

Journeying to a new parish

Having decided to live nearer to work and thus reduce my every day driving time, I made the decision to find a new home. Wanting an easy route for family and friends, an easy route to work, to be near bus stops and local community facilities, I searched and finally bought a block of land in Seaton.

Because I'd had a long and very involved relationship with an Anglican parish, one of the first things I did after choosing the block of land was to begin the choosing of a new parish. I was leaving one that was indeed a family to me. They were my great friends, a wonderful support group, deeply faithful and wise Christians, offered me wonderful opportunities for ongoing learning and extending of faith and they were keen & willing to outreach in wide and varied ways. I was leaving a parish where, as a member I was trusted, invited and encouraged to find & use my talents in so many ways, for both Sunday services and for outreach programs so that a sense of belonging and value was, for me, never doubted. I knew that finding a new parish, for me, would be much harder than finding a new house!!!

Historically, we might think that our address marks our parish – for every zoned area of land there is our parish church. I think in the 21st century people are not so influenced by where they live in choosing a parish but on the ministry offered in the parish. Transport is of minor issue for many, so travelling to a parish church is now much easier than in the past so *choice of parish* is indeed very possible.

I was very keen to belong to a parish that felt alive, was very active in mission beyond the parish, remained loyal to a familiar Anglican liturgy but wasn't so locked into it that we were no longer using the language familiar to those born later than 1990, presented the service and teaching in a way that reflected worship and learning of the 21st century, included music and song that was contemporary and had a leadership team that was varied in age so that each age-group was reflected in decision making.

How does one find such a parish?

- Well, in looking for 21st century worship and parish life my first call was Google and parish websites. A parish without Internet based outreach, I feel, is behind the times so if I couldn't get any info from the Internet I didn't even pursue further.
- I asked around. Fortunately, I knew many Anglicans and priests and asked what they knew of parishes near my new suburb especially about its leadership.
- I prayed on it.
- I went along! I couldn't judge any parish without attending – so off I went with an open mind.

The four things above pointed first to the **Parish of Kidman Park and Mile End**and so far I've stayed there!!!
A good sign.

WHY stay???

In no particular order:

- I as able to get information and listen to sermons on the parish website.
- I walked in to find a beautiful, light, well-maintained, open church. Seating can easily be re-arranged to cater for different worship styles. The architecture is modern, comfortable, balanced and quite stunning. The building is indeed very inviting. Heating for winter is excellent and in summer, large fans circulate the air.
- During services, a data-projector shows the order-of-service, words for songs and hymns and some images and dot points for the guest speakers etc, onto a large, clear and easily visible screen. This means liturgy is not locked in to any particular book so can be altered to cater for varying service styles or seasons.
- The microphone and sound system works very well – no trouble hearing
- Music is a large part of the parish. Some is via keyboard and other via mp3s or other digital version. It's always easy to hear and of very good sound quality.
- There is opportunity to join a choir, which accompanies Sunday services and also comes together to prepare and perform a Christmas Carols service.

- The preaching is excellent.
- The people are warm and friendly.
- There are varying avenues to be involved in mission outside the suburb and outside of Australia. The parish supports a variety of projects financially and also offers practical, physical support in a range of local community projects.
- There is a Bible study group and a Lenten study program
- There is little [or no] visible or verbal negativity. I don't hear people whinging about the parish nor the diocese – most just get on with doing the best they can to be loyal to their Christian calling and supportive of a their parish programs and of the leadership team.

Is it perfect? Well, find me a parish that is!!! Of course, it's not perfect. But, neither am I.

I am happy to be involved. I feel welcomed & comfortable and my faith is nurtured. There are many avenues for me to be more involved but I am never pushed. I do often sit around thinking "I wish they'd do it some other way." OR "I wish they'd use different words" OR "I wish they'd speed up or slow down" OR "I wish this or I wish that!"

But... I know, there is no THEY!

In parish life there is only a WE.

A parish is not for ME, it is for US.

I have chosen to belong and will thus journey forwards in my call to be part of an US – a group of people with varying talents and varying needs, planning and working together to worship God and do His work - to reach out and serve those who are part of my parish family and part of God's family.