

**Anglican Parish of Swan**  
**Annual Meeting 2019**

**Rector's Report**

*Beginnings*

*Ngaala kaaditj Whadjuk Noongar moort, keyen kaadak nidja boodja.*

We acknowledge the Whadjuk Noongar people as the original custodians of this land. The Swan River which flows past both the churches of our parish is known to the Noongar people as the Debarl Yerrigan, and that part of the river within the Swan Valley as the Debarl Naral. Our parish dating back to the earliest days of the Swan River Colony bears witness both to the faith and courage of European settlers and the dispossession of the original owners of this land - the memorials of our parish recording the tragic history of conflict. Today as Anglican Australians we work for justice and reconciliation and the vision of a shared future.

As priest and people in this parish this Annual Meeting marks the beginning of a new relationship and a new vision for our common life. You have made me welcome as your Rector, and the last four months have been a time of getting to know one another and of establishing a rhythm of prayer and service together. I have come to value and understand the marks of Fr Stuart's ministry in the parish, and have witnessed the care you have for Stuart and Helena, especially in the circumstances of his departure from the Parish of Beaconsfield. I also acknowledge with gratitude the ministry of the Reverend Jean-Pierre Schoeder during the interregnum before my appointment. Thank you also to Reverend Les, for his collegiate support and local knowledge and for the vital work you do both in the liturgy - and in

giving me the occasional preacher's day off - and in pastoral ministry. I am pleased that Reverend Les has also been able provide a report to the Annual Meeting.

### *Milestones*

Since my commissioning four funerals have been conducted in the parish, and we acknowledge the lives of Jessie Harris, Alleen Coltman, Janet Williamson and Min Plunkett. May they rest in peace and awake to eternal life. Some older members of the parish may remember Jessie and Min, and many of you knew and loved Janet who was an active member of the parish up to her death. One baptism has been performed, and one family has been welcomed to the parish in the celebration of their wedding vows.

An important milestone in the life of the wider community and all of our faith traditions was the outpouring of grief and love in response to the mass shootings in March at a mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand. Members of this parish, as well as representatives of other denominations and faith traditions, attended prayers in solidarity with our Muslim sisters and brothers at the local mosque in Beechboro. I would like to convey my thanks to those members of the parish who accompanied me on that occasion when an act of violent hatred was repudiated by right-thinking people of all faiths and none in an outpouring of unity and love.

### *Volunteers*

At this point I should like to thank the many volunteers who make our life together as a worshipping community possible. Some of our volunteers are seen, others unseen and occasionally overlooked - all however are vital and it is my pleasure to acknowledge your contributions today.

We will shortly move to the election of officebearers for the year ahead, but a special thank you to those whose term finishes today. As Treasurer for the last three years, Kathy Grobbelaar has been diligent in providing financial advice to Parish Council, keeping up to date with payments and receipts, behind-the-scenes computer book-keeping and producing the required reports. Kathy has also overseen the migration of our parish accounts to a new web-based computer platform and has trained her successor, Rachael Kelly, who is taking over the computer book-keeping. Kathy retires today from Parish Council with our thanks.

Thanks are also due to Laura D'Rozario, who finishes her term as a member of Parish Council today - and we hope may some time in the future decide there is not enough happening in her life and that she really really needs to stand for another term. It has been a pleasure having Laura on Parish Council.

As one of the three Wardens, Mary Wright has shown herself to be gifted and diligent in administration - both in keeping up-to-date with reports that need to be generated and in being the go-to expert for paperwork that was filed down somewhere 25 years ago but is suddenly needed. Mary is retiring today as a Warden - but has not really been allowed to get off scot-free as - subject to the will of this meeting - she has agreed to undertake the role of Treasurer.

Every parish owes a major debt of thanks to its Wardens, and Mary with Ros Tay-Brighton and David Johnston have been responsible for much of the day-to-day oversight of the parish, including the care of our buildings. This has meant they have had to carry a major load especially during the interregnum - which is to say almost a year with no parish priest. The three Wardens keep in touch with one another and with me - thanks to the miracle

of WhatsApp it means they are never really off-duty. Ros has shown herself to be a woman of great capability and is particularly calm in a crisis - as I discovered when she arrived with two small dogs to rescue me from a baby dugite in the Minchin Centre. David also has a special super-power in encouragement and pastoral sensitivity which manifests itself in sending me photographs of spectacular breakfasts on busy mornings.

A special word of thanks must go to Liturgical Assistants, who receive my licence this morning for the following 12 months. I have come to value the individual way each of our LAs perform their role in the liturgy and their leadership within the parish. I acknowledge the work of the Worship Committee, who help me in planning ahead for seasonal services and celebrations - their report is in the Annual Meeting papers.

When I began in the parish we had three Lay Pastoral Ministers - lay people who have received training and have the Archbishop's licence to perform various tasks in ministry such as visiting and taking home communion. The parish Prayer Tree is another example of the inspirational and sensitive ministry of trained lay people in the parish. My thanks to John Dendy, Glenda Hambleton, Helen Wakefield, and David Johnston for the ministry you have been undertaking as LPMs from before my arrival - but thanks also to seven others who have commenced training for this role. I hope soon to be able to recommend Gordon Todd, Graeme Grubb, Sarah Simpson, Sallyanne Bushe-Jones, Erica Hill, Sharon Zuiddam and Janet Hewett for the Archbishop's licence. This will be an unprecedented support in providing pastoral ministry within the parish.

A word about keeping our church safe. For all of the roles I have mentioned so far - Wardens, members of Parish Council and Lay Pastoral Ministers, there is a significant obligation for personal disclosure, background

checking, obtaining police clearances and in some cases Working With Children cards. Applicants for these roles must also attend Churchsafe workshops every three years to retain their licence. With the final recommendations from the Royal Commission into institutional child sexual abuse the bar for churches and other institutions was raised even higher, and there were also some specific recommendations for the Anglican Church as for other churches. The Anglican Church of Australia - and our own Diocese - have committed to implementing these recommendations in full, and for this reason volunteer forms have been redesigned to meet higher standards from May this year. All of this is a significant burden and possibly quite confronting for church volunteers, and I want to acknowledge with gratitude the goodwill with which all of our volunteers comply with these requirements.

I would also like to extend my thanks to our parish musicians - Shirley Reynolds, Margaret Grubb and Colleen McGrechan with the singing group and also our once-a-month organist at St Mary's, Graham Fist. Thank you to all on our parish roster - intercessors, readers, sacristans and hosts, to all who give out morning tea with a smile, to those who take a turn on cleaning duty. Many thanks also to Kristy McPherson our part-time parish administrator for everything you do.

### *Review of finances*

We have the parish financial reports before us this morning in the Annual Meeting papers, and will have opportunity to ask questions for clarification on these shortly. As well as recording my thanks to the Treasurer and Finance Team and to Parish Council generally for their stewardship of the parish resources, I would like to make a few observations.

Firstly, it is clear that our finances are precarious. This is not entirely a

bad thing - when parishes get too comfortable financially we run the risk of forgetting about mission! There was a healthy operating profit last financial year for the reason that there was no Rector for most of it - but with a full-time priest there is little margin. You will see in fact that the Budget for the financial year ahead projects a surplus of \$4,631. This is not as healthy as it might appear, because it includes projected interest of over \$6,000 on monies held in trust by the Diocese that we can't actually touch for day-to-day running expenses and at this point of time is inaccessible. So in terms of our operating budget we are expecting to run at a loss for the financial year that finishes next April. When the parish was looking for a new priest the nominating committee took a step in faith by undertaking to pay a full-time stipend, and of course I also took the step in faith of trusting that Alison's and my needs would be met. With the support of the wardens I have made a couple of changes over the last few weeks which positively impact the parish budget - without these we would be looking at a much greater deficit in the operating budget.

Most of our parish funding comes from the offerings of parishioners, and that is how it should be. The Church of God can only run on the generosity of the people of God. Shortly after my arrival in the parish the Wardens sent a letter to all members of the parish asking us to consider our pledges for the year ahead, and many of you have responded generously to that. One of the best ways for a parish to encourage giving is to ask people to plan ahead, in fact to plan a full year ahead, and to plan what you are going to give for God's work as part of your overall financial planning. We Anglicans don't talk so much about tithing - in the arithmetic sense of giving a full tenth of your income - because we all have different circumstances and different responsibilities, as well as different incomes. One size doesn't fit all. But that doesn't let us off the hook theologically. In the Hebrew Bible God's people

are commanded to give the first fruits - which is to say God gets the first and the best of what we have, not just what's left over at the end of the week.<sup>1</sup> Because everything that we have comes from God.

I think there is another very good reason to think seriously about giving, and that is because it is giving that makes us more generous and more committed. If we want to have generous hearts, if we want to be God's people committed to God's work, then we need to plan to give. Giving doesn't just happen automatically as a byproduct of us being generous people - it's the other way around. We only become generous by giving. It's as the Letter of James puts it, true faith results in action; "be doers of the word, not merely hearers who deceive themselves".<sup>2</sup> We have to work at it, to put our money where our mouth is. How much should you give? I can't tell you that, but I do think the amount you give needs to be enough that you miss it. Enough that there is actually something you are sacrificing. This parish exists because of the sacrifices of God's people. And so at the Annual Meeting we need to pause and consider the fact that offerings are decreasing, and ask ourselves why.

It is easier to give to the Parish of Swan than ever before. On our revamped web page we now have a payment 'kiosk' powered by Tithe.ly which means we can receive one-off donations by credit card. The Tithe.ly iPhone or Android smartphone app can also be downloaded for free, and set up in a few seconds either for a regular or a one-off donation to the parish. Tithe.ly fills a gap because many people no longer carry cash in their day-to-day lives. The Church needs to move with the times - we need ways of receiving donations that match the ways people like to pay.

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<sup>1</sup> For example Exodus 23.19, 34.26

<sup>2</sup> James 1.22

Speaking of finances, I should mention at this point the All Saints Spring Fete which is in its early planning stages with two very energetic coordinators - thank you John and Graeme. I'm told this year's Fete is going to be one of the best, and I look forward to seeing it unfold. Sacrificial giving, of course, includes our time and energy as well as our money. The way that God's blessings work, surprisingly, is that the more we give the more we receive. John and Graeme are planning a public meeting for next week, so please talk to them about your vision for this year's Fair.

### *Review of properties*

I turn now to our parish buildings, looking firstly at the utilisation of the rectory here at St Mary's and Mitchell Cottage at All Saints. Before I came to the parish, Alison and I made the decision not to move into the rectory at St Mary's, which is too big for our needs as well as being in poor condition. This means I have been receiving a housing allowance of \$15,900 per annum which is about \$305 per week. This is offset by rent of \$290 per week received from the tenant who has occupied the rectory since the beginning of the year.

The cottage at All Saints has been rented to Shalom House at a concessional rent \$125 per week or \$6,500 per annum, which even with top-up donations from parish members means the parish has received only \$9,137 for this property for the financial year. The lease on this property expires on 25 June, and has not been renewed as Alison and I will be taking up residence from 12 July. This property is in good condition, and is just the right size for us as a couple with our animals. There are benefits to my being on site and in particular having a presence at both centres. In addition, this creates a saving to the parish of about \$6,700 pa, being the difference between the projected rent on the property and the housing allowance that is

no longer payable. In the first year this is somewhat less as it is for only 10 months and there are other costs including removal expenses. This saving has been taken into account in the budget in the Annual Meeting papers.

The condition of St Mary's church is of some concern. An inspection by Mesh Properties last month identified some problem areas, chiefly the roof which needs to be replaced and flooring that needs some attention. Visible cracking of the exterior walls is long-standing but needs to be monitored. Some electrical issues were also identified. Mesh undertook to prepare a prioritised action plan, and commented that some of the work in the church may attract funding through the Heritage Council.

In relation to restoration work on our historic buildings and also the maintenance and beautification of the historic cemeteries in our care, I would like to investigate some alternative sources of funding and also whether we may be able to work with historical societies or groups in our area. For example, there may be the possibility of crowd-funding specific budgeted projects through software platforms such as Go Fund Me. The possibility of engaging others in our area who are interested in researching and preserving our shared historical assets may also present opportunities for funding the work that is needed.

The issue of the Tanner St trust account containing approximately \$416,000 needs to be addressed in order that these and other needs can be considered. Since arriving in the parish I have been well-briefed in relation to the history of this fund and the reasons it cannot at this point be utilised. I hope to have conversations over coming months with Diocesan officers including CEO Mr Keith Stephens regarding the feasibility of obtaining a variation through the Supreme Court to allow these funds to be utilised. Apart from the issues I have just mentioned, the rectory at St Mary's is also in need of some attention

as cracking due to subsidence is apparently deteriorating. Although the buildings at All Saints are in better condition there is a long-standing proposal for alterations to the Cloisters such as roofing to create better weather protection for parish and community use. I would anticipate bringing all of these matters before the new Parish Council.

### *Review of programs*

Lastly I would like to comment on some of the programs being run within the parish. Since becoming Rector I have made a minor change to the Sunday service time and implemented a mid-week Eucharist at St Mary's. The monthly Evensong at All Saints, the two meditation groups, the craft group and the Bible study group each attract a dedicated following and have my full support. The parish is also running effective ministry at Bandyup and Acacia Prisons and has been active in emergency food relief services. I wish to record my appreciation for those running these programs, and am happy to provide further support if required.

I have reviewed existing arrangements in relation to weddings and baptisms, ending the \$200 fee for baptism and halving the \$1,000 suggested donation for weddings. My feeling is that these were perceived as excessive, and this perhaps explains the currently low rates of wedding enquiries. I have also sought advice from the Diocese regarding the practice of installing memorial plaques on the walls at All Saints and St Mary's, as this does not comply with Diocesan guidelines for Memorial Gardens. Advice received last week from Bishop Jeremy suggests a new focus on constructing Memorial Gardens with appropriate registers, and I will work through the implementation of this with Parish Council.

On Easter Day the parish was visited by representatives from the Loud

Fence movement, who placed ribbons on the lychgate at St Mary's as a sign of respect and solidarity with victims of child sexual abuse in the Church. Some parishes have considered this action to be provocative and unwelcome. I have however indicated to Loud Fence my support for this action which I have highlighted on the parish web page. I would like to give consideration to how this could be given more prominence on a permanent basis.

The bi-monthly SPY group under the care of Sharon Zuiddam and Shirley Gollagher also attracts a dedicated group of young people. I am keen to see what may transpire from SPY considering involvement in the Five Leaf Parish Eco-Awards program, and will put any recommendations to Parish Council. In relation to ecological issues more generally it would be good to see if we could connect with local land-care groups regarding the conservation of the two historic cemeteries in our care. I would like to record my thanks to Shalom House for their care of the grounds at All Saints and to Mr Tony Murace from the Department of Justice and his community service work team for the hard work they have been putting in to the beautification of the grounds at both centres. I would be keen to investigate the planting of mature shade trees on the northern sides of both churches in order to implement some badly-needed natural air conditioning. Other considerations may include the installation of solar panels and water harvesting at both centres. I note that the Anglican Community Fund makes funding for such programs available to parishes at concessional rates through the Parish EcoLoan program - so that the plant pays for itself over four or five years.

Finally, I have been approached by Murdoch University to teach Introduction to Theology as a part of the Master of Theology program in second semester. I have accepted this offer, which will take one day per week during the 12 teaching weeks. As this attracts remuneration I will reduce my hours in the parish accordingly during the semester, which will save the

parish a little over \$3,000 in stipend and on-costs. This saving also is reflected in the Budget in the Annual report papers.

### *The path ahead*

It is opportune that our Annual Meeting falls now, four months after I arrived in the parish. I have had an opportunity to get to know you, and you to know me. I think it's a happy match. I see a parish who are committed to serving the area in which they worship, who treasure the tradition and the historical deposit of our faith and who wish to meet the challenges of the future. As a parish we are sandwiched between the old and the new - the historic suburb of Guildford and the emerging major residential area of Ellenbrook - between the urban and the rural, the hustle and bustle of city life and the quieter pace of the country. We have opportunities for ministry in prisons and hospitals and schools, and we have energetic and forward-thinking women and men who want to put their faith into practice. I believe this parish is an exciting place to be, and I look forward to ministering alongside you over the years ahead.

*Fr Evan Pederick*

23 June 2019