



FROM THE PARISH ARCHIVES

Number 29 December 2012

Caritas at Saint Margaret's

Welcome to the twenty-ninth edition of "From the Parish Archives". We hope that you will enjoy reading about the history of the Parish. This is especially as our 150th anniversary year draws to an end on the 12 December 2012.

The "From the Parish Archives" aims to be factual. However, any opinions expressed are personal and may not be necessarily shared by other parishioners.

Geoffrey A Sandy, Parish Archivist and Parish Historian.

Opening Comments

As mentioned above the 12 December 2012 ends our year of celebration for 150 years of service and mission. Saint Margaret's Church opened for Divine Worship on Sunday the 12 December 1861. The first full-time minister was the Lay Reader Dixon Bertram. On the 4 April 1861 the foundation stone of the church was laid. On the 16 May 1876 the church was consecrated in the name of Saint Margaret by the Rt. Revd. Bishop Thornton of Ballarat. The parsonage, now referred to as Dendy House, was occupied in October 1870.

The 150th Anniversary was marked by two main events. In February 2012 a Thanksgiving Eucharist was held with Archbishop Frier in attendance. He presided at a ground-breaking ceremony to mark the commencement of site-redevelopment. Current and past parishioners enjoyed a celebratory lunch in the church grounds.

In November we celebrated our patronal festival. The day began with a Thanksgiving Eucharist in honour of Saint Margaret of

Scotland. This was followed by a festive lunch and a concert performed by parishioners. The day ended with a 1662 Sung Evensong. In doing so we marked the 350th anniversary of the Prayer Book.

Introduction

Issue number 22 May 2012 of the From the Parish Archives featured the Mothers Union, Young Wives and CARITAS. It observed that many of our present women parishioners were once members of Mothers Union (MU) at Saint Margaret's or Saint Faith's or some other parish. They may have been principally associated with MU or the MU group that was referred to as A Fellowship of Marriage or The Young members Department of the Mothers Union or Young Wives or CARITAS. Its name changed over the years. Of course the Mothers Union exists to the present day. Issue 22 further observed that its historical account was exploratory and has many gaps. The foundation date of MU at Saint Margaret's and the list of leaders are incomplete for instance. Similarly, with CARITAS.

Partly as a response to "From the Parish Archives" a number of current parishioners, who had been members of CARITAS, thought it would a good idea to meet and share recollections of their participation. This issue shares those recollections verbatim as written down. The record has been placed in the Parish Archives for future use.

The Recollections

The other evening some of us who used to be Caritas members met to review our memories of Caritas.

Caritas (meaning Christian Love for others) was what 'Young Wives' became in the 1970s when Young Wives was thought to be too restrictive and we were wanting to encourage other young women who were neither young wives nor mothers – Caritas was the younger members section of Mothers Union and worked under the umbrella of Mothers Union in the Anglican Church.

The name change seemed to work and we had people from other churches in our group as well as a few unmarried and or childless people in our midst.

Each of us at our little gathering could remember the exact means of our joining the group – showing the power of personal invitation and connection. Caritas was our security and 'home base' as we settled into a new community of Eltham with our young families

Our membership and the roll call at the beginning of each meeting makes interesting reading and brings to mind many past members of our congregation. It is interesting to read that the vicar attended most meetings – probably not staying for the whole meeting but at least coming in to meet everyone and be known to all – even those not from our church – and there were several . It was a real outreach group..

We felt that one of the strengths of our group, which really hummed along during the 70s and 80s at St Margarets, was that the leadership changed each year so that no-one felt they were stuck with the job for too long, everyone got a turn and new ideas and methods were constantly being aired.

One of the things we used to laugh about in those days was that whoever was leader seemed to produce a child in that year, and for that reason we can clearly remember the years we led the group!

Caritas met monthly and involved a large number of the young women of the church – we had speakers sometimes – from within the group or from outside. Sometimes our meetings were purely social. Reading back through the minutes it is easy to see just how important the social side of the group was and what a support it was to those of us struggling in one way or another.

As well as the monthly meeting, we met weekly for morning tea and play group with our children – for many of us this was the only play group our children attended, and the group was very supportive for the mothers too. As we knew each others children and they knew us, it was easy to set up a babysitting system within the group, and this worked very well for several years, the more so as several of us did not have family living close, on whom we could call.

We were rather good at catching new people arriving and inviting them to join us – which they often did.

Another outreach from our group included raising money to present each newly baptised child with a bible, and making and distributing casseroles or other food to families who were going through rough times.

Some of our best attended events were the Caritas dinners to which we kindly invited out husbands or partners. These were really good evenings usually held in the hall, and usually with about 60 people attending. We provided the food ourselves with each person being responsible for part of one course of the meal. By the 1990s, as we aged and moved on to next stages of our lives, the group was getting too small to continue It had been

meeting in members homes and struggling with falling membership for a couple of years.

In 1992 came the final Report to the AGM. I quote the concluding paragraphs.

1992 has seen many of us living up to our Caritas meaning . . . "Christian love for others". We have been able to put our friendship into action providing meals support and love for many of our members in times of great need. Caritas is caring for others. Thank you to one and all for your support this year May St Margarets Caritas continue to meet and care for one another in 1993.

Sadly it seems that that did not happen though many of us have remained firm friends ever since, and continue to support each other and the church community.

Summary

2012 was a significant year for Saint Margaret's. It celebrated 150 years anniversary and reaffirmed its intention to proceed with major site re-development. The 350th anniversary of the 1662 Prayer Book was also noted, especially with a 1662 Sung Evensong in November. The 20th anniversary of the ordination of women to the priesthood was also celebrated with a special issue of "From the Parish Archives" and attendance at celebratory events by some parishioners.

The recollections of the former members of Saint Margaret's CARITAS group are appropriate for the final issue of "From the Parish Archives" for this anniversary year. The recollections will be a welcome addition to the Archives.