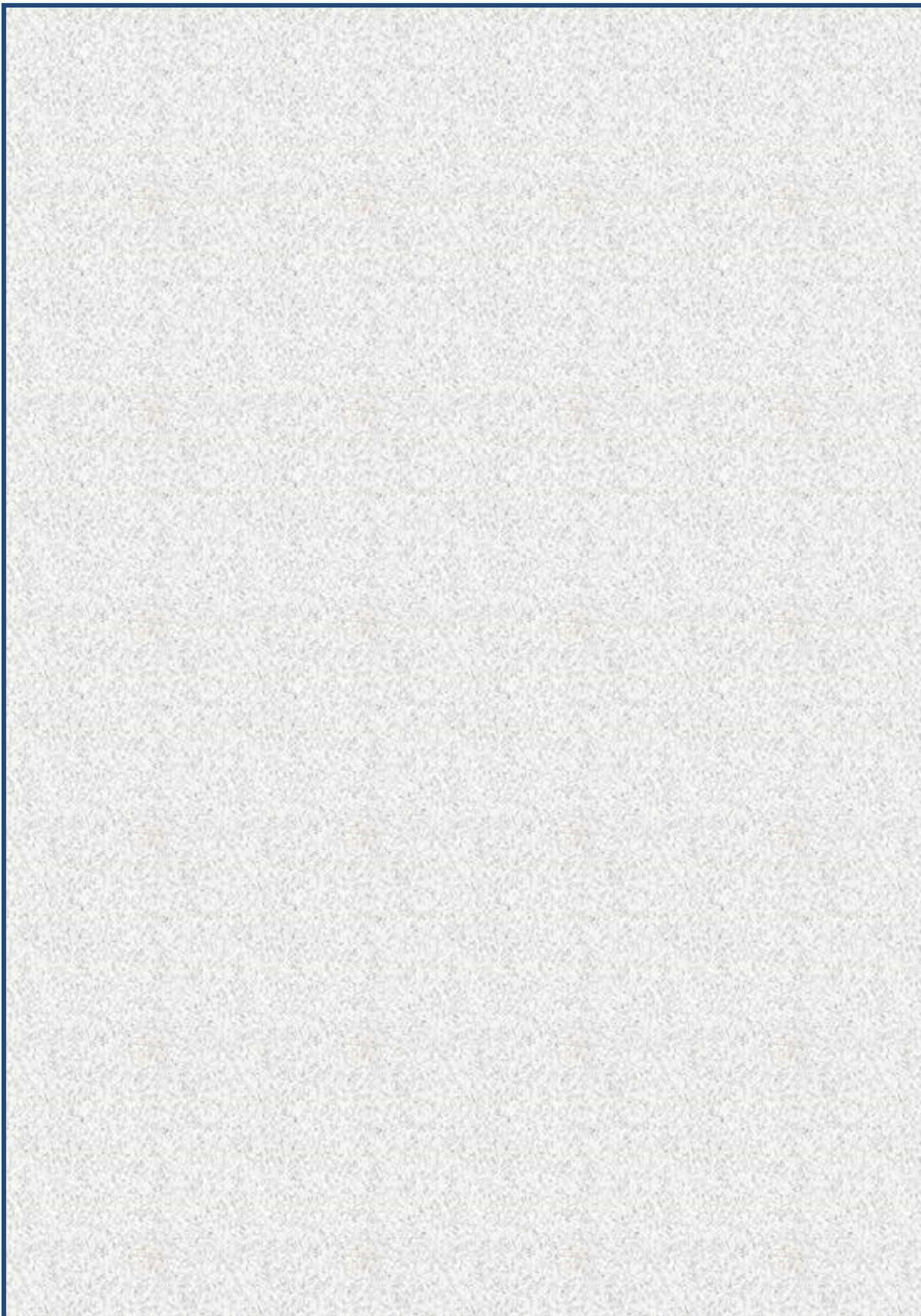


# Sacred Heart Church

## Gembrook





# Welcome to Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Gembrook.

Officially opened 31 December 1922.

The Church was scheduled to be officially opened in June 1922, but a heavy snowfall prevented the dignitaries from reaching Gembrook. A second date, in October 1922, was similarly cancelled, this time due to heavy rain which had made the roads impassable. Finally on December 31, 1922, New Year's Eve, amid much local celebration and in the presence of local dignitaries, including the Parish Priest, Fr. Thomas Little, the Church was "officially opened" by Archbishop Mannix, DD. (An account of the proceedings appeared in the Catholic newspaper, "*The Advocate*" on 4 January 1923). During his speech, the Archbishop commented on the evident lack of sectarianism (or religious bigotry) within the wider Gembrook community. This sense of shared community continues today as people from all faiths assist each other in times of need.

*Technical information about the church appears at the end of this brochure.*

## A Tour of the Church

### The Foyer

Visitors enter the church through the foyer (wheelchair access is available upon request).

**Framed Poster:** Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-1690), was a French nun who experienced many visions of Jesus. During one of the visions, Jesus told her: "*See this Heart which has loved men so much that it has spared nothing, to the point of exhausting and consuming itself to show them its love.*" St. Margaret Mary was canonised in 1920, just two years before this Church was officially opened. The framed poster in the foyer commemorates the occasion of the official visit to this Church in 2005 of the relics of St. Margaret Mary.

A **painting of the Sacred Heart** is displayed in the foyer. This was painted early last century by **Mrs. Eva Stocks** and donated to the Church. Mrs. Stocks was a teacher at the primary school in Cockatoo at the time the Church was built.

A small but ornate **holy water font** sits on the wall to the right of the entrance, in front of the window. The font was designed, carved and donated, in the 1990's, by local artist and parishioner, **Mr. Josef Mozer**.

## The Nave

The **double doors** by which one enters the Church, were refurbished in the 1990's by **Mr. Joe Hilder**.

The majority of the **timber pews** are original to the Church, with about half a dozen being added some time after the opening of the Church. These additional pews are the work of **Mr. Joe Hilder**.

The **Statue of the Sacred Heart** was donated by **Mrs. Spencer, Mrs. Kelly and Mrs McNaulty**. In the 1920's Mrs. Spencer ran the General Store (now a tea room) next to the Church. Mrs Kelly and Mrs McNaulty regularly made their homes available for celebrating Mass, prior to the construction of the Church.

The **banner** bearing the message "*Come as you are*" was painted and donated by **Mrs. Raema Failla** in the early 1990's.

Around the walls of the Church can be seen **Stations of the Cross**. These simple depictions are original to the Church and have been a source of spiritual meditation for countless parishioners.

Over the doors is a **picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour**, so beloved of those with special intentions.

To the right of the doors is a simple **wooden carving of praying hands**, fashioned after a painting by the German Renaissance painter, Albrecht Durer (1471-1528). This carving was fashioned by Gembrook resident, **Mr. A.W. Bates**, and donated to the Church in 1997.

To the left of the doors is a **framed scroll**, made by members of the Gembrook Uniting Church and presented to the Catholic parishioners of Gembrook. The scroll expresses gratitude for the use of the Church by the Uniting Church congregation at a time when they were without their own Church, a tree having demolished it in a storm. Subsequently, the Catholic community “borrowed” the new Uniting Church at a time when major structural repairs were being carried out on this Church. This shows that the lack of sectarianism, so favourably commented upon by Archbishop Mannix in 1922, continues to be a feature of the wider community of Gembrook.

Recent refurbishment of the timber floor and carpets were carried out thanks to the generous bequest of former parishioner, **Mr. Frank Blunden**. **The symbolism of the carpets:** the red colour of the carpets is in honour of the Sacred Heart; the fleur de lis (or fleur de Lys) motif has an ancient liturgical tradition as being a symbol of the Trinity. Over the centuries, it came to be seen as a lily, a symbol of purity and as such it came to be associated with Mary, the Mother of God. It also appeared on the coat-of-arms of the Royal Court of France, and so is a further link with France, home of St. Margaret Mary and the place where the apparitions of the Sacred Heart occurred.

## The Sanctuary

The **tabernacle** is the original tabernacle, donated by **Jean, Mrs. Tom Williams, Senior**. She was a parishioner at the time the Church was built. It is believed that she also donated the **Statue of Mary**, presently located to the right of the tabernacle. The tabernacle was originally part of an altar which was removed to accommodate the liturgical rites approved after the second Vatican Council. The tabernacle is now contained within a cross designed, built and donated by **Mr. Joe Hilder**, in the late 1980's. Mr. Hilder, who passed away in 2017, acknowledged the valuable assistance of **Mr. Ian Giulieri** who provided the steel support for this structure.

The **door of the tabernacle** was re-gilded thanks to a generous donation by parishioners **Gerry and Philippa Robbins**.

The **Altar** came to Gembrook, in the mid-1990's from the original St. Clare's Church in Mount Dandenong. Prior to that it had been in the Presentation Chapel of St. John the Baptist Church, Ferntree Gully. The present Parish of Belgrave (of which Gembrook is a part), was originally part of the Parish of Fern Tree Gully.

Inside the tabernacle is an unusual **Ciborium**. It was carved by the late **Ray Duke**, uncle of parishioner Elizabeth Streeter. Following the catastrophic bush fires of 1983, in which many lives were lost and much property destroyed, all that was left of the Streeter home were the red gum stumps. Mr. Duke used one of the stumps to carve the ciborium, which was then donated by the Streeter family. Of recent times, to ensure its continued use, with the approval of the Streeter family, a gilded insert for this Ciborium was donated by **Andrew and Judy Taylor**.

The **Sanctuary Lamp** was donated by the late **Mrs. Gertrude Elizabeth Hilder**, many of whose descendants still live in the area and worship in this Church.

The **Paschal Candle stand** was carved in the mid-1960's by parishioner and artist, **Hans Knorr**.

The wrought iron **Advent wreath** (only used in Advent), was designed, made and donated by local artist, **Mr. Mal Jeffree**.

**Quilted banners** reflecting the changing liturgical seasons can be seen on the Sanctuary wall. These beautiful banners were made and donated by **Mrs. Helen Jeffree, wife of Mal**.

During the Christmas Season, a rustic **Crib** is placed in front of the altar. The Crib was donated by the **Robbins family**.

### Stained Glass Windows

The window **above the Sanctuary**, and another **above the double entrance doors** are the work of the respected artist and parishioner, the late **Mr. Bill Gleeson**. The window above the Sanctuary depicts the Sacred Heart as described by St. Margaret Mary. The other window portrays the beauty of the natural environment of Gembrook.

The stained glass panels in **the side windows** were executed and donated by parishioner, **Mr. John Quinn**, in 2005.

**This concludes your Tour of the Church.**

*Before you leave.....*

*We invite you to spend a few moments in quiet prayer.*

Thank you for visiting our Church. We are pleased to share our beautiful Church and its history. It continues to be important in the lives of Catholics and of others in Gembrook. We hope you have enjoyed your visit.

*For enquiries about the use of the Church,  
please contact the Parish office on 03 9754 2141,  
or email [belgrave@cam.org.au](mailto:belgrave@cam.org.au)*



## History

*Until the early 1920's the Catholics of Gembrook, the 'eastern outpost of the Fern Tree Gully Parish', attended Masses in private homes.*

*The Church was designed by **Mr. Gerald Vanheems**, a notable architect, whose work included additions to St. Patrick's Cathedral in East Melbourne (1937-1938); the Convent at Benalla; St. Joseph's Convent in Richmond (1901); and a school at Geelong West (191). He was elected a member of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects in June 1923.*

## Description

*The Church is a gabled Arts and Crafts style timber church with an ornamental gable and round window (new glass) over the gabled porch entry. Windows are tall double-hung and hopper type with square heads in the front and pointed profiles at the side. The eaves are strutted, the rafter expressed and the roof of corrugated iron. There is also an ornamental porch entry to the side, set in a gabled win which has the appearance of an earlier building.*

*There is a group of mature Monterey pines at the rear but no front fence. Original photos show a fence of posts and wire.*

*(Permission was granted to use the above information, obtained from the Cardinia Shire (North) Heritage Study, available from the Cardinia Shire Library, Ref. 363 690994 CAR V 3).*

## **SNIPPETS FROM THE PAST**

**From “The Advocate” Catholic newspaper, dated 4 January 1923:**

### **NEW CHURCH AT GEMBROOK**

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#### **BLESSED AND OPENED BY THE ARCHBISHOP**

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*On Sunday, 31st December, within the Octave of the Nativity of Our Lord, his Grace the Archbishop of Melbourne (the Most Rev. Dr. Mannix), who motored from Melbourne, accompanied by the Very Rev. Dean Carey, P.P., visited Gembrook for the purpose of the solemn blessing and opening of the new church at Gembrook. There was a very large assemblage, many coming from Pakenham, Nar Nar-Goon, and every part of the parish, not a few journeying from the metropolis.*

#### **ARRIVAL OF THE ARCHBISHOP**

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##### **Enthusiastic Welcome**

*His Grace the Archbishop, who was received by the Rev. Thomas Little, P.P., and a guard of honour composed of the men of the parish, was received with ringing cheers as he alighted from his motorcar and entered the church grounds under a triumphal archway, above which was emblazoned the greeting “Welcome” in green, white and gold lettering, flanked by a fine new Australian flag that did not escape the notice of the Archbishop. Miss McNulty presented his Grace with a bouquet of wild flowers, tied with gold, white and green ribbons.*

*A procession of the Archbishop, Dean Carey, Fr. Little, Fr. F.A. Merner, Fr. McDonnell, and the altar attendants went around the church, which was solemnly blessed and dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus according to the beautiful and inspiring formulary prescribed by the Roman Ritual.*

## **THE SPEECHES**

*The speeches were delivered from a platform on the church grounds. Mesdames McNulty and Spencer were responsible for the decorations over the gateway and the platform, whilst details were looked after by the parish secretary (Mr. John Kelly).*

### **FR. LITTLE WELCOMES HIS GRACE**

*Fr. Little, who was cordially received, said that a well-known expression rose to his mind on that occasion, "All things come to those that wait." the blessing and opening of the church was originally intended for July; adverse weather caused the function to be postponed till 15th October, and the same reason was responsible for a third postponement to that day. There had been, of course, much disappointment. However, God had blessed them and gave a beautiful day for the function. (Applause). He was glad to see assembled one of the finest gatherings seen in Gembrook. (Applause). That was a red-letter day for Gembrook. On behalf of the gathering and his own and the residents of Gembrook, he extended a very cordial welcome to his Grace the Most Rev. Dr. Mannix. (Prolonged applause). That was the first, but he hoped not the last, visit of his Grace to Gembrook. (Renewed applause). His Grace was well known to the people, but there were probably some present who had neither seen nor heard him before. It was the magnetic influence of the Archbishop that was responsible for that fine assemblage. (Applause). They were all very grateful to his Grace. (Applause). Referring to that day's*

*function, Fr. Little said that there were only 16 or 17 families in the parish, but they were not perturbed at the debt of £600.*

*(Applause). The total cost had been £970, against which they had £356.10/-. He wished to thank the architect, Mr. Vanheems, and the builder, both of whom had given of their best. (Applause).*

*Thanks were also due to the Jesuit Fathers, especially Fr. Healy, for help in mission work. (Applause). To the non-Catholics, who had rendered great service, he felt very grateful. He hoped that the cordial relations existing between all denominations would continue. (Applause). He had to thank Dean Carey, who had come all the way from Melbourne to make the appeal. When a young man, the Dean had done yeoman service in a parish that included a wide area. (Applause).*

### **DEAN CAREY MAKES APPEAL**

*Dean Carey, who was loudly applauded, said that he had looked at the church inside and out, and had come to the conclusion that the people of Gembrook had not evaded their duty, as the church was a gem. (Laughter). He desired to congratulate the pastor and the people, who had done such fine work in a place where a few years ago there was nothing on those wild hills. It was quite possible that Fr. Little would become the first Bishop of Gembrook. (Laughter). It was nearly half a century ago since he (the Dean) had charge of that district and when there were only two or three Catholic families in Pakenham.*

### **THE ARCHBISHOP'S SPEECH**

*His Grace the Archbishop, who was greeted with sustained applause, said that he thought that Fr. Little must be the most popular man in Victoria. He doubted if any other man could have brought such a large gathering as Fr. Little had done to the top of the hills of Gembrook, especially after two postponements on*

*account of the weather. He had hardly ever seen a deferred function such a success as that was. Fr. Little was indeed to be congratulated on the success of the function. (Applause). He had come with much pleasure and satisfaction to bless and open their fine church. It as an heroic thing for the people and Fr. Little to build that church in Gembrook. (Applause). The church would be a great advantage to the local people and the visitors. Fr. Little might not be long there, but the church would be known as his.*

### **The Australian Flag**

*After expressing his pleasure that sectarianism had not been much in evidence during the recent election, the Archbishop said that he was much pleased to see the Australian flag proudly floating to the breeze at their meeting that afternoon. (Applause). During the war, Australia made a name for herself and had no reason to hang her head in shame. (Loud applause).*

*His Grace congratulated Fr. Little and all on the erection of the church and their response to the appeal. He especially wished to thank the non-Catholics who had lent a helping hand. (Prolonged applause).*

### **VOTE OF THANKS**

*On the motion of Mr. P. Commons, seconded by Mr. P. McNulty, a vote of thanks was carried to the Archbishop by acclamation, and his Grace briefly acknowledged the compliment.*

### **THE COLLECTION**

*The collection realised £160/9/6, including - The Archbishop, £20; Fr. Little £10/10/-; Dean Carey, Mrs. J Beacham, Mr. & Mrs. Phelan, £5/5/- each; Mr. G. Vanheems and Mr. B. Kelly, £5 each.*

## **BENEDICTION OF THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT**

*In the evening, at 8 o'clock, Benediction of the Most Holy Sacrament was given in the new church by Rev. J. McDonnell.*

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### **MORE RECOLLECTIONS....**

**1.** *These few stories are among precious memories of our living church here at Gembrook. The community was strong then, as it is now, as they supported each other to make God a reality in their lives. These stories will bring alive for many of us, how in the ordinariness of our lives, we bonded together as community while walking together on our faith journey.*

*Years ago, back in the early forties when the church was about twenty years old, Mrs. Tom Williams Snr. always did the flowers for our fortnightly Mass. She loved to use red-tipped, silver top gum leaves, plentiful about the town at that time. She'd go ahead to the church and Jim, her youngest son, would come later, laden with tips in his billy cart drawn by a husky-type dog called Ted.*

*One cannot speak of the history of our church without referring to Fr. Harmon. He was responsible for taking the children of Gembrook to the Catholic school in Fern Tree Gully. Every day he would drive the bus to and from Fern Tree Gully, sleeping overnight in the sacristy of the church and saying Mass here four days a week at 7.00 a.m. Gembrook was part of the Fern Tree Gully parish until 1959, when the Parish of Belgrave was created.*

*In very early days the priest and two nuns from Fern Tree Gully always came to Gembrook to teach the children for their First Communion. Later the children used to transfer from the state school to the Catholic School in Fern Tree Gully for two weeks.*

*During this time, they would receive their instructions for their First Communion. Then, when the two parishes separated, the parents took the children by car once a week for instructions at Belgrave. From there, we then moved to the children being taught by catechists at R.E. classes after school. It was during one of these classes that a local girl, eager to get what she considered the 'best seat' in my lounge room, jumped through the kitchen window into the lounge room!! Recently, the parents at home have carried out the preparation of children for sacraments, with the help of lay people. The numbers were always very large in those days, but now there are few, sometimes none. First Communion celebrations were always held at the R.S.L. Hall following the Mass. The First Communicants were joined by their families at the hall to help celebrate their special day.*

*During the missions of those days, there was always much singing. It was sometimes a problem to get an organist. Gertrude Hilder, who played the piano, was able to play the organ, but found she had trouble with the footwork, so Kevin Williams, a young boy at the time, took control of the footwork and Mum played the notes. The people knew the hymns well and were used to them. Many people also sung them at home.*

*Music was not the only problem. John Dennis, a local mill hand, had come to the mission. On this particular night when the priest preached about life, he only mentioned how he saw husbands treating their wives unfairly, etc., using the words "him" and "he" in any story he told. This became too much for John. His hand shot up "Yes, sir?" asked the priest. The man replied, "I don't think it is fair that you blame men for everything!" The priest apologised profusely saying he meant both sexes. Maybe this man was a little ahead of his time!*

## **2. Communion of Churches:**

*Recollections come flooding back of my childhood as I try to remember what connections there were between the churches. I was a very young school child at the time and my first memories of other churches involves school.*

*We lived in Alphington then, and the Catholic school that I attended was almost opposite the State school, and much mud-slinging went on between the two schools. We then moved to Gembrook.*

*Pictures show that at the opening of our church, several members of the Church of England came to join in our celebration.*

*The priest and the Anglican minister always came to the school and gave Religious Instruction. I remember the minister arriving at the State school by horse and jinker. Catholic teachers working at the school were at Mass and it seemed to work well as people followed the church of their choice.*

*The Church of England (Anglican) congregation, who still remember well, was large in number and would gather around outside and talk after their service. I remember very little about the Methodist church at that time, as it was located out of town. My grandparents went to the Church of England, but I never had any relatives at the Methodist Church.*

*Somewhere around the 50's a young single minister, John Newman, came to the Methodist Church. He was a footballer, playing for Gembrook and enthusiastic about his ministry and he really made things happen. This resulted in the congregation increasing in numbers. He also married while here, to a woman from Cockatoo.*

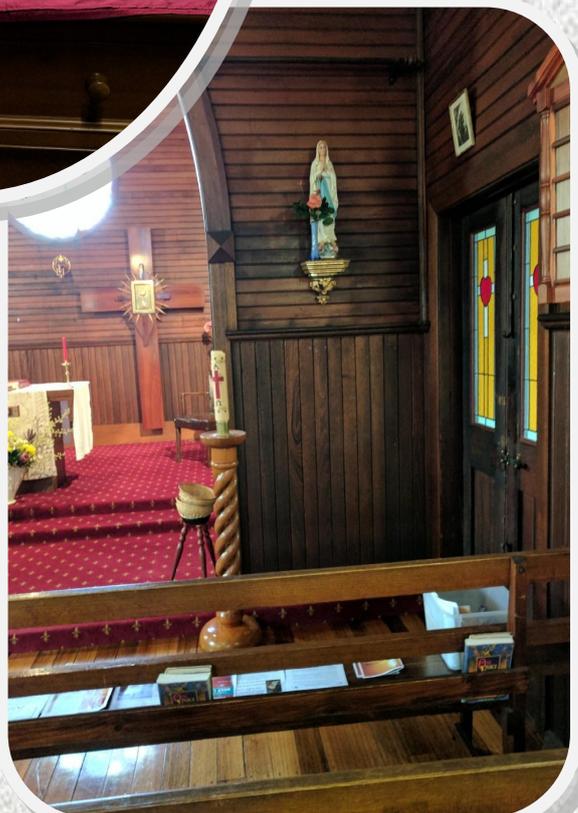
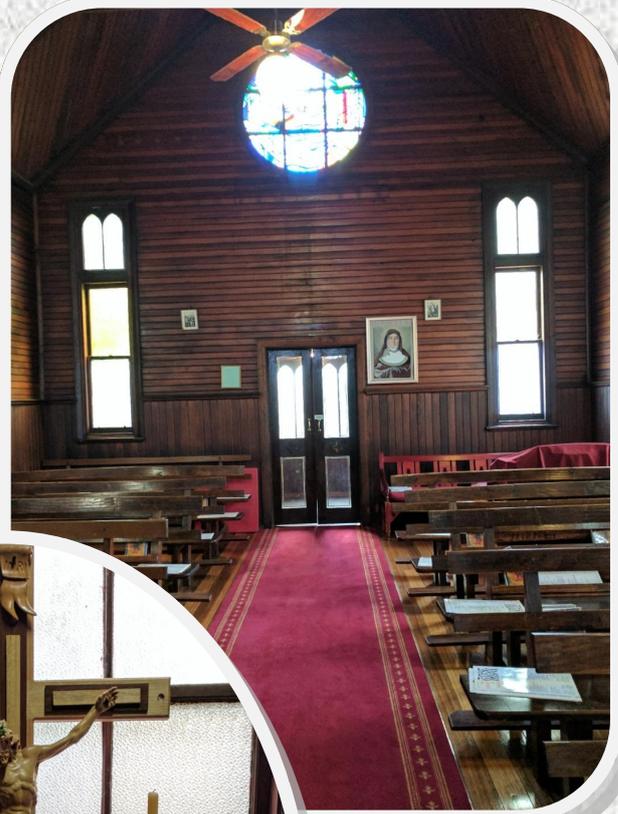
*However, it was not until after Vatican II that we started to really unite. Catholics went to non-Catholic weddings, funerals and sometimes services were held sharing leaders from both churches. Pleasant Sunday afternoons of prayer and fun became common. The climax, of course, came when sadly a tree in a storm demolished the Methodist, now Uniting, Church. We then shared our church until they rebuilt. The opening of their new church was a great ecumenical success and a powerful witness of their faith.*

*Many children have come to church here over the years and one of the most vivid memories for all was sticking to the varnish on the walls—trying to see if you would stick to it again and again. Only fairly recently a man came to a wedding here on a very hot day. He, too, stuck to the wall and his shirt was spoilt. Many people love our church and people come from far and wide to celebrate their wedding there.*

*When Fr. Peter (Carrucan) was here there were many children taught in the State schools and a Mass once a month was held after school. These school Masses are remembered fondly as happy times by many of our adult parishioners.*

*We were bonded together in many ways—dances, picnics, house parties, youth clubs, solidarities, working bees and the big spring clean of the church, getting it all looking lovely for Christmas. These were all great times.*





*Most Sacred Heart of Jesus,  
grant that peace,  
the fruit of justice and charity,  
may reign throughout the world.*

