

St Mary's  *Parish news*

Advent/Christmas 2018



Made from the volcanic ash of the 1991 eruption of Mt Pinatubo, Philippines.

Photo E. Murray

From the Vicar



In the past few weeks I have had a lot of “lasts” at St Mary’s: my last Annual Meeting, my last parish council meeting, my last Kinder AGM, my last Carols service, and now I am preparing for my last Christmas, and then on 6 January my last service. And, of course, this is my last Parish News.

It all feels very strange, and very disorienting. As someone who dislikes periods of transition, I’d even go so far as to say that it sometimes borders on the excruciating.

The thing is, life is always about transition, always about moving to the next thing and saying goodbye. Sometimes it happens so slowly that we don’t even notice, sometimes it’s dramatic, but the march of time is relentless, and it’s one of the things that tells us that we are alive.

The liturgical year, which began anew on Advent Sunday, is one of those regular cycles that actually assists us to cope with the constant change, the constant transitions, of every day life. As Christians in the liturgical tradition, we are blessed every year with the opportunity to touch base with familiar patterns and familiar stories and texts that can

help us to weather the storms of time's march. God's time – endless, constant, and hard to tie down – breaks through the chaos, and gives us an opportunity to be grounded in a vision of the Kingdom.

This Christmas, and in the time of transition that will follow, I encourage you to take comfort in the pattern of God's time, reflected in the liturgical cycle. The church's year marches on, and St Mary's will march on with it.

- Fr Craig.

Goodbye Father Craig

This is the last newsletter with Father Craig as our Vicar. We thank him for 'his infinite resource and sagacity' in all that he has done for and with us and we wish him well at his new life at Christ Church South Yarra.

Thanks to Father Philip who remains with us and to Fr Barry Furnley the Locum for the interim period. We look forward with joyous anticipation to the next stage at St Mary's.

Maria the mother of John-Mark

By Geoff Jenkins

In this Parish News' splendid series visiting many and various churches dedicated to St Mary, we have not always cared much about the building's date. Nor necessarily should we, but it is interesting to consider, if briefly, the age of church buildings as reflected in say

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_oldest_church_buildings .

We see that the oldest churches are most of them within monasteries in Egypt, and dating to about the fourth century. Only one from that century is dedicated to St Mary, namely Santa Maria in Trastevere from 340, whose current form preserves the fourth century floor and wall plan, though the existing structure goes back to the eleventh century. And it is not in Egypt of course, where in any case churches were not dedicated to Mary until much later.

We are inclined to imagine that church buildings, some of them dedicated to Mary, are as old as the Christian Church herself, but just difficult to locate in the archaeological record. The literary record certainly makes very early reference to churches (ecclesiae), though we do not necessarily know much about their architecture. In fact when Paul writes to the "the church of God in Corinth" he is probably not referring to a building at all, but rather to a congregation.

This makes the more intriguing one very early reference to a church meeting with architectural implications, namely Acts 12. And it's a Mary-Church too! What can we say about this earliest christian congregation?

We should commence with a note about this Mary, the least commented upon of the five Marys in the New Testament. Names in the New Testament sometimes could tell us more than we realise, and Mary the mother of John-Mark is surely one such. Let's begin with a comment about names from the literature of this period. In general, women tend not to be named in historical narratives. One assessment suggests that just 10% of persons named are female. There are all sorts of reasons for this, but likely it is due to the underestimate of the significance of the roles played by women in the events. True of Josephus, but perhaps less so of Luke. Certainly true of how we read the Bible!

In Acts 12, it is very remarkable that the author names two women. Perhaps Mary was much better known and prominent than the single reference (but see Rom 16) to her in the New Testament? Actually I think she was, as I will argue shortly, but how could the same be said for naming Mary's servant-girl Rhoda? Observe however that John-Mark is not the son of Mary, but vice versa, so in all likelihood Luke's readers were more familiar with Mark,

less so with Mary. And was there no man of the house to name?! My best guess is that Mary was a widow, but she may have been the wife of a prominent man who did not participate in church activities. One thing is certain: she was wealthy.

There seems to me to be one very clear implication for this narrative of the use of two women's names, namely that Luke was either there at the time and an eye-witness to the events, or had spoken to someone who was present (perhaps Mnason? Cf Acts 21). I am disinclined to believe that Luke added random names to his actors to colour his narrative. Note by the way the extraordinary vividness of the narrative (Rhoda leaves Peter knocking on the gate in her excitement; Peter imparts a message for James and the brethren but does not go into the house).

The supposed Jewishness of these names, Mary and Mark, adds to the intrigue. We are prone to jump immediately to the conclusion that all Marys are Jewish, but we should pause to note that Mark was not a Jewish name. Rather it is a Roman name, as is clear from its use in Josephus, where all the Marks named are members of the Roman Senate. Markus (as we will now call him) does have a Jewish name (John), which is an indication that he mixed actively in Jewish circles, in Jerusalem presumably, but that he was not himself Jewish.

What then of Mary with her obviously Jewish name, as is commonly supposed? Here we need to note that Luke does not spell her name Maryam, as he does for the other Marys including Mary the Mother of Jesus (eg Acts 1:14). In Acts 12 he writes rather Maria, which happens to be a very well known Roman name (the feminine of Marius). Now I don't think it is an accident that a perfectly good Roman name (with perhaps unfortunate allusions to the god Mars!) happened to sound just like a popular(?) Jewish name. Over time the two merged, as we see from the fact that almost all Greek manuscripts of the Gospels re-spell Mariam as Maria.

Now for a little speculation, based on the possibility, I would say likelihood, that Maria and Markus were Romans living in Jerusalem. How could this arise, and why is the Jerusalem church assembled and praying in her house?! It won't have escaped us that this is no ordinary house--and for that matter no ordinary church meeting! Maria's house has a door and a gate to the street, with a garden. And it accommodates "enough" (the literal meaning of "a number" in Acts 12:12) people for a meeting. And they are praying, which I think means they are having a "synagogue" (note that Luke regularly calls synagogue a proseuke, which is both the word for prayer and the building in which it occurred). It won't have been an ad-hoc prayer meeting, but a regular, probably weekly, house-church meeting.

Our speculation leads us to contemplate that Maria was a prominent Roman woman, a widow, or a centurion's wife perhaps, whose close relationship to Judaism arose because she was a God-fearer. As such Maria would have been an adherent of a synagogue, who when a split occurred in her synagogue (cf Acts 6-8), convened a christian synagogue in her splendid house.

This might seem a touch far-fetched, but compare the events described in Acts 16, where Lydia, a wealthy merchant, and a God-fearer, hosts the brethren at her place where Paul, released from prison, finds and encourages them! This was not different from what was happening wherever Paul went. He would direct his preaching especially to the Gentile God-fearers, and they would break away from the synagogue and constitute house-churches. These house-churches were dominated (Latin pun intended) by wealthy women, since a majority of God-fearers were female, and especially centurions' wives. Cornelius in Acts 10 becomes an exception to prove this rule, his wife not being named but whose house is visited by Peter who addresses his whole family.

What do we say of Peter? In one sense Acts 12 focuses on him and his miraculous escape from prison, and this may be one reason why we have missed some important details about Maria and Markus. But the key detail here perhaps is

that Peter does not enter the house of Maria, even though a house-church is meeting there. This incident may remind us of what happened in Antioch as Luke and Paul describe it. Likely as not Peter refused to associate with house-churches as a rule, and perhaps not because they comprised Gentiles (much less because women were in leadership roles!) but because unlike Paul he sided with the synagogues in the split-off of God-fearers. It is worth reading Acts 10 again, where Peter is reproached not for his prejudice against Gentiles in general, but specifically for his attitude to God-fearers!

But this reflection on Acts 12 says something important about text as much as institution. It is sometimes asked why if God-fearers leaving synagogues to form house-churches was a thing in the first century, some literature did not come into being from this moment and movement. Now we may see a first case, which we had missed, because the Markus of Acts 12 is almost universally acknowledged as the author of the first gospel. Yes, that very Gospel with its oddly Latin-flavoured language and strangely second-hand knowledge of Judaism.

We have a great deal to learn from Acts, I believe, if only we could carry less baggage with us to the text. Take for example our view about the dominance of men in leadership in the Pauline congregations. No wonder Paul tried to put the breaks on women in worship, since they

convened and hosted (some of) the congregations of house-churches, whose core were Roman women. And a whole re-think is needed of the Roman and Latin-language influence over Pauline christianity too!

Stories and News from around the Parish

Hello from Paul and Lexi Eikelboom

Dear parishioners at St. Mary's,

We are Paul and Lexi Eikelboom, and we would like to thank each one of you who welcomed us so warmly into your church. We arrived in Australia in late August, following a job for Lexi at the Australian Catholic University. Choosing to move to Australia was not entirely easy. The thought of living in a country which we thought was crawling with large, hairy spiders and venomous snakes was not appealing – thank goodness we weren't told about 'drop bears' until after it was too late! 😊 More seriously, the choice to leave the family, communities, jobs and networks that we had developed in Canada and the United States was difficult. We both knew from experience that starting fresh in a new country is not particularly easy, and for Paul, the search for work could be difficult. Nevertheless, the opportunities available in Australia, particularly the process for gaining Permanent Residency and the chance to live in a very interesting city, made

Melbourne an appealing choice. Since starting over can be difficult, your welcome has been particularly appreciated. Lexi currently works as a researcher at Australian Catholic University's Institute for Research and Critical Inquiry, and Paul is looking for entry-level work in Accounting. We value things like environmental sustainability and getting to know people with a variety of life experiences, from a variety of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. Something that is important to Lexi is cultivating attentiveness to wonder and beauty in the midst of an ever-more frantic and digitally-dominated society. She has particularly enjoyed the art galleries and the wide variety of birds in Melbourne. Paul cares about creating efficient and pleasant environments, which means that he enjoys things like music, DIY, and playing games with friends. We both like the coffee culture here in Melbourne as well as the gardens all around the city. We were pleasantly surprised that there are more than just spiders and snakes in Australia; we love the cockatoos, bats, and particularly the rainbow lorikeets that we see almost daily around our flat in Carlton.

After visiting a few churches in Melbourne, we came to St. Mary's in mid-October for an 8:00am service. We appreciated the way that everyone in that small service welcomed us so readily, inviting us for coffee and getting to know us. In addition to the friendliness of the people, we love the contemplative liturgy. We look forward to getting to know more of you over the coming months.

Thank you for your welcome to Melbourne, and we look forward to what God has in store for us as we settle in to Australia.

St Mary's First World War Honour Rolls By Graeme Archer

At the 10:00 am Eucharist on the 11th November, the 100th anniversary of the Armistice, the sanctuary team went first to the flower vestry and paused for a blessing of the two Honour Rolls on the north wall. They are dedicated to those parishioners who served and in many cases paid the ultimate sacrifice in the First World War.



Reproduced with permission from John Rickard's history of the parish:-

“Not long after the defeat and withdrawal from Turkish soil in December 1915, St Mary’s prepared its first Honour Roll, a very homemade affair, which was unveiled on 6 February 1916. It records all those who served, the dead being identified with a black mark against their name. As the war in France ground on, this Roll was soon filled up, and a second was put together. Like its companion, it has an improvised look. Some names lack initials, suggesting that although nominally Anglicans they were not known at St Mary’s. And rather as an afterthought the names of two women, Enid M Booth, nurse, and A V Booth, staff sister, have been scratchily added.”

Lest We Forget

A Church for People who Think

An Advent Reflection

By Christine Storey

In the preparation for Christmas thoughts of departed loved ones often come to mind. Over the past couple of weeks as we have reflected on the penitential aspects of advent, it has reminded me of my late sister’s complaints of the most gloomy Lenten (the other penitential season in

the church calendar) sermon she had ever heard at church. She was a teenager at the time, and a number of years older than me. She had the most wonderful bubbly, funny, warm and loving personality, and much to our family's mirth and merriment, she would convey amusing aspects of the day's events usually at school, often parodying teachers, and I thought that she was hilarious! On this particular occasion, she parodied our local Vicar at the time giving this sermon, and in a deep and booming voice, as she thumped the kitchen table with a closed fist, recounted: 'the middle letter of SIN is "I" – a very gloomy sermon indeed I thought at the time. In later years as I have reflected on what the Vicar may have been trying to say, was about "I" in the context of "S" for selfishness/self-centeredness and "N" for narcissism, and if so he had a point! Yet as Fr Craig highlighted to us in his sermon on 9th December, God has made each one of us as an individual unique in our own way, and it is up to us to discern what God wants us to do with our lives and for each other, what "I" should be doing for God.

This reminded me of another inspirational sermon I heard some years ago entitled "The Search for Integrity" I heard given by the now late Reverend Professor Peter Gomes (Pusey Minister at Harvard's Memorial Church and Plummer Professor of Christian Morals at Harvard Divinity School at the time), to the new students on the first day of the academic year, at the Sunday morning

service at the Harvard University Memorial Chapel. He explained at the outset that “integrity” is often understood as simply meaning being honest and truthful, but he highlighted that the word is related to a number of other English words meaning one in the sense of wholeness, such as Integer, Integrate and Integral. He also told them that they were “the brightest and best” working at Harvard University with the “brightest and best”. With that came the responsibility to discover together through their studies and personal interactions on campus and beyond, as students studying law, engineering, theology, economics, medicine, philosophy or any other field, to share their knowledge and experience across disciplines in their search for integrity. He explained that whatever their chosen field they needed to work together like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, making up the whole informed by God, or if they had uncertain faith, by the common good of all humanity.

Imagine a Christmas Gift of “integrity” to all this Christmas! As the Three Wise Men from the East followed the star to search for Jesus, may we all as individuals “Search for Integrity” this Christmas and always.

St Mary's Travels

A visit to Scotland by Greg Reinhardt

Many will have read my letter to The Melbourne Anglican (TMA) published in the October issue. It is reproduced for easy reference.

'I have just returned from Inverness where I attended the wedding and Nuptial Mass for Father Nigel Wright, former Vicar of St Agnes' Glenhuntly and Mr Stephen Murby, his long-time partner. Nigel and Stephen live in Scotland. The wedding took place in Inverness Cathedral before a large congregation which included a number of guests from Melbourne. It was celebrated by Bishop Mark Strange, the Primus of Scotland.

Bishop Strange in his introductory remarks noted that the Episcopal Church of Scotland was determined to give full recognition to marriage equality. This was the first same sex marriage celebrated in the Cathedral. The marriage service gave recognition to several people from Melbourne who have informed Fr Nigel's religious life (an example was the Mass Setting, the Mass in D Minor by Norman Kaye). It was a joyous, loving and wonderful occasion and I was privileged to be part of it.

I thought your readers might be interested to have this report particularly in light of what appeared in correspondence in September's TMA. I understand that the question of same sex marriage in Anglican Churches will be debated at the October Synod.

Significantly, since the Enlightenment of the 18th century, Scotland has led the world in many ways and contributed much to the development of the human race. Let us hope and pray that the Holy Spirit will lead a similar Enlightenment in the Diocese of Melbourne'.

The wedding was the principal reason for my visit to Scotland, although it was also the occasion to spend some time in Edinburgh, in Hawick in the Borders and to visit a friend in Helensburgh at the mouth of the Clyde outside Glasgow.

The nuptials were followed on Sunday by a High Mass at which the Archbishop of Perth, Kay Goldsworthy was the preacher, and a very good sermon it was too on the Gospel for the day, the faith of the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15: 25-27), a difficult passage. Mass was followed by yet another wedding reception for the overseas visitors.

My visit to Hawick was to assist further family research. Hawick was, and to some extent still is, a major weaving town in the Border area of Scotland. My great-great-great

grandmother, Janet Wemyss, and her family left Hawick in the 1850s to settle in Tarnagulla near Bendigo. The genealogical centre in Hawick has a self-printed book on the Wemyss family entitled "The Wemyss of Hawick" which is unavailable on line but with complete history of the family back to 1620. It is all quite fascinating for those with an interest in tracing their family.

On the theme of family history, I also revisited the Necropolis which rises high above Glasgow, where my great-great-great grandparents, on another side of the family are buried having died in the Glasgow Poorhouse in the 1860s. It is a somewhat surreal experience to be the only direct ancestor to visit their grave in over 150 years.

For those who have not been to Scotland, I urge a visit. The Scots are a wonderfully friendly people. Beautiful scenery. Pity about the weather.

Occasional Series – Prayers for the season

Collect for Christmas Day

All glory to you, gracious God, for the gift of your Son, whom you sent to save us. With the angels, let us praise your name, and tell the earth his story, that all may believe, rejoice, and proclaim your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the

unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen

A Prayer for Refugees

Almighty and merciful God,
whose Son became a refugee
and had no place to call his own;
look with mercy on those who today
are fleeing from danger,
homeless and hungry.
Bless those who work to bring them relief;
inspire generosity and compassion in all our hearts;
and guide the nations of the world towards that day
when all will rejoice in your Kingdom of justice and of
peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer for Australia

God, bless Australia,
guard our people
guide our leaders
and give us peace;
for Jesus Christ's sake.
Amen

At the time of choosing an incumbent

Bountiful God,

give to this parish a faithful pastor
who will faithfully speak your word
and minister your sacraments;
and encourager who will equip your people for ministry
and enable us to fulfil our calling.

Give to those who will choose, wisdom,
discernment and patience,
and to us give warm and generous hearts,
for Jesus Christ's sake.

Amen

A Church for People who Think

Sundays @ 11.30am

Starting February 2019

**Following the post-service morning tea each Sunday, St Mary's
now offers a weekly education programme. All are welcome.**

On the first Sunday of each month:

Congregational lunch at 12.15pm, sometimes with a pre-lunch talk

On other Sundays of each month:

Lecture/study groups from c.11.30am-12.15pm

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Sam Miller

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Parish Administrator &
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Regular Office Hours: Monday 9.30am-3.30pm

Wednesday 9.30am-3.30pm

Thursday 9.30am-3.30pm

From the 8th January 2019

Morning Prayer is at 8.30am Tuesday to Friday.

All are welcome, and for coffee afterwards.

Wednesday Eucharist and Meditation at 12.30pm
will resume on Wednesday 6th February

The clergy are happy to be contacted to discuss matters of faith with anyone, and to prepare people for the church's sacraments.

Any views and opinions expressed in this edition of the parish news are those of the individuals writing them and do not necessarily reflect parish policy or the views of the parish clergy.

This Edition of the Parish News has been printed in black & white to help save money. If you would like to view this edition of the Parish News in colour, please go to our website
www.stmarys.org.au

MISSION AND VISION STATEMENT

St Mary's Anglican Church, North Melbourne is an inner-city Christian community that strives to be faithful, inclusive and sacramental.

God inspires us to worship in daily celebration; to be caring, thoughtful and inviting.

In response to God's call, in the next three to five years we aim:

- *To grow substantially in faith and numbers*
- *To create an inter-generational culture that values all age groups - children and adults - equally*
- *To express our faith in active engagement within and beyond our own community*
- *To deploy our property and financial assets in strategic support of the ministry needs of the parish for the long term*
- *To become more open to change as we learn to grow*

