

Vicar's Report

A major achievement for the parish of St Nicholas this year was the development and adoption of our Mission Action Plan 2019-2021. The process began in August 2018 with a series of three MAP-related sermons and three associated parishioner questionnaires identifying our strengths (what we do well and want to keep doing well), our challenges (areas we value and need to start from scratch, build up, or strengthen), and realistic goals (based on our talents, time and financial resources). Collated responses from the questionnaires were presented to a whole-of-community MAP Forum held in November, 2018, inviting further community discussion and feedback. Taking all these responses and discussions into account, a draft MAP 2019-2021 was developed and ratified at April Parish Council. This draft was displayed for further comments and feedback from parishioners and final amendments made at Parish Council in June. I want to thank the MAP leadership team – parishioners Wyn Roper, Cassey Russell and Deb and Robert Eames - who assisted me with this important and major parish task. That the MAP was developed both collaboratively and with a minimum of fuss attests to the overriding collegiality and goodwill that exists in this parish community.

The MAP is a statement of the values and aspirations of our parish community as we look towards the future - our priorities and our goals - recognizing all the while that our growth and development is ultimately in God's hands. Our MAP outlines how our goals might be achieved, with God's grace, within specified timelines. My Vicar's report will this year consider each of our MAP goals in turn, commenting on what has so far been achieved and what work remains to be done. The parish of St Nicholas' is overwhelmingly on track in achieving its MAP goals for 2019.

In terms of growing our ministry to children, families and youth, a great achievement of 2019 has been the introduction of a Messy Church service once every month. Those planning this new service and new congregation did not anticipate the significant numbers of families that would participate from day one! Whilst numbers of attending families have settled somewhat over the nine sessions we have held from February - October, we have had average attendances of around 35-40 which is a great blessing to our community and provides a fertile ground for further growth over years to come. Much work is of course still to be done in nurturing and forming this new congregation but a good start has been made and already we have been blessed with new baptisms from the Messy Church congregation. I thank Deb and Dave Patterson and June Bryant who have worked so hard to plan and lead Messy Church, and all those generous members of our community who have assisted them, including providing generous hospitality for the families each and every month. Our Tito playgroup under the leadership of June Bryant goes from strength to strength and it is a joy to see the fellowship and enjoyment evident on Tuesday mornings during school term. I also thank those who have contributed to the leadership of our weekly Sunday School. Although our numbers are small I remain of the view that offering Sunday School every week is an important part of our regular Sunday service. We were disappointed that our application to KidsPlus+ for a grant to employ a part-time children's minister was not successful but we have received considerable encouragement from the Diocese to persevere with our goals. Offering an occasional Messy Movies outreach during school holidays is one possibility for the year ahead.

In terms of greater outreach to the local community, we have this year (with the assistance of our wonderful volunteer special-events co-ordinator, Audrey Phillips) extended our community events offerings to include two new major initiatives, the Gilbert and Sullivan evening in June and the “Carols in the Churchgrounds” event planned for early December. The Gilbert and Sullivan event was a great success, with our church filled to capacity and many members of our local community joining us for a most enjoyable and informative evening including a delicious supper. Planning is well underway for the Carols in the Churchgrounds event, including the participation of one, possibly two local schools. I thank Audrey Phillips for her hard work and leadership of these new initiatives, and for her foresight in procuring the internationally-acclaimed harpist Cath Connolly for the June 2020 musical evening. I thank Deb Eames for joining Audrey in the organisation of the Carols in the Churchgrounds event. Our parish has continued to support community outreach through the Gallipoli Precinct events (ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day) and the St Columba Gallery events and exhibitions, much enjoyed by so many in our local community. I thank Alex Somerset and his team for the various Gallipoli Precinct events, and Karen Hayden, Kerry Bounds and Lorraine Jones for the excellent work they do in planning and running the St Columba Gallery.

In terms of developing more small groups to support faith development and mutual support, I commend Lorraine Jones for continuing to convene our new and most valuable women’s fellowship group in the parish. This has met monthly in various parishioner’s homes and has provided much-needed opportunities for our women to get together and get to know each other better. This new group and been enjoyed by long-standing and new parishioners alike and in my view provides a crucial way for newcomers to feel a part of our community very quickly. I thank Rob Eames for being willing to begin the process of establishing a similar group for men, which I hope will begin in the not-too-distant future. Together with the Walk, Pray, Eat group, the Friendship Luncheon group, our two Bible study groups, the long-established Cursillo reunion group, the Christian meditation and Morning Prayer groups and the mid-week Eucharist and fellowship congregation, I am confident opportunities now exist for most, if not all parishioners to be part of a smaller group as well as the larger Sunday congregation. I thank all those who participate in and take leadership responsibilities for all these small groups in our community. Advent and Lenten studies are another important way of coming together in Christian fellowship as we study aspects of God’s Word and our Christian faith. Lenten Studies this year was particularly well-attended, and I thank Revd Geoff Cheong and Revd Ian Clark who joined with me to offer several well-received sessions exploring Anglicanism. I also thank Colin Duggan for leading our interesting Advent Studies sessions on the history and theology of some of our beautiful stained-glass windows.

In terms of increasing our understanding of social justice issues and growing our support for those in need we have continued in 2019 to be a Christian community which has given most generously to a range of social justice causes, including our ongoing support of the Dorcas Project in Tanzania, our new outreach to support women making the transition from prison to life on the outside (the Get Out for Good - Women’s project under the leadership of Anglicare and the Anglican Prison Chaplaincy) and the Asylum Seeker’s Resource Centre in Dandenong. With the generous help of the mid-week and Christian meditation congregations we have also given generously to a range of programs for those in need, including the Gippsland

farming communities effected by ongoing, devastating drought. A separate report is provided in the AGM Report of all our social justice initiatives, and I am confident our parish has given as generously as it possibly can. Financial constraints in the budget for the year ahead may mean some curtailment of parish giving to social justice causes but this need not in any way interfere with the MAP goal for 2020 of organising some parish forums which focus on facets of social justice relevant to our parish (eg youth homelessness, families at risk, frustration with government red tape and Centrelink, etc).

In terms of providing excellence in pastoral care, I have written a separate report on pastoral care in the parish which is included in the AGM Report. In brief, the pastoral care committee met diligently every second month throughout the year to consider the pastoral needs of those in our community and respond to them, and has been blessed with a growing team of experienced pastoral carers, including Sr Avrill Dover and Penny Swenson. We now have a team of pastoral carers regularly attending the four residential aged care facilities for which our parish has responsibility and I thank Margaret Carter, Revd Kerry Bounds and Penny Swenson who assist me in this important ministry as well as those who contribute to the ministry of home and hospital visiting. I am pleased at the progress we have made this year in re-developing the liturgies we use in aged care facilities to ensure they are appropriate and nurturing for those who attend them. Our aged care residential Christmas service was very well attended last December and is a wonderful outreach to many at this important time in the Christian calendar. Our ministry of welcome to newcomers continues to thrive, and the welcome pack, overseen by Lorraine Jones, is a wonderful way of providing everyone who visits our church with a tangible connection to what we do and who we are. Our prayer ministries, including the Prayer Chain (ably coordinated by Claire Shaw) and the Sunday Eucharist ministry of prayer, are great blessings to our parish and I thank all who contribute to them.

In terms of enhancing our communication and keeping everyone in our community safe, I thank Karen Hayden for her skilled and generous work keeping our FB page and website up-to-date with what is happening in the parish, and Cassey Russell for her hard work ensuring we have our monthly pewsheet to hand for the month ahead. It is quite an undertaking! I also thank Cassey for her willingness to be the parish's Child Safe Officer and Compliance Officer. Cassey's knowledge of processes for obtaining the requisite police checks, Working with Children checks and Professional Standards Training have helped our parish achieve excellent compliance with these important tasks. I know many in the parish would like me to thank Cassey on their behalf for helping them obtain the necessary checks with a minimum of fuss. Thank you Cassey!

Finally, in terms of enhancing worship, liturgy, prayer and spirituality I wish to thank everyone who assist me on a weekly basis to provide reverent, well-organised and meaningful Sunday worship services, and of course a special thanks to Deb Eames for the beautiful music to accompany our hymns. I thank Eva Cupido also for her careful choice of hymns and for assisting Deb with the various music ministry tasks. It is so good to now be singing many parts of the Sunday liturgy, adding further depth to our traditional Sunday service. It is important to remain open to opportunities to refresh and revitalize our liturgies and music, drawing on a range of approved Australian and international Anglican liturgical and musical resources, but in the main

I sense that one of our great strengths at St Nicholas' is our commitment to a more traditional, Anglo-Catholic liturgical style, setting us apart from the more evangelical offerings of many of our surrounding Anglican parishes.

It would be remiss of me not to mention in this report the Time Capsule project which was a fitting way to mark the end of our commemorations of 150 years of Anglican worship in Mordialloc. This idea, first thought of by parishioner Jacqui Stevens, quickly took on a life of its own, and was strongly supported by our parish community. I thank Dale Swenson, Peter Lansell and Michael Silberbauer who helped with the practicalities of designing and making the time capsule and with its ultimate burial in our church grounds. It was a wonderful occasion of celebration and good to have it recorded in The Melbourne Anglican in word and photographs. I also thank Wyn Roper and Dale Swenson for guiding us through the process of applying for a Kingston Council Grant for a new permanent shade structure in our rear-porch and garden area and we look forward hopefully to news of whether our application was successful in December. I also wish to thank Shirley Silberbauer, Karen Hayden and June Bryant for again hosting our popular Women's Pampering Day; Robert and Deb Eames for hosting the annual Men's Breakfast; and Alex Somerset and his team for organising the annual St Nicholas Day dinner and raffle in 2018. I thank Shirley Silberbauer and Karen Hayden for taking on the organisation of the dinner and raffle in 2019. All these events are wonderful ways for our parish community to grow in connectedness, mutual support and Christian love.

I also thank Michael Silberbauer, Arthur Robertson and others in the parish for maintaining our beautiful grounds and keeping everything looking so neat, including the new pathway edging. Special thanks to Cecil Erasmus and Barclay Howard for their ever-committed tending of the much-loved Memorial Garden.

I thank the leadership team - Wardens (Dale Swenson, Shirley Silberbauer and Alex Somerset); Honorary Treasurer (Arthur Robertson ably assisted by Karen Hayden and Shirley Silberbauer); Honorary PC Secretary (Karen Hayden); and Parish Councillors (Wyn Roper, Kerrie Devir, Deb Eames and Audrey Phillips) for your hard work over the past year. I thank Robert Malone and Eva Cupido (and Karen Hayden) for being our Synod representatives this year. The work of leading a parish is not easy and I thank everyone who has supported, encouraged and prayed for me as I have enacted my vocation as priest and vicar in this community. It has been the greatest of privileges to be a priest-in-charge in the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne for the past three years.

*The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. Amen.
(Numbers 6:24-26)*

The Revd Dr Sharne Rolfe, Vicar