



*A caring community making,
maturing and mobilising disciples of
Jesus Christ – locally and globally.*

GLEN WAVERLEY ANGLICAN CHURCH THE AMALGAMATION STORY

How God brought together
the peoples of St Andrew's
and St Paul's Glen Waverley,
and St James' Syndal.

Author: Ian Nyholm



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Preface by Rev Phil Meulman

Giving Thanks, Confident for The Future

The Psalmist exclaims, 'I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my heart. I will tell of your wonderful deeds.', and what a joy it was, and indeed is, to thank God for the amalgamation of three parishes to the Glen Waverley Anglican Church (GWAC) in 1995.



The origins and working through of this "wonderful deed" bring deep appreciation of God's good and gracious work through his people. Our gratitude to God and to those who participated in those formative years, deepens our understanding of God's faithfulness and work in history, and gives us confidence for the future: "Look what God has done! Look to what God will do, and indeed, is doing!"

I am grateful to Ian Nyholm for this history of a most significant season in the life of our parish. Ian's careful research has gifted the Church, and future generations, this important written record of God's faithfulness.

Of course, there was a dual aim in this project. Afterall it was, and indeed is not, just the building of the building, but the building of the people - the body of Christ. The amalgamation of three peoples into one people, was clearly a faith exercise: building on faith, building faith, and building confidence for future faith ventures: a strengthening experience. In the words of St Paul, 'just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.' (Col.2:6,6)

May God bless many through the telling of this history.

Rev. Phil Meulman

Senior Minister
St Barnabas, Glen Waverley Anglican Church
August 2021

Foreword by Bp John Harrower OAM

God is faithful

We have good news to share – the love of God in Jesus Christ! PTL! How then, do we share the good news? How do we engage with our community? What would enhance our community engagement?



This concern for God's mission lay at the heart of the decision of three Anglican Parishes in 1993 to explore cooperating with the other two in its outreach to the local community. There were many questions: Could the parishes cooperate and undertake God's work together? What would it take? What would God need to do? What would we, his people, need to do? Would we trust God to act in our history? Yes, we could state "God is faithful", but would we be prepared to step out in faith, to act, to put our faith in God into practice?

We were challenged by Jesus' words, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." (John 12:24 ESV) Death, the laying down of 'the way we do things' in our parish is neither easy, nor painless. At the conclusion of one of our early combined services in the former St Paul's Hall, I was called into the kitchen to resolve a disagreement: 'is the milk put into the mugs before or after the hot water?' Moreover, one of the parishes had colour-coded the mugs: green for tea and blue for coffee: 'do we retain the colour-coding of the mugs? The way we do things is a marker of identity, of significance. It is to be honoured, even as it dies so that new fruit might be produced.

Change, from the way we served tea and coffee to the choice of music, was at times a painful dying to self as new and strengthened ministries were born seniors, family, children and youth, tertiary student ministries – the emerging of the complementary gifts and ministries of staff and parishioners as 'three peoples were growing into one people'.

Amid all the change with its growing pains and joys, we experienced God's faithfulness. We learnt to trust in God for the big visible things – five acres of land in Glen Waverley – and the sometimes big, but not so visible culture markers, like milk in, before or after the hot water!

There were many steps along the way between November 1993 and the dedication of a new parish centre in November 1997. The initial conversations between the three vicars and lay leaders of the Anglican Parishes of St Andrew's and St Paul's, Glen Waverley, and St James', Syndal, were followed by continual prayer, growing in fellowship, sharing in ministry, planning, engagement with the Diocese of Melbourne, each parish voting in favour of the amalgamation, the sale of the three worship centres, purchase of five acres of land on Waverley Road, fund raising, integrating ministries, building a new church centre, and its dedication and opening by the Archbishop of Melbourne. The completion

of these many steps occasioned great joy and profound thankfulness. Thankfulness to God who is faithful, and thankfulness to a dedicated and generous people who held firmly to God, even in the most perplexing and challenging of situations.

It was God who called three Anglican communities into one new community, providing new ways of sharing God's love and purposes. Of one thing we can be sure, God will continue to challenge the Glen Waverley Anglican Church to die to self in order that it might bear much fruit, as the church community and its context changes. God's call to die to current ways in order that much fruit might be born is to be heeded with absolute confidence, since our God who calls is faithful.

May it be so and may the Glen Waverley Anglican Church be true to its dedication saint, Saint Barnabas: the Encourager, the Generous, the Mentor, the Missionary, the One who gives a second chance, the follower of Jesus Christ – and being true to him, bringing the blessing of the knowledge of Jesus Christ to the community and the world.

Shalom

+John ☺

Bishop John Harrower OAM

First Vicar of St Barnabas, the Glen Waverley Anglican Church (GWAC)

Acknowledgements

In compiling this booklet, I would like to acknowledge the support and editorial contribution made by Bishop John Harrower OAM, first Vicar of GWAC. John's foresight and wisdom was a significant factor in ensuring that the amalgamation process was so successful. In addition thank you to Dr Kris Argall, Tony & Robin Hickson, Pat Moore, Bob Barclay, Peter Crandle, Prof Ian Harper AO, George Savvides AM, Ann Hargreaves, Miles Tiller and Chris Brasington.

In particular, I would like to acknowledge the editorial expertise provided by Ross Curnow, former journalist and Children's and Families minister at GWAC (now at St Alfred's, Blackburn North) and also Barney Zwartz, former Religious Editor for The Age.

My thanks to the current Senior Minister of GWAC, Rev Phil Meulman, for his support and enthusiasm for the writing of this history.

Most importantly, thank you to our God who so richly blessed us and led us into a new faith community so that we can be "A caring community, making, maturing and mobilising disciples of Jesus Christ – locally and globally."

Ian Nyholm

Special Projects Officer

Glen Waverley Anglican Church

August 2021

Purpose

I have had the privilege of being a member of the Anglican Church all of my life, a blessing I very much treasure. The period 1993 – 1997 was the most exciting time I have experienced in my lifetime as a Christian and I had the honour of being intimately involved in the process whereby three Anglican Churches took the bold step of selling all of their assets and, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, allowed themselves to be molded into a new and vibrant faith community. This booklet chronicles the amalgamation process as I experienced it, together with some input from other people who were closely involved in the process.

It is not in any way set out as a model for other faith communities but rather to illustrate how God led a group of His people at a particular time and in a particular place.

Introduction

The 23rd of November 1997 was a memorable day in the life of the Anglican Church in Glen Waverley, located in the southeastern suburbs of Melbourne.

It was on that day that the new ministry centre for the Glen Waverley Anglican Church (named after St Barnabas) was both Dedicated and Consecrated by the then Archbishop of Melbourne, Dr Keith Rayner, marking the highpoint of a process which saw three Anglican Churches amalgamate to form a new parish located in a new ministry centre. The Dedication and Consecration Service was attended by over 500 people who came together to thank God for His faithfulness and pray for the future of this bold venture.

More about that Service later, but first, let me set the scene for the buildup to this momentous occasion.

The Beginnings

The starting point of the journey which led to the coming together of the peoples of the parishes of St Andrew's and St Paul's, Glen Waverley, and St James', Syndal, is probably within Archbishop-in-Council of the Diocese of Melbourne during 1992 where a select committee was established to prepare a paper on ways of improving the operation of the Diocese as it approached the year 2000.

This committee consisted of Rev John Harrower, (then Vicar of St Paul's, Glen Waverley), Rev John Howells, Rev Dr Peter Marshall, Mr John Lester, Dr Muriel Porter and Archdeacon Andrew Curnow. The paper produced by this committee was entitled "Towards 2001" and was presented to the 1993 Melbourne Synod. In Section 6 the committee made the following recommendation in relation to Parish Re-structuring:

"Perhaps a quarter of our parishes are non-viable if required to pay a full time priest. Some rationalisation of parishes through clustering or closure is needed".

Before the amalgamation process is explained, it would be helpful to have some understanding of the three parishes involved. As mentioned, they were St Andrew's and St Paul's Glen Waverley and St James' Syndal.

The Parishes

St Andrew's

St Andrew's was established in 1964 under a plan formed by Bishop Dann. At that time Bishop Dann had a vision of having an Anglican Church "on every major intersection, just like the petroleum companies have service stations".

St Andrew's was located at 7 The Boulevard Glen Waverley and was in the midst of a proposed major building programme at the time of the amalgamation. Under the leadership of Rev Gordon Hargreaves, the parish had accumulated nearly \$300,000 towards a new Worship Centre on the site and was actively pursuing building possibilities with the territorial Archdeacon of the day, the Ven Andrew Curnow.

The people of St Andrew's were meeting in a cement brick building which doubled as both a Worship Centre and a Parish Hall. It also had two offices, a small narthex and a kitchen within the building. One of the frustrations experienced by the congregation at St Andrew's was having to set up and pack up after the services each Sunday, as well as after any social functions such as wedding receptions and fundraising events (of which there were many).



St Andrew's 7 The Boulevard Glen Waverley

The ethos of this parish was very strongly evangelical and the parish was experiencing steady growth, despite its lack of facilities to cater for many more people in its congregation.

In addition to Gordon Hargreaves as Vicar, the staff was Rev Keil Maslem (Curate), Jeremy Thewlis (Youth Minister) and Irene Buck (part time Secretary).

There was a vibrant youth ministry at St Andrew's but the Vestry had decided at the end of 1992 not to renew the contract of the youth minister and instead continue the employment of its curate.

The strengths of this parish were its outreach programmes (including the Alpha programme), its youth ministry and its desire to teach life skills to its members. Its weaknesses were its lack of facilities and having little room to expand in the longer term.

As the parish was situated on only three suburban building blocks, which were all that was available at the time of purchase, and less than the standard diocesan allocation of the day. It was not an easy task for the then Building Committee to try to meet the increasing needs of a growing church community given that the building and vicarage occupied two of the building blocks it left only one standard block for parking.

St Paul's

St Paul's was the oldest of the three parishes. It was established in 1913, built its first permanent building in 1925 and its second worship area in 1978.

The staffing of the parish in 1993 was the Rev John Harrower (Vicar), Rev Greg Allinson (Curate), Dale Barclay (FT Youth Worker), Meagan Collins (PT Assistant Youth Worker), Helen Johnston (PT Pastoral Worker) and Bev Green (PT Secretary).

The Parish was evangelical in ethos and, under the leadership of John Harrower, it was growing. The main constraint on growth was the lack of facilities. Whilst the site at 758 Waverley Rd Glen Waverley consisted of the Worship Area, the original church, the Dunscombe Hall and a privately run Kindergarten, there was very little space for growing the congregation. Early in 1993 a proposal was put forward to link the Worship Area, the Dunscombe Hall and the Original Church to create a new Fellowship Area. This project would have allowed the existing Narthex to be used for worship but would have only provided 30 additional seats in the Worship Area and no additional carparking. The cost was estimated at \$300,000. In hindsight, this would have overcapitalised the site and not catered for any growth.

The strengths of St Paul's were similar to St Andrew's – its youth ministry, outreach programmes and links into the local community. Similarly, its weaknesses were lack of parking and room to expand.



St Paul's 758 Waverley Rd Glen Waverley

Left: Worship Centre, Centre Background: Dunscombe Hall, Right: Original Church Building

St James'

From the rural church of St Stephen's, Mt Waverley, several daughter churches grew, one of which was St James', Syndal. Starting in a family home in 1953, and after a proposal to return to a central church which was rejected in 1963, St James' was finally built and located on Blackburn Rd, just north of Waverley Road (opposite the Waverley Private Hospital). Yet thirty years later, the "church in the valley" between Mt Waverley and Glen Waverley became part of a central church proposal again. Its building was consecrated on 25 July 1993 by Abp Keith Rayner.

The Vicar of St James' in 1993 was Rev Dick Wallace. St James' was not experiencing any growth but under Dick Wallace its main strength was its healing ministry.



St James' Blackburn Rd Syndal

Getting Started

Following the tabling of the "Towards 2001" paper at Synod, some informal discussions took place between John Harrower, Gordon Hargreaves and Dick Wallace. During these discussions, it became obvious to all three that there was scope to build some links between the parishes based on the report's recommendations and the close proximity of the three parishes.

The first formal meeting took place in October 1993 when the three Vicars and some of the Wardens (several of them were not available on the day) from each parish met at St James', Syndal. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the application of the recommendation in Section 6 of the "Towards 2001" paper in the Glen Waverley/Syndal area.

The outcome of this meeting was to convene a further gathering involving all of the Wardens where a more detailed presentation was presented on the situation in the Waverley area.

It was at this second meeting that Dick Wallace presented a map of the Waverley area showing that there were seven Anglican churches within the boundaries of the then City of Waverley. It was agreed that the most feasible plan was to thoroughly explore the possibility of bringing together St Andrew's, St James' and St Paul's as they had enough in common including their close proximity to the hub of Glen Waverley. Also, at this meeting it was agreed that there was no possible way that arrangements could be made to attempt to buy the Glen Waverley Public School (which was scheduled for auction within about two months), but that an active search for land should start in the near future. A small committee was also appointed with the task of exploring the financial viability of bringing the parishes together.



My recollection of this first meeting was that several ideas were discussed such as combining the youth ministries or having one common branch of Mothers' Union. For me, the highlight was John Harrower making the suggestion "that we sell the assets of the 3 parishes and buy the Glen Waverley Public School located on the corner of Springvale and Waverley Rds which is to be sold shortly". I recall there being several minutes of stunned silence as the enormity of such a suggestion became apparent.

Ian Nyholm

More detailed discussions

The Steering Committee (the new name for the Vicars and Wardens) met again in January 1994.

The stage was now set for the whole project to be planned in earnest. It was at this point that the Steering Committee began to grasp the enormity of such a project and that it would need to have a solid administrative backup to cope with the myriad of tasks that would have to be undertaken.

These included liaising with various staff within the Diocese, local council, real estate agents, etc, etc.

A suggestion was made by John Harrower that we approach John Brace, a recently retired member of the St Paul's congregation, to assist with this work. John Brace had enjoyed a long career in the Public Service and was well known for his attention to detail and thoroughness. The Committee was thankful that John Brace accepted the appointment and thus began a new chapter in his life.

At the second or third meeting of the Steering Committee (later renamed as the Project Committee), then Archdeacon Andrew Curnow visited to provide some advice on how to present the proposal to Archbishop-in-Council and other diocesan bodies which had to approve various elements of such a project. (Whilst John Harrower was by then the regional Archdeacon, it was felt that some "independent advice" should come from another Archdeacon). Archdeacon Curnow's opinion was that the diocese would allow the proceeds of the sale of the three facilities to be applied to a new building. He also signaled some of the obstacles that would need to be cleared for such a project to come to fruition.

The newly named Project Committee then commenced some more detailed investigations to identify all the issues that might have to be addressed if an amalgamation were to become a reality.

The members of the Project Committee were

St Andrew's	St James'	St Paul's
Gordon Hargreaves	Dick Wallace	John Harrower
Tony Hickson	Chris Brassington	Bob Barclay
John McEwen	Peter Crandle	Ian Nyholm
James Poulos	Pat Moore	Andrew Reid

One of the first tasks was to undertake a financial feasibility study. When finalised, this paper showed that, if the three parishes had been amalgamated with the same staffing and had borrowed something like \$500,000 for new premises, then it probably would have made a small surplus for the year 1992/93. (Obviously there were some very rubbery figures in this assessment in relation to such things as the cost of running a building which had not yet been designed!). However, the conclusion was reached that such a concept was financially within the realms of possibility. This was the first of many exciting steps which occurred throughout the following years.

Public Announcement and Plebiscite

It was in April 1994 that a decision was made to announce to the congregations of the three parishes that discussions had been taking place in relation to a possible amalgamation. It was also foreshadowed that a plebiscite would be conducted to gauge the will of the people. The consensus was that the vote would need to be decisive in each parish for the project to succeed and, to this end, it was agreed that it would need a minimum 70% "Yes" vote in each parish for the project to go ahead.

In June 1994 a combined meeting was held at St James' to give the congregations more details on the proposed amalgamation and also to allow questions. About 70 people attended this meeting where several presentations were made including the financial research, the progress with obtaining land, finding a suitable venue for the new parish to meet whilst the new premises were being built, and the type of ministries which might be provided in a new and much larger parish. It was apparent at this meeting that, whilst there was a large amount of support for the project, there was also a small but determined group who sought to actively oppose the amalgamation. This group was mainly amongst the parish of St Andrew's, but had some support within St Paul's as well.



I recall being given the privilege of making this announcement at St Paul's. The reaction was interesting.

The most memorable was from Charles Pilgrim. Charles and Lorna had been worshipping at St Paul's for about 40 years with Charles holding numerous official positions. I recall him saying that such a move was the most sensible thing he had heard in a long time. He was most critical of the Bishop Dann's moves years earlier to have numerous churches in every area. He also told me that if any of the old people gave me any trouble he would sort them out!"

Ian Nyholm

Vote Taken

The process of putting a vote to the parishes was in two-parts. Firstly, on 21 August 1994, meetings were held in each parish to enable the leadership to present the position from their perspective and to allow discussion. Secondly, the parishes were then asked to vote on a Motion to formally amalgamate.

The results of the voting were:

- St Andrew's 74%
- St James' 96%
- St Paul's 81%

As soon as the results of the voting were announced, those opposed to the amalgamation within St Andrew's claimed that the voting had not been conducted in an appropriate manner and sought another vote. Interestingly enough, the second vote produced a result of 76% in favour.

Once the will of the people was known, the work of finding suitable land for new facilities and also locating premises where the new parish could meet and worship pending the completion of the new parish centre, was able to start. Having voted for an amalgamation, the view was, that if it was God's will for an amalgamation to take place, then suitable land would be found.

A selection of photos.



Early construction images



Left: Gordon Hargreaves and John Harrower surveying the site.

Right: Dick Wallace addressing one of the site inspections by the congregation.



Left: Early construction showing inverted dome over Fellowship Area.

Right: Newspaper article announcing commencement of construction of new ministry centre



Parishioners visiting the site prior to building commencing.



Peter Crandle explaining the plans for the new Ministry Centre.

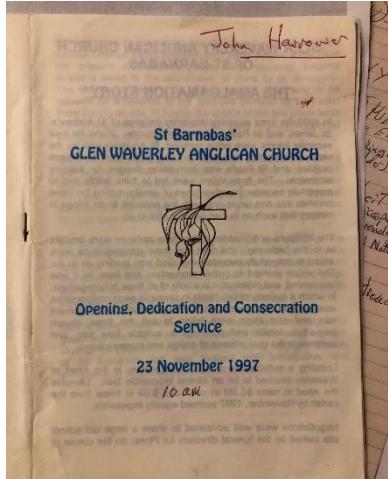


The carvings below were made by the late Ralph McDonell to commemorate the creation of the new parish. They are displayed on the wall of the walkway adjacent to the Hall.



Left & Right: Archbishop Keith Rayner at the first combined 8am Service in December 1995.

Centre: John Harrower's copy of the Consecration and Dedication Service 23 November 1997.



Below

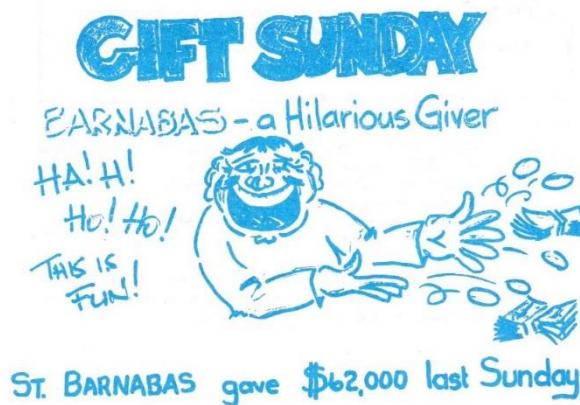
Left: John Brace who made a very significant contribution to the amalgamation.

Centre L to R: Ian Nyholm, Ann and Gordon Hargreaves, John Brace and John Harrower at an early gathering of GWAC.

Right: Charles Pilgrim, a long term member of St Paul's and great supporter of the amalgamation.



Gift Day cartoon on GWAC newsletter
8 June 1997.



Inter-Church solidarity

St Barnabas', the new Anglican church at Glen Waverley, recently hosted a 'thank you' morning tea to 30 St Leonard's Roman Catholic Church parishioners. St Leonard's had taken up a special collection during Sunday Mass, raising \$1,500 towards seating at St Barnabas'. Fr Brendan, the St Leonard's priest, was delighted that his parish could make a practical expression of solidarity with its Anglican brothers and sisters in their new venture, which he described as "an encouragement to all Christian people in Glen Waverley."

Above: TMA article July 1998 recognising a contribution from St Leonard's Catholic Church.

Open Day advertisement
29 November 1997

COME AND SEE THIS MAGNIFICENT NEW COMMUNITY FACILITY!

OPEN DAY

10AM TO 3PM
GIANT RIBBON CUTTING AT 11AM
SATURDAY 29TH NOVEMBER

- FREE Children's Activities
- Sausage Sizzle
- Chess Challenge – Try your skill
- FREE Donkey Rides
- Asian & Sri Lankan food
- Treasure Hunt
- Woodworking & Craft Displays
- Playgroup & Gymbaroo Displays
- And more!

DRINKS • ICE CREAM • TEA/COFFEE • CAKE STALL.
AMPLE PARKING

• ST BARNABAS •
GLEN WAVERLEY ANGLICAN CHURCH
800 WAVERLEY RD – CNR. WATSONS RD

Right & Below:
Scenes from the
Open Day
festivities 29
November 1997.



The Search for Land

As the discussions progressed, the view was formed that, if it was God's will for the parishes to amalgamate, then suitable land on which to build a new ministry centre would be found.

The then Property Officer from Melbourne Diocese, Mr Peter Gustavsen attended several Project Committee meetings and provided some very helpful advice. He encouraged the Committee to think far ahead as there were many scenarios that needed to be considered. These could include:

- The need to build a group of clergy houses on the site, or
- Building small retirement/nursing home facilities, or
- A missionary society might want to share our site, or
- The Diocese might want to decentralise in the future.

For these reasons, Peter Gustavsen advised us to look for around five acres (2ha) of land.

As a result, the search for such a parcel of land commenced in earnest.

At first it looked impossible. Some of the possibilities included a parcel of land on Waverley Road opposite the Council swimming pool. Another was land that Wesley College was considering selling on High St Road. The first was too small and the latter was on the fringe of the Parish and, therefore, considered to be unsuitable.

Towards the middle of 1995, events gained some momentum.

Le Pine Site

Firstly, it was learned that Le Pine, the purchaser of the former Glen Waverley Public School on the corner of Springvale and Waverley Roads, had a parcel of land that was surplus to their requirements. It was 3.75 acres located on the east side of their block facing Waverley Rd. They were willing to sell it for \$1.35m. The arrangements would be that the new parish could build a ministry centre and have some exclusive carparking. Where the two properties adjoined, there would be some shared parking (it could be used by Le Pine during the week and the new parish at weekends).

Given that there appeared to be no other suitable land available, a "hand-shake" agreement was made with Le Pine to purchase the site. This was not a universally popular decision, but it seemed to be the only option.

Melbourne Water Site

Shortly after, the site on the corner of Waverley and Watson's Roads, then owned by Melbourne Water, was put up for sale by auction. It appeared to be an ideal site but considered far too expensive and so there was no representation at the auction. Consequently, it sold for \$1.785m which seemed to justify the decision not to attempt to purchase it.

But God, in His faithfulness, had other plans.

After entering into a “hand-shake” agreement with Le Pine, advice was received that their US parent company had vetoed the sale of the land to the Anglican Church. This caused some consternation!

Letters of protest were sent to Le Pine and its US parent company claiming that they had a contract with us which should be honoured.

Then there was a further development.

Subsequently, it was learned that the purchaser of the Melbourne Water site was experiencing difficulties obtaining planning permission to build on the site. Armed with this knowledge, the Project Committee agreed to the Property Officer approaching Melbourne Water in an attempt to negotiate a sale. The approach was that the new parish could afford no more than \$1.5m. Melbourne Water agreed to negotiate on that basis.

The Melbourne Water site had several complications. It was more expensive to purchase and build on, there were caveats on parts of the property, there were water pipes traversing the property from the adjacent water storage facility and a portion was owned by the Waverley Council. The Diocese and representatives of the Project Committee negotiated with Melbourne Water over a three-week period in an attempt to resolve some of these issues.

Decision Made

Then on Friday the 18th of August 1995 events reached a climax.

During that morning, Melbourne Water contacted Gordon Hargreaves stating that they did not wish to negotiate any further and that a decision was to be made by mid-afternoon to agree to purchase the land at the points reached in the negotiations. Gordon prayed, made some quick phone calls, and took the bold step of saying “Yes”.

However, when John Harrower returned home that evening, there was a message on his answering machine from the Registrar of the Diocese. The message was that Le Pine now had permission to sell the parcel of land surplus to their requirements and would John come into the Diocesan Offices on the following Monday to sign the papers for the purchase.

In God's grace and faithfulness, there was now the choice of two parcels of land when, earlier, it had seemed impossible to find one. **Praise God from whom all blessings flow!!**

A meeting was hastily convened for 4pm on Saturday 19 August in the old Church building of St Paul's. John Brace and Gordon Hargreaves prepared a large board setting out about 20 different criteria and both parcels of land were evaluating against them. The unanimous decision was to purchase the Melbourne Water site.

GWAC formally constituted

Events moved quickly following this meeting.

19 August 1995 Meeting

"The meeting was a most constructive one. Some people came with fixed ideas whilst others had an open mind about which block should be purchased. After over one hour of discussion, I recall Don Reid saying 'As I drive home along Waverley Road, I can see the line of trees just below the Police Academy as I cross Stephenson's Road and again after crossing Blackburn Road. I keep thinking that my church could be on that block of land'. I believe that it was this inspired comment which resulted in the assembled group agreeing unanimously to purchase the Melbourne Water site."

Ian Nyholm

On Monday 21 August the Diocese was advised that the land on the corner of Waverley and Watsons Roads was the preferred site.

It was on Tuesday 22 August 1995 that Bishop John Stewart, Vicar-General in the absence of the Archbishop on leave, formally dissolved the three parishes of St Andrew's and St Paul's Glen Waverley, and St James' Syndal and proclaimed the new parish – The Glen Waverley Anglican Church. On that same day Archdeacon John Harrower was sworn in as Vicar and Rev Gordon Hargreaves and Rev Dick Wallace as Senior Associate Priests.

A Central Council was then established to be the "Vestry" of the new parish and this group was subsequently elected as the first Vestry of GWAC. The members were:

Wardens

Pat Huntington
Miles Tiller
John Shelton Vicar's Warden

Vestry Members

Beryl Barter
John Brace (Secretary)
Geoff Higgs
Graham Mollet
Gordon Paulett
Norman Pilkington
Don Reid
Barry Roberts (Treasurer)

Planning a new Ministry Centre and Seeking Interim Premises

Now that land had been purchased, the task of selling the existing facilities of St Andrew's, St Paul's and St James' and planning the new facilities at 800 Waverley Road began in earnest.

A Building Committee was formed consisting of Peter Crandle (Convenor) Gordon Hargreaves, George Savvides, Brian Burrows, John Christie, Peter Hughes, Rosemary Owen, John Payne, Robin Hickson, John Brace (Secretary), and Bob Barclay.

The architect ultimately engaged for the project was Smith and Tracey with Mr Ted Adams being the senior architect. Smith and Tracey provided an initial plan for facilities with the price tag of approx. \$2.1m.

The Finances

Another of the early tasks was to prepare a financial plan for the building of the new facilities.

One of the aspects which illustrated that such an amalgamation would be a step of faith was the enormity of the finances involved.

The financial planning process started with obtaining a valuation of the existing properties which was undertaken by the Diocesan Valuer. The valuations were:

- The St Andrew's \$500,000,
- St James' \$600,000, and
- St Paul's (excluding the Vicarage) at about \$900,000 - \$1m.

If these prices were able to be achieved, the new parish would have approximately \$2m towards land and new facilities. In addition, this would be supplemented by the \$300,000 raised by the people of St Andrew's.

Armed with this information, a sub-committee to prepare a financial plan for building the new facilities. This Committee consisted of Ian Nyholm (Convenor), George Savvides, Barry Roberts, Prof Ian Harper, Rodney Adams, Miles Tiller, Gordon Paulet and John Shelton.

The basis for the initial financial projections was that the new ministry centre would consist of:

- An auditorium which could ultimately accommodate approximately 600 people.
- Facilities for a staff of about twenty people.
- Meeting rooms for a variety of activities.
- A multipurpose hall.
- Car parking for 200 cars (Council regulations required one car park for every three seats in the auditorium)

With these estimates in hand, Gordon Hargreaves and Ian Nyholm visited Bruce Taylor, Director of the then Diocesan Rolling Fund (now the Anglican Development Fund). The preliminary plans were given to Bruce with the bold request for approval, in principle, for the parish to borrow around \$700,000 - \$800,000 from the DRF.

Raising Funds

The implications of undertaking such a project for the congregation was that it would have to raise \$500,000 in cash and also deposit \$1m into the DRF for the project to be viable. The deposits into the DRF would enable the new parish to borrow back 9/10ths at a very reasonable interest rate. These targets were seen as being a huge step of faith.

As the planning process developed, it was decided that the facilities would initially consist of an auditorium for 450 people but with the provision for extension to 600, a fellowship area, a Chapel which could seat about 30-40 people, staff offices for 15 staff, a multipurpose hall which would be about half the size of a basketball court and 3 meeting rooms. In addition, there was to be car parking for 150 cars.

These estimates would require additional funding and the Finance sub-committee looked at several options before agreeing to approach the Diocese for \$400,000 from the DRF general funds and \$850,000 from nominated projects funds (the latter to be supported by the \$1m to be deposited by the people of the parish).

The fundraising took many different forms including selling "bricks" in the new building. People were invited to "buy a brick" for whatever they could afford ranging from \$1 to several donations of thousands of dollars. This was a most innovative way of fundraising enabling people to feel part of the project irrespective of their particular circumstances. A large garage sale was conducted and many other smaller fundraising events were held.

In God's gracious timing, as the builders moved onto the site on 16 January 1997, the Building Fund reached the \$500,000 mark and the deposits into the DRF peaked at \$1m. *Praise the Lord!!*

When Bruce Taylor was confronted with our request to borrow around \$800,000 he was astounded. His comment was that we must have something big in mind for Glen Waverley. He stated that the largest loan so far by the DRF was \$300,000.

Ian Nyholm

Planning the new facilities

As mentioned earlier, a Building Committee was appointed and an architect sourced.

There were many visits by the architects to get a feel for the site. The site at 800 Waverley Rd presented many challenges exercising the minds of the Building Committee and the architects.

The Building Committee undertook a series of consultative meetings with various groups within the parish to enable them to determine what facilities were needed. Together with the architects, there were also consultative meetings held with the neighbours.



One of the site visits during construction being addressed by Dick Wallace.

On several occasions, members of the parish were invited to visit the site to gain some appreciation of what was to come. These proved to be most helpful as people came to appreciate the size of the block that had been purchased and the extent of the facilities that were being planned.

During the design phase, one of the memorable conversations was with John Harrower who had been appointed the Incumbent. In discussions with the

Building Committee, John drew a circle on a piece of paper and said that he wanted an area where he could "chat the gospel with his mates and then build any other facilities around that area". Hence there is now a wonderful fellowship area with a heater to keep the congregation warm during the colder months.

Another challenge in designing the new ministry centre was to build in some Christian symbolism. One of the ways in which this was achieved was the design of the centre window in the auditorium. A large "V" shape was incorporated to represent the tearing of the curtain in the Temple on the first Good Friday at the time of Christ's death (Mark 15:38).



The auditorium during construction showing the V shaped window.

One of blessings that came out of the planning process happened during 1996. Quite unexpectedly, Abp Harry Goodhew (then Archbishop of Sydney), together with several bishops and clergy from Sydney Diocese, attended the 10am service once the parish had started worshiping together in the Dunscombe Hall. Abp Goodhew was most interested in the plans and introduced us to Rev Rod Irvine (then Rector of Figtree Anglican Church in Wollongong NSW). Rod had been through a large building project and had gained significant insight into some of the issues that might be faced as the new facilities were being planned and built. Rod subsequently visited Melbourne and spoke with the Project and Building Committees providing valuable insight into some of the problems that might be encountered.

"Some years later, Rod Irvine visited Melbourne again and I had the privilege of showing him the finished facilities we now enjoy. He was amazed at the way in which the plans he helped us to develop had come to fruition."

Ian Nyholm

Search for interim premises

Once land had been purchased, a search for interim premises was commenced. It was assumed that, when suitable land was found, the premises of all three parishes would be sold and the newly formed parish would meet in rented accommodation whilst the new ministry centre was being built.

Bob Barclay, from St Paul's, was given the task of finding such premises. Similar to seeking land, finding suitable rental premises proved to be just as challenging. The most promising building had been recently vacated by the Sheriff's Department on Springvale Rd and was located adjacent to the Council Chambers. It was a two-storey building with a large area on the ground floor that could be adapted for worship and meeting purposes, whilst the area on the first floor would serve as office accommodation. (Early in the process consideration had been given to purchasing this building, but this lapsed when suitable land was found.)

Bob Barclay began negotiating with the Waverley Council to lease these premises and the initial response was very positive. However, as the discussions preceded, the attitude of the Council began to cool and requests for information were being ignored. History shows us that the Council had received a far better offer to purchase these premises and, today, the area is occupied by the Century Walk building with theatres, restaurants and a ten-pin bowling facility.

Former St Paul's site becomes new GWAC home

As the search for suitable rental accommodation became more challenging, the Project Committee recalled some earlier advice from Peter Gustafson. Peter had suggested that we may be able to consolidate onto one of the existing sites whilst selling the other two. He even foreshadowed that we might be able to sell the 3rd property with an extended settlement period.

This scenario was then explored by the Project Committee and a decision was made to sell the facilities of St Andrew's and St James' and that the new parish would consolidate onto the existing St Paul's site located at 758 Waverley Rd.

Consequently, the facilities of St Andrew's and St James' were offered for sale with the St Paul's site being prepared for the new parish.

In the period leading up to December 1995, both the St Andrew's and St James' facilities were sold with St Andrew's fetching \$500k and St James' \$610k. Both sites were purchased by other Christian congregations giving some solace to people who were sad to see their former ministry centres being sold. Services were held in both parishes to enable members to say their farewells to facilities which had great meaning for them over many years.

The St Paul's facilities were offered for sale and were subsequently purchased by another Christian congregation who were delighted with a 2-year settlement period. This allowed the purchasers to raise the necessary funds to finalise the sale by November 1997, the planned completion date for the new ministry centre.

Coming Together

The sale of the St Andrew's and St James' sites were finalised in late 1995 and the newly formed Glen Waverley Anglican Church first worshiped together, fittingly, on Advent Sunday (3 December) 1995, a day traditionally regarded as the first day of the Church year. There was a service of Holy Communion at 8am in the Worship Area and it was followed by a memorable combined service with Abp Keith Rayner as the celebrant and guest preacher. The combined service was followed by a parish lunch to give thanks to God for His faithfulness in bringing us together.



GWAC congregation celebrating following the first combined service on 3 December 1995.

Subsequently, the 8am Services were held on the former St Paul's Worship Area whilst the 10am and 7pm services were held in the Dunscombe Hall. These arrangements remained in place until the people of GWAC moved into new facilities in November 1997. One of the blessings that came out of the amalgamation was the way in which the youth of St Andrew's and St Paul's came together for combined services well ahead of the formal amalgamation. As so often happens, young people can find a way without having endless committees and meetings.

Building the new Ministry Centre

As work continued to refine the plans for the new ministry centre, the search commenced to find a suitable builder. The successful tenderer was S.W & J Gardiner Pty Ltd, builders experienced in projects of the size contemplated and in building ministry centres.

As mentioned earlier, 16 January 1997 was a memorable day as the 2 milestones for fundraising were reached and it was also the day on which the first sod was symbolically turned announcing the beginning of the building process.

With any large construction project, people often like to put their individual touch to the process. One interesting touch came from George Savvides. As the building of the new ministry centre progressed, it was discovered that the designers had underestimated the amount of landfill that would have to be removed. Consequently, there were many cubic metres of soil which had to be disposed of at a large additional cost.

Rod Adams, one of the St Paul's congregation, was a director of A H Plant – a business which hired out heavy earthmoving equipment. He offered to provide equipment to move the soil if it could use on-site. George Savvides then made the statement "I am from a Greek background and Greeks have amphitheaters so why don't we push the soil up to the south-east corner and create an amphitheater?" So it came to pass that the soil was graded into an amphitheater.



Gordon Hargreaves watches as John Harrower turns the first sod to commence the building.



Gordon Hargreaves and John Harrower surveying the site.



John Brace and John Harrower with Architects



Aerial view during construction

Building a new Ministry Team

As the building was being planned and constructed, the new Ministry team, under John Harrower's leadership, began building itself into a cohesive group. In May 1996 a strategic planning session, facilitated by Rev Dr John Williams, was held with the clergy. In addition, at the request of the full-time pastoral staff (John Harrower, Gordon Hargreaves, Greg Allinson and Dale Barclay), a revue of their roles and content, including children's ministry, was undertaken by Rev Peter Corney in September 1997 and the recommendations shared with the Vestry and parish in October.

In early 1997, Rev Dick Wallace accepted an appointment to Holy Trinity Ringwood East. Dick played a key role in the early days of the amalgamation hosting many of the significant meetings at St James'.

*Right: John Williams,
Dick Wallace, Gordon
Hargreaves and John
Harrower*



Left: Vestry Retreat circa 1997.

*Back Row from Left: John Shelton,
Norm Pilkington, John Harrower, Ian
Nyholm, Mandy Hickson, Gordon
Hargreaves, Ruth Hailes, Barry
Roberts and Greg Allinson.*

*Seated: Graham Mollet, John Brace,
Tony Hickson, Don Reid and Dale
Barclay.*

Opening Celebrations for the new Ministry Centre

The sale of the former St Paul's site was finalised by the end of November 1997 and the building of the new ministry centre, in God's grace, went to plan so that the first worship services were held in the new facilities on Sunday 16 November. In fact the very first service was on Saturday 15 November when Peter and Janet Cameron were married.

As mentioned in the Introduction, Sunday 23 November was memorable. A congregation of over 500 people gathered as Abp Keith Rayner dedicated and consecrated the new facilities. Amongst the congregation were Members of Parliament, Councilors from the Waverley Council, representatives of the Architects and Builders, past members of the three former parishes and the local community.

The Service began with the Congregation singing "Oh for a thousand tongues...". This was followed by the Archbishop performing the traditional knocking on the front door seeking entry. During the Service, Architect Ted Adams presented to the Archbishop the drawings of the building and notice of practical completion and the builder, Bill Gardner then handed over the keys to mark the conclusion of the building as planned (also on time and within budget).¹

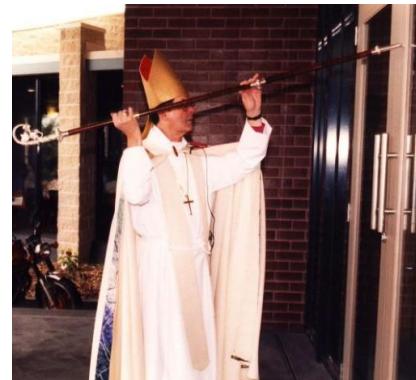
The Gospel Reading for the day was from John 2: 13 – 22.

In his sermon, Abp Rayner made the points that the new facilities were to be:

- A meeting place for praying,
- A place for fellowship and encouragement in keeping with the patron saint St Barnabas, and
- A base from which to reach out to those who do not know Jesus.²

"I was given the privilege of welcoming the congregation to the Consecration Service. It was a wonderful experience to see such a large congregation gathered to thank God for His blessings to us."

Ian Nyholm



Abp Rayner seeking entry for Consecration Service.

¹ Written by Gordon Hargreaves in Church Scene December 1997.

² Recorded by John Harrower.

To mark this milestone in the life of GWAC, several celebratory events were conducted.

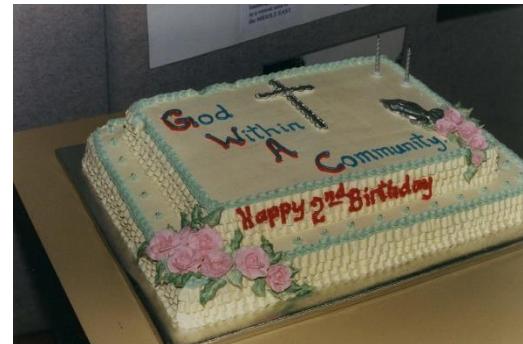
The parish had been blessed with the purchase of a state-of-the-art Chronicler 111 pipeless organ and well known Sydney organist David Parsons provided a wonderful recital on the afternoon of 16 November. The Master of Ceremonies for this occasion was Prof Ian Harper, who had been instrumental in selecting the organ.

On Saturday 29 November, an open day was organized and the whole community invited to come and see the facilities that God had provided. There were many family activities including rides on two donkeys owned by Gayelene Harrower.

These activities rounded off a memorable time as the people of GWAC were then able to set about building themselves into a cohesive Christian community to carry out the mission they had been called to follow.



Charles Pilgrim blows out candle to celebrate GWAC's 2nd birthday. Ian Nyholm watches on.



GWAC's 2nd anniversary cake 1997.

Conclusion

For the people who were members of St Andrew's, St Paul's and St James', the question posed years later was "would we do it all again?"

To see the wide variety of ministries being provided at GWAC today – vibrant ministries to children, youth, adults, families and seniors; to see many people involved in small groups; extensive prayer ministry; close links and support of many missionaries within Australia and overseas; parishioners now serving lay, ordained and missionary vocations; all combining to demonstrate God's faithfulness to us, the answer has to be a resounding "Yes". God provided the vision to create a new faith community and He has sustained it over the past 26 years. To quote the hymn: "**To God be the glory, great things He has done**".

Sometime after the amalgamation, John Harrower was interviewed by Roland Ashby from The Melbourne Anglican. He was asked the question "Would you do it again?". In part, John's reply was:

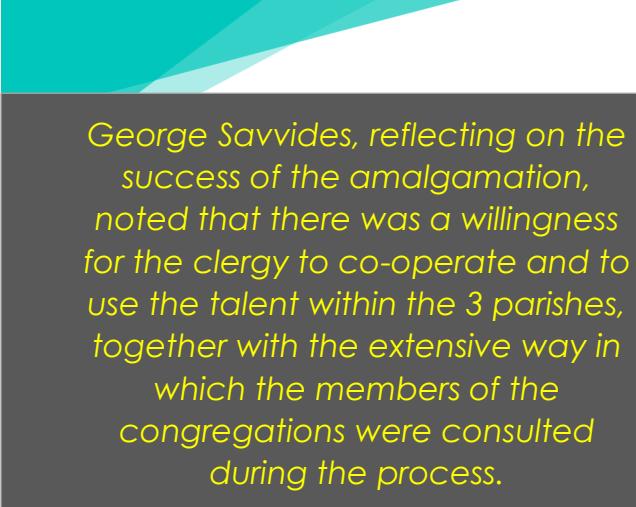
"Yes I would... It was hard. Personally it has been very hard... But amidst all the change that God has called us to, undoubtedly we have discovered that God is faithful."

Parishioners who formerly worshiped at St Andrew's or St Paul's can now see that the plans to develop their original sites would not have been good stewardship of the funds given by each parish. It would have over capitalized the sites and any growth in the congregations would have exacerbated the parking problems already being experienced. For those from St James, they are now integrated into a much more outgoing and dynamic faith community.

The way God led a group of His people in a particular way and at a particular time illustrates that our God is a faithful God who cares for His people.

A poignant verse from Scripture sums up the theology behind such an amalgamation. It comes from John 12:24:

"Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies it produces many seeds."



George Savvides, reflecting on the success of the amalgamation, noted that there was a willingness for the clergy to co-operate and to use the talent within the 3 parishes, together with the extensive way in which the members of the congregations were consulted during the process.

Postscript

A video presentation outlining a brief history of GWAC together with a pictorial illustration of the Ministry Centre was prepared by Mark Holder and is available on the GWAC website gwac.org.au