'. However: 'In the foreseeable future, and certainly not the immediate future, your Vicar John may well consider another appointment.' There the matter stood, for the time being at least.

At about this time, John Amor wrote that although the 'active workers of St Mary's' were generally dissatisfied with what was happening in the parish, they were 'reluctant to do much about it'. He queried whether the annual expense of \$40,000 to keep St Mary's running was justified. 'To close St Mary's may be too drastic, but a solution may lie in the sharing of worship and clergy with one of the neighbouring parishes,' he wrote.

The usual anxiety about the financial result of St Mary's all-important (1986) Fair was alleviated, when the final proceeds were tallied: \$8788 – a record result. 'As fair convenor Geoff Heeps remarked: 'I am sure our wardens and treasurer must have slept very peacefully on that Saturday evening'. With all fundraising efforts during 1986 accounted for, a total of \$9637 had been raised, a most satisfactory result.

Early in 1987 yet another stalwart of the church, Roy Duncan, died. Roy had worshipped at St Mary's since 1955, and had been married in the old church. Roy made many contributions to parish life, including tithing his income; Jack Broadbent once commented that St Mary's 'would have closed', had it not been for Roy's contribution.

Early in 1987, organist Len Kirchner departed after two years, and secretary Marie Molnar resigned. By July a new organist, Joyce Iggulden, a professional musician, was appointed, and she arrived with high hopes of developing St Mary's music ministry, and was ready to tackle the elusive task of fostering a choir. There was no ready replacement for Marie Molnar, and the vicar hoped some voluntary secretarial work might be forthcoming.

Kate Roberts announced she would not stand for vestry or as youth leader in 1986/87 as she would be moving to Murrumbidgee and was also busy at work. She agreed to remain temporarily as youth leader; before the year was out, a new leader had come on the scene: the highly energetic Glenn Scott.

At the church's AGM on 1 March, the wardens once again bewailed the over-dependence on a successful Fair result, but praised the efforts of Geoffrey Heeps (convenor), Lesley Laing and others which led to the remarkable \$8788 result in 1986. Together with other fundraising, this had helped to keep the church's deficit to \$1100, when a \$2000 shortfall had been feared.

However at the March vestry meeting, John Amor made the sobering point that the church's pledged giving, at \$21,000 per year, covered less than half of its running costs, and considerable effort would be required to bring it up to the budgeted level of \$24,000.

At the AGM, Glenys Sigley joined the Vestry, beginning a remarkable, almost unbroken record of service on the vestry which would extend from March 1987 to the end of 2015.

In May, Florence Kendall retired as St Mary's representative on the Intercare (church care) group. She had served as deputy president, and as a most active group member, faithfully reporting to vestry on the group's activities.

On 14 June, Tom Binks returned for a parish consultation follow-up. The *Gazette* reported on a 'worthwhile afternoon', in which discussion centred on parish development and growth, youth work and possible innovations in worship.

The ordination of women in the Anglican church was a controversial issue at this time. Two women had been ordained in St Mary's diocese, but as the Vicar reported in the *Gazette*, a minority of Anglicans still opposed it. The church had purchased several copies of the study material on the ordination of women, *Towards Understanding*, and the Vicar encouraged his flock to acquire a copy and read it carefully.

After a planned bush dance had been cancelled in 1986 when too few parishioners booked, a more conventional parish dinner on 12 September was 'an enjoyable night with an excellent meal' (as usual the result of tireless work by Norma Grayson and her team); and even better, the church coffers benefited from the event to the tune of \$1000 in much-needed funds.

To make the financial position crystal clear to parishioners, a document, *The Challenge Ahead* was distributed. In it, the Vicar, David Eggleton (warden and envelope secretary) and John Amor (acting treasurer) informed parishioners that 'despite careful economies', a deficit of more than \$3000, to add to the previous year's deficit of \$1100, could be the result of the church paying its \$3300 assessment to the diocese, and therefore this payment would not be made in 1987. Parishioners were urged urgently to 're-appraise their present level of commitment' to St Mary's.

The position was not helped by the stockmarket crash of 20 October. 'I hope none of you have been adversely affected,' wrote the Vicar, but economic times were most uncertain.

Despite the unusual rainy conditions, once again the (1987) Fair was an outstanding success. However, Fair convenor Geoffrey Heeps admitted he had broken out in a cold sweat the night before, when Rosemary, his wife, had asked, 'Geoff, what happens if it rains tomorrow?'

He said: 'After what then seemed an eternity, I answered: "I don't have a wet weather plan". Despite worrying himself to sleep that November night, Geoff could actually have slept serenely. Rain or shine the show went on, and a record result of \$9199 eventuated.

Among the many dedicated contributors to the success of St Mary's Fair each year was Bert Phillips, whose speciality was reconditioning bicycles, scooters, toys, prams. Bert, a World War I veteran, lovingly restored the pre-loved items to almost new status, and the shiny 'new' items were sold at the Fair.

Another St Mary's stalwart, Harry Nugent, who along with his wife Gladys, had been a regular member of St Mary's congregation for many years, and was a former vestryman, died on 23 January 1988 at the age of 87.

Former vicar (1960-63) Bishop Richard Lipp and Mrs Lipp attended a service at St Mary's on 21 February, and Lipp spoke 'most beautifully and affectionately' to the congregation in the hall after the service.

Despite the ever-present cloud of financial pressure hovering over the church, there was some good news at the 1988 AGM on 28 February: a surplus of \$2700 was declared, though it was achieved at the cost of the diocesan assessment, and through a reduction in contributions to missions.

A new vestry was elected, albeit below full strength, consisting of the Vicar, John Amor, David Ashton, John Corden, Paul Cuthbert, Florence Kendall, Lesley Laing, Vic McCrea and Chris Morris, but nominations for the two people's wardens and the secretary's and treasurer's positions were not forthcoming, perhaps an indication of uneasiness about where the church was heading, and the Vicar had not appointed his own warden.

The need to find office-bearers occupied most of the discussion at the February 1988 vestry meeting, particular note being made of the inability to fill some senior vestry positions, and some committee representative positions.

At the meeting, Florence Kendall also expressed concern about the church's lack of planning for the new year, remarking that St Mary's appeared to be putting all its energy into simply remaining afloat. 'Our supporters within and outside don't want their efforts to go only to meet St Mary's basic financial needs,' she said.

She suggested the formation of a special working committee to formulate a lively and attractive program, to plan parish meetings to encourage growth, and then to have a doorknock for new parishioners.

However the position had considerably improved by the April meeting. Joyce Iggulden had been elected as people's warden, Dorothy Stanley-Low agreed to become secretary, and John Amor became treasurer. Many other committee positions were also filled, including envelope secretary, which Evelyn Hunt agreed to take over when David and Mary Eggleton stepped down after five years of competent service.

By June, Paul Cuthbert was appointed Vicar's warden, and Lesley Laing was elected to the remaining people's warden position.

There was alarm in June, when heavy rain breached a valley on the church roof, and rainwater flooded part of the organ. Vic McCrea fixed the roof, and fortunately the water damage was not as extensive as was initially feared. The water-damaged section of the organ was stripped down and reconstructed, with the repair cost of \$200 fully covered by insurance.

The youth group was flourishing under youth leader Glenn Scott and newly-appointed youth convenor, Glenys Sigley. St Mary's linked with the St John's, Camberwell's youth group and monthly youth services were held alternately at St Mary's and St John's. Among the combined groups' activities within just over a month were a progressive dinner, a bowling/squash night, involvement in St Mary's 30th anniversary festival, a youth service and a 'pre-driver's' education session.

The anniversary festivities on 14 August, marking just over 30 years since the church building was dedicated and blessed on 9 August 1958 – were most successful. Bishop Butterss preached at a thanksgiving eucharist – 'a grand occasion', according to the vicar – with music provided by the organist, a choir and a brass ensemble, with help from young Sunday school children and the youth group.

Afterwards, more than 130 parishioners and guests sat down for lunch in the Manley Hall, with Norma Grayson and her helpers providing the usual delicious fare.

At the August vestry meeting there was lengthy discussion on the church's possible future direction, with Chris Morris presenting a paper on this issue. The consensus among vestry members was that St Mary's should continue in its present form, but there was lingering uncertainty about the future, and continuing concern about the Vicar's performance.

The AGM was held on 6 November as a result of legislation enacted in 1987 – the Parishes Act – which stipulated that the church year must now run from 1 October to 30 September. Paul Cuthbert was again appointed Vicar's warden, and Lesley Laing and Joyce Iggulden were re-elected as people's wardens.

In the November *Gazette*, the vicar wrote of his concern for St Mary's, with its 'very limited family base,' But he reported that 'for the immediate future the vestry has determined (with the expected support of parishioners) to "battle on"'. He felt there was cause for optimism, pointing to the anniversary celebrations in August, the growth in youth activities, and the approximately \$4000 increase in income over 1987, for the January-September period.

Late in the year the Vicar injured a knee, which required surgery in December. Archdeacon Gordon Brown stepped in to conduct all services in the Vicar's enforced absence.



*Publicity for the 1988 Fair in the local paper:
Lorna Vickery with her trash and treasure.*

The Fair was once again a success, bringing in a more-than-expected final total of \$8500, and providing the relied-on boost to the church finances. The calendar year ended with a small deficit, but the church voted to allocate \$650 to diocesan funds (having made no contribution at all in 1987) and \$800 to missions.

Church attendance figures continued to fluctuate, but the general trend was down. In 1978 there had been a total attendance of 4720, with congregations averaging 90 per week; in 1983 this had fallen to 3627 (averaging 69); in 1985 it was 4058 in total, averaging 78; and in 1988 there was a serious decline to a total of just 2478 for the year, with an average congregation of 47. This was a disturbing trend.

As 1989 unfolded, there were new enrolments in the Sunday school, bringing total enrolments to nine by April, but as always, teaching help was needed. Meanwhile the youth group continued to thrive under the direction of Glenn Scott and Glenys Sigley, and merged its activities with those of St John's. Glenn was appointed leader of the combined group, and

Glenys was elected chairperson of a parents' and friends' group, formed to support the combined group.

There were two very successful social events in the first half of 1989. On Mothering Sunday, 5 March 1989, there was a social cricket match at Lynden Park in Highfield Road, Camberwell, organised by Barry King, David Ashton and Ernie Sigley. In a picnic atmosphere on a fine, sunny day, families either participated in the game or enjoyed relaxing or socialising on the sidelines.

On a sunny Sunday in May, about 80 parishioners got together at the Sigley family's vacant block in Atkins Avenue, for a post-church barbecue and fun event, which also raised \$660 for missions.

Yet another link with St Mary's past was broken with the death of 94-year-old Vera Jones on 30 May. Vera, a teacher at Korowa Anglican Girls' School for many years, had been a parishioner for almost 60 years, and had been a key figure in maintaining the Sunday school for a long period, along with her sister, Maisie. Vera was known for her 'strong personality and sharp sense of humour'. She left a generous bequest to the church, half of which was to be devoted to St Mary's general purposes, and the other half to the organ fund.

Undoubtedly the financial stress continued to weigh on the parish. In April the Vestry wrote to Bishop Butterss about the parish assessment. Income growth had not proceeded as hoped, and the church feared that by the end of the year it would be operating close to the full extent of the \$5000 overdraft limit authorised by the diocese.

Although the vestry had resolved in August 1988 that a full-time ministry was still viable, it now told the Bishop that 'it is apparent that there has been little improvement [in growth], and that St Mary's does not have enough committed people to put our growth plan into effect'. Vestry added that it now seemed prudent 'to consider parish amalgamation, sharing or part-time ministry', and requested the Bishop's support in considering these options.

A major musical event took place at the church on 28 May, organised by choir director and organist, Joyce Iggulden. Members of the Camberwell Chorale and Caulfield City Choir joined St Mary's own choir members to perform Herbert Sumsion's *Communion Service in F Major*, and John Rutter's *God be in my Head*.

Positive activity among the young people of St Mary's and St John's continued, with a family eucharist on Sunday 18 June, at which youth leader Glenn Scott gave the address, based on the gospel of the day. There was a glimpse of the church's future music ministry during the service, with Nigel Swifte and Matthew Sigley playing guitars, accompanied by Joyce Iggulden on the piano.

As the vicar said, 'I feel we are perhaps "off and away" now with some more contemporary music which is still quite palatable to the regular congregation'. The church had bought copies of *Covenant Songs* (a book of modern songs) for use in services alongside the Australian hymn book.

Although Sunday school numbers had stabilised at around 10 during the year, these children had primarily come from just two families and there was little momentum, so it was decided to suspend the Sunday school.

There was an 'experimental' ecumenical event on 27 August after the 10am service, arranged by St Mary's worship committee, which involved a meeting with the people of the South Camberwell Uniting Church. There was a 'passionate and highly informed talk by Ms Anne Marriott' on her experiences in meeting Christians from Asia at a recent conference in

Hong Kong. The vicar commented: 'I am sure that this meeting will lead to further ecumenical endeavours'.

The entire Melbourne Anglican community was shocked at the news that Archbishop David Penman had died suddenly on 1 October, although there had been fears for his health after an earlier heart attack. Penman had been greatly respected both within the Anglican church and in the wider community, and Melbourne almost stood still as his cortege moved along Flinders Street after the funeral service.

At St Mary's the AGM was held on 26 November, with Paul Cuthbert appointed Vicar's warden and David Ashton and Frank Roberts elected as people's wardens, accompanied by vestry members Elrae and John Adams, Florence Kendall, Barry King, Arleen LaBrooy, Lesley Laing, Vic McCrea, Glenys Sigley and Dorothy Stanley-Low.

The balancing act of receipts versus expenditure had been performed more successfully than in many recent years, and included much higher giving to missions.

But, as the 1980s drew to a close, the clouds were continuing to gather over St Mary's. There was continuing dependence on a successful Fair result to help balance the budget, and there were diverging opinions on the subject of full-time versus part-time ministry. As well, the increasing secularisation of the nation was having its own declining effect on church attendances, and St Mary's was following the national trend.

This was a time when new ideas were needed, an evangelical outlook fostered, and a stronger focus placed on the church's mission, as expressed in the history of the first 50 years, 'that our Church in the power of the Holy Spirit will forever go forward', proclaiming the love of Jesus Christ in the local community.

However there was little doubt that the preoccupation with the Vicar's performance and the shortcomings in the way he carried out his duties, combined with the constant worry about the viability of the church, led to a sense of introspection at St Mary's. This aura of uncertainty would be carried forward into the early 1990s.

Chapter 3

The 1990s

In his final Vicar's report, to the 1990 AGM on 28 October, John Wight had spoken of the 'older folk' who had left the church over the years, and had not been replaced by younger generations. 'Our family base is very small,' he said. But many parishioners felt that Wight was prepared to resign himself to the concept that the 'family base' was small, and had not put enough effort into examining ways in which it might be expanded.

The discontent among many parishioners manifested itself in a letter to the Vicar dated 25 June 1990, copied to Bishop Robert Butterss, which expressed parishioners' views about Wight's role as Vicar.

Responding to the letter, the Bishop said he had known for some time of Wight's plans to retire from active ministry, 'towards the completion of 10 years' service at St Mary's'.

Butterss continued: 'The Vicar will himself make known to you his decision to resign from St Mary's in order to begin retirement'. Although his official duties would conclude at the end of November 1990, with accumulated long service leave and annual leave his official departure date would be in June 1991.

Writing in the *Gazette*, Wight said that in late 1989 he had begun to feel that the end of May 1991 – after 10 years at St Mary's – would be 'an appropriate time' to retire from full-time ministry. As well, he said, 'many of you know of my wife's deteriorating back problem, which has become a great trial for her and, if anything, has hastened the decision'.

A locum tenens was required, and an excellent one was found in the aptly named Rev Eric Christianson, a man of Scandinavian origins. Christianson was to win many friends at St Mary's, his work ethic, quiet efficiency, sense of humour and devotion to his temporary duties making an immediate impression on a parish which had lost considerable confidence in its incumbent vicar.

No one would have objected if Christianson had been satisfied just to keep the ship running on a steady course. But he was not content just to preserve the status quo. He launched several initiatives, including home groups, prayer meetings and monthly family church services.

Christianson had begun at St Mary's in January, working four days a week, and was immediately required to deal with feelings of resentment among some parishioners who felt that Wight had been pushed out before his time. But Christianson had a composed nature and projected a calming influence, helping to win over many of these disaffected parishioners. This was a critical factor for a church which was on the brink of welcoming a new vicar.

As Christianson set about this good work of reconciliation and consolidation, the incumbency committee – Lesley Laing, Frank Roberts and Glenys Sigley – had begun their own task of selecting a new vicar.

By mid-year 1991, the incumbency committee had identified a person who, to the committee, ticked all the boxes for a church like St Mary's. He was David Guy Stanley Rathgen, a New Zealander from Christchurch who was a part-time chaplain at Swinburne Institute of Technology (now Swinburne University of Technology). He had had previous appointments in New Zealand parishes, and chaplaincies in France and in Khartoum, Sudan.

The incumbency committee wrote to Bishop Butterss on 4 July, asking if Rathgen could be invited to St Mary's on 50 per cent of a full-time ministry, with a review to take place in 12 months. The Rathgen family would move into the vicarage on 19 August, David Rathgen would be inducted on 23 August, and his first service would be on 25 August.

The review in 12 months, would be preceded by '... an Evangelical Planned Giving Programme, to enable St Mary's to be able to, financially, offer a full-time ministry. David's wish is for full-time ministry after the end of 1992 when his appointment at Swinburne comes to an end.'

The Archbishop offered Rathgen the part-time position on 12 July.

The August *Gazette* cautioned: 'As far as costs are concerned, St Mary's parish is only responsible for half-time ministry, and therefore it must be understood that David won't be available in the same way as a full-time vicar'.

The *Gazette* continued: 'The time ahead is a period when both the vicar and the parish will need to prove that St Mary's is a full-time appointment. This will mean a greater effort on the part of St Mary's parishioners since they, in fact, will have to be involved more than ever in building up a viable parish – such an incentive is a challenge for all.'

Christianson departed in July, having worked productively and made many friends at St Mary's. On his departure, an unnamed parishioner wrote in the *Gazette*: 'We have indeed been blest during these past seven months to have in our midst and leading us, one such as Eric who is indeed a devout Disciple of Christ and who, had he been one of Christ's disciples at that time so long ago, would most certainly not have been one of those who turned away the women and children'.

Thoughts turned to making vicarage conditions more comfortable for the incoming Vicar and his family. The wardens had obtained a loan of \$6022 from the diocese for partial refurbishment of the vicarage, which included painting, repairing spouting and roof leaks, and internal work, including a new dining room door, a new gas stove, wardrobe and cupboard repairs and flooring replacement.

A 'large and representative' congregation attended the induction service on 23 August, despite wintry conditions. Welcoming the Rathgen family in the hall after the service, Warden Frank Roberts commented that it was 'good to see the lights on in the vicarage once again'.



Wardens David Ashton, Frank Roberts and Vic McCrea with David Rathgen (right) at Rathgen's induction service.

The challenge facing the church was clear as the Rathgen era got under way. Inevitably, as Rathgen rolled his sleeves up and got going, the cloud of financial deficit hovered over the church. The treasurer reported at the September vestry meeting that a deficit of \$4041 for the year ended 30 September was expected – which meant that the deficit had doubled during the year.

First impressions were good, from the Rathgen perspective. As David, his wife Berenice (Berry) and their children Anna (13) and Chris (10) settled in, David found much to like in what he saw in the neighbourhood: the front outlook to Bowen Street, with buses going to and fro, children on their way to school at Peate Avenue, and people enjoying leisure time in Bowen Gardens.

Berry was a registered nurse and a trained midwife. She would prove to be of stalwart support to David, and would become loved and respected as a dedicated worker in many aspects of St Mary's life. Anna, in particular, and Christopher, also participated in church activities. Anna went on to become a youth leader and a member of the vestry.

Rathgen showed a promising awareness of the task of attracting new parishioners to the church, inviting parishioners to view a video which explored ways of making the church attractive for young families. Parishioners were invited to an informal cocktail evening in the Manley Hall to meet and welcome the new vicar and his family.

Before long there were changes to worship procedure. From 1 December the 8am service was discontinued, meaning that there was just one service on Sundays, at 10am; from the same date the *Australian Prayer Book* became the primary book in use at services – the *Book of Common Prayer* was restricted to just the last Sunday of every month – and the church furniture was altered to a 'more friendly-looking arrangement'.

The Fair came and went, making \$9000 – short of the aimed-for \$12,000, but as always a day of fellowship, hard work, community outreach and fun.

Despite the fun and the Christmas celebrations, it was the time of 'the recession we had to have', as Paul Keating, federal Treasurer from 1983 to 1991, so flippantly described the economic circumstances of the time. Articles in the local paper, *Progress Press* (now *Progress Leader*) told of people approaching churches in Hawthorn, Kew and Camberwell, asking for food, or money for food. The Salvation Army was to open a soup kitchen in Camberwell – a move unheard of in prosperous Camberwell since the dark days of the 1930s Depression.

There was an encouraging rise in church attendances during the honeymoon days of the Rathgen incumbency, with total attendances during the period from 1 October to the second week of December rising by 24 per cent over the corresponding period in 1990; and the vicar reported to vestry in February that there were 'more attending in January [1992]'.

The church office at least was entering the age of computers: the vicar reported in February that he had 'negotiated the sale of my home word-processor and [purchased an] IBM-compatible computer'.

On the social side, the annual cricket match between the 'under 30s' and the 'over 30s' took place again at Lynden Park in Highfield Road, and it was again a successful event, bringing together parishioners young and old as players and spectators.

A 'Vestry Day' was held early in 1992, covering issues including the liturgy, relationships with the local community, finances, missions and property. Among the outcomes of the discussions which the vestry adopted at its February meeting were maintaining relationships

with the Bowen Street Family Centre (across the road from the church) with the aim of offering some of the church's services to the centre, and potentially recruiting young families as members of the church.

As always, finances were a major consideration, and vestry moved to establish a fundraising committee for 'specific purposes', which vestry would identify and recommend. Among the property issues were rising damp in the Broadbent Room – an issue which was to dog the church for many years. Lesley Laing was given first crack at taking action to hold back the waters.

On finance, the treasurer (Chris Morris) reported at the March vestry meeting that the church had a credit balance of \$7214, and that 'expenditure is well under control'. Vestry members suggested that in view of the satisfactory financial position, more of the church's reduced diocesan assessment could be paid, or more funds devoted to missions.

Chairing the meeting, David Ashton (warden) put forward a plan for David Rathgen to be appointed immediately to a two-thirds ministry, which would begin in 1993. However some vestry members felt this was a little hasty, and the wardens were asked to prepare a formal recommendation for the implementation of a two-thirds ministry.

This was at least provisionally put in place at the April vestry meeting. Barry King moved an amended motion that 'the vestry confirms its intention to reappoint David Rathgen to at least two-thirds ministry from 1 January 1993'. At the same meeting the treasurer had confirmed that on current indications the church could afford a two-thirds ministry in 1993; but not for the first time cautioned that 'we should aim at not being dependent on the fair to fund the ministry'.

The continuing use of the 1662 prayer book was causing unease in some quarters. The 8am service had been discontinued from the beginning of 1992, and vestry had decided that the old prayer book should be used at the 10am service on the last Sunday of the month over a six-month period in 1992, as a courtesy to older parishioners. But it was not used at all for at least two months in 1992. David Rathgen agreed to use the book in the service on the last Sunday in May.

But at the June vestry meeting, motions were passed 'recommending' the use of the *Book of Common Prayer* on the last Sunday of each month at the 10am service; and for its use on the first Sunday of each month at an 'abbreviated *Book of Common Prayer* holy communion service at St Mary's 8am service'. The restored 8am service was to be held on the first Sunday of the month. In July, Rathgen agreed to follow this plan, as a trial, during the remainder of the calendar year.

But the October vestry meeting resolved that the *Australian Prayer Book* should be used at the 10am service, at the 8am service on the first Sunday, and at the Wednesday morning service, 'provided that there is substantial agreement at the annual meeting'.

Numbers were small at 8am, although there was an increase from an average of five at these services in 1993 to 10 in 1994; but the average fell again to five in 1995 (when the time of the earlier service was changed from 8am to 8.30am).

In the year to 30 September 1993, attendance at 10am services averaged 58, and this increased to 62 in 1994; but the numbers declined to an average of 51 in calendar 1995, though in that year there were five 6pm Sunday youth services, with average congregations of 42.

The picture was much brighter at the other end of the age spectrum, according to the Incumbency Committee: young families were coming in growing numbers to the church. The committee's June 1992 meeting minutes concluded with an 'NB': 'St Mary's is a growing parish family of all ages – as in a domestic family, needs of all members must be catered for or the family breaks up'.

These sentiments were echoed at the AGM on Sunday 25 October. The wardens (David Ashton, Rod Kitchin, Vic McCrea and Frank Roberts) reported that there had been 'a steady increase in the size of our congregations' in David Rathgen's first full year as vicar.

'St Mary's has rung once again to the laughter and happy chatter of young children, together with their parents. Regrettably, a few older parishioners have made their decision not to attend as often as in the past, perhaps restricting their worship to when the *Book of Common Prayer* is used. Overall, last year's mood of renewal has been maintained and consolidated, and services have been innovative, uplifting and spiritually stimulating.'

The diocese agreed to a change of Rathgen's terms and conditions to a two-thirds ministry, as from 1 December 1992, and Rathgen accepted the new arrangements on 16 November. He was to work in the parish on Sundays, Mondays and Wednesdays, and to continue at Swinburne on Thursdays and Fridays.

(The two-thirds arrangement was subsequently endorsed at the November 1993 vestry meeting, and continued on into 1993/94; and the wardens were asked at that meeting to draw up a plan for Rathgen to become the church's full-time vicar from 1 October 1994.)

The annual statement, which had been tabled at the October vestry meeting, revealed a pleasing credit balance of \$8396, but as the treasurer remarked, 'without the Fair there would not be a credit balance'. Accordingly, the target for the 1992 Fair was set at \$10,000. (This was not achieved: the net Fair result was \$8323.) But the fundraising budget figure had been exceeded in the 1991/92 year, a result due in no small degree to the work of a group of indefatigable workers such as Lesley Laing and the anonymous Fair 'helpers'.

Economic times were not easy. The country was still recovering from the recession, which had been particularly deep in Victoria: among the casualties were the State Bank of Victoria and the Pyramid Building Society. (The former, which could trace its origins back to 1842, merged with the Commonwealth Bank in 1991, and the latter collapsed in 1990 with debts of \$2 billion.)

A slow recovery from recession began in the September quarter of 1991, but unemployment reached 11 per cent in 1992, the highest rate in Australia since the Great Depression.

In February 1992, the Vicar wrote a *Gazette* article entitled 'St Mary's helps', giving examples of the ways St Mary's was helping those in need. 'A young man of about 20 called [at the vicarage] asking for money to help him get to Sydney so that he could visit his brother who is in hospital as a result of a road crash. To him we were able to give a Met ticket so that he could at least get on the road a hitch a ride.'

Earlier, the Vicar had placed a basket at the church door for donations of groceries, to be given to needy people coming to the vicarage for help. 'When buying your weekly groceries,' he said, 'please add a couple of "rip-top" cans of baked beans or spaghetti ... These can be handed out and don't need to be cooked or opened with a can opener ...'.

St Mary's was also conscious of its responsibility to missions, and prayerfully supported Isabel and Lauren Dale, a missionary family in Egypt, and Philip and Margaret Higgins, in Tanzania, among others. (The Dale family came to Melbourne on leave during the year.)

Mission giving in 1992/93 was budgeted at \$8000, which would constitute 14 per cent of St Mary's gross income.

There were several successful social events during 1993, including the parish cricket match on 28 March, once again held at Lynden Park in Camberwell; another in a continuing series of 'slide nights' hosted by veteran traveller, Betty Huston, on 14 May; an organ recital at St Patrick's Cathedral on 23 May performed by virtuoso organist, John Mallinson, which raised \$640 for the church's organ fund; a parish dinner on 5 June which raised \$460; '100 years of musical comedy' on 2 October; and the annual 'Krazy Kapers Komedij Koncert' on 4 November, performed by the ladies of the Evening Group.

During the year three elements of a four-part parish development program were delivered, focusing on pastoral care, growth in faith and evangelism. The program was to be completed with a fourth element, stewardship, in May/June 2004.

The parish was aware that despite the influx of young families, few teenagers and young adults were attending church. During the parish camp, held at Merricks in May, it was decided to make young people the focus of the church's evangelistic outreach, and vestry resolved to establish a youth ministry, with vestry member Robert Reside appointed parish youth convenor.



Florence Kendall

The parish was deeply saddened to learn of the death of Florence Kendall on 13 August. She had been a most active member of vestry, right up to the May meeting, and had taken on a variety of tasks with quiet energy over many years. She was always ready to pass on a word of wisdom, or to proffer a cautionary note if she considered it necessary.

Florence was much loved and highly respected, and had worked for the church and the community with great energy and considerable organisational skills. She had a ready sense of humour, and was always ready to stand up for what she believed. She nourished a deep love of the Melbourne Football Club, about which she never wavered in her optimism that the club would return to its glory days of the 1950s. (It did not, in her lifetime.)

A new vestry took office at the church's AGM on 24 October, consisting of John Amor (warden), Lesley Laing, Chris Morris, Vic McCrea (warden), Simon Osborne, David Rathgen, Robert Reside, Frank Roberts (warden), Glenn Scott, Robert Stacy, Jill Williams and Kay Young.

The 1993 Fair was once again successful, raising \$9700. Joyce Iggulden, organist for several years, was farewelled at the 28 November church service. Bruce Brown took Joyce's place, beginning a long tenure as St Mary's organist. Patsy Kovac also came on board as organist for one Sunday a month.

A 'back to St Mary's' service was being planned as part of celebrations during 1994 of the church's 75th anniversary, which had actually occurred in 1993. Former vicar Fred Bedbrook was invited to preach at this very successful service on 21 August, attended by a congregation of 207. The ever-reliable Norma and Hugh Grayson ably provided the post-church lunch.

Other social events in 1994 included another well-attended Betty Huston slide night travelogue, which raised \$570, and a parish dinner on 18 June, organised by warden Vic McCrea.



Herald Sun, 25 November 1994, page 3

A momentous decision was taken at the May vestry meeting. Vestry voted, subject to diocesan ratification, to accept a proposal from Telstra to erect a cellular mobile telecommunications station on St Mary's property, which included a transmitting device to be fitted at the top of the church tower.

'There is no danger of it falling down, or interfering with your TV reception, your pacemaker, your hearing aid, or harming your own person,' the *Gazette* assured its readers. On the positive side, 'this should bring in a handsome rental,' the *Gazette* predicted; and headlined an article in the December edition: 'Is it a space ship? No! It's St Mary's tower'.

News of the tower installation even made it to the *Herald Sun* newspaper. Two photos appeared on page 3 of the Friday 25 November issue, one of which showed David Rathgen, rudimentary mobile phone in hand, pointing ethereally towards the church tower. 'The church has always been in the communications business,' he told the paper, 'and I don't think the building is so sacred it can't be touched. After all, God was happy to have his Son born in a dirty barn and manger — I don't think He is fussy about the building'.

The extension to the church tower took the form of framework on which the Telstra antennae were to be installed. Work was expected to be concluded by the end of February 1995. (Four years later, telecommunications company Optus also leased tower space for their own antennae.)

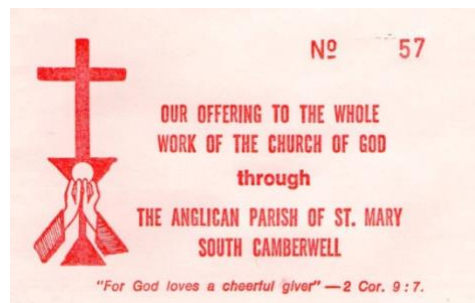
There was considerable awareness of the need to reach out to the local community, especially to young families which were seen as the future of the church. The Rev Graeme Sells, vicar of All Saints, Greensborough, was a guest at the May vestry, and spoke of the changes his church had been making to meet the needs of young families and young people in the church community. This included adopting new service times and establishing working groups to increase parishioners' involvement in church activities.

At the AGM, the vicar spoke of his disappointment that St Mary's had not engaged in any specific evangelistic activity. 'I think this a great shame,' he said, 'and I believe we need to continue to address our evangelism as well as our overseas connection.' However, he was delighted that the church had budgeted to send \$8000 to overseas missions.

The 1994 Fair brought in more than \$10,000, which was seen as an excellent result. With Telstra income scheduled to flow, St Mary's was optimistic about loosening its heavy dependence on a successful Fair result. In fact, funds raised from the Fair were in future to be spent on missions, not used to pay bills.

Treasurer Chris Morris had announced at the AGM that the church had achieved a most satisfactory surplus of more than \$10,600 over expenditure, and that all debts had been cleared: the parish was entirely debt-free for the first time in many years. There were smiles all around at this most satisfactory outcome.

A significant changing of the guard was the order of the day at the AGM. New wardens Robert Reside, Glenn Scott and Kay Young replaced Frank Roberts, John Amor and Vic McCrea.



St Mary's offering envelope

With the improvement in the church's bottom line, the way was now clear for David Rathgen to become full-time vicar of St Mary's, and this was set for 1 January 1995. Parishioners were invited to a farewell church service for Rathgen from Swinburne University at St Columb's in Hawthorn on 6 December, as an era ended for him.

The new year dawned with plenty of optimism about a new awakening for St Mary's, now with a full-time, fully-instituted vicar again, for the first time since 1991. There was good reason for this optimism, with the finances in order, a good vicar fully in place, and the economy looking up after years in the doldrums.

And, as the year proceeded, these positive feelings seemed well placed. The younger team of wardens was fully cognisant of the need to provide a more welcoming atmosphere, and to target at least some church services to young people. Early in the year there were plans for a 'contemporary-styled monthly evening service for teenagers and young adults', although a family service on 7 May attracted only 29 people.

Dwindling numbers at the 8am communion service caused a rethink: the service time was changed to 8.30am, but congregations continued to be small – almost always below 10. Justifiable doubts continued about the viability of this service.



Glenys, Emma and Ernie Sigley (1994)

The parish dinner on 17 June, hosted by Ernie Sigley in his inimitable style and organised by Glenn Scott with help from Vic McCrea, was very successful, with cabaret-style entertainment provided and an auction of 'exciting goodies' raising \$3700 for the church's youth ministry, for which there were ambitious plans: it was hoped to appoint a full-time youth minister within five years. In the interim, a search for a part-time youth minister, initially for eight hours a week, began.

The patronal festival still featured prominently on St Mary's calendar. Rev Rowland Croucher, from John Mark Ministries (a cross-denominational organisation providing pastoral care for ministers of religion) was the preacher at the patronal festival on 13 August, which attracted a congregation of 84.

At the AGM on 29 October, the Vicar spoke of the need to 're-evaluate our worship services'. Numbers continued to be small at the 8.30am service (now averaging six), but the youth services, 'Face the Music', which were held on the third Sunday evenings of each month, and the regular 10am services, were each continuing to attract around 50 people.

The Contact and Care group, coordinated by Helen Roberts, met six times during the year, aiming to maintain liaison between church members and to give support when the need arose. The group conducted a suicide prevention workshop on 26 October.

The new Australian prayer book was about to be introduced, discussions on cooperative work with other Anglican parishes on youth work were taking place, and St Mary's volunteers were continuing to provide CRE at Camberwell South Primary School, coordinated by Berry Rathgen.

Total numbers attending all services at St Mary's were steady in comparison to 1994 – 3191 as against 3167 in 1993 – but there was a significant decline of 1183 from the total attendance of 4374 in 1992.

For the first time, the item 'tower rental' featured in the annual financial statements: it was \$13,150, and this significant addition to revenue materially helped to ease the transition from part-time to full-time ministry. Total revenue was up slightly from 1993/94, but disappointingly there was a deficit of \$2331 following the \$10,629 surplus in the previous corresponding period.

Two long-serving vestry members decided to retire – Chris Morris (26 years on vestry) and Lesley Laing (14 years on vestry) who had served the church in many spheres since Vic Maddick's days in the 1970s now stood down; and Glenn Scott decided not to nominate again as a warden while he dealt with some health issues. Robert Reside and Kay Young were re-elected as wardens.

A number of 'critical success factors' were identified at a vestry planning day on 11 February 1996, held at the Heart of Life Centre in Kew. The factors included 'building bridges to the community, encouraging each other in our love for God and care for each other; and explaining what we believe, and why'.

Vestry planned to use the 'critical success factors' as the mantras against which the church's performance would be assessed. To help build bridges to the community, quotations were to be obtained to reconstruct the church entrance to make it more open and accessible to people passing along Bowen Street; and a large sign advertising St Mary's services was erected on the Bowen Street/Toorak Road corner.

Social events in 1996 included a visit by 60 parishioners to the Sigley family's property at Buninyong in February, where guests picnicked, chatted, and enjoyed golf on Ernie's mini-course in the large backyard. A parish camp in August at Merricks was attended by 35 St Mary's people.

In May, Adrian Talbot was appointed as the church's youth leader, and the successful Sunday evening youth services, which had been in recess, were restored in June. But Talbot's tenure was short: he resigned at mid-year and Glenn Scott took over some of his duties, including coordinating the monthly youth service.

Other initiatives to encourage young people's involvement in the church included a young adults' group which met at Glenn Scott's home, a small club for young high school children, run by the vicar's daughter, Anna, the church's continuing involvement in Christian education at Camberwell South Primary School, and Sunday evening family fellowship at Mary and Robert Reside's home. The church also offered a pastoral care study course at the Bowen Street Family Centre.

The condition of the floor in the Manley Hall had been of considerable concern, with the floorboards considered to be beyond repair. In July, vestry decided to replace all the flooring, at a quoted cost of \$13,000. The hall would be unavailable to hirers for four weeks, a necessary inconvenience to hirers and a small loss of revenue for the church.

The death of Frank Roberts' wife, Helen, in July deeply saddened the church community. Helen had been a leading light in the church, supporting Frank in his work as a vestry member and warden, and devoting her considerable energy to a wide variety of church roles, always performed with a positive, can-do attitude and a touch of good humour. The loss of her leadership in many spheres of church life would be keenly felt.

A very successful ecumenical service was held at 7pm on 1 December, attended by 85 people from Roman Catholic, Uniting and other Anglican churches, with music provided by a band consisting of St Mary's parishioners and a combined choir.

At the AGM on 27 October, a surplus of \$4750 was reported, a pleasing result after the \$2331 deficit in the previous corresponding period and continuing the recent trend of surplus/deficit/surplus.

An amount of \$12,000 was set aside as a diocesan assessment payment for 1996/97, although an appeal was subsequently lodged to the diocese against paying the full assessed amount, described by vestry as 'unfair' – it had increased considerably over the 1995/96 assessment. The full payment of the assessment had been somewhat tenuous for several years, particularly in times of financial stress for the parish.

Among other large budgeted items were \$8000 for mission agencies and \$5000 for the youth ministry.

Robert Reside and Kay Young were elected as churchwardens, and Bill Davidson, Kerry Dehring, Christine McKillop and Simon Osborne were elected to the vestry. However at the February 1997 vestry meeting Kay Young tendered her resignation, imposing quite a burden of responsibility on Robert Reside, who served out the remainder of the church's year as the solitary warden.

Under these circumstances, the vestry met for a planning workshop on 9 February. Among the 'strengths of St Mary's' identified at the workshop were acceptance of diversity; that 'we are debt free and give away a lot'; that there was a high participation rate [by parishioners in church activities] who had 'strong leadership potential'. David and Berry Rathgen were also identified as a 'strength'.

The goals set out at the workshop included the introduction of an additional evening 'alternative format' service per month, the development of an Alpha program (a course of studies providing an introduction to the Christian faith), initiating a study of the local community's needs, and 'employing a competent parish administrator', with an assessment of the church's performance to be ready by 30 June.

A special general meeting was held on 16 March, at which a motion was passed to authorise the wardens to 'proceed with the necessary works to construct a new entrance to St Mary's Church as a fixed price of \$35,000'. Robert Reside explained that the works had been approved in principle at the 27 October 1996 AGM, and that tenders for the work had been received. The work eventually began in April/May 1998, and was completed by May 1999.

The works were to be paid from existing reserves and the current year's property maintenance budget. It was intended that the parish was to remain debt-free, Reside said, and to ensure this, no other maintenance work would be undertaken during the year. Ahead lay considerable work in gaining the necessary approvals before the construction work could start.

Two Alpha courses were run during the year, but early in the year the youth ministry was under some strain, with the leaders – Glenn Scott and Anna Rathgen – having difficulty in finding committed young leaders to support them. However a successful youth camp was held at Cowes in May, and a family camp, attracting 30 parishioners, took place at Yarra Junction in August. Small prayer groups were conducted on Monday and Wednesday evenings, and a successful parish dinner took place in August.

In June, a proposal for a local counselling service based at St Mary's was submitted to vestry. Gail Wombwell-Robinson, a qualified and experienced counsellor, offered her services as a parish lay worker in this field. She suggested establishing a board of management to conduct the service, Vestry ultimately decided to commence the Cassia counselling service in early 1998, by which time Wombwell-Robinson would have become registered as an authorised lay minister.

The Broadbent Room was to be redecorated and a dedicated phone line installed. A council grant was sought to offset these expenses, but the application was unsuccessful; however the Mercy of God Trust made a donation of \$3000 to the service. By December, there were two Cassia clients, although the official opening of the service was not to take place until 3 May 1998.

Unfortunately the Cassia service was to be short-lived, and a potential outreach opportunity had languished. But another opportunity presented itself. In March 1999 a coffee shop (which came to be called the 'Coffee Spot'), operated from Monday to Friday at the front of the church, in liaison with the Bowen Street Family Centre. It immediately showed signs of success as an outreach activity – provided sufficient volunteers could be garnered to operate

it. That was the crunch: by July 1999, a paucity of volunteer support restricted the days of operation to just Tuesday and Thursday mornings.

Some clouds were gathering. To guard against 'growing perceptions of inadequacy and failure', vestry proposed that a display would be created and shown during the patronal festival, to 'demonstrate the successes achieved at St Mary's in recent times'.

The Fair was once again a major success, resulting in net proceeds of \$11,900; but, as reported at the AGM on 9 November, the church was now in serious deficit territory. Major reductions in income from envelopes for regular giving (down \$12,000 on the previous year), functions (down \$4000) and an increase in contributions to missions left the church with a deficit of \$19,179 for the year – a turnaround of almost \$24,000 from the surplus of \$4750 in 1996.

In light of the straitened circumstances, paying the diocesan assessment was proving to be challenging: for 1997/98 it was \$729.57 per month, but the arrears from the previous year had to be added to that, making a total monthly payment of \$1085.

Robert Reside, sole warden in the previous year, was now joined by Glenn Scott and Jackie Stacy, supported by a vestry of Kerry Dehring, Jacqui Cooke, Keith Robinson, Mary Reside, Ernie Sigley and Glenys Sigley.

There were some innovations in service procedure early in 1998. To create a quiet atmosphere prior to the beginning of the service, it was decided that greetings on arrival should be in the narthex (not in the church itself), and music practice should end before 9.55am, to facilitate a quiet period for reflection or prayer before church. Testimonies during the service were to be encouraged, but people wishing to make a testimony would be asked to consult with the vicar prior to the service.

At the vestry planning day on 7 February, Mary Reside was asked to look at aspects of 'children in church', and she made a number of recommendations, including the introduction of a set theme for the children's education, continuity of teaching from week to week, a coordinated, controlled return to church after Sunday school to reduce the disruption to adult worship, and to promote the 8.30am service a 'child-free'.

The vicar continued to visit the nearby Toorak House nursing home to take communion, sometimes accompanied by a vestry member or senior parishioner. He was finding that appointments should be made for home visits. 'On one occasion,' he said, 'I called at 14 homes but found only four people at home, none of whom could give me any time as they were all either rushing out or had only limited opportunity to speak.'

Berry Rathgen was proving to be a popular and contributing church member. Among other tasks, she convened the group of Camberwell South Primary School CRE teachers; but the vicar reported in March that there was an urgent need for two more teachers, one of whom was engaged by April. A new Alpha course began on Tuesdays early in the year, although somewhat 'erratically', according to the vicar.

There was a continuing focus on outreach to young people, including young adults. A structured Friday night program for young people began on 24 April, but Glenn Scott reported that attendances were small, and that a restructured program would be trialled during the second half of the year.

The Contact and Care group continued its oversight of St Mary's people who were physically unable to attend church, were isolated or had special needs.



Parishioners gather outside the church on St Mary's 80th Patronal Day in August 1998.

Among the social events during the year were a memorable and well attended outreach concert at St Mary's on 17 May, performed by the famous Australian tenor, David Hobson, together with the Victoria Children's Choir; a multicultural celebration on 26 July; a lunch for parishioners and guests at nearby Juliano's restaurant, as part of St Mary's patronal festival in August; a successful parish camp at Yarra Junction from 28 to 30 August, and a Cup Day progressive dinner in November.

Aspects of the information technology age continued to seep into St Mary's, with a website under construction by July. The office computer also appeared to be struggling with the increasing demands made on it, and David Rathgen requested that it be replaced in 1999. But early in the new year some 'inexpensive improvements' were made to the computer, obviating the need for immediate replacement.

At year's end, three services were held at St Mary's to mark the end of CRE at the Peate Avenue school, attracting more than 500 children, parents and staff.

At the church's AGM on 26 October, Chris McKillop and Jackie Stacy were elected as people's wardens, Glenn Scott was appointed vicar's warden, and the incoming vestry members were Kerry Dehring, Sibyl Johannes, Paul McKillop, Anna Rathgen, Robert Reside and Keith Robinson.

The character of St Mary's legendary Fair was changing. The 1998 fair had once again been a significant 'social' success, in that (as always) it had brought the church community together in pursuit of a common aim, and showed the public that the church existed, and was functioning and vibrant.

A net result of \$9900 was achieved (down about \$2000 on the 1997 fair). In vestry there was a feeling that 'the financial result achieved was not commensurate with the effort expended', and that 'the traditional formula is tending to involve more effort for less reward than in past years'.

The vicar was studying for a master's degree at the Australian Catholic University, and by December 1998 this had reached what he described as a 'critical juncture'. He said he was accumulating much primary information, with a view to analysing the information, writing his thesis and graduating in May 2000.

'I wish to assure vestry,' he wrote in December 1998, 'that these studies are secondary to my principal concern, which is that of the parish and its affairs'. He hoped that by the time the vestry met for its planning day in January that all vestry members would 'take time to reflect as a body on our mutual goals and ambitions for the next three years'.

There were feelings of unease in some quarters at the direction the church was taking, including some discontent at aspects of Rathgen's performance. This was obliquely referred to in his report to vestry in December 1998. 'Over the summer I trust we will be able to review our operations and systems with a view to improving the quality of our corporate life together. The wardens have already drawn to my attention some features which need reappraisal, and the incumbency committee is working on some others ...'.

But the planning day set for January 1999 did not eventuate: vestry felt it more prudent to conduct a midyear review, scheduled for the afternoon of Sunday 18 July; but there was a successful prayer vigil on 26 February.

A notable departure was that of the Reside family. Robert's letter of resignation was tendered at the May vestry meeting, in which said he and his family had 'decided to move to a new church home'. The whole family upped stakes and left. Like the McKillops, Robert and Mary had played significant roles in the parish, and there was also considerable regret at their departure.

There was also considerable sadness at the news that Frank Roberts would be departing from the parish in November, and relocating to the Mornington Peninsula. He had been a parishioner since 1962, and a stalwart contributor to virtually every aspect of parish life, both as a vestry member and as a warden.

Meanwhile the youth ministry, now facilitated by two Ridley College students, Christopher and Catherine Garcia, was kicking goals. The Garcias were engaged for six to eight hours a week to consolidate the church's youth group, coordinate the youth program, and also help with CRE at Peate Avenue and Sunday school at St Mary's. They were not to be remunerated, but their expenses would be reimbursed. An early success was the revival of Sunday evening young adult services, catering 'particularly, but not exclusively, to "young adults"'. A youth camp was held in October.

Returning invigorated from his stress leave, David Rathgen emphasised the necessity for vestry to plan carefully for St Mary's future. The church had not had a good year so far, and a change in direction was inevitable. A planning day was an urgent requirement, and vestry scheduled a 'preliminary planning meeting in the form of a "brainstorming" at 12 noon on 25 July. BYO lunch'. The first phase of a parish consultation took place in September 1999, facilitated by Brad Lovegrove.

Meanwhile, the diocese had approved plans by Optus to lease tower space at St Mary's, which was to be for a 10-year term at \$16,000 per year, with five per cent annual increments. Vestry agreed to a proposal to construct a kitchenette in the south-west corner of the church (inside the church, to the right of the main entrance doors). The Telstra installation brought in \$15,257 in 1998/99, so the combined rent of some \$30,000 represented significant income for the church.

At the September vestry meeting there was discussion about the strip of land running parallel to the church's car park, owned by Boroondara Council, on which there was a block of disused toilets. A vestry working group was set up to 'look into' this land, with a view to purchasing it and redeveloping the car park. The major maintenance work carried out in 1999 was the total repainting of the Tidmarsh (upper) Hal and the Manley Hall.

Bill Davidson agreed to coordinate the 1999 Fair, but Glen Scott had been planning a major banquet auction at Port Melbourne Yacht Club, set for 22 October. The event went ahead, driven energetically by Scott. It was a major success, netting a profit of \$18,000, a considerably higher net return than the Fair had ever earned.

During the year there had been a focus on missions, with visits from some overseas missionaries, including the Chapman family (missionaries in the Philippines) and the Dale family (located in Egypt). The church also kept in contact with and supported Julie Waddy, working as a missionary in Umbakumba in the Northern Territory. St Mary's mission giving totalled \$3453 in 1999.

The Coffee Spot continued to operate, with an average of about 10 customers a day, and the church hoped that friendships would develop, and that people would come to know Jesus through a relationship with the church, following on from their introduction to St Mary's via the Coffee Spot. But a lack of volunteer support caused it to close down.

There was a disturbing downward trend in overall church attendances at St Mary's. Through the early 1990s, average attendances had shown a generally upward trend, peaking at about 3700 in 1996, and falling slightly to 3500 in 1997 and 1998. But there was a substantial fall to about 2800 in 1999.

A parishioner survey in March 1999 did reveal some anecdotal reasons for the decline. There were two extremes in response to the question 'is the format of the 10am service appropriate for you. Comments included 'far too structures – old style Anglican', too much "traditional" worship' and 'boring'; while at the other extreme, comments included "it's really for young people now', 'when we have a printed order of service we do not even follow that, and 'we chop and change from the pew sheet to the order of service sheet to the prayer book' and 'confusing'.

These comments and others relating to issues such as hymns versus songs, the length of the sermon and the conduct of the Sunday school provided the vestry with food for thought as sights were increasingly set on the 2000s.

Rathgen congratulated the 'vestry of the new millennium' on its election at the AGM, held on 24 October, which consisted of David Ashton, Bruce Brown, Sue Brown, Kerry McKean, Glenn Scott, Glenys Sigley (warden) and Bob Stacy (warden).

The vicar's annual report reflected increasingly troubled times in his relationship with his parish. He said that despite the positives of a parish mission in October 1998, the attempt to set up a coffee shop and the prayer vigil in March 1999, there had been a 'significant downturn in our corporate life'.

But he believed it was not all one way; it was not simply the vicar's fault that credibility had broken down. 'At St Mary's we held several planning days at which goals were set. What was missing was the willingness to work as a team to achieve each goal ... It was my mistake to fail to hold us to that vision; and it was my failure to require that we be responsible for implementing each part of it ... It was put to me as "You've lost your vision; it's time you left".'

How could the situation be rectified? David and Berry Rathgen had been grateful for the support of Bishop John Stewart during this difficult period. David Rathgen also believed the support of a mentor, to be nominated by the bishop and the archdeacon, would 'help both clergy and congregation to address our fears and heal our sorrows, so that we are equipped to take the next step in our faith journey as God's Spirit directs us ...'

'I don't see this as a sign of weakness, but as admitting a reality,' Rathgen said. 'Why not work as a team to take great risks for God?'. In the meantime, he would continue to seek out opportunities for a new ministry.

In a further effort to turn a new page, a 'service of reconciliation' was held at 7.30pm on Friday 3 December. 'We do not wish to enter the new year with any unfinished baggage of the past', Rathgen wrote in a letter to parishioners. He pointed to the 'new opportunities God is presenting to us', which included a new Alpha program in the coming year, 'a fresh face to our evangelism following the huge success of the Parish Dinner', and the opportunities for the youth ministry to take further positive steps.

There was much to occupy the minds of St Mary's people and their vicar as the millennium approached. They were not to know that the forthcoming decade was to be one of change and upheaval for the church and its incumbents, all of which was to be clouded by uncertainty about the church's very existence as the new decade and millennium unfolded.

Chapter 4

The 2000s

One of the church's first actions of the new millennium was for David Rathgen, accompanied by vestry members David Ashton and Bruce Brown, to take a walk around the church and the vicarage on 12 January 2000, to check the condition of the church, the halls and the vicarage.

The inspections classified the internal condition of the vicarage as 'good', though perhaps the vicar and his family were being a little diplomatic and not expressing their true feelings about some of the shortcomings of their home; nevertheless, several issues were noted for attention. Externally there were sagging and rotting eaves, guttering in poor condition and a general need for an external paint job.

Eaves, guttering and downpipes were also a problem with both the halls, especially on the north and western sides. Possums and birds had made their homes in the Tidmarsh Hall roof, and the Manley Hall roof tiling was in poor condition. The Manley Hall kitchen was a relic of the past, with poor water pressure, outdated cooking and washing facilities, and a pressing need for painting.

Issues generally identified in and around the church also included the need for painting, as well as untidy gardens and deteriorating noticeboards.

It was obvious that funds needed to be devoted to a variety of small and some much larger jobs, and brows were certainly creased about the condition of the vicarage, despite the internal condition having generally been assessed as 'good' when Rathgen, Ashton and Brown did their inspection in January.

In effect, when all the vicarage maintenance issues were listed, it seemed a genuine case could be made for the church's longstanding option of pulling the building down and starting again. However, as in the past, this appeared to be a bridge too far.

A vestry planning day was held on 29 January, at which a wide variety of issues were covered, including property, the children's ministry, CRE at Camberwell South Primary School, pastoral care and worship services. Significantly, despite their importance, the future of the fair, preparations for the forthcoming new ministry and the production of a new parish profile were not covered at the meeting.

In February a One.Tel proposal for a mobile base station was approved, based on an annual rental of \$18,000 with a five per cent per annum increase, providing another welcome boost for St Mary's finances. Rental proceeds from One.Tel were to be devoted to property maintenance at St Mary's. (But this avenue of income was to be abruptly terminated when One.Tel collapsed in May 2001.)

An obvious and pressing need was to devote some of the funds to vicarage refurbishment. Three options were considered – a total rebuild, full renovation and selling or renting the property – and an architect was consulted. The architect's opinion was that there was too much residual value in the vicarage to consider demolishing it, and he submitted draft drawings for refurbishment. Plans were approved by the diocese and submitted to Boroondara council.

Socially, vestry approved a proposal for a bush dance in the Manley Hall on 13 May, and Glenn Scott's plans for a fundraising dinner at The Point restaurant in Albert Park in October

were outlined. Tickets would be \$135 each, and funds raised would support youth employment and youth counselling.

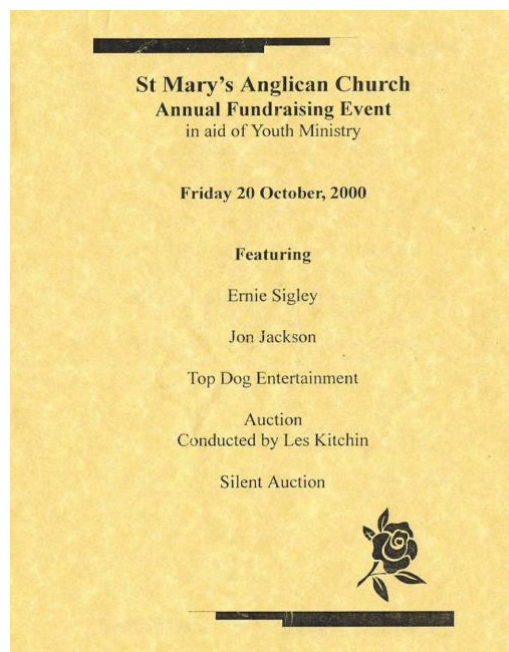
With Scott's plans well under way, vestry proposed that a committee should review the viability of the Fair. Ultimately, vestry cancelled the 2000 Fair, but its longer term fate was not resolved.

Plans were in hand for the conclusion of Rathgen's ministry and for the period before a new vicar could be identified and appointed. Rathgen had been appointed to the Anglican parish of St John, Healesville, and St Paul, Yarra Glen, into which he would be inducted on Tuesday 21 June, following his final service at St Mary's on 18 June. In the meantime, he and Berry would take two periods of leave during May, and the Rev David Smith was appointed as locum at St Mary's.

The incumbency committee – Darren Bartholomeusz, Simon Osborne and Glenys Sigley – were considering options. In a report to vestry, warden Bob Stacy cautioned against 'rushing into a hasty appointment'. He challenged vestry to 'think of our priorities', pointing out that these included 'maintaining St Mary's Anglican Church', 'servicing the Anglican ethos' and 'serving our God'.

The incumbency committee met with Archdeacon Graeme Sells in July and presented a parish profile which had been prepared earlier in the year.

Youth affairs continued to be front of mind. Chris and Cath Garcia had moved to Glen Waverley after setting the foundations of a strong and thriving youth ministry at St Mary's, and now fresh new leadership was required to maintain the momentum the Garcias had built.



*Front cover of program for fundraising dinner,
 20 October 2000*

It was proposed to approach Ridley College to ask if a student could be allocated to become youth director at St Mary's, with the church offering a form of scholarship or stipend to the potential leader. To back the director, young adults would be sought to act as leaders, an outreach program would be devised, and the current support for CRE would continue.

The treasurer's report at the AGM on 12 November revealed net income for the year of \$13,958. Proposals for the vicarage were submitted at the meeting. The archdeacon had determined that three specific actions were required to bring the building up to diocesan standards – the addition of a family room, and extensions to the study and the fourth bedroom.

The wardens were authorised to proceed with renovating the vicarage to the plans submitted by the architect; to refurbish the vicarage to rental standards, and to find appropriate rental accommodation for the vicar and his family. Alternatively, if the vicar-elect wished to purchase his own home, appropriate assistance should be offered.

It was announced that Roger Kenneth Ridley would be the new vicar of St Mary's, and Tuesday 5 December was set for his induction by Bishop John Stewart.

Ridley was a son of missionary parents, born in Sydney and brought up in Japan where his parents were serving. Ridley's first Anglican ministry experience was at St John's in Camberwell. He had had subsequent appointments in South Australia and then Victoria, before returning to Adelaide with his wife, Gaynor, and young family to take up a role with the Church Missionary Society.

Roger, Gaynor and younger daughter, Glenda, had returned to Melbourne in June 2000, while son Tim and elder daughter Jocelyn remained in Adelaide to continue their university studies. Ridley had been working as a locum until his St Mary's appointment.

The induction was followed by what the wardens described as 'a true St Mary's party', arranged by Christine Osborne and some helpers, at which the Ridleys were introduced to 'their first real taste of our community'.

The locum, David Smith, had presided at the AGM on 12 November, and Roger Ridley attended his first vestry meeting on 13 December, with warden Glenys Sigley in the chair.

Over the Christmas holiday period Ridley planned to prepare a vision statement, taking into account his early impressions of the parish and how he saw the church progressing in the early part of this ministry. A vestry planning day, professionally facilitated by Simon Osborne, took place on 20 January 2001, at which the parish's vision and strategies for the Ridley era were set, in consultation with Ridley.

Together with Ridley, vestry members were Christine Osborne, Ruth Richards, Glenn Scott, Glenys Sigley, Bob Stacy, Jackie Stacy, and Peter Young. The wardens were Glenys Sigley and Bob Stacy.

Once all approvals were in place, the vicarage project finally got under way in June 2001, and by 1 October the Ridleys were able to move from their temporary premises – a unit in nearby Wattle Valley Road – to the refurbished vicarage.

The vicar had supervised much of the building project himself, at the same time as he was coming to terms with the demands of his new parish, and while also coping with the strains of the family separation which had been a corollary of his appointment to St Mary's. (Dedication of the 'new' vicarage took place on the evening of 5 December.)

The cost of the vicarage refurbishment was set at \$180,000, with \$165,000 to be sought from the Anglican Development Fund. The total cost was later revised, and an additional \$13,500 was requested from the ADF.

As well as settling in a new vicar and launching a 'new' vicarage, there were many other positive developments at St Mary's during 2001. The highlight of the church's social calendar was the annual fundraising event, this time held in the Royal Botanic Gardens restaurant. Entertainers Ernie Sigley, Dennis Walter and Bernadette Robinson entertained the diners, and there was an auction of goods, including a Renault convertible. About \$13,000 was raised. A successful trivia night was held in December.

Early in the year there had been a move to bring the church closer to its namesake football club, St Mary's, which played in the Victorian Amateur Football Association. Ernie Sigley was the club president, and a special football service took place at St Mary's on 25 March, before the 2001 season began.

Several burly football club players and coaches attended, and were introduced to parishioners at the start of the service. Melbourne Football Club chaplain, Cameron Butler, delivered a football-orientated message.

St Mary's had earlier adopted a slogan – 'a great church arising' – and a member of the church's music team, Bill Davidson, had written *St Mary's Song*, to the tune of Creedence Clearwater Revival's *Bad Moon Rising*. For the football service, he rewrote the final verse of the song:

*We join with our friends from the footie
Hope for a playing season
With our ears responding to the coaches
We play our best for good reasons.*

Davidson's fellow St Mary's musician, Peter Young, had tinkered with the words of the traditional *When the Saints go Marching In* for the service, rewriting several verses, including:

*When the whistle starts to blow
When the whistle starts to blow
Lord, I want to be in that number
When the whistle starts to blow.*

and:

*Oh when the final siren sounds
Oh when the final siren sounds
Oh Lord, I know I'll be in that number
Oh when the final siren sounds.*

The football service was well attended and successful, and it was conducted again in 2002 and 2003, but the initiative was lacking for it to become fully established as an annual event. As time passed, links with St Mary's Football Club again became more tenuous, though senior parishioners such as Albert Vickery, a former club president, regularly attended matches, and there was the continuing link through Ernie Sigley's club presidency.

Roger and Gaynor Ridley, along with Christine Osborne and Glenys Sigley, continued St Mary's longstanding commitment to Christian religious education at Camberwell South Primary School. The Christmas church service for the primary school, held each year in early December, regularly packed out St Mary's, and 2001 was no exception.

By year's end, plans were under way to appoint a young person to create a ministry among local year seven students.

Gaynor Ridley was already developing a reputation for the excellence of her roast dinners, which were specifically aimed at encouraging non-church goers to have contact with St Mary's. David Ashton organised Wednesday morning breakfasts for several men of the church to gather for friendship and prayer.

In July the church was saddened to learn of the death of Joan McCrea, a much loved and respected parishioner, and wife of long-serving vestry member, Vic. An emotional thanksgiving service for Joan's life was held at St Mary's.

The church celebrated its 83rd birthday on 27 August with what the wardens described as 'a fantastic worship celebration'. The Sunday school children organised a unique pageant to dramatise significant events in the church's history.

St Mary's link missionaries, Lauren and Isabel Dale, returned temporarily from Egypt, and at a special service they spoke of their work and their hopes for the future. As well as supporting the Dales, St Mary's also continued its support of St Mary's Anglican Church in Umbakumba on Groote Eylandt in the Northern Territory.

At the AGM on 11 November, Ridley thanked St Mary's for 'the acceptance of Gaynor and myself into your lives'. He said their 'hope and prayer' was that 'we will all grow to maturity in Christ, that we will have a fruitful ministry in Camberwell/Glen Iris, and that many will be drawn to know and love Jesus'.

At the AGM, Bob Stacy joined Glenn Scott and Glenys Sigley as wardens, and Darren Bartholomeusz, Lee Bechler, Chris Osborne, Jackie Stacy and Peter Young completed the vestry, along with Roger Ridley. A satisfactory surplus of \$4105 was announced, against a planned deficit of \$1562.

Bruach Colliton, a young engineering/business student at Swinburne University, had taken on the role of youth leader – a paid position of 16 hours a week – and a youth support working group was established. Colliton came to St Mary's as part of St Hilary's, Kew's, ministry training program.

As 2002 began, concerns were raised about the lack of female leadership in the youth group. As well, a youth band was meeting for jam sessions on Sunday afternoons, and although this was a positive development, it also required supervision, and this was posing an additional burden on leadership of the fledgling group. By July, the youth group had reconfigured itself as 'The Basement', offering a format of games followed by devotion and then supper.

In September, youth ministry planning meetings were held, attended by Roger Ridley, Darren Bartholomeusz, Bruach Colliton, Chris Osborne, Simon Osborne, Glenn Scott and Roberta Stacy. Plans were made for regular church youth services, establishing a core group of parents of young people, and organising a disco or a series of discos for primary school children in years four to six.

Home groups had been meeting during 2001, hosted by Dorothy Evans, Lee and Andreas Bechler and Glenys and Ernie Sigley, but early in the year they were all in recess for varying reasons. Fresh impetus and new participants were needed to avoid these groups stagnating or discontinuing.

A successful trivia night was held on 9 February; but a bush dance on 22 June was not so successful – it was poorly attended – although a small profit of \$320 went into church coffers. A parish camp was held at Arrabri Lodge in Warburton.

Another highly successful parish dinner was held at the Savoy Plaza Hotel on 11 October, featuring entertainment by Jeannie Little. Of the funds raised (a net \$20,000), a total of \$15,000 was earmarked for financing youth work in the outer suburb of Melton. Ridley and Scott had discussed with the Anglican vicar at Melton how the churches could cooperate to develop youth and related projects in the locality.

Vestry members were asked to make written comments on 'what they enjoy' and 'what are their frustrations' about St Mary's. Among the various responses, there was consensus that St Mary's generated a friendly atmosphere: remarks included 'the congregation are friends', 'the people are good and caring', 'great camaraderie in the church', 'a real family feeling', and 'a very welcoming church – like it's home'.

Against that were perceptions that outreach was lacking: 'it's hard to see our evangelism', 'not enough outreach to people' and 'lack of outward focus'. There was also a feeling that too much was left to too few: 'we are all too busy', 'little things in general don't get done,' 'too many jobs for too few people', 'we are plodding along', and 'lack of leadership in church'.

Other frustrations included the need for a 'deeper level of pastoral care', that there should be more focus on the gospels, and that informality was all very well, but 'we need uniformity'. The observations were to be carried forward to a 'spiritual renewal day', which was set for 26 October.

In an effort to boost church attendances, the July vestry decided on a three-month trial, beginning on 25 August. On the third Sunday of each month there would be an 8.30am communion service, followed by a 10am family service with no communion; and on the fourth Sunday there would be a 10am communion service and 5.30pm evening worship.



Flyer for service on 21 October 2002, featuring the Good News Big Band

However the church's register of services shows that 8.30am services were not held during this period, and there was only one 5.30pm Sunday evening service, attended by just four people. Numbers at 10am services during this period averaged 33, including an expanded attendance of 109 at a service on 21 October featuring the Good News Big Band. The band played foot-tapping Christian music, and the visit was arranged by Glenys Sigley, who had

seen the band perform at the Inverloch Jazz Festival and believed the band service at St Mary's would be another excellent outreach opportunity.

The annual pet service attracted a congregation of 36.

But the trend continued downwards; the average Sunday attendance had been 50 in 2001, 44 in 2002, 41 in 2003 and it dropped significantly to 32 in 2004.

Several long-term parishioners died during the year: in March, the loved and respected World War I veteran, Bert Phillips; in July, Mavis Patton, and in September, Nancy Chessell.

Alpha programs continued intermittently, with a fresh program getting under way on 26 August attracting 22 people, which was considered a satisfactory participation rate.

The church's longstanding provision of monthly communion services at nearby Toorak House nursing home ended during the year, when residents all moved to a new aged care facility in Surrey Hills and the outdated facility was demolished to make way for the construction of units. However, Ridley continued to conduct services at the Broughton Hall (Camberwell) and Broughtonlea (Surrey Hills) aged care facilities, in rotation with two other local churches.

A worship task force consisting of Ridley, Scott and Jackie Stacy met in July to discuss issues including church music, prayer, pastoral and 'healing' ministries, service times and the format of services.

The church's AGM was held on 17 November. There were sweeping changes to vestry: Lee Bechler, Darren Bartholomeusz, Glenys Sigley Bob Stacy and Glenn Scott did not stand for re-election, and they were replaced by David Ashton, Marie Boyle, Rohan David, Bill Davidson and Glenda Ridley. David Ashton was vicar's warden, and at the December vestry meeting Bill Davidson and Peter Young were elected as people's wardens. A vestry planning meeting was scheduled for 17 December.

At the AGM, treasurer Peter Young reported a surplus of \$8764, with rental income from the telecommunications towers again positively impacting the bottom line: but 'these funds are needed to maintain the solvency of the parish,' Young cautioned in his treasurer's report.

In early December, a part-time administration assistant was engaged on a temporary basis, working three days a week until 23 December.

The church was corresponding with Boroondara council about a small piece of council land incorporated in St Mary's car park. This land was surrounded on two sides by the car park. St Mary's was anxious to have its car park asphalted. It was surfaced with tennis court clay, and through heavy public use it was constantly subject to potholing, with large pools of water frequently developing during wet weather. The church asked the council if it was prepared to seal and landscape the entire area – St Mary's car park and the piece of council land – in partnership with the church, and incorporating the council land as an additional car parking area. St Mary's offered to contribute towards the costs.

Warden David Ashton pointed out to the council that St Mary's car park was heavily used by customers visiting businesses in the South Camberwell shopping centre, by parents dropping off children at Camberwell South Primary School, and by residents attending the Bowen Street Family Centre.

As well, a new office building had just been completed in Toorak Road less than 100 metres from St Mary's, which provided car parking for only 75 of the estimated 200 employees

anticipated to occupy the building. This would place further pressure on local car parking availability. Ashton organised a petition to the council on the issue of sealing the car park.

Investigations revealed that a small part of the council land (a grassed area abutting Toorak Road, extending approximately to a liquidambar tree near the men's club) had already been effectively incorporated in the car park.

The approach to council was to constitute the early stages of a campaign that would not be completely resolved until 2010.

The worship ministry team met early in 2003 and among the team's suggestions were that the church should extend services to shut-in households once a month. Later in the year a letter of invitation was mailed to 82 people, inviting them to attend a special St Mary's Day service on 17 August, at which warden Peter Young would deliver a testimonial on 'what God means to him'.

The first major event of 2003 was a parish weekend away at El Kanah guest house in Marysville, a facility which was to be a victim of the Black Saturday fires in 2009, and then to be rebuilt after the fires.

Vestry endorsed Christine Osborne's proposal for a youth disco, which had been mooted during 2001, and a working group was set up to get the ball rolling. In March, Nick Rutherford and Clare Nelson of Top Dog Entertainment presented vestry with a detailed proposal for monthly discos on Friday evenings for children aged from 10 to 13, from 7.30pm to 10.30pm.

Launched on 20 June with an attendance of 11, the ultimate aim of the discos, named 'Heaven', was to build attendances to 200 each month, but this figure was never to be achieved. However, regular early attendances of upwards of 50 were considered satisfactory, and 30 children attended the December event. Christine Osborne was the energetic driving force of the disco, helped by a small band of St Mary's regulars. However, unfortunately the disco was to be short-lived.

The annual football service was still on the agenda, and this took place on 16 March. To create atmosphere, the church was decorated in St Mary's Football Club's colours of yellow and black. Several football club members attended the service, which was followed by a sausage sizzle.



Glenn Scott organised several successful parish dinners.

The major fundraising dinner concept had now firmly taken the place of the Fair. But there was a feeling that the cost of the dinner (well over \$100 per person), and its location away from the church was minimising the community outreach aspect which had been seen as the Fair's secondary, but important, aim (aside from the critical significance of the funds it raised in the pre-telecommunications tower era).

To address this, it was proposed that there would be two dinners: one to continue as a major fundraiser, with proceeds to be donated to the Oaktree Foundation (a young people's organisation formed to combat poverty) and to foster youth projects in Melton; and another, to be more of a St Mary's community dinner, and probably to be held at a local restaurant.

At the wardens' suggestion, Ridley met with Bishop Stephen Hale on 1 August. The bishop recommended that the parish should engage a diocesan consultant who would help the church sharpen its focus for the future, enable parishioners to be fully involved in this process, address any concerns parishioners may have, and enable the church's leaders to be accountable for their actions.

In July, Ridley had attended a 'power and trust' seminar led by Archdeacon Graeme Sells, which among other issues included a video entitled *Not in my Church*, which was 'an expose of a minister engaged in immoral behaviour with a string of people (under his authority) and how the church responded to it'.

A crisis was developing, and one of the early casualties was warden Bill Davidson, who in December stood down as a warden and vestry member because of his 'difficulty with the whole working of the issue revolving around the vicar'; however by the January meeting Davidson was back on the vestry, though he was noted as an apology for that meeting.

At the AGM, the three incumbent wardens had been reappointed for 2003/04, accompanied by the new vestry of Bruce a Beckett, Bruce Brown, Rohan David, Jeffrey Luckins (who agreed to become the church secretary), Christine Osborne, Glenda Ridley and Jackie Stacy.

Treasurer Peter Young reported a small net income of \$124, but this compared favourably with a budgeted deficit of \$5220. He reported that Glenn Scott's Melbourne Youth Fundraising Dinner, held in October, was expected to raise \$20,000, and as planned, part of the funds were to go to the Oaktree Foundation and part to be devoted to youth work at Melton.

During January, with the approval of the diocese's director of professional standards, a senior member of the parish conducted her own survey of 31 St Mary's parishioners' feelings about Ridley. She shared the survey's findings with Ridley. 'You can rest assured', she said, that 'people are not out for your blood'. She added: 'Virtually everyone finds you friendly and is concerned about your welfare'. However, she was incredulous that Ridley's behaviour could take place at a time 'when sexual harassment by clergy is big news'.

Concerns were also expressed in the anecdotal survey that Ridley was not enthusiastic about his job, that he was not listening to people, and that his handling of pastoral issues had been inadequate.

But many parishioners were passionate in their defence of Ridley. Writing in May 2004, a vestry member dismissed the anecdotal survey as 'showing distinct bias'. He said: 'To suggest to Roger that people were not "out for his blood" is blatantly false'. The vestry member was 'totally amazed and saddened' by the events of the previous six months.

Ridley wrote to the diocese's director of professional standards, expressing his 'deep remorse and regret' and tendering an apology for his behaviour, which he admitted was 'inappropriate in terms of my profession'. He categorically denied further allegations of misconduct which a parishioner had made in a letter submitted to the Archbishop of Melbourne.

But the die was cast. In February Ridley submitted his resignation from the parish, and during that month he conducted his final service at St Mary's.

As the wardens reported at the 2004 AGM on 7 November: 'Among those who chose to remain at St Mary's, many suffered deep anxiety and not inconsiderable pain. Time has healed some of this pain, but ... the hurt remains for many parishioners'.

According to the church's register of services, in the two months leading up to Ridley's departure, the average attendance at 10am services was 32. This decreased marginally to 31 in the two months after Ridley left the parish, and in July/August/September the average 10am service attendance had increased to 34. (These figures exclude special services at Christmas and Easter.) The Wednesday 12.30pm service continued to attract only about four or five attendees.

Despite the difficult times, the AGM reports showed a surplus of \$11,142 against a budgeted surplus of \$3399.

Partly as a result of the stresses and strains of the time, there was considerable turnover in vestry positions, with four of the 2003/04 vestry not nominating for office – David Ashton, Bruce a'Beckett, Rohan David and Jackie Stacy. They were replaced by Marie Boyle (elected as a warden), Glenys Sigley, Lorraine Friend and Shirley Lang.

Bill Davidson was appointed vicar's warden and Peter Young was the other elected warden. Christine Osborne and Jeffrey Luckins (secretary) were also re-elected, but Luckins had subsequently to withdraw from vestry through pressure of work. Ernie Sigley joined vestry in April.

Somewhat wearily, the church embarked yet again on the search for a new vicar. Locums during this period were the Venerable Graeme Sells (February to May), followed by the Rev Barry Green, who was to continue as locum vicar at St Mary's right through to the installation of a new vicar in August 2005.

Green was the ideal man to step in at this critical time. He was open, friendly, optimistic and encouraging, and took no sides, while being prepared to listen to all points of view on what had happened and what was to come. His unique style, his energy and his quirky musical skills with the banjo played an important role in the healing process at St Mary's after Ridley's departure.

With the support of his wife, Jan, Green – who initially worked at St Mary's on Wednesdays, and led the Wednesday and Sunday services – lifted the spirits of those parishioners who had stayed at the church through such a traumatic time. After some months at St Mary's it was even whispered to him that he might become a candidate for the incumbency, but he made it clear that he was partially retired and wished to remain so.

St Mary's continued to pick up the pieces, and church life continued under Green's genial and enthusiastic guidance. Another church dinner took place on 19 November, again in support of the Oaktree Foundation, as well as Christian Blind Mission International and a locally-based youth project. But the youth disco, which had shown so much promise in 2003, did not continue in 2004.

In preparation for the arrival of a new vicar, a parish profile was prepared in November 2004. Posing the question 'Who are we?', the profile answered its own question with 'we are a caring church ... an evangelical Anglican church', and 'we want to grow, stepping out in faith to work in the community for God'. The church's mission was 'to work with God in our church for the local community'.

Four strategies were identified:

- Provide people with the opportunity to praise and worship God.
- Provide a Christian environment for younger members of the local community to grow and develop.
- Love and care for senior community members.
- Support and encourage each other in family and professional lives.

What kind of vicar was the church seeking? The profile suggested: 'The person we are looking for is someone:

- Whose experience of God is vital, real and personal;
- Who is able to facilitate action in a community of strong self-starters;
- Who is creative and interested in trying "new" ideas;
- Who is loving and caring, with a strong pastoral commitment; and
- Who has a sense of fun and enjoys the social activities that form a significant part of our church life.'

That was the task facing the incumbency committee of David Ashton, Simon Osborne and Glenys Sigley as 2004 came to a close. During early 2005, Ashton stepped down from the committee and was replaced by warden Marie Boyle.

Among property issues, the memorial garden along part of the church's northern wall had become something of a play area for children – it was an obvious place for games of hide and seek, and the small pebbles in the garden made useful projectiles. An extension to the existing brick fence and to the existing gate, to be fabricated from steel and clear-panel polycarbonate, was approved at the August vestry meeting.

Finally, after an exhaustive search, in mid-2005 it was announced that Andrew Ettles would be appointed St Mary's priest-in-charge. Ettles' institution by the Rt Rev Stephen Hale, Bishop of the Eastern region, took place in St Mary's on Tuesday 2 August.

Ettles embarked on his new role with vigour. During his early months he compiled a document, *St Mary's Mission: Looking Forward*, which, he said, was 'far from being definitive or complete', but would help the church to refocus on its 'core business', reflect on the challenges it faced, and enable it to look to the future. It was a thoughtful document, running to nine A4 pages.

'Our "core business", Ettles wrote, 'is of course our mission ... to live, take and declare the good news about God's love and grace in Jesus Christ to the world' and 'to do exactly this in the Glen Iris and Camberwell area'.

'If we are going to take our reason for "being" seriously as God's Church,' he wrote, '... we have only one way forward and that is to become a mission-shaped church ... to be creative in finding ways to let the "non-churched" experience the grace of God in Jesus Christ'.

He identified three main focal points for the church to act as 'goalposts' for its community:

- Having a flexible, multipurpose, contemporary and inviting church site;
- Creating a centre for healing and wholeness; and
- Engaging with network communities through a shop-front cafe.

Ettles admitted that 'much prayer, thinking and discussion' lay ahead before the mission could be engaged.

During the year some changes were made to the interior configuration of the church. The former chapel became a children's area, and some of the pews and the front rails were removed to provide flexibility in the use of spaces within the church.

Early in 2005 the magnificent stained glass windows in the church were carefully moved to new positions. They became more visible, and the greater transmission of sunlight through the windows enhanced the windows' beautiful colours and emphasised the Christian messages they conveyed.

Social events in 2005 included a parish picnic at the Sigleys' Inverloch property in May; and a 'Treasure Day' in December, which raised more than \$2000, but was primarily intended as a way for the church to reach out to the community – one of the aims of the former fair. The 'Treasure Day' consisted of a stall offering 'treasure' (as distinct from 'trash'), a cake stall, a barbecue and a cafe. Glenys Sigley organised the event, with help from other parishioners, particularly David Hayne.

In October, Kym Markwell was employed as parish administrator and performed most professionally, relieving Ettles of many day-to-day tasks including acting as hall hire coordinator. Markwell's tenure was to be short, as she resigned early in 2006 having decided to move to Brisbane to be closer to her family.

Markwell was replaced by Marcus Allport in January 2006. Allport was part-time assistant curate at St Dunstan's, Camberwell, and his tenure was also to be short. In November 2007 he was ordained priest to work full-time as a curate at St Dunstan's.

Though links with St Mary's Football Club were becoming tenuous again – the annual football club church service had not taken place since 2003 – the church still hoped to achieve closer ties with the club. Football club presidents Albert Vickery and Ernie Sigley were influential in this, but the football club church service was not reinstated.

However the annual pet service had become established and continued to be successful, particularly in attracting many people from outside the regular church congregation.

Ettles was keen to encourage small groups to develop at the church, seeing them as 'the bedrock of any healthy parish'. A small group of about 10 people was meeting at the vicarage on Thursday evenings for fellowship, studying the scriptures, and prayer. Another small group was meeting for breakfast and prayer at a local cafe.

A 'Commitment Sunday' was held on 13 November, described by *Pews News* – a successor, in part, to the *Gazette* – as providing 'an opportunity for us all to commit to the ministry of our congregation'.

At the AGM on the same Sunday, 13 November, Ettles reported for the first time as incumbent. He said that attendances at the Wednesday service had picked up, and that if all who had attended the service during the previous three months turned up at the one time, the congregation would be 23. (Wednesday service attendances had fluctuated in that period from as few as three to as many as 11.) The average attendance at Sunday services in 2004/05 had been 35.

Ettles pointed out that Wednesday congregations included several young mothers, babies and toddlers, and he felt that the midweek service should concentrate on attracting this

demographic, especially with so many young mothers attending events at the Bowen Street Family Centre.

The wardens reported on the continuing issues of rising damp in the lower rooms of the church buildings, and the poor state of the car park at the back of the church. Rising damp was a long-term issue stemming from inadequate waterproofing when the church was built in the 1950s, and although there had been several rectification attempts, it would continue to pose problems. And despite a number of representations to Boroondara council for the car park to be resurfaced, the issue was still not resolved.

The church finished the year with a most satisfactory surplus of \$29,830. Proceeds from the major fundraising event enabled a donation of \$35,000 to be made to various causes, including youth projects in Melton, and \$11,604 was paid as a diocesan assessment.

Marie Boyle and Simon Osborne were elected as people's wardens, with Rob van Loenen appointed as vicar's warden; other members of the new vestry were Bina Chandy, Shirley Lang, Chris Osborne, Glenys Sigley and Peter Young.

Young resigned from vestry in July 2006, and was replaced by Ian Penna as a vestry member and church treasurer. Peter and his wife Tracie (as bookkeeper) had efficiently handled the church's finances for several years, and Peter had been very active in the music ministry, week after week, for many years.

A vestry retreat workshop was held in the church on 10 December, to plan for 2006 and beyond.

St Mary's joined with the Bowen Street Salvation Army Citadel to present Carols in the Park, staged successfully in Bowen Gardens. This became an annual event.

Moving with the times, vestry approved an outlay of \$2400 for purchasing a personal computer, and for an information technology network to be set up in throughout the church and its offices. Another IT-related innovation was the acquisition of 'Epray' software, which helped to simplify preparation for worship services.

After 14 years of faithful work as hall booking person, Norma Grayson retired in mid-2005. Her work was acknowledged by a letter of thanks and a gift – a voucher for the Windsor Hotel's famous high tea – and a minute of appreciation was recorded in the September vestry papers.

Norma's devoted work for St Mary's had gone far beyond taking hall bookings. Although not congregation members, she and her husband Hugh had provided delicious food for countless church social functions for many years, frequently at their own expense. Norma and Hugh went about their business quietly and without stress or fuss. Quirkily, they also owned a Santa Claus suit, which could be 'hired' for church and other functions.

More than 800 boys and girls, teachers and parents attended the three CRE Christmas services, held at St Mary's in December. The vicar described them as 'a powerful and wonderful witness of the Christ of Christmas to the school community'.

He added: 'It was very obvious that the Holy Spirit was moving in this place. I had teachers and parents approach me after the service in tears, not knowing why they were emotional, but saying they found the service a powerful experience ... I have never had this experience or felt God's presence as powerfully as we had here at St Mary's last December'.

Early in February 2006, Emma Manton, a trained pre-school teacher who had spent eight years as kindergarten coordinator at St Michael's Grammar School, and was a member of a family which had had previous close ties with St Mary's, was appointed as children's and families minister, working for eight hours a week. At the top of her mind was to facilitating a playgroup ministry, which came to be called 'Footsteps'.

By May, Footsteps was up and running well, with 15 children and 10 adults participating, and there was a waiting list. A second Footsteps session began in July, attended by 10 children and eight mothers or carers. Three family mornings at Bowen Street Family Centre were organised, helping to build links between the church and the centre.

Good momentum was building, but late in the year Manton announced that she would be taking a year's leave in 2007 to prepare for the birth of twins, with the aim of returning to the project in 2008. (However the demands of family life made it too difficult for Manton to return to the job, although she continued to serve voluntarily as Footsteps coordinator.)

By year's end Andrew Ettles himself was also beginning to experience the joys – and the demands – of family life, when his wife Angela gave birth to a daughter, Jacinta.

Ettles, portraying himself as a 'non-biased vicar' placed this tongue-in-cheek entry in the weekly *Pews News*:

'Mourning – AFL competition for 2006 CANCELLED! According to a reliable source, the 2006 AFL competition will have to be cancelled. Under the new anti-terrorism laws, the Bombers are banned. Not only that, but the new IR legislation rules out the Dockers, and the avian flu epidemic is wreaking havoc with the Crows, Eagles, Hawks, Magpies and Swans.

'Any transfers to the Cats, Lions, Dogs, Tigers or Kangaroos must now be quarantined for at least 12 months. Religious vilification laws mean that no one can legally barrack for the Demons or the Saints. If all this gives you the Blues, you'll have to get stuck into the Port!'



Lesley Laing

In February, the church lost another of its former stalwarts when Lesley Laing died at the age of 82. Although she had departed from St Mary's several years earlier to become a parishioner at St Dunstan's, Camberwell, Laing had previously been a long-time vestry member and dedicated worker for St Mary's in many areas, Laing was a woman of practical faith, always forthright yet compassionate, with a comprehensive knowledge of the church and a knack of getting things done.

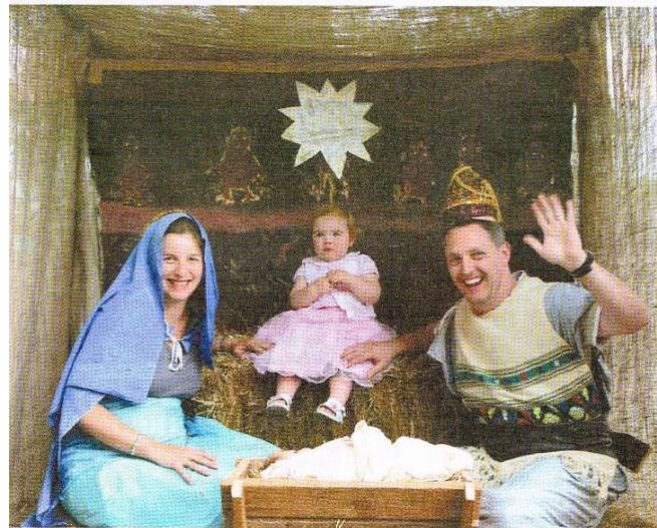
At the March vestry meeting, Andrew Ettles presented a draft mission and vision statement, building on the document he had presented at the 2005 AGM. St Mary's was to be 'a Christian community seeking to be transformed by God's love, expressing itself in authentic worship and mission, so that all people can experience the transformational power of God's

grace in Christ Jesus'. He went on to present elements of the statement to the parish through his 'Ramblings' column in *Pews News*.

Vestry also discussed restructuring the 10am service to enable greater flexibility and creativity in the church's worship, while allowing for essential elements, such as Holy Communion, to continue. The proposed changes were to be trialled for 12 weeks, and mainly involved moving communion to an earlier part of the service, after which the children would leave for their time together. But in May, vestry decided to postpone the trial.

November was always the traditional month for St Mary's Fair, but in November 2006 the church came up with a new concept – a fiesta. Similar to the 'Treasure Day' of the previous year, the fiesta was not to be a critically important fundraising event like the Fair of former years: the aim was primarily to enable the church to connect with the wider community, as the 'Treasure Day' had done the year before. Any profits were to be donated to TEAR Australia, a Christian organisation helping poor communities around the world.

There were children's rides, a jumping castle and animal farm, face painting; and for the adults, music, a coffee shop and stalls, several of which were set up by local traders. There was also a 'Living Nativity', for which people were invited to dress up and enter into the Christmas story.



The Manton family, with Charlotte, the small angel, formed a nativity tableau at the St Mary's Camberwell Fiesta.

The Manton family in a nativity tableau
– The Melbourne Anglican, December 2006

A survey was conducted at the fiesta, asking participants what they thought about God and about the church. Respondents were also asked to identify the resources and services they believed were lacking in the local community. Though the fiesta was successful, it was not repeated in 2008.

In her first major role at St Mary's, Esther Teo became missions coordinator. Teo aimed to encourage St Mary's to focus more intently on missions. Among her initiatives were 'Mission 5000', with the dual aims of raising the church's awareness about mission and challenging the parish to commit to 'taking the gospel to the ends of the earth'.

In practical terms a fundraising target of \$5000 was set for 2006/07, with the funds to be used to support the church's link missionaries, who were now 'Dave' and 'Ruth'. (The missionaries' true identities were protected because of security concerns in the country in which they worked.)

The AGM, held on 26 November 2006, revealed a most pleasing rise in average 10am attendances, from 35 in 2004/05 to 49 during 2005/06 – a 40 per cent increase. The church finances were also most satisfactory: income exceeded expenditure by \$17,910.

The new vestry was led by vicar's warden Rob van Loenen and elected warden Simon Osborne, supported by Marie Boyle, Bina Chandy, Chris Osborne, Ian Penna (treasurer), Glenys Sigley and Jackie Stacy (secretary). Geoff Manton subsequently joined vestry at the August 2007 meeting, and was appointed as a warden.

It may have been the holiday season, but both Angela and Andrew Ettles were about to launch into Masters' degrees in education and theology, respectively. Later in the year Andrew moved to a Doctor of Ministry degree, a four-year course. His studies would involve travelling to Pasadena, California, USA, for two weeks' study each January.

The Ettles continued to seek a family/ministry balance, as they experienced the joys and demands of parenthood with the birth of daughter Jacinta in December 2006.

Developing the church's vision was to be a major focus in 2007. A team was appointed and guided by consultant Rika Mason from Oakseed Ministries. A 'listening exercise' was conducted in June, at which parishioners could provide feedback on St Mary's perceived strengths and future challenges. The results suggested there were three major areas requiring development: the mission itself, pastoral care and worship.

Considerable discussion and prayerful consideration followed. Two task groups – vision development and pastoral care – were asked to articulate a vision for St Mary's, with worship to be covered next in the development process.

During 2006 Ettles had discussed worship options for children with young church families. The outcome was 'All About Kids' (AAK), a monthly worship event for preschool to primary-age children, which began in March 2007 and initially averaged about 30 attendees (parents, children and AAK team members).

AAK smoothly complemented the Footsteps playgroup, and provided opportunities to develop links with fringe families around St Mary's. By September AAK had started to meet fortnightly, and on the second Sunday of each month it met in nearby Ferndale Park, under the acronym 'PAAK' (AAK in the Park).

The church's AGM, held on 25 November, revealed a financial deficit of \$10,981, largely attributable to the purchase of a new photocopier (\$7000) and the replacement of the office computer and church laptop, which were not budgeted items. Rental income was also down, as a result of a Vodaphone telecommunications lease payment being incorrectly credited to St Mary's in September 2006 (which had to be transferred to where it should have been paid in the first place – St Oswald's Anglican Church in Glen Iris).

Congregations on Sundays in 2006/07 averaged 45, down about eight per cent from the average of 49 in the previous year.

Members of the incoming vestry, along with the vicar, were Bina Chandy, Geoff Manton, Ian Penna (warden and treasurer), Glenys Sigley and Jackie Stacy (secretary).

A new parish administrator – Yih Chern Lian – began work at St Mary's on 22 January 2008, and her efficiency and work ethic quickly became apparent. As well as her contribution to the general administration of the parish, Yih Chern also took on the role of bookkeeper, providing valuable support to the treasurer and wardens.

Early in the year, Geoff Manton was transferred in his work to Perth, so the Manton family announced that they would be moving to the western capital. This was an unexpected and unwelcome development for St Mary's: the Mantons had contributed greatly to ministry and leadership at St Mary's – Geoff as a vestry member and warden, and Emma as children's and families minister. While the church began a search for a replacement for Emma, Angela Ettles stepped temporarily to fill the breach. It would take many months before a suitable candidate could be identified and appointed.

St Mary's held a 'day of repentance' on Saturday 15 March, which included 'a time for fasting, quiet meditation and prayer' from 8am to 3pm, and a service of repentance and reconsecration of the church, led by the Rev Roger Rich.

Also in the early months of 2008, Ettles proposed a new structure for vestry, with finances and property the wardens' responsibility, and the wardens to meet two weeks before vestry to streamline business and consider proposals. Minimal time was to be spent in vestry on business which the wardens could handle separately, and there would be more intense concentration on visionary planning in line with the church's mission. The new structure was to be trialled for three months.

Pastoral care was front and centre in 2008, with vestry looking to appoint a pastoral care coordinator. After prayerful consideration of the role and the person who would make the best fit, Amanda Ballantyne, a part-time pastoral worker at St Timothy's Anglican Church in Bulleen with a background in education, and who was a candidate for ordination, was appointed lay pastoral minister (part-time) effective from 1 December 2008.

The role would have two main thrusts: to coordinate the children's and family ministry and lead the pastoral care team.

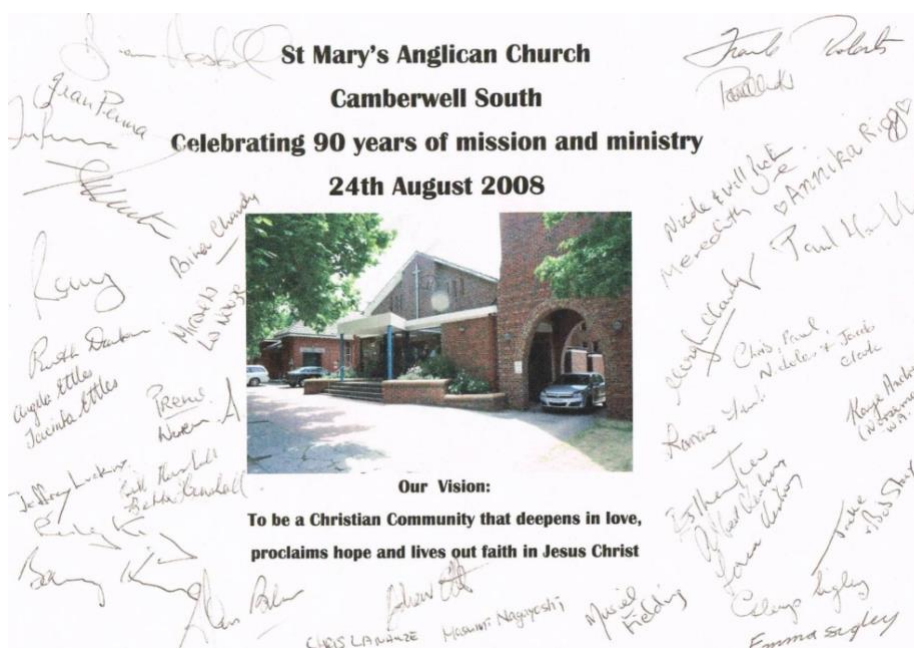
In the former role, Ballantyne would benefit from Emma Manton's excellent work, and also from the fine work Angela Ettles had done to maintain momentum while more permanent options had been considered. Two Footsteps programs had continued (on Mondays and Wednesdays) involving a total of 19 families, while more than 40 people had worshipped together as families in AAK.

Angela Ettles reported: 'We are seeing spiritual growth; families who had no previous connection with the church worshipping together through play, story, music and prayer as part of our community. It is exciting to see children asking questions as they gain a greater understanding of who God is and how much they are loved by Jesus'.

In the pastoral care role, Ballantyne would be guided by the recommendations of a pastoral care development team. Ballantyne quickly got under way, undertaking CRE training and getting out and about, meeting church members and AAK participants, and administering Footsteps. While Ettles was on study leave in January, Ballantyne took on the day-to-day oversight of the parish.

Family life for the Ettles was about to become more intense with the impending arrival of a second daughter, Kari.

Flushed with the success of Mission 5000, Esther Teo now proposed Mission 6000, aiming to raise \$6000 for the Church Missionary Society of Australia, Christian Blind Mission, and the local mission, Alabaster House. That total was not quite achieved, but the \$5000 mark of the previous year was exceeded. As well as the mission giving, there were four 'mission-focused' Sunday worship services during the year.



Parishioners signed this photo, commemorating the church's 90th anniversary in August 2008.

Shortly before the AGM on 30 November 2008, the Archbishop of Melbourne offered Ettles the position of incumbent of St Mary's. This was clearly an important career step for Ettles, meaning inter alia that he would be licensed for 10 years as incumbent of the parish.

'Having prayed about it', Ettles said, 'both Angela and I believe God's call is to continue ministering at St Mary's; we love our church family and there is much still to be done. I have accepted the Archbishop's offer.' He was installed as incumbent on 11 December.

A year of significant change had had its impact on St Mary's financial situation, as outlined at the 2008 AGM. The church had set itself a goal of raising \$65,000 from freewill offerings – the amount calculated at that time to be sufficient to cover the salary and associated costs set by the Anglican diocese for a full-time vicar's position. But freewill offerings ultimately came in much lower at \$42,400 in 2007/08, explained in part by the departure of several families from the church community.

The overall results showed a surplus of \$11,000, but the treasurer cautioned that the church owed the diocese precisely that amount, and it would need to be paid in 2008/09.

Average attendances at Sunday services slipped minimally from 45 to 44 in 2007/08. It was notable that special services such as St Mary's Day (24 August – 46 attendees) and the pet service (5 October – 43 attendees) did not attract larger congregations than approximately the yearly average. The St Mary's Day attendance was somewhat disappointing, as it was a celebration of a significant milestone for the church – its 90th anniversary.

The small new vestry comprised (along with the vicar), Amanda Ballantyne, Bina Chandy (secretary), Jenny Clemow (warden), Ian Penna (warden and treasurer) and Glenys Sigley (warden).

As the year drew to an end, St Mary's was subtly evolving into three distinct worshipping communities – those participating in the 10am Sunday service, in the small 12.30pm Wednesday service, or in the very successful All About Kids (AAK) program, including some overlap, with participants attending two or even three of the worship opportunities.

Ettles was a little uneasy about the distinct worshipping groups: remarking at the AGM: 'It is important to keep in mind that St Mary's community of faith is more than Sunday mornings, and that the challenge remains "cross-pollinating" relationships amongst the whole people of God'.

Three small groups – Monday evenings at the Sigleys' home, Tuesday evenings at the vicarage, and Wednesday afternoons at the Stacys' home – continued to meet, and attracted a total of 18 people.

Ettles maintained his strong belief in small groups, seeing them as 'a vital part of maturing in our faith journey' and 'a foundation for good pastoral care and mission'. He said: 'It ought to be a priority for us to implement more groups and encourage more people to participate'. Time and again in the records his desire to create and maintain small groups is evident.

Andrew and Angela Ettles, along with Glenys Sigley, Fran Penna and Esther Teo continued St Mary's stalwart commitment to teaching CRE at Camberwell South Primary School, contacting about 280 children in the process during 2008.

The Mantons were one family whose departure had impacted St Mary's, and late in the year there was another significant departure. Bob and Jackie Stacy announced that Bob would be taking up a new job appointment in Sydney, and the couple would relocate in February 2009. Supported by Bob, Jackie had played many roles at St Mary's over the years, including as a vestry member, secretary and warden, as well as preparing the church flowers, and participating enthusiastically in working bees and social events.

Finally it appeared that the long-running saga of the church car park might be reaching a conclusion – but although events took a positive turn, it turned out to be something of a false dawn yet again. In December 2008 Boroondara council finally agreed to proceed with concreting the car park, landscaping the Toorak Road side of the car park, and – to the pleasant surprise of the vestry – council agreed to cover all costs. Two trees were to remain: the liquidambar near St Mary's Recreation Club and another tree near the traffic lights.

Work began on 30 April 2009 and was completed by June, aside from landscaping and line-marking, which meant that the car park could now be used once again. But the finishing touches of landscaping and line-marking would take a long time to complete: they had still not been done by the time of the AGM in November 2010.

Early in 2008, the recreation club had asked vestry to confirm that the club was a 'vestry-approved centre of activity of the parish'. (The Anglican Diocese Insurance Company had asked for the confirmation.) On behalf of the club, Albert Vickery pointed out that it had always cooperated with the vestry, and considered itself to be 'an active parish organisation'.

This also became a long-running issue. The church could find no record of an agreement between the church and the club over the use of the club's building, and the diocese directed St Mary's to prepare a formal agreement for signature by both parties.

The church's first website was set up late in 2008. Rudimentary at the outset, it had a temporary design and included only basic information about the church, pending its full setting-up by consultant Ross Daws. Ettles was keen for the site's full development, so that among other capabilities, he would be able to load up his sermons for access by the church and wider community.

Hanging over the early months of 2009 like a sinister shadow were the Black Saturday bushfires of 7 February and their aftermath. Australia's all-time worst bushfire disaster took the lives of 173 people, with 414 people injured.

Andrew Ettles reported that he had encountered many people in one of the local cafes who had been directly affected by the fires, and who wished to speak openly about their experiences. The church organised a service of prayer for those affected by the fires, and a retiring offertory was taken up for the Red Cross to aid its work in supporting fire victims.

A guiding team was set up to lead a listening process, as the church reviewed and consolidated its vision document. The team's mission-shaped church survey, which had been submitted to all St Mary's members, and to which 31 members ultimately responded, was completed by April 2009. The team met with vestry and ministers at an all-day seminar on 23 May to consider the recommendations and to communicate the outcomes to parishioners.

Ettles introduced an interesting innovation for Maundy Thursday. It was a Passover meal and a communion narrative similar to the narrative that Jesus commissioned at the Last Supper. Congregation members contributed to the meal by supplying roast lamb, wine, grape juice and other traditional Passover foods, and appropriate music, scripture, poetry and reflection were included in the service. Ettles had invited participation from the wider community, and he was satisfied with the attendance of 31 at the service. He described the experiment as successful and 'very exciting'.

At the start of the 2009 school year St Mary's once again had a team in place for CRE teaching at Camberwell South Primary School, consisting of Amanda Ballantyne, Andrew and Angela Ettles, Fran Penna, Glenys Sigley and Esther Teo. During the year, the team would have contact with more than 370 Camberwell South students.

At the outset, the CRE teachers hosted a morning tea for school staff to introduce themselves to the staff and to launch the program. There was also a plan to introduce a chaplain at the school, and Ettles and CRE coordinator Joan Burger discussed the plan with ACCESS Ministries, with a view to approaching the school for its views.

Footsteps continued to run successfully on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, albeit with an almost totally new group of children in 2009, the previous group having largely moved on to kindergarten. However the Monday group was discontinued, as numbers had dwindled to almost zero. The ubiquitous Glenys Sigley, along with Angela Ettles, Chris Clark, Romy van Loenen and Meredith Ure helped Amanda Ballantyne to run Footsteps.

With the Stacys having departed for Sydney, the church was running just two small groups: Monday evenings at the Sigleys' home and Tuesday evenings at the vicarage, involving 15 church people in all.

A worship committee had been set up in response to the 2007 'listening process' recommendations. Ettles commented on the recommendations: 'What is obvious to the committee is that the issues for our worship are deeper than any developmental; approach will address ... The "call to discipleship" is the primary issue for us to address as a community of faith in the year to come'.

An intense focus was directed to what 'might be' if the parish were to become attentive to the Holy Spirit's mission for the church in its local community. Angela Ettles, Glenys Sigley and Esther Teo led the vision work the church was undertaking to become 'visionary people of God'. The group organised a series of listening groups in November 2009 to provide feedback to the church congregations. Vestry was then to set up one or two mission experiments emerging from the feedback.

The church's finances had been severely affected late in 2008 when a long-term tenant of the Manley Hall, Leaping Lizards (a children's physical education program), decided not to

renew its lease in 2009. This immediately reduced the church's planned income by \$12,000 in the January to September period, although two new tenancies were picked up: 'Shake Rattle and Roll' (a program similar to Leaping Lizards) and a Pilates class. Hopes that the Camp Australia group would step in as a major hall hirer, similar to Leaping Lizards, were dashed when the group's administrative problems forced it to withdraw.

There was a looming large expense in the offing for repairs to the church roof, expected to come in at around \$30,000. Other large expense items were the anticipated cost of the half-time pastoral minister (\$28,000 per annum) and the foreshadowed donation to missions (\$6000).

Esther Teo had been working assiduously to raise St Mary's awareness about mission, and challenging the parish to meet its financial commitment to help 'take the gospel to the ends of the earth'. The church's three target mission groups were still Alabaster House, Christian Blind Mission and the Church Missionary Society, although news came through that 'Dave' and 'Ruth' would soon be leaving CMS.

To help meet the church's Mission 6000 target, an on-line 'op-shop' selling donated goods via eBay was set up, with the proceeds to be devoted to Mission 6000. There was also a successful lunch event in November 2009, with proceeds of \$1200 devoted to Mission 6000.

The financial emergency following the United States' sub-prime mortgage crisis was casting a dark shadow over the financial world, and contributed towards the US recession, which had begun in December 2007 and continued on into 2009. At ground level in Camberwell South, Ettles noticed an increase in emergency relief requests in March and April 2009.

At the AGM on 29 November, Ettles advised that Amanda Ballantyne would be ordained deacon by the Archbishop of Melbourne, and would commence ministry as an assistant curate in the Diocese of Melbourne.

With much regret, the church had been unable to find the approximately \$61,000 that would be required to fund a full-time curacy for Ballantyne after 2009, despite two donations from parishioners towards funding the position which totalled \$15,000. As a part-time ministry was not an option for Ballantyne, from 2010 she would no longer be a paid member of St Mary's staff, but agreed to remain as a volunteer, continuing in roles such as CRE teacher and a helper at AAK.

There was quite a disturbing downward trend in average attendances at the church's 10am Sunday service, which were 29 in 2008/09, compared with 44 in the previous corresponding period, and 49 in 2005/06. The financial reports showed a deficit of \$7500 for the year compared with a surplus of \$11,000 in the previous corresponding period. Much of the deficit was attributable to the cost of the part-time children's and families minister (\$18,000) and an increased contribution towards the parish assessment (\$21,000).

The incoming vestry, again below full strength, was, with Ettles, Alf Baker (vicar's warden), Bina Chandy (secretary), Ian Penna (treasurer and elected warden) and Glenys Sigley (elected warden). Baker was to resign during 2010 when he and his wife moved to Arthurs Seat.

Hall tenancy, or the lack of it, was causing a degree of unease, particularly the loss of \$12,000 in annual rental caused by the departure of Leaping Lizards in late 2008, which had not been covered by the acquisition of another major tenant.

But there was an unexpected turn of events. The church had prayerfully sought answers to its hall tenancy problems, and late in 2009 the prayers were answered in the form of a

proposal by a market research firm, ChantLink and Associates, which employed approximately six people, to take up a long-term lease on the Tidmarsh (upper) Hall.

This revolutionary proposal required renovating the hall into a space suitable for a corporate office, and for this to be achieved within a three-month timeframe so that the firm could move in. This would mean that the hall would no longer be available for use by any other tenant.

Delicate negotiations with a long-term tenant, Toorak School of Dancing, would need to take place. This tenant had signed a lease entailing the use of both the Tidmarsh and Manley Halls at various times of the week (on the condition that the church would be able to use the lower hall whenever necessary for its own purposes).

Meanwhile, vestry had to pull out all stops to meet the ChantLink deadline. Alf Baker, who had had many years' business experience and also had a portfolio of trade contacts, was of great help to Ettles, who rolled his sleeves up, and with the help of several other parishioners, got on with the internal work that was necessary before the fitting out could be completed.

Inevitably, costs exceeded expectations, but the work was finished in time for ChantLink to move in on 1 March 2010. The vicar remarked: 'Whilst this puts financial strain on the parish in the short term, the long-term investment will provide a much-needed reliable income for our future'.

Despite uncertainties and some disappointments, particularly that the church was unable to fund the full-time children's and families' ministry it so dearly wanted, St Mary's had good reason to thank God for its good fortune as it embarked on the second decade of the 21st century.

Chapter 5

The 2010s

In April 2009, the results of a 'Mission-Shaped Church Survey', initiated by Andrew Ettles, had been published. Although the sample was small – the results reflected the views of just 22 St Mary's parishioners – there were comments that might have caused some disquiet as the church headed into the century's second decade: if they were taken as representative of a wider view and not just of the individual parishioners.

It was a 'mission-shaped church survey', and some respondents saw shortcomings in the way St Mary's approached its mission to the local community. One commented simply: 'Our church needs to do more to reach out to the local community'. Said another: 'The challenge seems to be for us to remember that we are called by God to be his messengers and to go out and mingle'.

Another respondent said: '... We are not meant to be a social club sitting on our bums and waiting for people to walk through the door. Why would they?' Another parishioner said 'planning towards growing the congregation does not seem to have any positive impact on church numbers'.

These parishioners' views were on record to be taken into account as the church shaped itself to face the challenges of the new decade; or perhaps they were to be treated with caution as the view of too small a slice of the total church family. However, the 22 parishioners responding to the survey did represent approximately 60 per cent of the average weekly St Mary's congregation of 36, Sunday and Wednesday attendances combined, in the second half of 2008 (approximately the time of the survey).

Whatever, as the new decade dawned, works were well under way on alterations to the Tidmarsh Hall, in anticipation of ChantLink's occupancy, and this was occupying much of the church's attention, not to mention requiring an input of much energy from the vicar himself and other church people.

The 4 January 2010 vestry meeting was told that all major demolition work had been completed on the hall, that a draft lease would soon be ready for submission to the diocese, legal documents had been drafted (at no cost to the parish), and builders had been nominated. In a separate project, approximately \$27,000 had been set aside to pay for restoration of the church roof which was leaking in several places.

All was in readiness for ChantLink to move into the Tidmarsh Hall by 1 March. Andrew Ettles reported to the March vestry meeting that although the refurbishment project had run over budget, it had been completed on time. 'The estimated budget of \$17,000 turned out to be unrealistically low, however I don't believe that we have over-capitalised on the renovation,' he said.

Ettles had worked long and hard to have the hall ready for its new tenants, even digging a trench, with the help of Alf Baker, to facilitate the installation of a phone line to the hall. 'It should all be well worth the effort', Ettles wrote. He estimated the project should yield a net profit of more than \$200,000 over the following six years.

The final cost of the project was just over \$60,000. To cover this cost, the Anglican Development Fund granted the church a loan of \$40,000, and the additional expense was covered by withdrawing the church's savings with the ADF. The diocese also assisted by temporarily waiving the annual diocesan assessment and staffing costs such as superannuation.

But the church now had no savings, and a significant cash flow problem. The treasurer estimated that St Mary's would need to raise \$90,000 in new ADF investments, and this would not be easy to achieve. In a letter to the church community, he appealed for parishioners' financial commitment.

The church car park was a nagging problem. Though major work on the car park had been completed in the previous year, the local council's bureaucratic inertia had prevented the final landscaping to be completed. Despite this, the car park was in constant use, especially by parents dropping children off at Camberwell South Primary School, and the church saw this as an opportunity for outreach.

Meanwhile the Toorak School of Dancing (despite initially expressing concern about its inability to use the Tidmarsh Hall) and the children's physical education program, Shake, Rattle and Roll, continued their tenancy of the Manley Hall. As well, a new three-year lease was signed with Telstra for the telco's continuing use of the church tower.

In March, St Mary's hosted a World Day of Prayer celebration, organised by Glenys Sigley, who had been St Mary's representative on the local World Day of Prayer committee for several years. More than 80 people attended the service, which featured African musical group, Vox Congo, and was considered the most successful of its kind in the church's region.

CRE continued at Camberwell South Primary School, with St Mary's supplying most of the teachers – Andrew Ettles, Glenys Sigley, Fran Penna, Esther Teo and Amanda Ballantyne. Although St Mary's had not been able to support Ballantyne as a paid staff member, she continued to contribute to the church in many ways as a volunteer.

Footsteps, the playgroup ministry, expanded again to two groups, under the determined leadership of Angela Ettles, supported by Amanda Ballantyne, Glenys Sigley and Meredith Ure. As well, a group called 'eXplorers', which aimed to familiarise primary school age children with the love of Christ, was created and got off to a solid start with a good core group of children. But the fledgling group faced the challenge of engaging more children at Camberwell South Primary School.

In May, a further opportunity to engage with the community arose at the opposite end of the age spectrum. Aged care facility, Shenley Manor, at the corner of Bowen Street and Camberwell Road – on the site of the former Salvation Army Bethany facility – invited Andrew Ettles to provide a monthly holy communion service, enabling Ettles to connect with the growing number of residents moving into the new facility, which included St Mary's past parishioner, Jean Peverill.

Another outreach opportunity was provided by the 'Hebrews 13:16' group, which strove to raise money for St Mary's mission projects. For Christmas 2010, St Mary's mission focus was on the Victorian town of Kerang, where many people were living in hardship as a result of the drought, which thankfully was nearing its end. To help drought-affected Kerang residents, St Mary's parishioners donated money, stamps, and basic necessities such as soap, toiletries and canned food. Twenty buckets of these goods were packed up for distribution in Kerang.

Small groups had soldiered on at the church, hosted by the Sigleys, Amanda Ballantyne and Angela Ettles. Pastoral care had been provided to several men from a Toorak Road boarding house, one of whom made a commitment to Christ, and began helping young people deal with issues relating to alcohol abuse.

Much loved parishioner, Bill Henshall, died during the year. Bill and his wife Betty had attended St Mary's for only a few years, but had become regular attendees and familiar faces.

The small vestry, consisting of the vicar, Alf Baker, Bina Chandy Ian Penna and Glenys Sigley, had worked hard during 2010, but change was in the air. Baker and his wife Brenda moved to Arthurs Seat during the year. Baker had made a positive impact as vicar's warden, and his loss would be felt acutely.

An agreement had been drawn up in October 2009 for St Mary's Recreation Club's long-term use of the club premises, but by the 18 August 2010 vestry meeting, no final agreement had been reached. It was a long-running issue which the vestry and the club were keen to have finalised, but time and again the issue would appear in vestry minutes as unresolved. A year later, there was still no resolution.

The treasurer's report to the annual general meeting on 24 October showed net income of minus \$124,116, reflecting the major expense of refurbishing the Tidmarsh Hall, but a surplus of \$5055 was budgeted for the 2010/11 year. In his report to the AGM, Ian Penna appealed for 'sacrificial giving by all of the community, no matter how large or small that offering may be'.

The new vestry, elected at the AGM, consisted of the vicar, Glenys Sigley, Ian Penna (treasurer) and Bina Chandy (secretary).

Church attendances in 2010 averaged 26 at the 10am service and seven at the Wednesday service. The faltering Wednesday services were cancelled in 2011. (In all instances these figures only include attendances at 'normal' services, and exclude services such as baptisms or funerals.)

Andrew Ettles had been in poor health for some time, His final service at St Mary's was on Sunday 5 December 2010, after which he departed on sick leave and later resigned as vicar.

Ettles' illness and departure had been sudden, and came as a shock to the parish. He had shown considerable energy in his work as vicar, and had enjoyed loyal support from his wife, Angela, particularly in the church's ministry to young people and its outreach to local families. A farewell event for the Ettles family was set for the afternoon of Sunday 11 September 2011, and ultimately was attended by approximately 30 parishioners, together with Angela Ettles and the children.

On 7 May 2011, Bishop Barbara Darling and Archdeacon Alison Taylor met with wardens Glenys Sigley and Ian Penna for critical talks on St Mary's future. Prior to the meeting, Bishop Darling had sent the church a letter outlining the 'possibilities with St Mary's South Camberwell'.

'The resignation of the Revd Andrew Ettles as incumbent of St Mary's South Camberwell ... leads to various possibilities ahead for the parish,' the letter began. The bishop sought input from 'the wardens, vestry and members of the parish, the clergy of the local churches, and others interested in possibilities'. Bishop Darling suggested six 'possibilities':

1. Continue the parish as is (but she pointed out the need for more members to ensure the church's viability).
2. Close the parish and support existing congregation members as they seek alternative parishes.
3. Merge with a local church.
4. Be the venue for a church 'plant' from another (neighbouring?) church
5. Create a partnership with an Anglican agency such as Anglicare.

6. Discuss other options to be suggested by St Mary's.

At its 10 May meeting, vestry discussed the issues raised at the meeting with the bishop and archdeacon. There was a suggestion of a parish consultation with Archdeacon Taylor and locum Graeme Sells, to be held in July, and Glenys Sigley was to ascertain if any other congregations were interested in using St Mary's facilities.

The word did get out that the St Mary's site might be available to potential users. Treasurer Ian Penna received an email from Priestmonk Kyril of the Holy Ascension Orthodox Christian Mission, about the 'possible availability of using St Mary's Anglican Church ... for our community, which is currently searching for a place of its own'. Penna replied: 'We still have no idea as to the future of the current church community.'

Meanwhile, much to the regret of the parishioners, Amanda Ballantyne departed with the church's best wishes in February 2011, after being appointed to a ministry position in the Bairnsdale region. Ballantyne, who had contributed much to church life as a pastoral worker during a very difficult period for St Mary's, now had certainty in her own employment, but her shoes would be difficult for St Mary's to fill.

Despite the drastic issues canvassed at the meeting with Bishop Darling, the decision had been made to appoint a new incumbent. In the meantime, parish locums stepped in to fill the void created by Ettles' departure – Rev Mark Hanson, from 12 December 2010, followed by Rev Edwin Lang, Rev Graeme Sells, Rev Gordon Hargrave and finally Rev Neville Mellor.

Rev Mellor took up his appointment on 1 October 2011, and would remain as locum until a new appointment could be made. On 7 May, the vestry met with Archdeacon Alison Taylor and Bishop Barbara Darling to discuss St Mary's future. The appointment of a new vicar was to be made by the Archbishop.

Archdeacon Taylor and the Rev Graeme Sells conducted a thorough inspection of the church's buildings, and in a letter to the wardens and locum on 1 August, listed various issues requiring attention. Maintenance issues included the perennial problem of rising damp in the church and in the Manley Hall, the requirement for extensive interior and exterior painting in both areas, and 11 issues relating to the vicarage. Taylor and Sells emphasised that repairs to the vicarage should be prioritised to enable it to be let.

They also noted that the status of the lease agreement for St Mary's Recreation Club was still unclear, and needed to be resolved.

As a follow-up, Taylor and Sells attended a parish consultation at St Mary's on Sunday 7 August, which included a motion passed unanimously: 'That the vestry of St Mary's meet with the churchwardens and vicar of St Mark's, Camberwell, and respond back to a congregation meeting as soon as possible'. It was felt that the two churches could join forces on some projects, and St Mary's could feed off the energy developed by St Mark's.

The meeting was set for 22 August, and the report to the congregation would take place on 11 September. The vicar of St Mark's, Rev Greg Allinson, had suggested a 'cooperative arrangement' between St Mary's and St Mark's, 'where the vicar of St Mark's, Camberwell, would be appointed as priest in charge'. A 'suitable minister' could be appointed to work in conjunction with the St Mark's team. Meanwhile a small group of parishioners led by Glenys Sigley met every week to pray for the future of St Mary's.

But the immediate outcome of the 22 August meeting and the report to the congregation was simply to aim to 'build relationships [between St Mary's and St Mark's] so that we could join up with some activities they have; e.g. women's breakfast, Alpha course, etc.', according to

the minutes of the 12 October vestry meeting. However by the AGM on 11 December, even this relationship-building proposal was unlikely to occur: as treasurer Ian Penna pointed out, the appointment of a new minister for St Mary's was the first priority.

Armed with the issues arising from the 1 August letter, and mindful of outcomes from the parish consultation, the vestry acted promptly on many of the recommendations in the Taylor/Sells letter.

At the 16 August meeting, plans were set to make monthly debt-reduction payments to the diocese, and a structural engineer was to be engaged to assess the rising damp issues. Further follow-up on issues identified in the letter also took priority at the 6 September and 12 October vestry meetings, indicating vestry's determination to act decisively on the identified issues.

Throughout 2011, vestry members Glenys Sigley, Ian Penna and Bina Chandy, together with parish administrator, Yih Chern Lian, kept the parish in running order. Glenys, Esther Teo and Fran Penna maintained St Mary's commitment to CRE services at Camberwell South Primary School, and to the Christmas services for the school at St Mary's. During the year the ever-faithful Sigleys again opened their home for Bible study.

Mission outreach in 2011 included continuing support of link missionaries Alabaster House and Christian Blind Mission. In June the church began a mobile phone collection for Taralye, a Blackburn community supporting children with hearing problems and their families. The community arranged for the phones to be recycled and used the funds raised to further their work. The church also funded a set of Bibles for distribution to the Year 6 children at Camberwell South Primary School as part of their graduation send-off.

In 2011, average church attendances had fallen to just 17 at the 10am service and three at the Wednesday service (compared with 26 and seven respectively in 2010). The poorly-attended Wednesday service was discontinued after the 6 April service.

But by November, the church's financial position had shown pleasing improvement. In just under four months the diocesan debt had been reduced significantly, from \$29,000 to \$22,000, partly as a result of the parish not being required to pay a full stipend during the interregnum period. The balance of funds borrowed from the Anglican Development Fund still stood at a rather daunting \$142,000, but against that was a total of \$65,000 which parishioners had invested with the ADF.

At the 2011 annual general meeting, Glenys Sigley was appointed vicar's warden, with Ian Penna and Rob van Loenen taking the other wardens' positions, and Bina Chandy, Romy van Loenen, Allan Smith, Esther Teo and Meredith Ure making up a larger vestry than in preceding years. The incumbency committee consisted of Bina Chandy, Ian Penna and Glenys Sigley, but the appointment of a new vicar would be in the Archbishop's hands.

By the 11 January 2012 vestry meeting the Archbishop had made that appointment: David Huynh was appointed as curate-in-charge of St Mary's. Ethnically Chinese and Australian born, the 31-year-old Huynh had worked for Telstra for two years after graduating in Commerce and Information Systems from Melbourne University in 2003. After his time at Telstra he moved to Sydney to study theology. At the time of his appointment to St Mary's, Huynh was a gospel minister to students at St Jude's Anglican Church in Carlton.

Huynh's commissioning, by Bishop Darling, took place during St Mary's 10am service on Sunday 5 February in front of 64 parishioners and guests. Prior to that, Huynh, his wife Kylie and young family had moved into the vicarage on 23 January.

Huynh set to work with enthusiasm. His early plans included changes in the style of service at St Mary's, plans for alterations in the layout of the church (dispensing with the pews and replacing them with chairs to provide more comfort and adaptability for the church configuration), and setting up more Bible study groups.

He immediately appointed Bonnie Cheung as a pastoral trainee: Huynh and his wife Kylie would be the trainers. Cheung's stated aims were to develop an understanding of, and grow her skills in, pastoral care, among various groups within the church community. With Kylie, Glenys Sigley and Romy van Loenen, Huynh started the process of establishing a women's ministry and a crèche ministry.

Two Bible studies groups operated during the year, with attendances fluctuating. A Monday evening group continued to meet at the Sigleys' house, led by David Huynh, and a Thursday morning group for women was run by Kylie Huynh.

At its 17 June 2012 meeting, vestry decided on a significant change in 10am service procedure. Parishioners had been consulted about possible changes to the frequency of communion and the type of service to be offered, and many had responded. Several options were considered, including:

- offering communion prior to the 10am service on the weeks communion was not offered during the service;
- scheduling two Sunday services: an 8am prayer book service including communion, and a contemporary service at 10am offering communion bimonthly;
- a midweek Prayer Book and communion service.

After considerable discussion, and taking account of parishioners' views, vestry resolved that it would devote its energy to developing the 10am service. From 1 July this service would become 'contemporary', with communion scheduled twice a month.

By the September meeting, vestry could report that no adverse comments had been received, 'so we can surmise that the new format seems to be accepted'. Comment had been received about the number of songs in the service and that some were quite long, but the general feedback was that people liked the variety of the new-style service. There was no momentum for a second service on Sundays or on another day of the week.

The church continued its support of linked missionaries Alabaster House and Christian Blind Mission. Glenys Sigley, as patron of CBM, travelled to Africa early in the year and on her return, she championed an awareness of fistula, a debilitating post-natal condition affecting up to 100,000 women worldwide.

In 2011, the church had bought Bibles to present to Year 6 students at Camberwell South Primary School as part of the children's graduation send-off. Some funds remained from this initiative, and mission coordinator Esther Teo planned a similar initiative in 2012.

Inevitably, an immediate challenge for the new vicar was the church's financial situation. The debt to the diocese had largely been repaid, and by the end of 2012 St Mary's had \$20,000 in the bank. However, the church still owed \$130,000 to the Anglican Development Fund, resulting from borrowings to pay for refurbishment of the Tidmarsh Hall prior to its occupancy by ChantLink. But there were encouraging signs: the loan liability was reduced by \$12,500 in 2011/12, and the parish had a firm repayment plan established as part of its 2012/13 budget.

Against that, during the year 3GIS (One.Tel) decided to decommission its phone towers at St Mary's, effective from 2013, which would leave a \$30,000 p.a. gap in rental income. This

forced several cost-saving measures, including the church having to dispense with the services of its parish administrator, Yih Chern Lian.

This was done with much regret – Lian had provided efficient and dedicated service for more than four years. Her departure meant that the vicar, wardens and vestry had to take on the burden of administrative work previously handled by the administrator. To ease this burden, Glenn Scott's company was engaged to provide bookkeeping and accounting services. (Scott had left the church by this time.)

Later in the year there was better news in dealings with telecommunications carriers. The church signed a new 10-year lease with Telstra, which also agreed to back-pay a shortfall in rent dating from 2009; and Optus confirmed its intention to remain with the church. As well, the Toorak School of Dance and ChantLink back-paid CPI increases on their rent.

In addition, David Huynh identified several cost-saving measures, including cancelling four Telstra services which were no longer required, which saved several thousand dollars per year. By the annual general meeting, the church reported that income exceeded expenditure by \$22,000 for the 2011/12 year.

The appointment of a new vicar seemed to be the catalyst of an immediate spike in church attendances, which rose from an average of 17 in 2011 to 22 in the first half of 2012.

The state of the church buildings continued to pose major challenges. Rising damp in the Broadbent Room meant that it could not be used for any purpose – posing some restrictions, as it would have been useful for children's and family ministry activities.

After a waterproofing expert determined that Telstra had caused the rising damp problem during construction of their equipment room in the church basement, the company agreed to pay for repairs. The waterproofing expert also advised that water damage to the former office next to the Broadbent Room had been caused by council work on the car park, and the church's lawyers submitted this finding to Boroondara Council.

At the AGM on 28 October, David Huynh spoke of the need for the church to have a clear vision and mission, to give it 'the necessary direction to move forward, but also to give us clarity to know how we can individually contribute to reach the community with the gospel of the Lord Jesus'.

'Will you pray with me', he said, 'that the Holy Spirit will be mightily at work in us and through us? Will you minister with me ... by being committed to regularly meeting with each other to spur one another on to love and good deeds? ... Will you look forward with me to the day when people from every tribe and language, people and nation, are gathered round the throne of Christ to sing his praises?' It was a stirring and compelling challenge.

Brian Foo and Glenys Sigley were elected as wardens at the AGM, with Bina Chandy, Meredith Ure and Peter Young making up a smaller vestry than in the previous year.

A significant development towards the end of 2012 was the commencement of Kids' Church at St Mary's, under the leadership of Kylie Huynh. The Kids' Church leaders adopted the Kidswise preschool program created by Sandy Galea, which helped them to develop as leaders and grow in confidence in their mission to the young people. Through 2013 a roster was developed of three teams comprising two to three leaders, which rotated each week and rested during the school holidays.

As the weekly congregation began to grow – it was averaging 30 by the time of the 2013 AGM – ministry opportunities were being considered. This included the introduction of a French ministry.

There was a decidedly French influence in the neighbourhood: several parish members spoke French and there were other French-speaking people living in the church's vicinity; Camberwell Primary School was bilingual (French and English); and a French-speaking playgroup had been initiated at the Maternal and Child Health Centre opposite the church.

Also proposed was creating a ministry to the many international students in Melbourne, particularly those from Asian countries; and consideration was given to establishing a playgroup, which was seen as providing opportunities to minister to young families (however the playgroup proposal was ultimately not adopted). A roster of musicians and singers was drawn up to lead the church's music ministry. As well, after-church lunches took place every Sunday, providing excellent fellowship opportunities for parishioners and guests.

A vestry retreat at a Camberwell restaurant in June had considered key issues confronting St Mary's, including 'the nine marks of a healthy church', the church's mission, values and core beliefs, and coming to a decision on the new name.

Vestry held a longer, more intense retreat at an urban camp in Parkville on 9 and 10 November 2012. A draft vision, mission and values document was prepared, which 'the congregation received with great enthusiasm' on Sunday 19 November. Vestry had posed three questions:

- 'When will we change the name of the church? St Mary's sounds too Catholic, was the comment.
- How does the diocese see St Mary's now?
- When will we begin fixing up the building?'

Vestry conceded that 'a lot more work will need to go into distilling the vision, mission, values and strategy of St Mary's. It will take up too much time.' In the meantime, the church decided to rename itself 'Camberwell South Anglican Church', which, once adopted in February 2014, quickly gained the acronym of 'CSAC'.

The rationale for the name change included the perception, expressed above, that the name 'St Mary's' suggested the church was a Roman Catholic institution; also that many local community members believed the church was closed or had become a kindergarten; and simply that a new name would be in keeping with the new era of vitality, outreach and community engagement.

The Archbishop approved the proposal, and the re-launch of the church was ultimately set for 23 February 2014, to coincide with the erection of a new sign on the Toorak Road/Bowen Street corner, the creation of a new website, setting up an online presence via Facebook, and establishing new community mission groups and a preaching group.

The name change was one component of the church's determination to create a clear path towards achieving its vision and mission, in line with God's vision, as set out in Bible references such as Matthew 28:18-20. ('... Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age.')

With the aim of closer engagement with the local community, the church went back to the future with the reintroduction of a 'Fun Fair' in early 2013. Linking up with visitors from the

Heathcote Engadine Baptist Church, located on Sydney's south-west fringe, the church reached out to the local community, aiming to show that it was alive, well and ready to spread the good news about the love of Christ. The joint mission activity was most successful, and a similar link-up for a subsequent fair in conjunction with the Sydney church was scheduled for February 2014.

The church had devoted much thought over more than a year to its Mission Action Plan, at vestry retreats, via congregational surveys, and through wider consultation. March 2014 was planned as Mission Month, providing the opportunity for St Mary's to consider how it could provide for the physically and spiritually poor of the world.

Funds would be raised for Christian Blind Mission, for Caroline Evenden, the church's link missionary, and for Access Ministries, which enabled David Huynh, Glenys Sigley and Esther Teo to provide CRE at the Camberwell South Primary School. A new mission partner would be added – the Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students.



A major focus during 2013 was formulating the building master plan. An important component of the plan would be reconfiguring and redeveloping the church infrastructure to be appropriate for the needs of the church as it moved into a new era. Immediate needs included remedying various problems at the vicarage, clearing and sorting material in the shed undercroft and in the car park, and concreting part of the grounds.

In financial terms, 2012/13 was both challenging and rewarding. In February 2013 the Tidmarsh Hall tenant, ChantLink, abruptly departed, leaving the hall untenanted for most of the year until a new tenant, the Hidden Cafe, was identified, and moved in near the end of the year.

Obtaining a new tenant was good news, but the loss of rental income of approximately \$19,000 in the intervening months was unfortunate. But the hard work of pursuing reimbursements from Telstra for rising damp resulting from the company's construction works was rewarded when Telstra paid the church \$50,000 in compensation. In addition, live giving showed a very pleasing increase of 56 per cent over the year.

Despite uncertainties, the debt to the diocese had been paid off, and good progress had been made on repaying funds borrowed from the Anglican Development Fund to redevelop the vicarage and refurbish the Tidmarsh Hall. Income exceeded expenditure by a healthy \$65,000.

Vestry approved a proposal for David and Kylie Huynh to attend a four-week Redeemer City-to-City training event in Hong Kong Taipei and Singapore later in 2013, for which Huynh had received sponsorship to cover all costs. Among the aims of the training were to help the Huynhs maintain their theological focus and vision, and to help them shape decisions to grow St Mary's.

At the annual general meeting, Marc Allison and Glenys Sigley were elected as wardens, with Andrew Bird, Bina Chandy and Brian Foo as the other members of the vestry/parish council. (The Parish Act of 2013, passed by Synod, determined that Anglican church governing bodies were now to be known as 'parish councils' instead of 'vestries'.)



At the end of the year another significant outreach opportunity presented itself in the form of a multicultural carols service, organised by St Mary's, to be held on 13 December in Bowen Gardens. South Camberwell Gospel Hall (the former South Camberwell Uniting Church), L'eglise, the French-speaking church, and Camberwell Salvation Army were all invited to participate, and help to bring the Christmas message to the church neighbourhood. The theme of the event was 'the peace that Jesus brings from east to west' (Matthew 2: 1-12).

St Mary's invited members of the Camberwell South and Camberwell Primary Schools communities to participate in the service. Local councillor and Boroondara Mayor Coral Ross represented the council. (St Mary's had been delighted to receive a \$10,000 grant to offset event expenses.)

The event was compered by Glenys and Ernie Sigley, carols were sung in English, Mandarin and French; and a brass band from the Salvos and a contemporary band from the gospel hall provided music. The event was a great success, with 400 people hearing the good news of Jesus' love.

The first major event of 2014 was the church's second Fun Fair, held in the church car park on Thursday 20 February, again with the help of the Heathcote Engadine Baptist Church mission team, led by Pastor Manfred Yew. The Baptist church group helped to promote the fair in the neighbourhood, and also assisted with publicity about the re-launch of the church. The event was again a success. There were balloons, a cake stall, a barbecue, fairy floss and an animal petting zoo, and the local community turned out in good numbers.

Hot on the heels of the Fun Fair came the church re-launch at 10am on Sunday 23 February. The church's new name, Camberwell South Anglican Church (CSAC), was backed by a new vision and mission statement, and the creation of three new ministries. The vision and mission statement read:

Our vision is to be a thriving multicultural, multilingual and multigenerational gospel-shaped community.

Our mission is making, maturing and mobilising disciples of Jesus Christ from every nation for God's glory.



The first of the three new ministries, centring on reading the Bible together every day as a church, was based on the *City Bible Reading Journal*. The second ministry was a Life on Life Discipleship. It involved individuals meeting during the week to pray, encourage each other and read the Bible together. The aim was to encourage members to get to know each other more deeply so that the gospel could be brought into their lives more readily.

The third new ministry involved the creation of two missional community groups, providing a platform for church members to spend time together building deeper relationships while studying the Bible. Each month included a social week, allowing time for fun activities, outings or sports, which again was an opportunity to foster deeper relationships.



David Huynh with Evie

During 2014, Kylie Huynh had to step down from overseeing Kids' Church following the birth of the Huynhs' daughter, Evie. Kylie had performed well. She had restarted Kids' Church, assembled and trained up a leadership team, and welcomed families from the church's neighbourhood.

Taking Kylie's place as children and families minister was Dianne Martin. Under Martin's leadership, Kids' Church resumed in August 2014, using the Kidswise program which CSAC had adopted in earlier years. A new team of children's leaders was engaged, led by Martin and consisting of Kathy Foo, Coco Hu, Charissa Wu and Emma Sigley. Children from nine families were participating in Kids' Church.

David Huynh wanted to establish CSAC as a training church, and two student ministers were engaged during 2014: Simon Niam and Matthew Smith. Niam, a civil engineer, had moved to Melbourne from Darwin in February and began studying at the Melbourne School of Theology. When appointed, Smith had already been studying at Ridley Theological College during the previous two years.

Congregation numbers continued to grow steadily, increasing from an average attendance of approximately 30 in 2013 to more than 40 in 2014, a pleasing development, and the wardens were delighted that so many parishioners, those of long standing as well as recent additions to the congregation, were willing to help the church in a wide variety of areas.



The church as it used to look. Photo taken just prior to a wedding.

During the year the church interior was reconfigured; the old church pews were removed and sold, along with other items of furniture considered surplus to current and future requirements.

Financially, it was a positive year. The hard work of securing good tenants for the church halls ensured a solid source of income, and this, along with the generosity of congregation members allowed CSAC to proceed with the redevelopment of the church site (for which the diocese granted approval during the year) and to increase the size of the pastoral team.

The 2013/14 budget had included a provision for a part-time assistant minister to begin in February 2014, but the first assistant minister did not begin at CSAC until August, resulting in reduced expenditure. Savings were also made because of delays in site redevelopment.

Further progress was also made in paying off funds borrowed from the Anglican Development Fund to redevelop the vicarage and refurbish the Tidmarsh Hall. These loans were reduced by \$12,200 in 2013/14. In all, the church reported an operating profit of \$14,352.

Another successful multicultural Carols in the Park service took place in December, once again held in the attractive setting of Bowen Gardens.

As 2015 dawned, the church entered the second year of its re-launch with renewed confidence and vigour.



Church camps had previously been held somewhat intermittently in the past at St Mary's/CSAC, but the concept was given new life in 2015. A camp was held at Mt Morton Camp and Conference Centre in Belgrave Heights from 27 February to 1 March, attended predominantly by young family groups. At the camp, Rev Dr Peter Adam spoke about the importance of Christian discipleship, as set out in St Paul's letter to the church in Colossae, and David Huynh took the opportunity to launch the CSAC discipleship program, called 'REAL Discipleship'.

The acronym 'REAL' stood for Reading the Bible, Engaging in prayer, Abounding in love and Living for Jesus. The aim of the program was to embed the church's vision and mission statements into daily life, so that the mission was taking practical form every day, as the church aspired to the vision becoming a reality. (The REAL Journal, 'designed to integrate REAL Discipleship into our daily lives', was introduced in 2016.)

Several major steps were taken to ensure that the church's buildings were both safe, and conducive to achieving CSAC's vision and mission. The considerable growth in congregation numbers (the Sunday service attendance now averaged 56) enabled the church to pay off accumulated liabilities, meet financial obligations and generously support local and overseas mission partners, in a way that it had fallen short of achieving in the past.

For example, there was a significant reduction of \$14,270 in funds borrowed from the Anglican Development Fund. Overall offering increased to approximately \$126,000. The church rounded off the year with a tiny surplus of \$14.98.

In light of the improving financial situation, the parish council decided to transfer \$101,000 into the building fund, to contribute to the repair of the Manley Hall. This would also reduce the parish assessment which CSAC would owe in 2015/16.

Refurbishment of the hall was stage one of the church's strategic building initiative. The project had become urgent, because the hall's floor had become unsafe and comprehensive works were required to ensure the hall's suitability for continuing use, and improve its functionality.

Prior to the flooring issues becoming apparent, the church had begun to use the hall more often than in the past; for example, lunches after Sunday services were held in the hall, and the hall also had its regular tenants, including long-term hirers such as the Toorak School of Dancing.

But around March 2015 serious flooring issues began to emerge, which escalated as more defects were identified. The parish and the diocese were unable to resolve the issues in consultation with the builder, and it seemed that the parish would have to go it alone and pay for the building rectification works.

But the diocese ultimately agreed to partner with CSAC and to make a substantial contribution to the cost of the works. The rectification would take time, and the unavailability of the hall led to a substantial reduction in income from hall hire, and the loss of long-term tenant Toorak School of Dancing.

The Fun Fair, which had previously been held in February, was transferred to Easter week in 2015, and it was again a successful event. In good weather, children enjoyed a bouncing castle, balloons, an animal petting zoo and face-painting. It was another good opportunity for community outreach, and CSAC hoped to make the fair an annual event.

CSAC was aware that there were about 17,000 native French people living in Melbourne, as well as a community of about 12,000 French-speaking Mauritians. In addition, Boroondara had at least six primary schools offering French. It seemed that a French ministry at CSAC could reach out materially and spiritually to the francophone and Francophile section of the Melbourne community.



Jonathan and Meg Chaintrier and their children, 2017

CSAC took the decision to plant a French ministry, and on Sunday 7 June the church's first French minister – Jonathan Chaintrier – was commissioned. Chaintrier would work one day a week in his ministry, thanks to an \$8000 diocesan grant.

Three months later, on 14 September, CSAC's Chinese ministry began, with the commissioning of Teik Ch'ng as Chinese minister. Among the first activities of the ministry was the creation of a Chinese Bible study group.

Another grant – this time from Boroondara Council and the Rotary Club of Balwyn – enabled CSAC to set up the Camberwell Table Tennis Club, to be affiliated with Table Tennis Victoria, and to be located at CSAC. Membership quickly grew, comprising people from a variety of age groups and backgrounds, and approaches were planned to gauge the interest of local primary school students.

The children and families ministry continued to thrive, with new families joining the church, new people stepping up as leaders, new ways of teaching, and the adoption of a new format, separating older and younger children. Another innovation was to link the children's teaching with the subject of the adults' sermon, enabling the whole family, as well as the wider church family, to learn together.

The trainee ministers, Simon Niam and Matthew Smith, continued to grow in competency and confidence. Niam became involved in the Bible study ministry, and led the Wednesday Bible study group. During the year he preached three times, on Luke, Matthew and the Psalms. Smith was also a Bible study leader, and helped to organise church events, such as the inaugural camp and the celebration dinner. He preached six times during the year, including a three-part series on the Book of Haggai.

At the AGM on 29 November, Bina Chandy, Brian Foo and Glenys Sigley did not stand for re-election as parish council members, so that the incoming council, together with David Huynh, consisted of Daniel Ch'ng, Esther Teo, Wen Xian Hong, Zhichao Wu and Albert Widjaja. Zhichao and his wife Charissa moved to the USA in January 2016, but Zhichao continued as a parish council member for some time via email.

Another successful Carols in the Park in Bowen Gardens again drew the church close to its community, and a Christmas service for Camberwell South Primary School was also held in December. But this service was accompanied by a feeling of sadness and finality, as the school had decided to discontinue what had come to be known as Special Religious Instruction.

CSAC had faithfully administered SRI (previously known as Christian Religious Education, then simply Religious Education, before the acronym became SRI in the closing stages). It was without doubt the end of an era, and there was a palpable sense of regret at CSAC, which had provided Camberwell South Primary School with a succession of teachers over the years, including Glenys Sigley, who taught CRE/RE/SRI for 25 years.



Easter Fair, 2016: David Ashton and Esther Teo

Among the significant developments in 2016 was the appointment of David Shannon as discipleship minister. Shannon's tasks included oversight of the four Bible study groups as well as one-on-one discipleship in the church; and, with the departure of Dianne Martin late in the year, supervision of the children's ministry. Shannon, his wife, Emily, and their children had moved from Sydney to Melbourne at the beginning of 2016, after Shannon completed his theological education.

In Bible study, Shannon's primary aim was to help CSAC people to become better Bible readers. In the children's ministry, he strove to ensure that 'the children ... will never have a

moment in their lives when they do not know God's love for them, and that their childlike faith will grow into a mature lifelong faith in our risen Lord Jesus ...'.

Teik Ch'ng, as Chinese minister, had first spent time coming to terms with the culture of the church, and getting to know parishioners. Stating that he aimed to 'evangelise and to make disciples', Ch'ng had launched the church's first Mandarin Bible study group in November 2015, which met fortnightly. He met slightly rocky ground during the year, when some of the initial group of Mandarin speakers he had assembled late in 2015 did not return in the new year, and some returned to China. However, his Bible study group stabilised at eight regular participants.



The French ministry, conducted by Jonathan Chaintrier and his wife, Margaret (Meg), which had begun in June 2015, was growing, and some of the grants the church received during the year were used to finance this ministry.

The Chaintriers began a French playgroup on Wednesday mornings during school term; they set up a French book club on Sunday afternoons; and on 7 August, introduced a French service, including Kids' Church, which began with an excellent attendance of 60 people, dropped a little at the September service, and settled at 40 by October.

Simon Niam was in his third year as student minister, which coincided with his third year of training at the Melbourne School of Theology. Having been ordained and appointed as assistant curate at Rowville and Ferntree Gully Anglican Churches, Matthew Smith had departed from CSAC during 2015, so Niam took over organising the liturgy for Sunday services and the church roster.

When Zhichao and Charissa Wu left for the USA, Niam also handled the music ministry, although David Shannon relieved Niam of his liturgy and music responsibilities on his arrival at CSAC. Niam was also in charge of the church's annual camp in April, and he preached five times at CSAC during the year.

During 2016, CSAC's Gospel Partnership was launched. This program of deep commitment to Jesus and to CSAC itself was designed to be taken up by parishioners who could describe themselves as 'already Christian'. The partnership involved a six-point commitment plan:

- to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ;
- to CSAC's Vision, Mission, Shared Values and Beliefs;
- to serve the church with the parishioner's time;
- to serve the church with the parishioner's talents;
- to serve the church with the parishioner's treasures; and
- to love the church wholeheartedly.

Gospel Partnerships became established, with many parishioners signing up to participate. CSAC came to expect that anyone involved in any form of teaching or leadership position in the church would have signed up as a Gospel Partner. As David Huynh remarked: 'The

great thing about the program is that it provides everyone with clarity about what it looks like to be a committed member of the church, so that everyone “owns” the church and plays their part in seeing the gospel go forth.’

The long-term issue of reaching an agreement with St Mary’s Recreation Club – now known as ‘Camberwell Cue Sports’ – continued to simmer. In 2008, when the club had asked vestry to confirm that the club was a ‘vestry-approved centre of activity of the parish’, the church had not been able to find any record of an agreement between the church and the club over the use of the club’s building.

Now, in 2016, the church was proposing a five-year tenancy for the club with an option for a further five years, subject to an annual rental based on market rates. The club declined, stating that there had always been an understanding with the church that the club could occupy the site rent free in perpetuity, provided the club paid for all outgoings and treated the site respectfully.

In response, CSAC instead proposed a lease agreement involving an annual rental considerably below market rates (to be negotiated, in the region of \$3000 to \$5000 per annum), which the club rejected, leaving the issue still unresolved.

In January, the cafe tenants – the Hidden Cafe – transferred their lease to Linger Cafe, and in August, the new tenant exercised an option to extend the lease for a further three years. The relationship with the church prospered, with CSAC using the cafe for its annual celebratory dinner in November.

The Montessori Australia Foundation approached CSAC with a proposal to operate a kindergarten in the Manley Hall, based on a shared use facility with the church. The parish council saw the proposal as a positive move, which could attract young families to the church community.

Part of the proposal would entail using the vicarage backyard for a childcare playground, and this would intrude on the Huynh family’s privacy and amenity. Accordingly, parish council encouraged David Huynh to seek accommodation away from the church.

It was a good year for the vicar, David Huynh and the church, with Sunday service attendances rising to a healthy average of 76 per week. Support from the pastoral leadership team and from the parish council enabled him to spend more time preaching, praying and pastorally caring for the church members.

It also enabled him to spread his wings as a preacher of the gospel, with pastoral engagements at the Overseas Christian Fellowship in Carlton, at the Fellowship of Overseas Christian University Students at Monash University, and at Moore Theological College in Sydney. He also continued as chairman of Connect Ministries, a non-denominational Christian ministry dedicated to helping local churches find and develop ministry leaders, as well as continuing in his role as an Anglican Chaplain to the University of Melbourne.

At CSAC, church music had for several years been supplied by keyboard, guitar and drums, and in March, the organ – which had not been used during this period – was sold for \$10,000. The church was pleased with this result, and used the funds to make essential improvements to the church’s lighting and sound systems.

The removal of the organ, though not coming as a surprise to parishioners, was accompanied by some feelings of nostalgia among the few remaining long-term members of the congregation. Some could recall the days before councils collected paper, glass and

plastics for recycling, when the church collected and sold newspapers to pay for the organ, which was fully paid off by September 1978. (See chapter one.)

At the 2016 annual general meeting on 20 November, the treasurer, Albert Widjaja, could report a positive bottom line of approximately \$32,000. Paying tribute to the 'enormous financial support from the parishioners', Widjaja said freewill offering, although under budget, was \$141,000, an increase of 12 per cent over the previous financial year.

The debt to the Anglican Development Fund was again reduced, this time by \$15,224. Striving to clear this liability, parish council resolved to allocate \$37,000 from Telstra rental income in 2016/17 towards paying off the loan, and to clear it completely by August 2019. Imelda Leung, CSAC's off-site bookkeeper, continued to serve the church with her accounting skills and her prayers.

Elected to parish council at the AGM were Daniel Ch'ng, Albert Widjaja and Wen Xian Hong (wardens), Sam Niam and Melissa Lai.

But good news did not entirely prevail in 2016. Rising damp problems continued to plague the Manley Hall, in particular during the wetter months of 2016 when the moisture content under the wooden polished floor caused it to buckle. The flooring problems also had implications for the proposed Montessori kindergarten operations in the hall.

Much to CSAC's relief, the diocese agreed to fund essential repairs to the floor, as well as to cover external consulting fees, enabling the hall to remain functional pending the identification, costing and implementation of a longer-term solution. The diocese provided further financial assistance to CSAC by granting parish assessment relief totalling about \$8000.

While the Manley Hall repairs took place, Kids' Church was held in the undercroft and foyer.

Meanwhile, as there had been some problems with the hall not being left clean and in good order after being hired out for private functions, parish council decided that the hall would in future only be hired for 'commercial functions', such as the proposed Montessori kindergarten, and would not be available for functions such as birthday celebrations, except where the functions involved members of the church.

Late in the year the church participated in celebrations to mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. CSAC church marked this great landmark by revisiting some of the core doctrines which were rediscovered during the early days of the Reformation, and the commemoration continued in 2017 with David Huynh preaching on a series of Reformation subjects (see below).

The multicultural Carols in the Park was again very successfully staged in Bowen Gardens, in collaboration with other local churches. Fundraising for the event achieved a surplus of \$2000, which was to be devoted to the 2017 carols service, scheduled to be managed by South Camberwell Gospel Hall.

A significant event early in 2017 was the appointment of Luke Pedersen as a Student Minister in training, a two-year engagement. Pedersen and his wife Leanne moved from their home church to join CSAC at the end of January. His tasks included leading the Monday evening Discipleship Team early in the year, and subsequently leading the Tuesday evening Discipleship Team for the remainder of the year.

As well as intensive Bible study, one of the primary aims of the teams was to train lay people and develop their theological and ministry depth. This was an important component of

CSAC's ongoing intention to become a church united in the gospel and equipped to fulfil the church's mission to make, mature and mobilise disciples.

Pedersen preached four times: twice at CSAC and twice at Church on the Corner, in Cooloongatta Road, Camberwell, helped with Kids' Church, and participated in a team organising the March 2018 weekend away.

Simon Niam continued as pastoral trainee, and continued to preach, and lead Bible studies and the music team. Niam's year was at once testing, as he coped with the severe illness of his wife, Christina, and joyful, as he and Christina welcomed their first son, Judah. Given his circumstances, Niam decided to relinquish his student minister's role for the present, but he continued to lead the music team.



Weekend away, March 2017

The weekend away, conducted at Araluen Lutheran Camp in Anglesea from 3 to 5 March, was highly successful. The peak attendance was on Sunday, with 92 parishioners and guests participating, including 11 day visitors. It was a valuable time of bonding for CSAC people, and the parish council was most encouraged by the positive feedback it received from attendees.

The long-running saga of the Manley Hall's drainage problems continued, despite the installation of a comprehensive drainage system. The floor buckled badly during the wetter months of the year, although not as extensively as in past years, and it was an issue constantly on the minds of parish council members.

There was also a long list of property issues yet to be resolved, including reassessing the hall's floor for final polishing – once the drainage issue had been finally resolved – moving the Memorial Garden, repairing the church's undercroft rooms, repairing and refurbishing both the downstairs toilets, and rewriting the church's master plan. (One element of the master plan was to construct a canopy between the church and the hall, enhancing all-weather access to the hall.)

Two members of the parish council, Daniel Ch'ng and Wen Xian Hong resigned early in the year, and the ever-faithful Esther Teo returned to the council as a churchwarden, providing significant support to Albert Widjaja (finance warden), Sam Niam (Treasurer) and Mel Lai (secretary). The parish council provided considerable support to the Huynh family in their relocation to their new premises in Kew, and supported Huynh in his role as Anglican Chaplain at the University of Melbourne and in his chairmanship of Connect Ministry.

Easter was an extremely encouraging time for CSAC, with the Easter Sunday service attracting a very large congregation of 183. Commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation continued, with David Huynh preaching on a series of Reformation subjects,

including Luther and faith. However, the series had to be curtailed when Huynh was confined to bed in April with the flu.

David and Kylie had identified a three-bedroom unit in Kew which suited their needs in terms of accommodation, amenity, a sense of privacy emanating from the increased distance between their home and the church/ministry, and proximity to schools for the children. (Huynh reported that daily driving time to and from school was significantly reduced).

The Huynh family moved out of the vicarage on 9 May, enabling maintenance work on the vicarage to proceed. Prior to their departure the floorboards had been repolished in some places, and external painting was done after the family vacated the house. In addition, new fencing was installed at the back of the vicarage, to enable a garden/playground to be established in anticipation of the introduction of the Montessori kindergarten, or for use by children participating in CSAC's own flourishing Kids' Church.

Once the work was completed, the vicarage could be tenanted, and this was achieved by mid-June.



In May, shortly before the Huynh family vacated the vicarage, Huynh had attended the Reformation 500 Conference in Hong Kong, attended by more than 3000 people from Asia, America and Australia. Huynh was overseas for 12 days in all, and was 'encouraged and challenged' by his time away. He said: 'I have been reminded of the enormous privilege and cost of full-time gospel work, and believe that this is where God wants me to continue to serve and grow.' He was aware of the need to direct his time and energy strategically for the growth of the work of the gospel at CSAC.

Throughout the year, Friday evening Discipleship Teams burgeoned, with more than 50 people participating regularly, some of whom were CSAC regulars and others who were new to the church. In all, 12 Discipleship Teams were established in 2017 and in early 2018.

David Shannon also ran four Christianity Explored sessions, aiming, as he said, 'to present Jesus to people who are investigating him or wanting to brush up on the basics of the Christian faith'.

The French ministry was a success story, as it continued to grow in 2017, based on three main elements:

- a French service, including Kids' Church, at which numbers averaged 45;
- a French book club, held on Sunday afternoons;
- a French playgroup, held on Wednesday mornings.

Momentum was building, and plans for 2018 included a second service each month and weekly Bible studies.

The news was not so positive for the Chinese ministry. Although an average of 23 people had attended the Chinese services, when Teik Ch'ng, the Chinese minister, departed late in the year, CSAC decided to suspend the Chinese ministry, hoping that it could be re-established at some time in the future.

The Montessori proposal was still unresolved at the end of 2017. The kindergarten would need to relocate its operations from its current premises by the end of the year, but as a not-for-profit organisation, it would not be in a position to pay market rental rates and wished to rent the Manley Hall on an hourly basis, initially for 15 hours per week.

In finance, the accounts showed that the church's actual giving for 2017/18 exceeded budget by \$973, totalling \$186,173. CSAC was able to keep within budget throughout the year, and at the time of the annual general meeting on 19 November, was in a strong position to meet its immediate obligations, with budgeted income for 2017/18 set at \$507,000. There was, however, a continuing reliance on rental income from the telecommunications companies to aid cash flow.

At the annual general meeting, David Huynh reflected on 2017 as a year of growth in line with CSAC's vision, and pointed to a number of positive outcomes. 'We have seen people become Christians and celebrated baptisms together. We have welcomed many brothers and sisters displaced from their churches, from overseas and from the community. We have bought more chairs to cater for a growing English congregation, and have seen our Kids' Church outgrow the undercroft rooms and expand into the Manley Hall.

'We have started praying together as a church every month to express our dependence on God in all we do, [and] started our REAL Leadership course to raise up more leaders in our church ...'

Sunday 10am church attendances through 2017 averaged approximately 130, a notable increase on the 2016 average of 76. This was partly attributable to the addition of people who had moved from the South Camberwell Gospel Hall in Toorak Road to CSAC, and partly to an increased number of overseas students becoming regular CSAC attendees.

To put the weekly average in perspective, in 2010 the average weekly attendance at 10am had been 26, and in 2011, just before the commencement of Huynh's ministry, it was just 17. To cope with the ever-increasing congregation, 40 extra chairs were purchased for the church.

The new parish council for 2017/18, in addition to David Huynh, included Albert Widjaja, Esther Teo, Erwin Khoo, Dan Kong, Glenys Sigley and Sam Niam.

It had been a successful but challenging year, and David Huynh gratefully took his family away for a month-long holiday in December 2017, most of which was spent visiting relatives in Singapore and Malaysia, including Kylie's 92-year-old grandmother. The family returned refreshed and ready for CSAC's centenary year.



There were changes in the children's ministry, with Greg Wong having been appointed Kids' and Youth Minister, beginning on 1 February 2018. Wong settled in well, learning the ropes with the help of Kylie Huynh and Emily Shannon. Plans were made and various roles and responsibilities discussed.



CSAC, 10am, Sunday 8 July 2018



REAL Women's brunch, 10am, Saturday 28 July 2018



REAL training, 7:30pm, Wednesday 1 August 2018

In the early months of the year, five couples participated in a four-week REAL Relationships program, and the REAL Leadership team continued to meet and study the core doctrines of the church. The Discipleship Teams were flourishing, with more people joining the 12 groups CSAC was running.

Average attendances at the French ministry services had fallen a little to around 35 people, including children, with eight to 10 parishioners participating in a French Discipleship Team.

Other plans for 2018 included:

- Reinforcing Discipleship Teams as the backbone of the church's ministry, working as committed church members who studied the Bible together, and worked together to plan and implement CSAC's weekly church services. The groups learned together and served together, all as part of CSAC's aim to fulfil its mission ambitions.
- The formation of a 'buddy' program to encourage cross-generational discipleship, as adults and Year 4+ children were paired up to pray and reflect on the Sunday sermons during school holidays at church.
- Plans also included establishing quarterly men's breakfasts and women's brunches during the second half of 2018.

As the date of the church's centenary approached, a parishioner transported from 1968 to 2018 and coming to CSAC would be astounded at the degree of change which had occurred. First, as the parishioner approached the church, he or she would observe on the noticeboard fronting Toorak Road, that the name 'St Mary's Anglican Church' had disappeared, to be replaced by 'Camberwell South Anglican Church'.

And though the church buildings would be familiar, it would be immediately noticeable that a cafe now occupied the Tidmarsh Hall. The transportee would enter the church through a more open, airier narthex than that of 1968. Inside, the parishioner would see that pews had been replaced by chairs, that the side chapel had disappeared, there was a space where the organ, organ pipes and choir stalls had once been, and there was new carpet and new and brighter lighting. And there was no formal pulpit.

If the parishioner arrived when a service was in progress, it would be quite evident that the service structure was very different. A band, with guitars, keyboard and percussion would accompany the songs – and they would mainly be songs, not hymns.

Looking around, the parishioner might be surprised to note a much more multicultural congregation than would have been the norm in 1968, and a far less structured service, not based closely on the stipulations of a prayer book.

It might come as a shock to see that most congregation members were casually dressed – no suits, no ties, no formal dress for women. And noting the size of the congregation and the enthusiasm of the service leaders and the people for Jesus Christ, the visitor would no doubt conclude that the Holy Spirit was still very much at work in Camberwell South.

So, has the 'fervent hope and prayer' of Geoffrey Harrison, the author of the history of CSAC's first 50 years been fulfilled – that 'the ancient landmarks here may be preserved, and that our Church in the power of the Holy Spirit will forever go forward, having learnt the lessons of the past, and prove a spiritual and moral force in the life and service of the community in the future'?

The reader will make his or her own assessment about the achievement of those aims. The landmarks, changed though they may be after 50 years, are indeed still in place.

Any visitor participating in a service during 1968 and returning in 2018 would note, without doubt, that the church is still fervently worshipping the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and is still a 'spiritual and moral force' in the South Camberwell and wider community. No doubt it is also still 'learning from the lessons of the past' as it forges on into its second century.

**Appendix 1: Vicars of
St Mary's/Camberwell South Anglican Church, 1969-2018**

1966-1976	Rev C F Withington
1976-1979	Rev F E Bedbrook
1979-1981	Rev A V Maddick
1981-1991	Rev J G Wight
1991-2000	Rev D G S Rathgen
2000-2004	Rev R K Ridley
2005-2011	Rev A D Ettles
2012-	Rev D Huynh

**Appendix 2: Churchwardens of
St Mary's/Camberwell South Anglican Church, 1969-2018**

Marc Allison
David Ashton
Alf Baker
Marie Boyle
Daniel Ch'ng
Jenny Clemow
Bill Davidson
Paul Cuthbert
David Eggleton
Brian Foo
Wen Xian Hong
Joyce Iggulden
Rod Kitchin
Lesley Laing
Roy Manley
Christine McKillop
Geoff Manton
Chris Morris
Vic McRea
Simon Osborne
Ian Penna
Robert Reside
Frank Roberts
Glenn Scott
Glenys Sigley
Jackie Stacy
Robert (Bob) Stacy
Esther Teo
Rob van Loenen
Albert Vickery
Albert Widjaja
Kay Young
Peter Young

**Appendix 3: Vestry/Parish Council members of
St Mary's/Camberwell South Anglican Church, 1969-2018**

Note: the vicar is an ex officio member of vestry/parish council.

Bruce a'Beckett
Elrae Adams
John Adams
Marc Allison
John Amor
David Ashton
Alf Baker
Amanda Ballantyne
John Barnes
Darren Bartholomeusz
Lee Bechler
Andrew Bird
Marie Boyle
Jack Broadbent
Mary Brodie
Bruce Brown
Sue Brown
Bina Chandy
Daniel Ch'ng
Jenny Clemow
Jacqui Cooke
John Corden
John Covill
Nelson Cox
Ian Curry
Paul Cuthbert
Rohan David
Bill Davidson
Kerry Dehring
David Eggleton
Brian Foo
Lorraine Friend
Brian Goodwin
John Gray
Geoff Heeps
Wen Xian Hong
Joyce Iggulden
Sybil Johannes
Vera Jones
Florence Kendall
Erwin Khoo
Barry King
Rod Kitchin
Dan Kong
Arleen LaBrooy
Lesley Laing
Shirley Lang
Jeffrey Luckins
Roy Manley
John Manton
Kerry McKean

Christine McKillop
Geoff Manton
Chris Morris
Vic McRea
Paul Orchard
Christine Osborne
Simon Osborne
Harry Pearson
Ian Penna
Anna Rathgen
Eunice Raymond
Mary Reside
Robert Reside
Ruth Richards
Glenda Ridley
Kate Roberts
Frank Roberts
Keith Robinson
Glenn Scott
Roma Sell
Ernie Sigley
Glenys Sigley
Allan Smith
Jackie Stacy
Robert (Bob) Stacy
Dorothy Stanley-Low
Esther Teo
Meredith Ure
Rob van Loenen
Romy van Loenen
Albert Vickery
Jill Williams
Kay Young
Peter Young
Albert Widjaja
Zhichao Wu

Appendix 4: Acknowledgements

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Glenys Sigley
Esther Teo
Lorna and Albert Vickery

Appendix 5: About the author



David Ashton wrote this history. He has been a parishioner at St Mary's/CSAC since the early 1980s. He is a former vestryman and warden of the church. He lives in Radnor Street, the next street parallel to CSAC, travelling west.

David's career has been in editing/writing. He was Manager, Publications at the National Australia Bank for nearly 18 years and was Corporate Relations Manager at the City of Boroondara for four years.

He is married, with a daughter and a son, and he has two grandchildren.

