



Glen Waverley Anglican Church

A brief description of its beginnings



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

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Purpose

This booklet has been written to provide a brief overview of the history of the Glen Waverley Anglican Church (GWAC).

It does not seek to be a comprehensive record but rather provide some highlights for future generations to know something of the way in which God worked with a group of His people at a particular time and place.

The Glen Waverley Anglican Church of St Barnabas was formed by three existing Anglican Churches in the Glen Waverley agreeing to amalgamate by selling all of their assets, purchasing a suitable block of land and building a new Ministry Centre enabling a new faith community to be created under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Introduction by Rev Maria Brand

Glen Waverley Anglican Church has a vision to be 'a light on the hill' and a mission to seek to be 'a caring community making, maturing and mobilising disciples of Jesus Christ, locally and globally.'

We thank God for the origins of this church community and were delighted to hold a joyful 30th Anniversary celebration this year. Over the decades this church community has seen testimony to God's faithfulness as GWAC has continued to seek to be part of God's work in the world, both locally and globally. I am excited to see the continue work of the Holy Spirit leading us as a community into in the future, holding fast to hope. As a community we are seeking to develop deeper faith, brighter hope, wider love and richer worship over the next five years.

Rev Maria Brand (Lead Minister/Vicar)

December 2025



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 gave a second chance, the follower of Jesus Christ – and being true to him, bring people to a vibrant faith in Jesus Christ.

Shalom

+John ☺

Bishop John Harrower OAM

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

August 2021

Brief History of Glen Waverley

Glen Waverley is an eastern suburb of Melbourne, located 19 km (12 mi) southeast of the Melbourne central business district. It is in the local government area of the City of Monash and is a prominent suburban commercial district, as well as a local transport hub as the interchange between the Glen Waverley train line terminus and a wide reaching public bus service. Glen Waverley recorded a population of 42,642 at the 2021 census.

The area was first settled in the mid nineteenth century and later developed as orchards and farming lands. The name "Waverley" comes from a novel by Sir Walter Scott.

Major development occurred in the 1950s to 1970s with rapid infilling of housing built to a generally high standard on large (typically 800m²) blocks. In particular Legend Park Estate was opened by Hooker Rex in 1971. Much of that housing stock is now ageing and renewal is occurring, frequently involving subdivision of the larger blocks into townhouse development. One of the most significant changes to the demographics occurred when a large number of migrants, mainly Chinese, moved into the area at the beginning of the 21st Century.

The Glen shopping centre is the retail heart of the suburb. Glen Waverley is also serviced by a large number of general and specialist medical practices as well as a large variety of restaurants serving many different cuisines,



The Glen Shopping Centre

Who were the 3 Parishes that amalgamated to form the Glen Waverley Anglican Church?

St Andrew's Glen Waverley

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). 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 Rev 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.

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 St Andrew's 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 Glen Waverley

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 Rev 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 James' Syndal

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.



Getting Started

Following the tabling of the “Towards 2001” paper at the 1993 Melbourne Synod, some informal discussions took place between the Vicars of the 3 parishes Ven John Harrower, Rev Gordon Hargreaves and Rev 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 3 parishes.



*Rev Dick Wallace, Rev Gordon Hargreaves,
Ven John Harrower*

The first formal meeting took place in October 1993 when the three Vicars and some of the Wardens 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. Section 6 recommended that more parishes within the Diocese “cluster” to gain more effective use of physical and human resources.

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 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.

After more detailed discussions a Project Committee was formed to conduct due diligence on what promised to be a large and complex project.

More in-depth due diligence was undertaken and in early 1994 an announcement was made in each of the Parishes that an amalgamation was being considered. A series of consultative meetings were conducted leading to a vote in each of the Parishes in August 1994. The motion to amalgamate was carried by a majority in each parish setting the scene for the work to begin to sell the assets of each parish and source a suitable parcel of land upon which a new ministry centre could be constructed.

The Search for suitable land

Following the vote to amalgamate, the view was taken that, if it was God's will that the project proceed, He would lead us to a suitable parcel of land upon which to build a new ministry centre.

Advice from the Diocesan Property Officer was to look for around 5 acres (2 hectares) to allow for many different scenarios that might eventuate in the longer term. In 1994 and early 1995, locating suitable and affordable land was a daunting task.

However, God had a plan which unfolded with some twists and turns along the way.

Le Pine, the funeral directors, had purchased the former Glen Waverley Public School on the corner of Springvale and Waverley Roads in early 1994 and subsequently advised that they had a 3.75 acres parcel of land facing Waverley Road which was surplus to their requirements. They were offering it for sale at a price of \$1.35m. Whilst it was smaller than the advised requirements the new parish agreed to purchase it as there was no other possibility on the horizon.

However, the US parent company which owned Le Pine subsequently vetoed the sale. This caused some anxiety as the parish believed it had an agreement to proceed with the sale.

The next development in God's plan came when 4.75 acres owned by Melbourne Water on the corner of Waverley and Watsons Rds became available for sale by auction. This was an ideal site but was perceived to be too expensive so GWAC was not represented at the auction. This judgement was justified when the hammer fell at \$1.875m – beyond the means of the parish.

But there was one final twist in God's plan for the new parish to purchase suitable land. Following the sale of the Melbourne Water site, it was learned that the purchaser was experiencing difficulties getting planning permission for the development he had planned for the site so he wanted to withdraw from the contract.

With the help of the Diocesan Property Officer, an approach was made to Melbourne Water, offering \$1.5m for the site. Extensive negotiations took place and God's plan came to fruition on the weekend of 18 – 22 August 1995. On Friday 18 August 1995, representatives of Melbourne Water contacted the parish with an ultimatum to agree to the sale that day at the points reached in the negotiations. Senior members of the staff took the bold decision to agree to the sale. However, that very evening advice was also received that Le Pine had now agreed to sell their land.

Thus, in God's grace the parish had the choice of 2 blocks of land when, sometime earlier, it seem impossible to find any suitable land! A meeting of representatives of the 3 parishes was convened on 19 August and a unanimous vote was carried to purchase the Melbourne Water site.

On Tuesday 22 August 1995, the Vicar-General of the Diocese, Bishop John Stewart, formerly dissolved the parishes of St Andrew's and St Paul's Glen Waverley together with St James' Syndal and created the Glen Waverley Anglican Church – (later named after St Barnabas) with Ven John Harrower as the Incumbent.

Building a new ministry centre and faith community

The newly created parish was blessed with a large number of talented and committed people who were willing to use their skills, knowledge and finances to establish a new faith community to further the work of the Gospel in the Glen Waverley area.

A Building Committee was formed to plan the new ministry centre. There were several engineers together with others skilled people on the committee and they worked closely with the architects Smith and Tracy to design a functional and aesthetically pleasing building which could be constructed on the new site, despite there being several complications with caveats and other construction challenges.

An equally talented Finance Committee was created to ensure that the building could be financed within the capacity and faith of the parish to give and borrow funds.

In total, over 40 smaller committees were formed to oversee the various aspects of the project. In God's grace their committees worked in harmony to complete the various tasks allocated to them.

The new staff team was led by Ven John Harrower together with several ordained clergy, lay ministers and administration staff. Overall, the team worked well to allocate responsibilities and create a new culture for themselves as well as with the wider congregation. After prayer and discussion, the parish adopted the mission statement which now reads *"To be a caring community making, maturing and mobilising disciples of Jesus Christ – locally and globally."*

In late 1995, the assets of St Andrew's and St James' were sold and the new parish consolidated onto the former St Paul's site for the duration of the building project. Advent Sunday 1995 was memorable as the first combined service was held with Archbishop Keith Rayner presiding.

The people of GWAC at their first Service on the 1st Sunday in Advent 1995.



During the period 1995-1997, a large team effort enabled the new ministry centre to be planned, a building contractor engaged and the building programme completed. In God's grace the parish was able to raise \$500k in cash as well as place deposits of over \$1m into the then Diocesan Rolling Fund to support a loan. Together with the proceeds from the sale of the 3 assets, the new building was completed and fitted out at a total cost of \$4.1m.

The St Barnabas Ministry Centre was consecrated and dedicated on 23 November 1997 with a wonderful celebration where Archbishop Keith Rayner presided and over 500 people gathered to thank God for His blessings to them all.



Archbishop Keith Rayner

Some of the major achievements over the past 30 years.

God has blessed the ministry of GWAC in many ways over the intervening years seeing many people come to faith in Jesus Christ.

Some of the highlights include:

- ❖ Many members of the GWAC congregation have gone on to full-time or part-time ministry either ordained or lay. This has included people becoming missionaries mostly with CMS or BCA in various parts of Australia and overseas.
- ❖ Establishing a working relationship with the Mission of Truth (MOT) Church in Surabaya Indonesia. Representatives of MOT have visited GWAC over the years and, in return, GWAC members have visited MOT to encourage them in their ministry.
- ❖ Vibrant ministries to children, youth, young adults, families and seniors have been developed and are still well supported.
- ❖ In 2021 a Mandarin Speaking congregation was formed to meet the changing demographics of the Glen Waverley area.
- ❖ A Public Benevolent Institution, known as "Hope for Monash Ltd", was established to show God's love in practical ways to the wider community. It has conducted well supported food drives over the years and also established a "Let's talk English" class to assist Mandarin speaking people to converse better in day-to-day English.
- ❖ The parish has been blessed with committed and competent ministry staff who have ensured that the Gospel is faithfully preached and this has been supported with home groups known as "Connect Groups" where people can gather in small groups for Bible study, prayer and fellowship. In addition, a large number of volunteers have supported the mission of the Church.

- ❖ GWAC has been able to install modern audiovisual equipment enabling worshipers to watch enhanced visuals during worship and other gatherings as well as livestream services and events to the wider community.



Conclusion

In reading this brief history of the Glen Waverley Anglican Church, it is hoped that the reader grasps something of the gratefulness the people of the parish feel towards God as He led them through a wonderful journey. A journey which is continuing to be blessed by God as we seek to be *“A caring community making, maturing and mobilising disciples of Jesus Christ – locally and globally”*.

Prepared by Ian Nyholm

December 2025