

# HISTORY

The parish of South Yarra was formed in 1887 and Fr John Francis Fitzgerald was its first parish priest.

Fr Fitzgerald was born in the Irish County Tipperary in 1841. He was educated in the Augustinian Monastery in County Kilkenny. After his ordination he set out to Australia and arrived in Melbourne in 1867. Upon his appointment as the parish priest he immediately commenced building St Joseph's church.

Fr Fitzgerald died, aged 52, in St George's Presbytery in Carlton on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1893. Austral Light reported his death "...the deceased gentlemen was a brilliant mathematician and theologian and an indefatigable worker. Lately, owing to indifferent health, he was not able to take that active part in clerical administration for which some years ago he was so conspicuous. St. Joseph's Church, South Yarra, is a worthy monument to his zeal and enthusiasm."



## Did you know?

A Catholic, Johannes Gutenberg, invented the printing press in 1455. The first printed book was the Bible.

Andrew Balcerzak

## PARISH WELCOMES, CELEBRATIONS AND FAREWELLS

Through the waters of **Baptism**, the parish has welcomed Lucia Kobo, Lotte Steinfort, Ace So, Louis Horton, Keo Tonel, Noah Hadjifiotis, Summer Damasena, James Bassed, Max Haralambidis, Juanito Abaricia, Lennox Kereopa.

**We rejoice that The Sacrament of Marriage** was celebrated by Alexander Balagot & Charlyne Domingo.

**We farewelled** Caroline O'Neil  
May she rest in eternal peace.

## NEW TO THE PARISH?

Welcome! New Parishioner Information forms are available in our churches to complete and return to the parish office or hand to the priest.

**THANK YOU** to the contributors to this edition: Fr Brian Buckley OSA, Andrew Balcerzak, Steffy Coosnapa, & Di Brebner (Editor)

## PARISH OF SOUTH YARRA

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### Mass Times

**Tues-Fri:** St Joseph's 10am;

St Thomas Aquinas: 12.45pm

**Sat:** St Joseph's 9am & 6pm

**Sun:** St Thomas Aquinas: 9am; St Joseph's 10.30am

## AGED CARE VISITATION

For many years there has been parish ministry to the Royal Freemasons and Mecwacare Aged Care facilities in Prahran. This month marks five years since I started ministering to the elderly people in these two centres.

It's been an amazing journey full of love, understanding, care, learning and spiritual growth. It is an honour to visit weekly many beautiful people who, in their aging incapacities, cannot connect physically with their faith and church communities. Offering Communion services to them has supported them, brought them a deepened expression of their faith and supported their faith.

The residents' families and carers have expressed their gratitude for the continual support to their loved ones. During the pandemic, visitations were restricted but I was still able to connect to the residents virtually. Now, I am grateful for the chance to visit the residents, pray with them and share warm chat and laughter, which they enjoy.



I am looking forward to continuing my ministry with these wonderful elderly people and sharing their faith with them.

Steffy Coosnapa  
Parish Pastoral Assistant

## FROM THE AUGUSTINIANS:

Our parish RCIA program for 2024 has now concluded and we give thanks for the grace of having accompanied a number of people on their journey of faith over the first six months of the year.



Our new Parish Council is now gaining in momentum and confidence with new leadership and membership. The challenges of Parish Mission Renewal in the Archdiocese ("Take the Way of the Gospel") remain an area of focus for us in the time ahead.

In our locality here in Melbourne we are conscious of the retirement of Fr Brendan Hayes from Toorak/ Armadale parishes who has been a good friend to us over the past 20 years, greatly assisting our ministry at the Alfred Hospital. We wish him a happy retirement.

The Korean ministry has now settled again after the disruptions of the Covid period and good numbers are attending the masses at Mt Waverley. Monthly Masses are also celebrated at Caroline Springs, Melbourne, and in Hobart for their respective communities.

A significant gathering of the Augustinians was held in Sydney from 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> July when about 40 members of the Order from Australia, India, Vietnam, Korea and the Philippines celebrated what is known as a Mid-Chapter, a meeting designed to review and evaluate the plan of the Augustinians in their works in Australia, Vietnam and Korea.

The occasion provided the opportunity to celebrate the jubilees of vows and ordinations of some members, and to attend the diaconate ordination of one of our Vietnamese brothers, Br. Joseph Van Tu Nguyen.

Some of the visitors from overseas were able to travel to Melbourne after the event to spend a few days with us, including Fr Michael Sullivan, our former parish priest.

Fr Brian Buckley OSA

## RCIA

The Parish of South Yarra concluded the annual RCIA ceremonies at the Easter Vigil and on Pentecost Sunday. The fire of the Holy Spirit was moving amongst the newly baptized and received into our church namely; Michelle, Aaron, Patrick, Paola, Charlene and Melati.



Father Brian Buckley OSA and Steffy Coosnapa lead the RCIA program for 5 months and supported the participants in their faith journey. Additionally, several parishioners were invited to be part of the program and shared of their beliefs, experiences and knowledge on different topics of the Christian life. This spiritual journey varied to the many forms of God's grace, the free cooperation of the individuals, the action of the Church and the circumstances of time and place.

There were many important themes to explore and unpack, which enlightened and contributed to the participants' spiritual growth. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the support of the Parish community, Michelle, Aaron, Patrick, Paola, Charlene and Melati became full members of the Catholic Church. This was celebrated with their respective families, friends, parishioners and the community around a meal.

The Parish would like to thank everyone who participated in this journey.

Steffy Coosnapa Parish Pastoral Assistant

## PARISH MINISTRY TO THE ALFRED



and, more recently, by dedicated parishioners.

When the Augustinians came to South Yarra in 1976, one of the charges they were given by Archbishop Little was to continue the chaplaincy to the Alfred. While all the priests would have answered hospital calls, the full-time chaplains for almost 30 years were:

Fr G. O'Leary OSA (1976)  
Fr B. Clifford OSA (1977-78)  
Fr B. O'Donnell OSA (1979-82)  
Fr J. Whelan OSA (1991-95)  
Fr P. Bourke OSA (1983-87, 2000-2003)

By 2004, when it was no longer possible for the Augustinians to supply full-time chaplains, two significant parish-based ministries emerged. In keeping with the practices happening in other hospitals, the Alfred chaplaincy was passed on to lay people, mostly also parishioners. The local priests were always on call to administer the sacraments to patients who wished to receive them, and they were supported by priests from surrounding parishes, and later by the lay chaplains, who formed a night-roster to ensure that very sick patients who asked for the Sacrament of the Sick, or for the last rites, were visited.

Fr John Barry OSA, the parish priest, invited Gemma Schooneveldt and Paul Abbott, both working in Pastoral Care in the Prahran parish since its amalgamation into the South Yarra Parish, to take on Catholic Chaplaincy Liaison at The Alfred. They shared the role from 2004 – 2006, assisted weekly by Margaret Hayes from Catholic HIV-Aids Ministry, who visited the hospital until 2020. They were followed by three more chaplains:

Gemma Schooneveldt (2004—2006)  
Paul Abbott (2005 –2006; 2007—2009)  
Sr Delia Donahoe OLSH (2007 -2009),  
Sr Pat Leadbetter IVBM (2010) and  
Diane Brebner (2009, 2010 -2015).

Paul also shared the role for some periods during 2007 - 2009. In 2016 the ministry was then taken over by Mr Brian Welsh, appointed by the Archdiocese.

In 2006, Fr John also invited interested parishioners to form a group to visit the hospital on Sundays and take Communion to Catholic patients. Initially, seventeen parishioners volunteered. This ministry continued on a weekly basis for about fourteen years until the onset of the COVID virus meant that the

hospital had to close down on volunteers visiting the patients. Over those sixteen years, almost fifty parishioners joined the Alfred Communion Ministers' Roster. Their presence was greatly appreciated by the patients, who were comforted by the parishioners bringing them Communion, praying with and for them, and, for numbers of longer-term and country patients who did not have many other visitors, for the chance to talk to someone.

Everyone who participated in these ministries is to be applauded for their generous service, some people continuing for up to ten years. The list is too long for all names to be included. Four people who earned special commendation, however, were Amy Yu, Trish Bainbridge, Phil Brennan and Ettore Giorgione. Amy, Trish and Phil had been on the roster from its inception in 2006, Trish finishing in 2019. Amy continued to visit the hospital right up to 2020. In 2016 Phil took over the organization of the Sunday rosters and continued this task until 2020, when COVID restrictions brought the ministry to a close.

For about eight years, Phil and Ettore volunteered to take Communion to the patients every year on both Christmas Day and Easter Sunday, often spending 2-3 hours visiting the patients. Their presence on these two sacred days was very much appreciated.

For all the support the members of the Sunday Ministers' team brought to the Alfred patients, their families and to the hospital staff, the parishioners still speak of what an inspiring and uplifting task it was to visit the patients. Indeed, all of us who were associated with the chaplaincy and ministry to the Alfred Hospital were the ones who were most blest in participating in this wonderful ministry.

We are most grateful to Fr John Barry OSA for introducing The Alfred Ministry to our parishioners and we thank God for the blessings which were shared among us.

*Di Brebner*

## PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL 2024

The elections for the roles in the PPC for 2024 resulted in the following appointments

- Chair: Kristopher Marsh
- Deputy Chair: Narelle Ivers
- Secretary: Mary Greene
- Assistant Secretary: Aparna Nirmal



New PPC members this year are:

Ione Almeida, Averyl Menezes & Benedict See.

We thank the following PPC members who have completed their current terms: Paul

Simmons, Emmanuel Abaricia, Kate Chard, Joseph Herro & Stuart Ralston-Phillips.

## EDUCATION IN SOUTH YARRA

The first St Joseph's School, formally blessed and opened by Archbishop Carr on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1889, served the families of our parish for 116 years until its closure in December 2002. It had replaced a temporary church/school building opened in 1887. The first Head Teacher was Mr F. E. O'Connell and the First Assistant was Miss Whelan. They ran the school until 1905, having started with about 40 students.



In 1904 the Sisters of the Good Samaritan, founded in Sydney in 1857, moved to Melbourne. In 1906, led by Mother Bernard Lysaght SGS, they took over the running of St Joseph's School and opened the convent and Santa Maria Secondary College in Caroline St.

By about 1915 the primary school enrolments had grown considerably and the two-storey school building was formally opened by Archbishop Mannix in 1917, followed by the building of the infant school classroom block, opened in 1922. St Joseph's was growing rapidly.

In 1940, as so many girls were travelling long distances from the northern suburbs to attend Santa Maria College, the Sisters decided to move the school and their community back to Northcote where it had begun in 1904. About 67 Good Samaritan Sisters worked in South Yarra during their 36 years in the parish. They were highly respected and esteemed by the people of South Yarra.

In 1941 the Presentation Sisters, already long established at Presentation Convent in Windsor, moved into the parish and took over the running of St Joseph's School. Mother Angela Bourke PBVM was the Head Teacher. At the tail end of the 1930s Depression and the beginning of Australia's involvement in World War 2, many of the families were quite poor and numbers of the students received great help from the Sisters in finding employment when they had finished Grade 8.

Two of the oldest parishioners, Patsy O'Rourke and Maureen Allsop, students from the early 1940s, now both in their 90s and possibly the oldest living past pupils, remember the wonderful spirit that existed among the families that made up the school and the parish. Great and lasting friendships were formed. Many of the families looked after each other when times were tough.

The 1950s saw huge growth in the population of the school with the influx of migrants, many of them from Italy and Greece. The records mention that there were families from 45 nationalities in the school – a rich multicultural mix from Ireland, the UK, Europe, South America, India and several Asian countries. At its height, the school had around 400 pupils in the 1960s and 70s.

Over the next decades, gradual changes in the demographics of South Yarra saw changes in the

school population, with fewer children being born in the area and as families needed to move to larger homes as their children grew up. By the early 1990s the student enrolment had dropped to under one hundred. The Catholic Education Office listed St Joseph's as one of the schools unviable to maintain and to be closed. From 1991-98 Sr Judy Carey PBVM was Principal. Despite many efforts to build up the enrolments, it became very evident that this would not happen. At the end of 1998, the Presentation Sisters withdrew from the school and the parish, much to the sadness of many parishioners. During their 57 years presence in South Yarra, about 115 Sisters had served the families in the school and the parish and were much loved for their work and their presence.



St Joseph's School had begun in 1887 under the leadership of Mr O'Connell, a layman, and in 1999, the principalship passed to Mr John Connors who led the school until its closure in December 2002. By that time there were 44 students and seven staff members.

Buildings and timelines are important to remember, but by far the most important stories are about the people. Many former students at St Joseph's School have very happy and precious memories of their years at the school, the enormous supports they received, the friendships made during their school years and beyond, and the great education they received. They recall the school concerts, the family picnic days, the school and parish sports teams and the working bees. Many remember the wonderful support they and their friends received from the Sisters and lay teachers who taught them.

It has been suggested that these memories and stories should be recorded and circulated. If you have stories to tell, and would like to participate in this, please contact the Parish Office 9826 9677. We would love to hear from you.

*Di Brebner*