

ST. JOHN'S
Uniting Church
Virginia Street, Mount Waverley.

60th ANNIVERSARY
1949 to 2009

Looking back
and
Looking forward



WORSHIP SERVICE AND CELEBRATION
22nd NOVEMBER 2009

LOOKING BACK – A Brief History

From 1947 onwards, occasional Methodist Church services were held in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Downes in their home in Sherwood Road, Mount Waverley. Some Methodists in the district who attended High Street Road Church, decided that there should be a place of worship in that area bounded by Waverley Road, Huntingdale Road, High Street Road and Stephenson's Road. Consequently they contacted the Superintendent at the Burwood Church, the Rev. Norman Smith, who agreed to canvass that district in the hope of commencing a local Church service. It was found that the Park Lane Primary School was available and on the afternoon of October 31, 1949 the first of ongoing fortnightly services was conducted by Rev. Smith. Twelve to fifteen people attended these early fortnightly services of worship. Within three months of their commencement, the Rev. Norman Smith had left and he was succeeded by the Rev. George Harris. Mrs. Best was the pianist, Miss Edna Parker was the first superintendent of the Sunday School and Claire Laphorne was no. 1 on a roll of three pupils.

But what of the future? Clearly a growing Church had no future in meeting in a school, no matter how cheap and convenient. Mr. John Marriot, a devoted Methodist, donated two blocks of land in Virginia Street for use by the Methodist Church. The Rev. G. Harris and Mr. H. Mold became interested in the design of a folding church. On December 15, 1951 on the Virginia Street land, one of these folding buildings was opened by the Rev. A.W. Pederick, Superintendent of Home Missions. There were three original trustees - namely Mr. R. Tainton, Mr. D. Lechte and Mr. J. Marriot. These were joined later by Messrs. Laphorne, Quested, Parker, Broughton and R. Marriot. Mr. Lechte became the secretary and Mr. Broughton was the Treasurer.

The Church grew, particularly with the influx of children for the Sunday School. At this time, the late Rev. Keith Leigh assumed the responsibility of the pastoral oversight of both High Street Road Church and St. John's. It was obvious that the next step in the growth of the Church was the erection of a permanent hall. The Home Mission Department and the Church Building Fund were sympathetic to the needs of St. John's provided that the men of the Church would supply physical help. Of course the men rallied and the trenches for the hall footings were dug. A contractor, Mr. Phelan, worked with the men of the Church and, in due time, the John Marriot Hall was completed. At the ceremonies on February 12 and 13, 1955, the Rev. G. C. Harris declared the John Marriot Hall opened.

A master plan for future developments was necessary. Mr. J. Earle, Architect, was invited to prepare such a plan and, after amendments resulting from suggestions from the congregation, this master plan was adopted for St. John's. Although it was envisioned that the erection of a church would be the next building to be constructed, the large Sunday School demanded that other buildings should take priority. A Trust resolution of July 19, 1956 was passed. This resolution stated that "before proceeding with the plans for a new church, the views of the Sunday School, Kindergarten and Youth Groups be obtained." The Chapel, Primary Room, Kindergarten Room and Fellowship Room were built and dedicated on Saturday, September 27, 1958.

The official title "St. John's Methodist Church, Virginia Street, Mount Waverley" was approved by the Leaders' Meeting and the Quarterly Meeting in 1959.

Council requirements for car parking precluded further expansions. St John's acquired two blocks of land east of the existing church property, but a house (the Looke family residence) was on the most easterly block. Land at 43 William Street was purchased and, with much effort by working bees and professional help, the Looke residence was transported to 43 William Street and re-erected. St. John's had its parsonage and the Rev. Bruce Richards and his family became its first occupants in January 1964.

It is worthy of mention that, in 1964, Virginia Street was unmade and it was no uncommon event for cars to become bogged on Sunday morning or to become trapped in the "gutter" on turning into the church property. The cry "car bogged" became commonplace in the congregation and it was with willing hands that each car was "unstuck", albeit resulting in mud spattered clothes and dirty shoes for the helpers. Volunteers laid concrete paths around the buildings.

The time came for the construction of the Church.

On July 11, 1964, the Rev. H. B. Freeman, President of the Methodist Conference laid the foundation stone. Over the following months, Dance Bros. of Mount Waverley constructed the church building and the Rev. Chas. Gallacher, President of Conference, opened and dedicated it on Saturday, December 12, 1964. 1994 saw great changes to the buildings. A glassed in walkway unified the buildings, an internal office entrance was provided, a new kitchen and new toilets were completed and an area for the baptismal font was created in the church.

The foresight of the St. John's pioneers and those who followed, together with the guidance of present and past ministers, has given a superb suite of buildings to God's glory in Mount Waverley. True it is that no longer does St. John's have a Sunday School, but the congregation is no less dedicated to the service of our Lord. The sharing of the buildings with the Bethel Presbyterian Church, a Korean congregation, in recent times is an added and ongoing blessing. **As the Rev. Bevin G. Fist said in 1975** "*St. John's is a vibrant suburban congregation. Here, through the years, men and women and children have found fellowship, strength, comfort, hope and challenge, daring to believe that 'the best is yet to be'.*"

LOOKING FORWARD

St. John's has been blessed over past years with competent and dedicated ministers and leaders. We acknowledge the current ministerial leadership provided by Rev. Dr. Max Champion and Rev. Clive Skewes, together with support provided by Lay Preachers and Retired Ministers, in the conduct of our worship services.

We are inspired and committed to continue to provide a meaningful worship opportunity to the current members of the congregation, together with an awareness to reach out to others.

An opportunity exists for fellowship, support and involvement in many interest groups associated with St. John's, with the objective of providing fellowship and the opportunity to grow in our faith.

St. John's looks forward to continuing a Christian Witness in the community of Mount Waverley.

HISTORY OF ST. JOHN'S – Leadership

Much more could be said about the way in which God has blessed St. John's, its people and its work, and it is important to record the leadership provided by -

OUR MINISTERS

PAST

Revs. Norman Smith, George Harris, Keith Leigh,
Angus Allinson, Bruce Richards, Ron Croxford,
Bevin Fist, Bob Sanders, Achara Brunelli,
Dr. Rodger Bassham, Toska Miriam, Jen Pretty
and Dr. Bill Goldsworthy.

PRESENT

Rev. Dr. Max Champion and Rev. Clive Skewes