

ST STEPHEN'S

The Story...

so Far



THE STORY OF ST. STEPHEN'S COORPAROO

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The history of a church is like the history of a family - the family of God. This is a brief account of the family history of St. Stephen's Anglican Church, Coorparoo. Space permits only a selected profile of the many events in our church's life story.

1921-29

In 1921, some Anglican residents of the Coorparoo area who attended St. Philip's Church, Thompson Estate, with the support of their vicar, the Reverend Hugh Molesworth, proposed the creation of a new parish district. The Archbishop of Brisbane St. Clair Donaldson purchased six allotments of land at the corner of Cavendish and Chatsworth Roads. At a ceremony on 24th June 1922, people simultaneously capped the 70 or so stumps that they had paid for by donation. They closed the ceremony by singing the hymn "The Church's One Foundation". On 8th October, 1922 the Archbishop of Brisbane Gerald Sharp dedicated the new church, preaching on the text: "Ye shall be a witness unto me." It was not only the clergy that the Lord Jesus Christ expected to be a witness unto Him, said the Archbishop, but everyone who knew the name of Jesus Christ. The original church building now stands renovated on a different position at the rear of the church property.

The first Rector of Coorparoo Parish was Arthur Smith, who served with appreciation until 1929, dying soon after taking leave for ill-health. The parishioners erected a Memorial tablet in the church as a mark of their esteem for their first Rector. This tablet is now located in the Columbarium Chapel.

1930-39

The coming of the second minister the Reverend Leonard Quinlin coincided with the onset of the Great Depression. Mr. Quinlin was a minister of evangelical or low-church tradition. He was a bachelor who worked hard for the parish and, in the difficult days of the Depression, on occasions went without a stipend as the church struggled financially. Financial problems were prominent in church council meetings in those days.

Yet the ministry of St. Stephen's Coorparoo moved forward in the 1930's. The social life of the parish was boosted by the construction of the Tennis Court and an associated Tennis Club. In 1935 attendance at Easter Day services was a record 264 people. In 1937 St. Stephen's finally was able to build a Parish Hall at a cost of 1,105 pounds. This hall became a useful source of income from rentals. We still use this fine hall today.

With the provision of the Parish Hall came the expansion of societies and groups. The Church of England Men's Society was founded, along with the COE Boys' Society and the Girls' Younger Set. Garden parties, dances, fancy dress balls were held. The Parish of Coorparoo provided the first home for Coorparoo Scouts. The congregation of the 1930's was proud of their church and its grounds. Under the Relief Scheme, they constructed church gardens and terraces with 350 different species of trees, shrubs and creepers, some rare and exotic.

In 1937, Reverend Quinlin was called on to travel up Christmas Creek on the Macpherson Range to bury one of the victims of the Stinson Airliner crash. The Burial Register of St. Stephen's records this famous death and burial.

Mr Quinlin finished his ministry here in January 1939, as the Depression was drawing to a close and that other great world problem, the Second World War, was about to break out.

1939-1948

About 200 parishioners filled the church to overflowing for the induction of the Reverend Maurice Pay on the evening of 23rd February 1939. Mr. Pay gave vigorous leadership in the difficult days of the war. When the King called a Day of National Prayer in July 1940, "fully 900 people" came to St. Stephen's that day.

During these years the Societies within the parish increased in number and in attendances. A Women's Guild was formed. The Mothers' Union branch was started in 1941. The Church of England Young Men's Society began in February 1940, and was followed soon by the Girls Friendly Society. The GFS by 1947 had 70 members on the roll. The Girls Friendly Society and the Young Men's Society got together for monthly Fellowship Teas in the Parish Hall from 1942, and later an Annual Ball was begun.

St. Stephen's kept in touch with Anglicans in the area through the District Canvass and the distribution of the Parish Magazines.

From this time, a concern for the wider work of world mission became more prominent at St. Stephen's. When Mr. Pay resigned in April 1948 he noted that "we had won an excellent name for ourself for our support of Missions, and had not adopted any 'Parochial' outlook".

The Parochial nominators set to work to look for another minister in the evangelical tradition.

1948-1956

When the Reverend Arthur Lupton arrived at St. Stephen's Coorparoo in 1948, the area was part of the expanding suburban fringe of Brisbane. Coorparoo was a suburb growing with the families of the post-Second World War baby boom. Growth in the numbers of children and families offered a challenge to the church. By 1952, the parish had to schedule two sessions of Sunday School each week, using the Hall, the church and the Rectory for classes. Sunday School numbers by the early 1950's reached 350-400, with 45 teachers. St. Stephen's started a Kindergarten at the beginning of 1953 "with a capacity enrolment and a waiting list."

Needing assistance in pastoral and children's work, Reverend Lupton called Miss Shirley Fletcher from Melbourne to assist him in Coorparoo. St. Stephen's became the first parish in the Diocese of Brisbane to employ a female parish worker.

The existing church building was proving inadequate for the needs of the growing parish community. Mr. Lupton proposed the introduction of a new method of church fund-raising (the Wells Way), in order to raise money for the construction of a new church building. Church of England people were canvassed for pledges in a planned giving appeal. Community figures assisted in the promotion of these Every Member canvasses. A Loyalty Dinner was the climax of the campaign, to which all Anglicans in the area were invited and where they were called on to make pledges of support. St. Stephen's became the first Anglican church in Queensland to adopt the Every-Member Canvass.

This scheme was very successful and was followed for many years. Plans were drawn up for a new church building that would be modern in style and functional, able to make room for as many people as possible. The original church was moved from its location on the present church site, to a position behind the Parish Hall. Mr. Lupton, who led the project for the construction of the new church, was pressed by the Archbishop of Brisbane to move, and resigned from Coorparoo before the new building was constructed.

1957-1971

The next Rector, the Reverend Jim Payne, arrived in April 1957, a month before the work commenced on the new church building. The setting of the foundation stone in July 1957 attracted a large crowd of 2,000 people. The building was completed in March 1958 and dedicated in April that year. It was one of the first churches in Queensland to be air-conditioned.

The attendances at worship continued to grow, until the Rector commented that "we didn't build the new Church large enough after all." Christmas services in 1957 were typical with over 1,100 communicants.

A new Rectory was purchased directly opposite the church, and became so well known as the St. Stephen's Rectory that it was still being called by that name in this community years after it had been sold.

The ministry of St. Stephen's in the late 1950's and early 1960's was filled with notable activities: the music and choir ministry under Sheila Postle and Cyril Brasher; radio and television broadcasts of St. Stephen's Sunday services; visitation of the district; Parish Missions; and of course one of the biggest Sunday Schools in Queensland. In 1957-58 enrolments totaled 900 students, and by 1962 there were 1,000 children and over 60 teachers. A train was booked to take the Sunday School and families on the annual picnic.

St. Stephen's clergy were the only Anglican ministers in the Diocese of Brisbane to personally support the Billy Graham Crusade of 1959, which had an invigorating effect on the congregation.

In 1960, a branch church was started further up Cavendish Road - St. Anne's. The tennis court of the 1930's became a basketball court in the 1960's, as the children became teenagers.

In February 1963, John Greenwood came as the sixth Rector of Coorparoo Parish. The record attendances continued (1,400 for Christmas 1964). While Sunday School continued to be large, the youth work of the parish boomed. There was a Cricket Club and a Football Club. In 1965 the lower Hall was used as the "Walk-Right-Inn" Coffee shop, attracting up to 100 teenagers. The team that led this venture took it to Bribie Island in the summer of 1970, to reach holiday-makers.

New currents of church life began to be felt at St. Stephen's as the decade of the sixties progressed. Mr. Greenwood encouraged parishioners to join one of the home-based discussion groups that were forming in 1966. Evangelism continued to be a feature of St. Stephen's, with a full-scale Parish Mission in July 1967, and preparations for the return of Billy Graham in March 1968. In April 1969 the Lay Institute for Evangelism training program was held here, with over 120 participating.

1971-76

Harry Goodhew came to Coorparoo as Rector as the Jubilee year of the parish began. With his arrival, a new stage of ministry opened. Mr. Goodhew set about to develop a new church staff team. There have been many gifted ministers and

pastoral workers who have served us well through the years, such Michael Bennett, Graeme Hodgkinson, Jim Doust, Lex Carey, Rod Story, and many more.

Mr. Goodhew began his ministry by leading the parish in a review of ministry direction for this church. Times were changing and community attitudes to the church were not the same. Church financing methods began to change, as the Canvass scheme declined in effectiveness. Stewardship promotion was adopted. The original church building gained a new lease of life as the Youth Centre, after a decision to remove it was reversed.

Evangelism continued to mark the ministry of St. Stephen's. Harry Goodhew invited John Chapman to introduce Dialogue Evangelism, and a Parish Mission was held in 1974. Mr. Goodhew's interest and skill in evangelism was appreciated by others in the Diocese. The Evangelism Explosion visitation program was begun in 1975.

Sunday At Seven, a different style of evening service, started in 1974. Some will remember how St. Stephen's Coorparoo operated an outreach Coffee Shop (off this site) called "The Stepping Stone" on Friday and Saturday nights and during the weekdays, staffed by voluntary workers.

1977-98

With the opening of the 1970's, the story of St. Stephen's Coorparoo begins to follow the larger trends of Australian society. The last generation has seen a change from a churched culture to a secular culture; dramatic changes in the composition of the Australian community; and new patterns of family life.

Church life has changed greatly too. Nominal church attendance has declined across the nation. People are less interested in denominational allegiance. And the children of the 1950's have largely left the church in which their parents raised them - the Baby boomers are the missing generation in most Anglican churches.

Ken Baker served as Rector from 1977 to 1989. During his time, some of these significant social changes started to be seen in the life of this church. Church attendances began to fall across Australia in mainline denominations like the Anglican Church; this phenomenon was seen at Coorparoo.

Some of the features of this time can be recalled; the Evangelism Explosion Clinics held at Coorparoo; Youth Safaris; Preteens Ministry (Grades 6-7); the St. Stephen's Singers; musicals like "Alleluia" under the direction of Craig Berkman; the primary aged choir "The Mustard Seeds"; the Bethel Bible Series.

The coming of the Reverend Doctor Graeme Goldsworthy added strength to the Christian Education ministry of St. Stephen's. Graeme's teaching would exercise an

influential impact on many people and during his time here his book on Biblical theology would find an appreciative audience around the world. With Ken Baker's resignation in 1989, and the coming of the Rev'd Ralph Bowles.

1990-2009

Ralph was a formidable thinker and teacher, who throughout the 90's really pushed the theological thinking in the church and it's intersection with community life. One of the unhelpful trends that had developed at St Stephen's was the separation of the two. Under Ralph these were brought back into balance with the church meeting social needs with various initiatives such as Divorce Recovery, St. Stephen's Unemployment Support Group and the All-age Sunday morning Christian Education program and most recently.

During the 90's St Stephen's experienced steady growth as people moved to Brisbane and sought a Gospel Centred church. In 1999 this unfortunately stopped as the church went through one of the most painful experiences in its living memory as personalities clashed within the staff team and unorthodox theology crept into the church. Ralph confronted these issues head on with the complete support of the church wardens. Whilst necessary and right this situation took a significant toll on both Ralph and the church and in a short period of time the numbers across the church diminished due to ongoing personality conflicts within the parish council.

During the following 9 years Ralph worked tirelessly on pastoral care and the health of the church implementing the Natural Church Development process across the various congregations. It took a while but thanks to God's grace and Ralph's faithfulness the church began to show signs of health again and growth.

In 2009 after a significant time of prayer and consultation Ralph resigned as Rector of Coorparoo and took up a position working with the Brisbane Anglican Diocese helping to develop the health of the local parishes.

2010-Present Day

this part is really still being written. Josh and Kristy arrived in November 2010 and by God's amazing grace have seen the church change and grow quite drastically over the past couple of years. We look forward to see what God will continue to do here and we excitedly continue to pursue His Glory and His renown.

At the opening of St. Stephen's Coorparoo in October 1922, Archbishop Sharp pointed out that the Lord Jesus Christ expected that everyone who knew the name of Jesus Christ should be witnesses to him. This should still be our vision.

I would Like to support the work here at St Stephen's : we are so humbled that you are considering partnering with us. there are a couple of ways you can support the work here: Pray regularly raise the church, its ministries and the leaders to God. that he would strengthen them and guide them. Participate we know this is a busy life, but we always make time for our priorities, there is no better way to support the work here than regularly participating in our gatherings. there is also nothing that will encourage you more than meeting regularly with others and building up relationships. When you feel comfortable please consider how God has gifted you and how you might be able to serve the wider church. Provide we would ask you to talk with your family, pray with your family and consider financially giving as a family to the work here at St Stephen's. You can do this through the offertory box at church or by setting up an automatic electronic transfer. St Stephen's Coorparoo BSB: 704 901 Account:0000 1010