

**ST LUKE THE EVANGELIST  
PARISH AND SCHOOL  
50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
1962-2012**



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title of section	Page
Preamble	3
Introduction	4
Parish picnic and St Luke's Day	7
The parish and school market day	8
Parish Priests	10
The growth and development of St Luke the Evangelist school	13
School Principals	16
Parish groups	17
St Vincent de Paul Society Conference	17
Care Group	18
Maintenance Group	18
Church cleaning and flowers	19
The Gadabouts	19
The Book Group	19
Play Group	19
Some stories from families in the parish	20
Concluding comments	32

## PREAMBLE

Given what has been achieved over the years, we can all be rightly proud to belong to St Luke's, or to have some connection with the parish and school.

Our thanks go to the priests who either paved the way for the parish to be established, or who have subsequently served their people so well and who, in their own unique way, have made significant if not diverse contributions to St Luke's over the past 50 years.

We also need to thank the Sisters who taught here at St Luke's as well as the dedicated principals and school staff over the last half century.

As the present parish priest, I consider it most appropriate on behalf of the parish to thank our author, Margaret Gearon, for her painstaking work in putting this brief but succinct history of the parish together. As a historian, she is well qualified for the task, and one can only admire the efforts she put in to ensure that the information in these pages is as accurate as possible and as detailed as one could possibly hope for. So Margaret, for conducting the interviews, gathering the anecdotal evidence, and for your general research undertaken in order to give us this history of the parish and school, we are indebted to you.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the wonderful contribution made by both past and present parishioners of St Luke's who, when all is said and done, have given St Luke's its unique identity and life.

May the parish of St Luke's, with its school community, continue to benefit from those who have gone before us, and may we be willing to give shape to the future of our parish by our willingness to serve God and to minister to each other's needs. May we treasure the legacy that has been left to us and be forever thankful to those who have dared to dream and who have had the courage to make it happen.

Fr. Tony Spierings.

## **Introduction and Overview of the Parish and School Beginnings**

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Blackburn South was gradually developing into a suburban area, with the replacement of the fruit orchards and the surrounding paddocks by family houses. Orchard Road, so named because of the lemon orchard where the church and school are now situated, and other fruit orchards, was an unmade road with a few shops nearby along Canterbury Road. As the area grew, the parish priest at St Thomas the Apostle, Blackburn, Father Paul Ryan, decided that Blackburn South also needed a school and parish in its own right.

Land was purchased to build the church/school. On the existing site, there were three houses, one of which became the first presbytery. The new building consisted of three classrooms, separated by folding doors, an altar and sacristy. After mass each Sunday, the church seats were moved into the three separate classrooms ready for school on a Monday.

The Blackburn South parish was separated from Blackburn parish in 1962, and in early 1963, Father F. Larsen was named the first parish priest. According to the records found in the school's archives, "the parish is (sic) situated on 4 ½ acres of land in a semi-rural picturesque residential area".

The church, as we know it, was not constructed until Fr. Kennelly arrived. As the Parish was finding it difficult to raise a loan, he suggested to the parishioners that they lend the money, which he would guarantee to pay back within three years. The funds raised enabled the church to be built and furnished. The Stations of the Cross were a donation from an Italian couple in the parish, Mr & Mrs Perara.

In 1962, the primary school opened with two classes: Grade 2 of 41 students and Grade 3 with 33 students, although the school was not officially registered until 25<sup>th</sup> November, 1963.

Early in the life of the Parish, a group formed to introduce the Sacrificial Offerings to raise funds to purchase parish needs. The first meeting was held at Box Hall Lower Town Hall and was very well attended.

A number of groups developed from the original sportsmen's group which held fund raising nights. These include the Maintenance Team which looks after the grounds and any repairs needed to the church; the Church cleaning teams where volunteers spend part of Saturday morning ensuring the inside of the church and the outside toilets are clean and tidy; the Flowers team where members bring flowers from their own gardens to decorate the altar for each week from Saturday morning. Participation in all of these groups is voluntary; once a year, clipboards are distributed and those who can provide some time sign up; rosters are then drawn up by a person responsible for each team. During Fr. Staunton's time, parishioners were encouraged to

volunteer as readers (Ministers of the Word) or Special Ministers of Communion (Ministers of the Eucharist) and rosters for these are drawn up by Noelle Hughes. There is also a small team of volunteers who distribute communion to those elderly parishioners who are unable to attend Mass; these may be in their own homes, or in Aged Care residences such as Inala and Goodwin Close.

In 1994, a monthly newsletter, 'The Evangelist', was produced. In the third issue, George O'Brien began a history of the local parishes from his family's point of view. His reflections confirm what other early parishioners, especially John and Joan Robinson and Frank Kenealy have recounted, namely that after St Francis Xavier's at Box Hill, St Thomas's at Blackburn, with Fr. Paul Ryan as parish priest started. For those who built houses in Blackburn South, there was a bus along Middleborough and Canterbury Roads to take families to St Thomas's. As George O'Brien comments, this was the social event of the week, enabling "a sense of identity as South Blackburn folk" to develop. He identified a number of families: Robinsons, Dynans, Sheehans, Byrnes, John Bourke, some of whom are no longer with us. He also notes that Fr. Ryan had started to organise the purchase of land to establish new parishes, one of which would be at Blackburn South.

During the early to mid 1990s, there was also a Children's Liturgy group at the 10.30 mass because of the number of parents with young children. The key organisers were Andrea de Carvalho, Marianne Stevenson, Bernadine Brennan and Margaret Yore. Together with volunteers, they took a small group of young children to the room next to the sacristy to do activities associated with the gospel of the day. The children returned at the beginning of the Offertory and were part of the procession, sharing what they had been doing with Fr. Staunton and the congregation.

Music for 10.30 masses has been provided by a choir of volunteer parishioners and organists and conductors since 1966. The first organist, Mary Egan, was greatly appreciated by many people for her wonderful talent in playing the organ and preparing the choir to sing. Mary retired from her role as organist just prior to falling ill. These photos show the members of the choir at her farewell.



L - R: Paul Gunn, Terry Wells, Phyllis, Sr. Pat, Deidre Farrell, Mary Egan, Maisie Cherrill, Nan Giovannini



Josie Fahey, Tom Murphy, Paul Gunn, Terry Wells, Fr. Staunton at Mary's retirement function

On Mary's retirement, the parish was fortunate in having Terry Wells volunteer to take over the responsibility for the choir and music as he had been in the St Patrick's Cathedral choir. Together with Bill Goodwin at the organ, they have been able to maintain the music on Sundays, and especially at Easter and Christmas. After many years of service, Terry retired from the position of choir conductor at the end of 2011, and in order for the work which he and Mary had carried out to be continued, Margaret Yore and Margaret Gearon agreed to take on joint responsibility for the hymns at the 10.30 mass. Bill Goodwin has taken responsibility for encouraging a group of young musicians who provide the music once a month at the 6.00pm mass and he rehearses with them on a Sunday after 10.30 mass. The choir is also fortunate to be able to call on the school choir, led by Margaret Yore for special occasions such as the St Luke's day mass and First Holy Communion.

### **Parish Picnic and St Luke's Day luncheon**

The photos below show parishioners enjoying the parish picnic held at Warrandyte in the late 1980s. Meant to be an annual event, this was the only occasion on which it took place.

In 2000, to acknowledge the start of a new century, Fr. Staunton introduced a parish BBQ lunch held after mass on the Sunday closest to the feast of St Luke to celebrate the parish community and thank parishioners for their contribution to the parish and school.





## **The parish and school market day**

During Fr. Staunton's time, the school fete was re-organised and became a market day. The organising committee, consisting of parents from the school and volunteers from the parish groups, facilitated the setting up of stalls under the school verandahs and on the quadrangle of the school. The stalls sold cakes, second-hand books, handcrafts, raffle tickets for a Christmas cake decorated by Grace Dimattina, food and drinks, and "White Elephant" goods. In addition, there was a spinning wheel with prizes and a Devonshire Tea-room set up in one of the classrooms. Rostered volunteers worked at the stalls between 11.00 and 2.00pm and then helped with the clean-up. The Market Day has always raised a good amount of money thanks to the generous donations from parishioners and the large number of people who attend and buy the goods available.



## Parish Priests

Father Frank Larsen 1963- 1968

Father Larsen was the first full time parish priest (1963- 1968/9??) and he was assisted by a Redemptorist student; priests from St Dominic's, East Camberwell, and from the Franciscan Monastery (St Pascal's) in Box Hill.

Father Maurice Kennelly 1969 - 1988/9

In the eulogy to Father Kennelly, delivered by Father Gerard O'Callaghan, the latter spoke of a person who had a highly developed business acumen and enterprise which enabled him to leave St Luke's with an extended school premises, refurbished hall, and new church, all paid for. Fr. O'Callaghan also commented on the influence of the time Fr Kennelly spent as chaplain to the armed forces which produced a man of strong character who valued discipline.

Father James Staunton 1989 - 2010

Father Staunton recalls that he arrived in April 1989 and was made very welcome by the parishioners; indeed, this welcome continued and grew over the years. What he most appreciated was the marvellous atmosphere and the great relationships which he established with the parish and its many parishioners.

In the year 2000, as this was the year to celebrate the millennium, he realised that the parish had not organised how it was going to contribute to such a milestone, so he suggested the parish have a party for St Luke's day; this was so successful, that this has continued each year since. Father Staunton sees this as an example of the underlying sense of unity, purpose, appreciation of what needs to be done for those who form the parish and school communities. At these lunches, he enjoyed spending his time moving from table to table interacting with parishioners and catching up on their news.

During his time at St Luke's, the school and parish fete expanded from being a small event organised by the Mothers Club to a parish and school Market Day where the planning committee

allocated jobs to various groups in the parish and school- this exemplified for Fr. Staunton the co-operation between all groups in the parish and the school.



Father Tony Spierings 2011 – present

Fr. Spierings arrived in January 2011. Given the shortage of priests and the right of the laity to involve themselves in the affairs of the parish, he considers it vital for the future of the parish to promote and encourage greater lay participation.

He readily acknowledges and very much appreciates the initiatives taken by his predecessors, especially Fr. Staunton, to ensure that this was already taking place and continues to build on some of the areas such as music and liturgy. To this end, he organised the installation of an updated audio visual facility enabling fuller participation with everyone responding to psalms and songs. He then encouraged more volunteers to learn how to use the equipment at all masses. The formation of a Liturgy Team was important to highlight special celebrations and feast days. He encouraged the choir to expand its repertoire and to bring their music into line with the weekly Scriptures.

Fr. Tony has been instrumental in encouraging parishioners to take responsibility for ministering to one another and the role of taking Communion to the sick is a ministry which is well supported and appreciated.

Fr. Tony is also keen to forge stronger bonds between the school community and the parish while acknowledging the good rapport which exists. He hopes to work more closely with the parents of the school who are also parishioners. His work is not yet done.

## **The growth and development of St Luke the Evangelist school.**

In its first year of existence, the school had only two classes, one of which was taught on the present site of the hall, which doubled as the church, while the other continued to be located at St Thomas's in Blackburn. The two classes were a Grade 2 of 41 students, and a Grade 3 of 33 students. Two classes were also offered in 1963. In 1964, the school had grades from a combined Prep and Grade 1 to Grade 4. In this year, Fr. Larsen organised for five classrooms, a tuckshop, a staff room and toilet facilities to be constructed, and these form the east wing of the current school.

In 1965, three nuns from the Dutch order, the Sisters of the Society of Jesus, Mary, Joseph arrived from Holland and took over the running of the school from the lay teachers. Their residence, the Sacred Heart Convent was a brick house located in Charlotte St, to the side of the church property and was blessed and opened in June 1965. One of the nuns, Sr. Christine, brought a full range of Montessori material from Holland to use with the younger children. The nuns also brought a number of musical instruments with them. Sr. Willemine, who arrived in 1978, remembers that the nuns were sent to support Catholic education as the state government did not assist catholic schools at that time. She also recalls that they exercised firm discipline. She wrote: *"I arrived at St Luke's in 1978. Because the Catholic education is not subsidized in Australia so we were sent from the Netherlands to teach. We had lots of Montesorie (sic) material with us to start this new experience. I don't know the names of the sisters, because most of them are deceased. We came with ten sisters. Ten years before there were sisters of JMJ in the parish. I gave lessons at the primary-school. I remember that we had discipline without a firm hand and religion was highly valued. We went back to Holland in 1984, because the State also subsidized Catholic education. We had accomplished our task. Australia could now take over. It is a memory that for me has been largely forgotten. I'm glad I'm able to do something for you, but the time was very short."*

These first nuns were joined by others between 1965 and 1975, the year the last two finished teaching at the school, although Sr. Willemine stayed involved with the school until 1984.



1970 photo – Sr. Miriam, Sr. Dorothy, Sr. Louise, Sr. Christine.

Correspondence between some of the nuns and parishioners Mary and Geoff Egan after the former returned to Holland shows the extent to which the nuns had appreciated the opportunity to teach at the school in its early years. Writing on the occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the parish and school, in October 1992, Sisters Ludwigo and Miriam recalled a number of events which they had recorded in photos and taken back to Holland. *“We looked at some slides of St Luke’s School taken quite a number of years ago. We enjoyed them thoroughly. They showed for instance:*

*Father Larsen amongst a group of first Holy Communion children.*

*Football training on the oval.*

*Terry conducting the choir on a Sunday celebration of Mass.*

*Classroom shots with Sr. Christine teaching the children by Montessori method.*

*Sr. Ludwigo doing needle work with a group of children.*

*Sr. Dorothy, Christine and Ludwigo in our beautiful house in Charles (sic) St, Blackburn.*

*All sweet memories.”*

Sister Christine also wrote to Mary Egan recalling her experiences of teaching the Montessori method to the children. Extracts from her letter are reproduced here:

*“Yesterday I sent you the tape. But it is not a very good one. Students from the Melbourne University took them. They stayed four days in my classroom. At the university I am sure there will be more and better ones. [...] At the Melbourne University is also all the material I used, e.g. the farm, the bells and the beads (for instruction in arithmetic). Maybe it will be very interesting for my old students to see that again. [...] Before we left Blackburn we (Sr. Dorothy & me) have made a few albums with all the fotos and gave them to Mr Matheson (headmaster) to put them in the archives of the school. [...] Oh, I forgot something. Mr Brody has been taken (sic) many foto’s he still might have the negatives. Sr. Christine Dekkers”*

Early parishioners, Joan and John Robinson, and Frank Kenealy, whose children were amongst the first to attend St Luke's school, recall the arrival of the nuns and the development of the school buildings.

An article in the local newspaper from June 1965 recounts the arrival of the nuns and the opening by Bishop Fox on 27<sup>th</sup> June 1965 of the Sacred Heart Convent in a cream brick building which was part of St Luke's parish centre, situated in Charlotte St. The article mentions that the 'church-school' and the school proper consisted of five classrooms, all single storey brick buildings, and that the presbytery where Fr. Larsen lived was a pre-war weather board building.



The original presbytery, an old farmhouse.

In 1965, according to the archives, "the school proper consisted of five classrooms in a new single storey brick building. Grade IV occupied the rear room of one building, used as a church on Sundays." The Mothers' Club was responsible for running the tuckshop which provided play-lunches and lunches on a daily basis. The Mothers' Club held monthly meetings, which the nuns attended, and raised money to buy much needed resources for the school, in particular books for the library. In 1965, a school uniform was introduced as requested by the parents. The archive notes state that "they [the parents] were happy with the choice of grey uniforms for the boys and maroon ones for the girls. The uniforms ... copied from those worn at the Sisters' school in

Canberra". During 1965, Sr. Christine had a number of visitors interested in the Montessori method of education young children in literacy and numeracy. At the end of 1965, the school students presented a concert which was very well attended by the parents.

1966 was the first year that the school had separate classes for all grades from Prep to Grade 6, with a total of 277 students. Grades V and VI were in the two rear rooms of the church while the parish waited for permission and financing to build two new classrooms, a staffroom and an office. In 1966, the school and teachers were inspected by the State Education Department Inspector and the Catholic Education Office one. Both commented positively on the running of the school by the nuns, the hard work of the teachers and the high educational standard achieved by the children. The Catholic Education Office Inspector wrote: "Parishioners can feel assured that the efforts they have made to establish this school are well justified by the standards it now has and by the promise it holds for the future ...". The archives for this year note that "The Mothers' Auxiliary provided the school with blinds. Grade 6 received a splendid library, a wireless and a sewing machine for the girls".

By 1975, the school numbers had reached 398, but then gradually declined with the aging of the parish population, and have now settled around 200 students.

## **School Principals**

Mother Teresa and Sr. Dorothy were in the first group of the nuns from Holland to arrive at St Luke's to assist with the establishment and running of the school. Due to ill-health, Sr. Dorothy was obliged to leave in 1974, paving the way for the appointment of the first lay principal.

### **NEIL MATHESON 1975 - 1978**

During Neil's time as Principal, he introduced an approach to reading which interested many other Primary School Principals, especially from country primary schools, after they heard him interviewed on ABC radio or attended his presentation at a seminar at Marysville in 1976. There are a number of letters in the school archives which provide evidence of this interest and of the visits which the school received as a result of this. The approach was called an Oral Reading Program, had a set of standards for different age groups which included comprehension checks, speed reading standards and a standardised format for recording results of individual progress. There was also a Behaviour Modification program according to one of the letters in the archives, but no details about this are available.

## MRS MAUREEN CONNOLLY 1979 - 1982



Margaret (Peggy) D' Prazer 1983 - 2005

**PEGGY D'PRAZER** began as Principal of St Luke's in 1983. In Peggy's twenty-two years as Principal, she saw many changes and developments in the community and in education itself. The community continued to change over this time as new families moved into the area and the number of children and classes grew.

The most significant memories for Peggy were the development of community events that continue today - market day, Father's Day and St Luke's Feast day. These were significant events that brought the community together and enabled everyone to celebrate so it is no wonder that these remain priorities in Blackburn South today. Peggy recalls the energy and enthusiasm of the parents and families, as they worked together to organise these events so that the community spirit could develop and grow. Fr. Staunton was especially committed to the St Luke's Feast day Mass and lunch as he loved to see the community together. He loved to wander around the tables in the quadrangle greeting old friends and new, sharing a story and laugh with the many who attended.

Peggy's reflections on education were of the constant change throughout her time as Principal. Money and grants were not as prevalent as today and getting the resources for children to learn was always a challenge. With great community generosity and hard work the school managed well and provided good education for the students. Past students reflections are always of the happy days they spent at St Luke's and the feeling of pride associated with their primary school. Ensuring the students had access to technology was one of the major achievements during this time. Not easy when the cost of technology was so exorbitant in the 1980's, establishing the

Information Communications Technology (ICT) laboratory was something of which she was very proud.

Peggy reflected that her time at St Luke's was one of which she is incredibly proud and she looks forward to joining the community to celebrate the milestone of their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

### **DEB EGAN**

Walking through the gates in 2006 our mosaic mural provided me with a first impression of St Luke's community. Drawing on the story of creation, acknowledging indigenous ancestors and highlighting students and families as church, the mural is so much more than a wonderful art piece, as it embodies the drawing together of the proud, close knit community that is uniquely St Luke's.

When I look back over the 7 years I see how much the school has changed in line with shifts in education, but that the core values of this community remain steadfast- a strong community spirit, family atmosphere, a happy and safe environment for students.

When we received the Building the Education Revolution funding in 2010 we began the process of redeveloping the site to provide new learning spaces for our children. Removing the mosaic from its old home in good order so it could be reinstated in the new environment was a painstaking task and a complete labour of love, demonstrating how much we value the stories of our past and are respectful to all parishioners who have built this great parish and school over the past 50 years. Such symbols are so much a part of our history!

The School learning environment looks very different than it did 50 years ago, and even than it did 5 years ago. Global change and increased access to new technologies means our world is closer than ever before. Our young people are 'digital natives' and are increasingly operating and contributing on a global scale. Our school has responded to the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner and thinker with great success. With redeveloped classrooms and playgrounds, students in 2012 enjoy many exciting and varied learning opportunities. With increased collaboration between teachers and students, and cross- school opportunities for learning together, students at St Luke's work hard to build good relationships.

Student Wellbeing has always been a strength of this community and was also one of my strongest first impressions of the school. I have always been impressed with the way teachers knew and looked out for their students. With the great work of all teachers, student wellbeing remains high on the agenda as we work in partnership with parents to give students positive experiences and opportunities as they learn to be confident, happy and resilient young people.

There are so many highlights of my 7 years at St Luke's that it would be difficult to mention just one - although the day Kevin Rudd visited was pretty special as it was a wonderful community



boost and the only time I ever saw Fr Staunton in a suit jacket!! What a wonderful occasion to honor the work of Fr. Staunton and parishioners and families who have built the Blackburn South community! The highlights of my time as Principal continue every week as I watch students grow and develop - whether it be sharing with students as they receive the Sacrament of Eucharist for the first time, watching Preps present at the celebration of learning or the Seniors produce and present their animation on Belonging for the ACMI screen-it competition - it's hard not to thank God for all that we have at St Luke's and all that we are!

It is my great privilege to be the Principal of St Luke the Evangelist school, working with Fr. Spierings to continue the work of all who have gone before and preparing the way for all who follow in the future. I warmly congratulate everyone in this Golden Jubilee year for a wonderful 50 years and thank you for your individual contributions which are part of our collective story and history.

## **Parish groups**

### **St Vincent de Paul Society Conference**

The Blackburn South Conference of St Vincent de Paul Society was established on 8<sup>th</sup> September 1965.

Meetings were held in a small room at the end of the first building .

First committee members:

Bill Hales

John Robinson

Bill Mangan

Leo Giovannini

Eric French (President)

Geoff Egan

Frank Kenealy

At the first meeting, there was 2 shillings and 6 pence in the kitty.

Meetings were held at night and calls were also made at night.

During the 1980s, Bill Hales was President and the conference continued to support needy families in the parish and visit Inala on a regular basis.

During this period, Eastern Regional Council asked for volunteers from conferences in the Ringwood Region to assist with visits at South Melbourne.

Presidents of the South Blackburn Conference

1997 – 2000: Harry Allsopp

2000- 2006: John Robinson

2006-2012: Dan Carroll

2004 – 2011: John Robinson was Social Justice officer for the Ringwood Regional Council.

In recent years, visits to those needing assistance have been co-ordinated by the St Vincent de Paul call centre at Gerald Ward House in Box Hill. The conference president is contacted once a week with a list of those people requiring assistance and their addresses, and members work in pairs to visit and assist in a number of ways, including distribution of vouchers for food, petrol and telephone calls. Advice is also provided for those needing help with utility bills, unemployment issues and other areas dealt with by Centrelink. The Blackburn South Conference is acknowledged within local St Vincent de Paul regions (Ringwood and Eastern) for its high level of attention to social justice issues.

In 2011, Donvale Conference asked if Blackburn South conference members could assist with visits to Port Melbourne and volunteers have been rostered each month during 2012.

Members are also rostered to assist at the Ringwood Centre on a Saturday.

The Blackburn South conference conducts a twice weekly bread run from February to December, thanks to the generous donation of the owners of the Canterbury Rd bakery. Conference members and auxiliary members are rostered in pairs to collect the bread, put it in bags and deliver it to between 20 and 40 residences in the parish depending on the demand or expression of need.

Two long-standing members, Bill Goodwin and Terry Wells, visit nursing homes and hostels each month to entertain the residents with mini-concerts which last for one hour. Bill plays the keyboard while Terry sings and encourages the audience to join in when they know the songs. Although many residents of these aged care homes are confined to chairs or even mobile beds, they can be seen to respond to the music and they are always very happy when Bill and Terry make a return visit.

Today, the school children donate a large amount of non-perishable foodstuffs each year and are currently growing vegetables to donate at Christmas time.

### **Care Group** (Thanks to Noelle Hughes, Tonia Plevier for this information)

Shortly after Father Staunton came to the parish, he asked two of the parishioners to cater for a funeral. They went to the house, set up the sandwiches, cups and saucers, and minded the house while the people were at the burial. They were very grateful. Following this, more catering was done in the homes. The group had an urn which was too tall in some houses as it did not fit under the cupboards near a power point, so the group bought 'Erny' which they liked better as water

could be added in the top and hot water out of the tap used. As it became very congested in homes, the meeting room at the back of the hall was used and finally the hall itself. The Care Group relies on people helping on the day and for making sandwiches and/or cakes.

The current (2012) Care Group consists of 26 ladies, each with her speciality so that when there is the need to cater for a funeral, they provide a delightful range of sandwiches, cakes, biscuits and slices. The Parish provides the hot food which is usually party pies and sausage rolls. For each funeral, between 6 to 8 ladies who serve the tea and coffee on the day, and assist with setting up the hall and cleaning up afterwards. The Care Group also provides flowers for the altar as necessary and on the major feast days (Easter, Christmas and First Holy Communion). The funds come from donations to the Altar Society and the main fund raiser each year, the Christmas Hamper raffle.

### **Maintenance Group**

Established by Bob Forster in 1972 and led by him until 2001 when Bill Goodwin took over the role, the maintenance teams consisted of volunteers from amongst the men of the parish whose jobs included keeping the church and school grounds neat and tidy by trimming the trees and cutting back the grass; repairing minor damage; cleaning up the school oval and mowing the grass. Until recently, they also cleaned the gutters, but new regulations concerning ladder safety has meant that this is no longer part of their role.

### **Church cleaning and flowers (Pam Badawy; Tonia Plevier)**

Two other key groups of volunteers, mainly from among the women of the parish, ensure that the church is cleaned every Saturday, except for Easter and Christmas, when the men from the maintenance teams undertake a major clean-up. The flower roster also enables the church to have fresh flowers on the altar for the three weekend masses and during the week.

### **The Gadabouts**

When Jean Hudson came to be housekeeper to Father Staunton, she started The Gadabouts. They used to have meetings after mass on Tuesdays. They organised outings. The first one which Tonia Plevier remembers was The City Lights. There was also a trip on Puffing Billy with meals served on the train in aeroplane type packets; a trip to Williamstown on a ferry; another to Geelong to the wool museum; and another to Science Works. Tonia loved the Hugh engine which had been used to pump sewerage to Werribee.

The Gadabouts purchased a toaster oven with a hot plate on top, and later a pie warmer. From 1996 to about 2003, Pat and Jim Grant were also involved with a small church group called 'The Gadabouts', ( which included Tom & Audrey Murphy, Paul Gunn, and Deidre Farrell)- the driving light of which was a lady named Jean Hudson. The group arranged trips for Seniors and Christmas parties every year for many years. On Jean's death, the group was disbanded. One reason was that we were all getting older and the setting up became too onerous.

### **The Book Club**

Tonia Plevier remembers the existence of a book club where the books were provided by the University of the Third Age. The group had a month to read each book after which they met for a discussion. She also remembers that one month, they were sent Vivaldi's Four Seasons!

### **Play Group (Margaret Yore; Bernadine Brennan)**

In 1989, the playgroup at the local Anglican church, utilised by a number of parishioners from St Luke's disbanded, as most children attending were about to start school. As a result, St Luke's parishioners, Marianne Stevenson and Margaret Yore, approached Fr. Staunton about starting a playgroup in the parish hall. The group soon began meeting weekly and was always well attended. Margaret Yore ran the group for the first two years and it was decided that each year, a new parent would take a turn in running the group. Marianne Stevenson, Janette Clark and Bernadine Brennan were others to take over in the early years. The group always attracted local families but also served the purpose of introducing families to the parish and future students to our school. Latterly, Sonya O'Farrell ran the group for 12 years - the early ruling must not have been included in the oral tradition! The group still meets weekly and remains a wonderful inclusion in the weekly life of the parish.

## **Some stories from families in the parish**

### ***JOAN AND JOHN ROBINSON'S MEMORIES***

John Robinson bought a block of land in Agnew St and began building their house in 1954. He and Joan remember the unmade roads and streets (except for Canterbury Rd). He rode his bike along Middleborough Rd and one evening, hit a cow which was wandering down the road from the nearby paddocks. When they first moved into their house, there was a bus to the first mass (7.30am) at St Thomas's in Blackburn. In 1962, Fr. Paul Ryan, parish priest at Blackburn, bought land on Orchard Rd in Blackburn South to establish the new parish of St Luke the Evangelist. The parish officially began in 1963 with the appointment of the first parish priest, Fr. Larsen. The school began in 1962, with two classes and two of their children were in these. Gary was part of the Grade 3 class which was the first to make their First Communion.

Both the school and the church operated from the same building which was divided into classrooms by concertina doors; these are still at the back of the stage.

In 1965, nuns from the Dutch order of Jesus, Mary and Joseph arrived to work at the school. They arrived in two groups and stayed until 1975 when the order was recalled to Holland. (Names: Sr. Christine (Montessori); Sr. Christalie; Sr. Therese; Sr. Dorothy; Sr. Ludwigo; Sr. Clater; Sr. Willemine).

They didn't speak much English when they arrived. Some of the parishioners, including John, drove to the convent at Mooroolbark to bring them to St Luke's to their convent which was the cream brick house next to Fulton's in Charlotte St.

Sr. Willemine remained behind as long as she could and continued to teach at the school, probably until 1983. After her return to Holland, she was allowed one holiday to Australia. She was very friendly with the family, and even went on camping trips with them, sharing a tent and joining in the activities.

The nuns brought musical instruments with them, including a xylophone, and a drum, and introduced music to the children (Sr. Ludwigo). The drum was used at Midnight Mass as part of the The Little Drummer Boy which was sung each year. Concerts were a big part of the school year during the nun's time.

The nuns also brought a full set of Montessori materials and the method. Sr. Christine taught her classes using this approach. Joan and John's daughter, Helen, was in a small group from the Grade 2 class which was used to demonstrate the approach to students from Monash University's Faculty of Education.

Sr. Ludwigo taught Art and Needlework as well as Music; she taught all the girls to crochet, cast on stitches and knit, and to do fine cross-stitch.

Joan remembers Sr. Christalie as being “a real villain”; she was not averse to punishments such as sticky-taping the children’s mouths, attaching their legs to chairs to stop them moving around, and even using the strap on their legs.

All of the Robinson’s children attended the school, providing a continuum from 1962 to 1985 - 23 years!

The Robinsons remember the second parish priest, Fr. Kennelly, as being a wonderful administrator, even though he kept no written records. For example, in order to raise the money to build two classrooms and the toilets, and to avoid taking out a bank loan, he borrowed from the parishioners, re-paying them within three years.

Highlights of their time in the parish and at the school:-

- John’s brother Peter said his first mass at St Luke’s after his ordination in 1964. The children were given a half day holiday.
- School sports which were held at an oval on Burwood Highway and in 1966, at Xavier College in Kew.
- The school football team which John and others trained at a field on Edinburgh Rd, where the pre-school and a park now are.
- Richmond footballers coming there to train the boys.
- A very small boy whose football jumper was 3 ½ and whose photo was in the Sun newspaper.
- Sportsmens’ nights to raise money for the school. Early in the life of the parish (and school) there was a need to raise money, so the men organised ‘gambling nights’ where pontoon, Crown & Anchor, poker were played- there was a poker machine! They also had a chicken raffle.
- The Mothers’ Club which raised money for the library and sporting equipment.
- Joan’s role as the first coach of the girls’ basketball (netball) team. Her policy was to give all girls a turn at each position to help them work out where they played best. The teams played against other Catholic School teams, and Joan was responsible for the transport of the team to and from other venues.
- The establishment of the St Vincent de Paul Conference at Blackburn South in early September 1965, again moving away from St Thomas’s Blackburn. Eric French was the first president. At the first meeting, the group raised 2s 6pence to buy food for the needy in the parish. In the early years, calls were mainly to the elderly, the sick, and families finding things tough in the 1960s. Meetings and calls were always done at night and because of the unmade roads, they frequently were bogged when out on calls. There was no Poor Box until the current church was built, so money was collected through appeals. The

Conference membership remained about the same for many years, but grew steadily. The addition of women members (Wilma Kingston, Olive Hamill and Lorraine Kermond were the first) was organised by John Robinson. In 1965, the Blackburn South conference took over the visits to Inala from Box Hill conference. Every two to four weeks, members visited taking lollies, tobacco, cigarettes and pipe tobacco to the residents, about 100 men.

- In 1991, John Robinson was asked to write an article for the Inala Village newsletter about the Blackburn South conference's involvement. This provides very interesting details about the connection between St Luke's and Inala. In 1945, the then Salvation Army Men's Retreat took in a resident who was Catholic. The Salvation Army Major in charge of the residence contacted Box Hill Parish to ask if a priest could visit on a monthly basis. This was agreed, and so began the long association between the Salvation Army and the local Catholic parishes. This included permission for members of St Vincent de Paul to visit once a fortnight, a tradition which continues today, although the visits are now once a month and involve not just men but also women members of the Blackburn South Conference. Three of the original members of the latter still visit today; they have seen the facility grow from huts and old cable tram rooms to the current modern buildings, and the facility extended to welcoming both men and women. At the above date, St Vincent de Paul conferences had made approximately 700 visits, which is an average of six members over 47 years.

### ***FRANK AND LUCY KENEALY'S STORY.***

Frank and Lucy Kenealy arrived in August 1958 in Pakenham St with their first son, Michael. Three more boys were born in later years (Mark, Shane and Luke).

The Parish of St Luke's was originally serviced by Fr. Paul Ryan from St Thomas's Parish, Blackburn.

Land was purchased to build the church/school, originally in the hall. The building consisted of three classrooms, separated by folding doors, an altar and sacristy. After mass each Sunday, the church seats were moved into the three separate classrooms ready for school on a Monday.

On the existing site, there were three houses, one of which became the first presbytery.

The second stage of the building were the classrooms along the oval and the original toilet block. Third stage was the second lot of classrooms and staff room.

## **KEY EVENTS**

### 1. Start up phase:-

Father Frank Larsen arrived as first parish priest and to assist him, priests were supplied as needed from St Pascal's Box Hill and St Dominic's East Camberwell.

2. Sacrificial Offerings (weekly contributions) were introduced to the Parishioners to raise finances for future Parish expenses and these continue today. The Sacrificial Offering Campaign was launched in the Box Hill Lower Town Hall. Every parishioner was invited to attend and a dinner was supplied; the Town Hall was packed.

3. A Parish Committee was organised to provide assistance to Father Larsen. During Fr. Larsen's time, the committee members became aware that Fr. Larsen was driving a car which was not roadworthy, so they arranged several fund raisers in order to take action. Don Brodie and Geoff Egan were very involved in the work that followed. The challenge was to raise enough money to buy Fr. Larsen a new car and this was achieved through the parishioners' efforts. One Sunday after Mass, he was presented with a new Holden. But, there is a twist to the story: two to three weeks later, Don Brodie rang to say that Fr. Larsen had been transferred to another Parish- and the car went with him!!

4. Fr. Kennelly replaced Fr. Larsen as Parish Priest.

## ***JIM AND ELAINE CHAPMAN'S STORY***

The Chapman's arrived in St Luke's parish in 19.. Their three children attended the school before going to St Thomas More's and St Leo's, Box Hill. The key event they remember was when St Luke's was created as a new parish from St Thomas's, Blackburn when Fr. Paul Ryan, who only died last year at age 96, purchased the land to set St Luke's on its way. They had maintained close contact with him over the years. The other key event they remember is the opening of the new church and Father Kennelly's purchase of the Stations of the Cross from an orphanage in Geelong; he was able to do this because of a generous donation from an Italian couple. They consider this to be one of the best parishes in Melbourne, especially because of the great leadership from all of the parish priests.





Father Kennelly with Dan Chapman, son of Elaine and Jim on First Communion day

### ***MARY AND DAN CARROLL'S STORY.***

Mary and Dan Carroll arrived in St Luke's parish in 1963.

They remember, in particular, having to move the desks and pens out of the hall in order to set it up for Sunday masses. They also remember the arrival of the Dutch nuns with Sr. Dorothy as Principal of the school.

A Sports Committee was formed and quickly branched out from organization of sports to general maintenance. There were gambling nights to raise finances to assist in the running of the parish.

Later there were social events such as dances and trivia nights.

Like many parishioners, they remember the contributions to Sacrificial Giving, and their association with the school and to the on-going life of the church.

Key events for them have been the contribution by the parish priests, especially the administration by Fr. Kennelly whose business acumen resulted in a new church, plans for a new presbytery and a debt free parish at the time of his death.

The development of the parish over the last 50 years has been a gradual but highly organised evolution. The new church and the great expansion of the school has been a great asset with fine teachers, and excellent grounds which are a credit to the parish priests, their forethought and administration. Any requests for assistance from the priests have always been met by a thorough response from the parishioners.

Dan has been a very active member of the St Vincent de Paul Conference at Blackburn South, always ready to visit those in need and to organise assistance and advice to help them to get back on their feet and feel safe and valued in the community.

## *PAT AND JIM GRANT'S STORY*

Pat and Jim took up residence in Blackburn South in late April 1964.

Events they remember most:-

Their three children starting school at St. Luke's - Andrew and Robert started in 1972 and Greg started in 1981. At the time Andrew was to start in Prep. (1971), St Luke's did not run a Prep Grade and so Andrew had to start at the State school near home.

The time when they **didn't have** to take out the school desks from the hall/church/schoolroom and put in the church pews so that there could be the mass in the hall, because the extra schoolrooms had been built.

The demolition of the oldest house on the block and the cutting down of the old pine trees by Fr Kennelly. The building of the new church.

The demolition by Father Staunton of the old farm house that was used as a presbytery for many years and the building of the new presbytery - not sure what year this was.

Father Staunton's Golden Jubilee on 6 June 2004 at Golden Sands Receptions and mass beforehand at St Luke's.

Early in the piece, Jim took over from Ron Blewett as Treasurer for the school fete (in fact Pat, his wife dubbed him in) which lasted about 7 years. He was treasurer also for the combined raffle which was run by St. Thomas', St Luke's and St. Phillip's. The raffle was for a car and the proceeds were shared equally by the 3 parishes. The raffle went for at least three years and it was drawn at a combined Ball.

Pat also became involved in the Mothers' Club in which she took a very active role, including running the Tuck Shop for a couple of years. In the late 70s and early 80s, the Mothers' Auxiliary (Club) had many do's like wine & cheese tastings and casserole nights to raise money for the sealing of the basketball courts on the parking area.

There was also a Men's Club which had gambling nights to raise money for the school. Also the Men's Club used to have Father/Son Weekends at Somers for many years. Jim and his sons participated in these weekends.

Their son Andrew (with Anthony Box & Sandra Allsop) tried to start a Youth Club when he was at St. Leo's College but the Parish Priest at the time (Fr. Kennelly) would not allow it.

Their other son Greg (who has Cerebral Palsy) was instrumental in the school obtaining its first computer.

For some years, Jim has helped out as a Minister of the Word and also, more recently, has been helping with the computer screening at Sunday masses.

From 1996 to about 2003, Pat and Jim were involved with a small church group called 'The Gadabouts', ( which included Tom & Audrey Murphy, Paul Gunn, and Deidre Farrell)- the driving light of which was a lady named Jean Hudson, ( Fr. Staunton's housekeeper)- which arranged trips for Seniors and Christmas parties every year for many years. On Jean's death, the group was disbanded. One reason was that they were all getting older and the setting up became too onerous. In almost every aspect of life, St Luke's has been a source of spiritual guidance for the Grant family.

### ***VAL AND TERRY WELLS' STORY.***

We arrived in St Luke's Parish on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1966, just prior to the birth of our first child in December – five more children were to follow.

Fr. Larsen was the parish priest at that time; we had several years while he was here. Mass was held in the parish hall which had to be assembled and disassembled each weekend – part of the hall was used as classrooms.

Terry became involved with the choir quite early in our time here. Mary Egan was the organist. There was a period of a few years when we took leave from the parish along with about one-third of the parishioners until Fr. Staunton arrived.

We had four children at the school there; for a time we were both busy with helping. Val was secretary of the Mothers' Club; did reading each morning and tuck shop duty.

There were the usual Baptisms, First Communions, Confirmations, Sports Nights, Fetes to raise money for the school; Father – Son weekends; netball, football, driving children to play at other schools.

One of the outstanding memories was when the parish gave Fr. Larsen a car for his silver jubilee; we were amazed at the generosity of the people in South Blackburn. Fr. Staunton got a golf club for his golden jubilee.

With Fr. Staunton, there were the wonderful St Luke's masses and lunches to bring all the parishioners, young and old together; there was always a great atmosphere at these days.

St Vincent de Paul has always been very active in the parish; the generosity of the people came out again and again.

Our family has now gone full circle; we have had children married at St Luke's; grandchildren baptised there, and now we have grandchildren attending the school. We are again involved collecting children from school; attending school masses, sports days etc. We hope we have many long years ahead with Fr. Spierings leading us along the way.

## *ESTELA AND MANUEL GONZALEZ' STORY*

We came to this Parish and our son to the school in 1981.

We are sure we went through many important events in the life of the Parish during our 31 years here at St. Luke's and it will not be easy to select the best to remember, since the changes were too many and some big ones.- The building of the new Presbytery, new school, new and bigger car park and so on.

Our family's role in the Parish or School has not been of any importance, apart from my help with the maintenance roster for the last 25 years or so and almost as many years as a "projectionist" starting with the overhead projector and now the more modern ones run with the help of the computer.

Family contribution to the School and Parish. Apart from the above mentioned, we do not think we had any other contributions done.

The School and Parish have contributed to our family's involvement by given us the happiness, security, welcomed and feelings of belonging to such an important place. I do remember when in 1981 we were looking for a Parish to assist to Mass and a School to take our son to, and going to see Fr. Kennelly. It was a long talk that evening and even with my English being extremely poor, it was a very pleasant one and very happy to have found so much help and kindness.

As mentioned before, there were many events in the Parish and School that made us feel at home, like the Year 2000 Jubilee celebrations, the first Holy Communion and Confirmation Ceremonies of our children. Also of importance is the celebration of St.Luke's day together with the rest of parishioners during the last years.

The development of our Church and School over the last 50 years, we have witnessed only 31 of them, but we can certainly say it was a remarkable, of which we parishioners should be very, very proud. To this, we should add that it was possible first of all thanks to the Priests' administration, and the enormous effort of so many hands. I just wish I could remember all their names; like Bob Forster, Peter Hall, Paul Carey, Adrian Costello, Andrew Badaway, John Fulton, Bill Goodwin and many, many more to whom I must apologise for not remembering their names.

Having our three children pass through this School, I believe the teachers should be very highly remembered for their excellent contribution to our family in every aspect.

### ***THERESE AND KEN PITCHER'S STORY***

In 1967, we married and came to live in St Luke's parish, but it was not until our first child started school that our relationship with the parish came to life. In the early days, the leading ladies of the parish were Isabel Norden, Josie Fahey, Mary Carroll, Iris Evans, Rhonda Smith, Gwen Jury and Fran O'Donoghue, among others, but my personal favourite was Julie Meggs who was always prepared to listen and offer some friendly advice. These were the trail blazers who showed us the way to do things. We worked in the Tuckshop (before it became the canteen), heard the children read and went on excursions.

Years later, a small group including myself became more involved and the fun began in earnest. We were almost all stay at home mums with young children, so the parish became not just a place to raise money for the school, but also the centre of our social life and place to make friends. There is something bonding about washing the floor of the hall at 1am, after a function, when you had sold the tickets, made the supper and sold the raffle tickets.

St Luke's led the way when dads' involvement was not in vogue. The Father and Son weekends became legendary and the men made friends as well. The Sports Committee was another area of expertise. My husband Ken (not a Catholic) went to one meeting and came home President. At his first meeting, Jack Norden said: "We open the meeting with a prayer", so Ken said: "That's your job Jack" and it was!

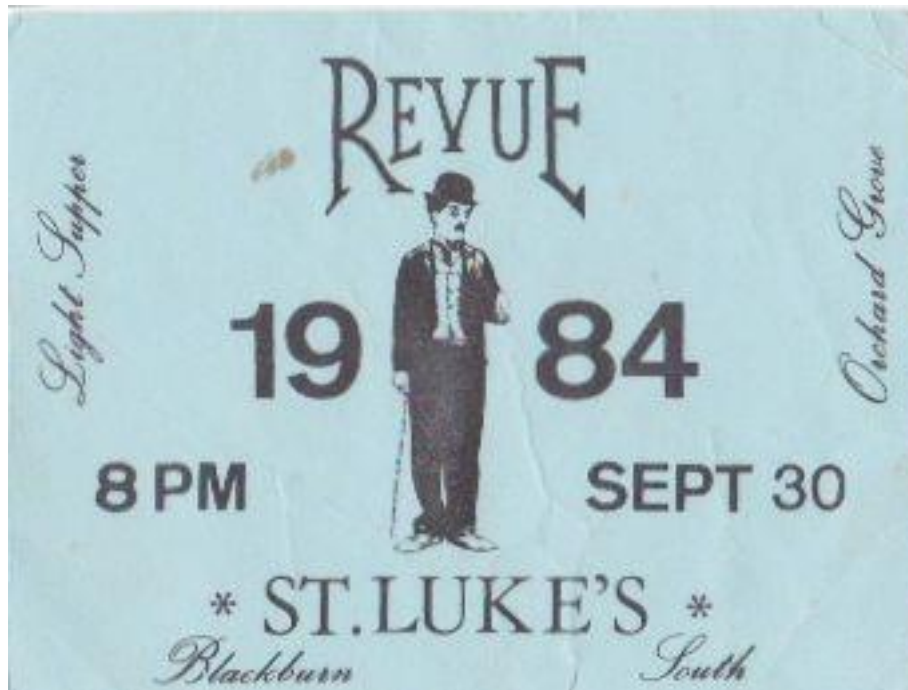
Sport put our parish on the map. We were a small school in numbers, but big in enthusiasm and great coaches. Val Gardiner and Pauline Taylor led the netball teams to glory with their team of helpers whose names I can no longer remember. They spent hours teaching the girls in the carpark. Meanwhile, Russell Withers and his helpers were on the oval showing our boys how to kick a footy. Basketball was another of Russell Withers' coaching talents; many a Friday night was spent driving the boys to Albert Park in peak hour traffic to play a game.

It was a busy time but well worthwhile and the group of friends has mainly moved away but we still spend some time together and are there for each other in good times and bad in the true spirit of St Luke's.

### ***JOSIE AND FRED FAHEY'S STORY***

We arrived in the Parish about 50 years ago (1962) when our daughter Moira was three months old. Some of the key events which remain in our memories are our daughter Rose and seven other children starting school in the first class; having both school and Sunday mass in the hall; taking our children to sports training. The event we remember the most is The Revue where parishioners performed songs and dances to entertain and to raise money. We have always contributed to parish and school activities through Josie's work preparing craft items for the

Market Day stall and working at the tuck shop; Fred's work on the maintenance team and being a Minister of the Word at masses. The parish has seen many changes over 50 years and has developed well thanks to the parish priests, the teachers at the school and the many willing families who have volunteered their time and expertise to help out.



### ***TONIA AND HANS PLEVIER'S STORY***

In 1961, someone drove us down Orchard Grove and pointed out the site of the Catholic Church. At that time, it was very clayey block with spindly gums. We came to St Luke's in 1967. Our fourth child was born in June 1967 and because our new house was under construction, Fr. Larsen allowed us to have him baptised in St Luke's. We moved on October 30<sup>th</sup> and I attended my first mass on November 1<sup>st</sup>. Our eldest daughter began Prep in 1968; our second began school the next year but had to do Prep at the old Orchard Grove school on the corner of Holland and Fulton Roads; that was where we all went to vote at election time. She returned to St Luke's for Grade 1. Our next child also had to do Prep at Orchard Grove, in 1971, but by then the new government school had been built entering from Orchard Grove. When the plans for our part of the suburb were drawn up, an area had been left for a school, but it was only discovered later that there was not entrance, so one of the house blocks had to be bought back. We used to call Wurrundjeri Walk the horse paddock because of the number of horses grazed there. The area had been left unbuilt for a designated freeway to Healesville, which is why Orchard Grove is overall wider than other streets in the area.

Our fourth child began Prep at St Luke's in 1972 after the new classrooms had been built. By that time, a double stream was progressing through the school. Our fifth child was the one

thousandth child enrolled at St Luke's in 1974. This was the year when St Dorothy who had been head teacher up until then returned to Holland; sadly, she died that year. By the time our sixth child came to the school, it was much as it is today.

In those days, Mass was held in the Hall. Audrey Murphy said that, at first, Mass was held in the back room, but later moved into the hall proper. There were big folding screens pulled across the hall to separate the classrooms, but by the time we came to the parish, the first proper classrooms had been built.

The presbytery was one of the original houses, with high ceiling rooms. After the new presbytery was built, the old one was moved to Hawkesdale near Warnambool.

The first parish priest, Fr. Larsen, was replaced by Fr. Kennelly in 1970. Fr. Kennelly was responsible for the roses along the front of the car park and the camellias against the hall. There used to be a moveable bookstall on the north side of the hall, and a gate through to the convent on Charlotte St.

We can't recall when the sacrificial giving began, but every household was visited by a group of three men and since then, it just seems to tick along. We always had a tin for the altar, then lists for flowers, cleaning and ground maintenance, and more recently for reading and distributing communion. The men also used to do the school cleaning; some of the original workers on the maintenance teams are still going.

### ***MEGAN MCLEAN AND HER FAMILY'S STORY.***

My name is Megan McLean (nee Carman). I was born on 29 February, 1968, the second child to John & Valerie Carman who lived in Blackburn South and belonged to St Luke The Evangelist parish. This is where I was baptised by Farther Larsen on 24 March, 1968.

In 1970 my Mother's parents moved to Blackburn South and were also then parishioners of St Luke's.

I started in Prep at St Luke's in 1973. By the time I began school Father Kennelly was the Parish Priest and Sister Dorothy was the Principal. I was placed in the Prep Class being taught by Miss Roberts. There was another Prep Class being taught by Mrs Mulholland. St Luke's at the time was a large school, with almost two streams of each year level being taught.

As part of our school supplies we had to bring a toilet bag which was to contain soap and a small towel. This was to be taken to the toilet each time we went so we could wash and dry our hands as there was no soap or any way of drying our hands in the toilets back then!! We never wore our shoes inside the classroom and had to take a pair of slippers which stayed in the classroom all year round. Each morning we took off our shoes, neatly lined them up under the

bench seats outside the classroom and put on our slippers once we were inside the classroom. The floors were highly polished and this would save dirtying the floor and causing scuff marks on the polished boards of the classroom. The Tuck shop was run each day and I remember being very upset at losing my 5c that my dad gave me to spend at the tuck shop. Mr Poulsen, who was a kindly old teacher at the time, gave me 5c to replace it and I happily skipped off to spend it! I remember being able to buy a very large Wagon Wheel biscuit for that 5c!

Library was held in the room which is now the meeting room at the back of the hall. We also had a singing teacher in my later primary school years who took us for singing lessons in this room also.

Each morning we would have to line up in our class groups in the quadrangle and march into class to music being played over the loud speakers. Each girl was expected to wear their beret to march to the classroom and if they weren't they risked the wrath of the nuns.

In Grade One I was taught for part of the year by Miss Wallace. I believe she became ill and our class was then taken over by Mrs Marchiori. I went into Grade two in 1975. By then Mr Neil Matheson was the principal as Sister Dorothy was very ill. I was lucky enough to be in the class taught by Sister Christine. She was strict and a little scary but I remember enjoying the activities we did in her classroom. We sat at a table rather than the old desks and there were four to a table. A pot plant sat in the middle of the table and each student who sat at the table had a number. Each number was in charge of a different task to do with looking after the little potted plant, i.e. Number one watered the plant, number two moved the doily that the plant sat on across to the window sill each morning, number three moved the plant and number four put it all back on the table again at the end of the day. It all seems so trivial now, however, I believe this taught us to work as a group and take pride in our little plant as it grew and flowered.

Grade Two was when we made our First Confession and First Communion. Each student made a book as we prepared to make our First Communion (which I still have to this day). In the book we pasted the words to the hymns we would learn for the big day along with drawings and names of all the priest's vestments which he wore during Mass as well as all the ornaments used during the Mass. Also in the book we had to write all the words to the hymn "We Stand For God" which was a hymn we sang all the time at St Luke's. The words "We Stand For God" were also printed on the school badge which we wore on the vee of our jumpers. I made my First Communion over two days on the 11th and 12th of October that year. I'm not sure why it was done this way but I remember showing up both Saturday morning and then again on Sunday for the big Mass and celebration afterwards.

The nuns lived in the convent which was on Charlotte Street and had a sign saying "Sacred Heart" on the front of the house. There was a path which ran beside the convent through to the



school grounds and came out near the side of what is currently the Hall. At the end of Grade Two we were told that the nuns were leaving St Luke's. I remember hugging Sister Christine and crying on her last day. (Despite some people's memories, I guess she couldn't have been all that bad!!) Consequently, the nuns left St Luke's and moved to Mooroolbark to St Peter Julian's where we did visit them when we played netball against their school. They moved back to Holland to live at some stage following this.

I believe it was when I was in Grade Three when we girls had a change of uniform. The girls' berets disappeared and the fabric of the summer dress changed to what it is today. The winter shirt was replaced by a royal blue skivvy which was worn underneath the same tunic worn today. In Grade Three I was taught by Miss Almeida who married toward the end of the year and became Mrs Fernandez. I remember her being extremely strict and relentless in giving out homework every night. She believed in a lot of homework and I found myself doing at least an hour most nights after school which I don't even think children that age do now!!! At the end of Grade Three was when a lot of the boys left to go to St Leo's in Box Hill South to finish their schooling. This saw the class sizes reduce by quite a few.

In Grade Four I was placed in a composite class of Grade 3/4. The teacher was quite a young lady and she preferred to be called Ms Walsh rather than Miss. This was something new to us but thinking back now, was rather indicative of the 1970's and women breaking free from some stereotypes. During that year Ms Walsh announced she was getting married, however, when quizzed by us girls as to where her engagement ring was she told us she didn't need one and that after she was married we could still continue to call her Ms Walsh. We all thought how thoroughly "modern" she was and this was also new to us!!

In 1979 we had a new Principal in Mrs Maureen Connolly and I was in Grade Five. I was in Mrs Sabangan's class and most of us were taller than her which was a source of amusement to both us and her! I loved being in her class and she was one of my favourite teachers. I remember she returned to the Philippines for a visit to her family during one of the school holiday periods and when she returned she gave each student a little gift which she had bought on her trip. The girls received a key ring in the shape of a shoe with "Philippines" painted on it and I still have it today!

In Grade Six in 1979 I was in Mr Cassar's class. During this year we made our Confirmation with the Grade Five class and were the first group to be confirmed in the new Church which had been built during the previous year or so which was special for us.

The old church was then transformed into the school hall. My dad, being a draughtsman was asked by Father Kennelly to draw up the plans to install toilets into the back of the hall and close off what was originally the opening of the old church. Once the plans were drawn up, these

renovations were completed by John McLean (my father in-law now!) who was a builder assisted by Andrew Gronn, also a builder.

In the following years I followed my sister to Blackburn South High School, but having two younger brothers I still managed to visit St Luke's school for sports days and school plays whilst they attended there. We continued to live in the same house so we continued to be parishioners and attended Mass every Sunday at St Luke's.

When I was in about Year 9, I think, the Parishioners of St Luke's put on a show called "The St Luke's Review". Some of the people involved in the show were also students at the Blackburn South High School so they asked Noel Daniel the music teacher there if he would come along and help out with the music, which he did, even though he had no connection with the Parish; this was lovely of him. I remember watching all the acts and enjoying every minute, with some of the song and dance acts being hilarious!

In June 1985 my grandfather passed away and in January 1986 my father passed away. Both their funerals were held at St Luke's.

On 9th February 1989 Father Maurice Kennelly passed away in April that year our new Parish Priest, Father James Staunton, came to St Luke's. His Irish accent charmed us even though at times he was a little hard to understand. A little earlier than this I had started going out with a young man named Darren McLean who was also from St Luke's parish. The McLeans were a large family of ten, Darren being the eldest of the eight children who had all attended St Luke's at one stage or another. We became engaged in November 1989.

My Mother remarried at St Luke's in March 1990. Father Staunton conducted the marriage ceremony between Mum and Jim Fogarty and then Darren and I were married by Father Staunton in November 1990. During that year, St Luke's started running of the Silver Circle at Christmas time. We purchased a ticket for about \$10 dollars and for four weeks a name was chosen from the barrel and that person won their money back. The fifth week there was the grand draw and the winner won \$500. I was the lucky inaugural winner that year when Josie Fahey, who was asked to draw out a name, drew out mine!! This was a large amount of money for a young married couple who had just purchased their house and the money was very well spent.

My Grandmother passed away in June 1992 and her funeral was also held at St Luke's.

We have three children: Olivia born in 1993, Georgia in 1995 and Benjamin in 1998. Father Staunton baptised all three at St Luke's.

Our children attended St Luke's between the years of 1999 and 2010. Miss Peggy D'Prazer was the principal at until 2005, and then Ms Deb Egan came to the school in 2006. Over the course of these years I became involved in the Parents' Association with two years as President in 2004

and 2005. During these years we had many social and fund raising events including market day, Bunnings BBQ's, trivia nights, sports nights, parish dinners and class dinners. We raised many thousands of dollars for the school which helped to purchase various items of equipment including permanent playground equipment for the junior school children. I made many special friends with whom I will always be friends.

Our children now attend university and secondary school and so our association with St Luke's school is limited to my niece who is in Prep this year. However, we are still parishioners and attend Mass there every Sunday and we continue to be involved where we can with the parish which includes helping out with Market Day and the 50th Celebrations' Committee.

St Luke's has always been part of my life as I have always lived in the area and have been part of the Parish. St Luke's has been involved in some of the most important events of my life as my story recounts. Some of my closest family members and friends have been married there, buried from there or attended school there.

Whether we still live in the area, or if we decide to move away one day, St Luke's will always be of great importance to my family and me.

## **CONCLUDING COMMENT**

Fifty years after the establishment of the new parish of St Luke the Evangelist at Blackburn South, followed by the school which was officially registered in 1963, both parish and school continue to flourish, as can be seen below in the contrast between the picture of the original presbytery and the current school playground area. Original parishioners and their families have been joined by new groups of young families and all work together to promote a harmonious and vibrant community.





The original presbytery, an old farmhouse circa 1970s.



The current playground facilities at St Luke's school.