

**SAINT JAMES THE GREAT, THORNBURY**  
**CELEBRATING**  
**ONE HUNDRED YEARS SINCE THE**  
**ESTABLISHMENT OF A SEPARATE PARISH**  
**IN 1924**



*Our parish is situated on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. We acknowledge their Elders, past and present, and pray for a just outcome for all Indigenous peoples.*

## **Brief History of the Parish of Saint James**

On the 20<sup>th</sup> November 1916, “a meeting was held at Penders’ Grove Hall to consider the advisability of erecting a Church of England at Penders’ Grove, Thornbury.” The Rev’d C.W. Wood, Vicar of Holy Trinity, Thornbury was the Chairman. Immediate steps were then taken to arrange finances and have the building commenced, with the first St. James church built and ready for opening and dedication less than 12 months later in July 1917.

The church was built on Wurundjeri land, and part of the original land purchase of 1839 by Michael Pender. Pender was a Northcote pioneer and owner of a number of pubs. His son, William, farmed the land from the 1840s until 1862, although it is said he lived the life of a drunken playboy! It was subdivided in the late 1880s.

Located on the corner of Newcastle and Pender Streets, St. James started out as a weatherboard mission and daughter church of Holy Trinity, Thornbury (which had, in turn, only been established in 1907 – it is now St. Georges Antiochian Orthodox Church). At first St. James was served by various curates from Holy Trinity. One of those curates was the Rev’d Joseph Briggs, who went on to become the first vicar.

The small congregation struggled in the early days having to cope with building the church during the first world war and the later building of a vicarage. They had a left field initiative in providing a hall. In 1923 they purchased the old Myrie Shoe factory, which was located nearby, and transferred it on drays onto the church grounds (it served the parish until 1977 when it was destroyed by fire).

Under Diocesan rules of the time, the construction of a vicarage was a requirement for permitting a church to become a separate parish, which St. James achieved in 1924. The Rev’d Briggs was inducted as the first vicar.

It was during these first 10 years under its first vicar, that St. James became an Anglo-Catholic parish.

Other long serving vicars included John Taylor in the 1940s, James Jenkinson in the 1950s, Peter Chesterman in the 1980s, and, from 2005, Andrew Oddy.

In 1966, because of dwindling congregations, the Diocese decided to close the adjoining parishes of Epiphany and its daughter church, St. Aidan. Epiphany was sold to the Macedon Bulgarian Orthodox Church, while the St. Aidans and St. James congregations merged. The St. Aidans site in Victoria Road was sold and, in 1969, the proceeds used to build a new church at St. James. At that time the original weatherboard church became the church hall.

The new church was opened and dedicated on 11<sup>th</sup> October, 1969 by the Most Rev'd Frank Woods, the Archbishop of Melbourne, with a congregation of 425! Virtually the entire furnishings were donated by individual parishioners, although the pews were transferred from the old church as were the stained glass windows, which were expanded to fit the new window enclosures.

The St. James Parish Centre, combining a “new Parish Office, Counselling Room and Meeting Room” was dedicated on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2001 by Bishop Andrew Curnow.

The year 2001 also saw St. James merged with the Parish of All Saints Northcote and St. Pauls Fairfield to become the Anglican Parish of South Darebin. While enjoying strong links with its sister churches, St. James continued to maintain its distinctive identity and its style of worship amidst an accepting Christian community.

*Source: Various notes and articles, particularly those prepared by Norm Appleby and the Rev'd D.J. Connolly.*



*The original church in the early 1960s, with the kindergarten hall at the rear.*



*St Aidens was established in 1928 when a small wooden church was erected on the corner of Victoria Road and Kellett Street, Northcote. It burnt down in 1952, but a fine brick church was erected in 1953. This foundation stone dates from that time, but the inscription ‘St Aidens Chapel’ was added when it was relocated to the new St James church in 1969.*

## ‘Priests Called to Serve the Parish of St James East Thornbury’

Vicar	
1921	Joseph W. Briggs
1934	Frederick P. Edwards
1939	John Kessel Taylor
1949	William B. Hunter
1951	Reginald M. Coy
1953	James A. Jenkinson
1961	Brian Ashworth
1964	Peter A. Thomson
1965	Charles M. Duns
1970	David J. Connolly
1977	M. Barry Smith
1983	Peter H. Chesterman
1993	Graeme Brennan
1996	Graeme Kaines
1999	Peter Macleod Miller
Priest in Charge	
2001	Stuart Gardiner
2005	Andrew Oddy
2023	Jonathan Jackson



*Rev'd Joseph Briggs*



*Rev'd Peter Chesterman, with Rev'd Jean Penman and Mrs Shirley Chesterman.*

# Timeline

## DIOCESE OF MELBOURNE

1835 First Anglican service in Melbourne.

1847 St. James Cathedral completed (five years after building commenced!).

1891 St. Paul's Cathedral completed.

1955 Constitution of the 'Church of England in Australia' drawn up.

1977 First Australian-born Archbishop of Melbourne – Robert Dann.

1981 The Church of England in Australia now known as The Anglican Church of Australia.

## PARISH OF ST. JAMES

(The Rev'd Briggs was later an organist at the old cathedral).

1916 Meeting held to consider a Church in Penders Grove, Thornbury.

1917 First church built (weatherboard).

1923 First vicarage built (on site of current church).

1924 Former slipper factory re-erected as parish hall (burnt down in 1977).

**1924 Instituted as a separate parish.**

1962 Current vicarage built (on site of former church tennis court).

1966 Joined with the congregation of St. Aiden's, East Northcote.

1969 Existing church built. Old church becomes church hall.

1969 Meeting rooms and new toilets constructed and the kindergarten hall renovated.

1973 Further renovations to the hall, dedicated as the 'Joseph Briggs Community Centre'.

1976 The new church was consecrated (having paid off all debt).

2001 St. James was merged to form the Parish of South Darebin.

2001 Church and hall refurbished, with a new extension built (parish office, counselling room and meeting room – 'The Bishop Andrew Curnow Room'). The hall complex now known as the 'St James Parish Centre'.

**2024 Centenary of establishment as separate parish.**

## Some Memories

**Elizabeth Braithwaite** remembers her first day well – one Sunday in August 1989. Having moved into Northcote, she arrived with husband James and 2-month old Caroline and, within 10 minutes of entering St James, just knew it was the church for them. In the 1990s, when the diocese wanted parishes to have a ‘mission statement’, the St. James congregation chose ‘Accepting. Loving. Encouraging.’ And this still resonates with Elizabeth. Being one of our organists for many years, Elizabeth loves the music and recalls the old organ at the back of the church, the ‘Coro Capella’ choir and the variety nights (with ‘soup and bread’) held in the parish hall.

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**Megan Lewis** can also well remember her first day at St. James – it was Easter Day 1983. Having not been in a church for a while, she decided to just turn up at a nearby church, ie St. James, and found that it just felt right. Extremely welcoming and accepting. She recalls Rev’d Peter Chesterman as a loving, very pastoral vicar. And the fetes! A multi-day event that was the best in the area, with all the local community joining in - just fantastic! The parish hall used to rock! With square dancing and a popular gymnasium program community highlights. And there were lots of parishioners, lots of baptisms, lots of funerals and you had to get in early to get a seat at the Christmas carols!

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Not everyone can say that they found a church for themselves as well as a church for a vicar, but that is what **John Meers** did – and the church he found was St. James. John and, the soon to become vicar of St. James, Rev’d Graeme Kaines, dropped in one day when some parishioners were making palm crosses and to this day he can remember their warm welcome and feeling ‘wow’. John was a churchwarden for some 10 years and can recall working, with Cliff, on renovating the church and the opening of what we now know as the Parish Centre by Bishop Andrew Curnow. John loves the stained glass windows but always wondered why they are positioned so the officiating vicar can see them, but not the congregation!

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Seventy nine years is surely a record for any parishioner for any church, but that is the length of **Norm Appleby’s** connection with St. James. When his family moved to Thornbury in 1945, young Norm was dragged off to Sunday School and he just stayed! Norm remembers seemingly hundreds of children at Sunday School, the Children’s Church, Sunday School picnics (on steam trains and in picnic vans) catered by the ladies of the church (freshly cut sandwiches and raspberry turban cakes) and a robed choir of boys and girls. As a young child, the ice cream dixies, kept cool in a big container of dry ice, was a hit at the annual bazaar.

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Over the years Norm took on many roles and responsibilities and has many memories (both good and bad!) of the cavalcade of vicars. As well as Sunday communion, there were matins services, with evensong services a big deal. He remembers the problems of the old vicarage (it wasn't square!) and debates over the early designs of the new church (the quotes were too expensive – the proposed copper roof was scuttled!). The original stained glass windows of the old church were very special and he was pleased with their subsequent reconstruction and installation in the new church. The font, once located by the Children's Window of the old church and now located in the memorial garden, was donated by the Parish of Thornbury in the UK.

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If you dropped into church in 1965 you would have seen **David Wilson** robed up as an altar boy (his mum did the flowers). He then went on to become an active member of Youth Action, a church group for teenagers. He can recall the carnival erected on the corner and running games at the fete – always a bit of fun. There were car wash fundraisers and monthly square dances. Other memories are of the altar boys' monthly service breakfasts and folk guitars at the Sunday family services. There were two Sunday services - a 'no frills' 8am service and a 9.30am sung high mass complete with incense. For many years there was also a social group for adult parishioners – the Friendly Circle.

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Choir Boys in the late 1940's



## From the Marriage Register

The church archives still retains the first volume of the Marriage Register, with the first recorded marriage being between John Henry Patton and Daisy Maud Thomas on 10 May 1919.

In the State of Victoria. In the Commonwealth of Australia.

*St. James' Church, Melbourne*

**CERTIFICATE OF MARRIAGE.**

Part B 177. Form of Great Britain & Ireland & Colony of New South Wales.

No. of Register	When and where solemnized	Name and Address of each Party	Age of each Party	Religion of each Party	Signature of Minister of the Gospel	Signature of Witnesses
10	10 May 1919	John Henry Patton Daisy Maud Thomas	25 25	Anglican Anglican	<i>W. Patton</i>	<i>Daisy Maud Thomas</i>

We declare that the above is a true statement of the particulars relating to each of us respectively; and that Marriage: the solemnity was solemnized between us on the date and at the place mentioned according to the Act of the Church of England.

Witnesses:  
*G. H. Holding*  
*E. L. Thomas*

1. *W. Patton* Minister of the Gospel  
 2. *E. L. Thomas* Clerk

I, *E. L. Thomas* do hereby certify that I have this day duly solemnized Marriage between the above-named parties, after notice had been duly given with respect thereto, and after declaration, duly made as by law required, and with the necessary consent of

Dated this 10th day of May 1919.

Registrar of Marriages, Commonwealth of Australia.

Four marriages followed in 1920 and three in 1922. 1923 proved to be a bumper year, with 12 marriages recorded. With two exceptions, being a widower and a widow, all were 'bachelors' or spinsters' - no divorcees in the Church of England in the 1920s. Their ages? No one under 19 years, with the oldest 41 years. Most were in their mid- to late 20s when married.

At least one partner came from Thornbury or Northcote, but otherwise those being married came from all over: Port Melbourne, South Yarra, Mentone, Clifton Hill, Carlton, Kyabram, Flemington, Brunswick, Sunshine, Coburg and Woolsthorpe. The register also records the occupation of each partner. The occupation of the women was inevitably 'domestic duties' or 'house duties', but there was also a trained nurse, a few dressmakers, a clerk, a shop assistant and a saleswoman, a number of boot trade machinists, as well as a knitter, a music teacher, a house keeper and a brush manufacturer.

Men's occupations ranged from farmers, dairymen and farriers, to carpenters, plumbers, bootmakers and brickmakers. One was listed as shop keeper, others as butcher, fruiterer, wine merchant, driver, tramway or railway workers, one a hospital worker (who lived on the grounds of the Fairfield Hospital), an accountant, of course a postman and, intriguingly, a cigar maker.



## Highlights over the Years

The congregation of St. James enjoyed an active community life together, with a full event calendar. Football, tennis and cricket clubs flourished, there was a Young Anglican Fellowship in the 1950s, a scout troop was formed (in the 1960s and 1970s), with a G.F.S. group, Mothers' Union and a Men's Society all popular. There was even a dramatic society. The children looked forward to the annual Sunday School picnic and Christmas pageant. Dinner dances, Crazy Whist nights and organ recitals were held, with an annual church bazaar a highlight of the annual calendar for many, many years. A Gymnasium Club ran from 1939 through to 1989. In 1978 it had an enrolment of an impressive ninety-eight members.



*Church fete 2010*



*Nativity play 2008*



*1971 fashion – hats for the ladies*



*The GFS girls in the 1960s*



*S.t James Football Club – 'Premiers 1923.*



*St. James Cricket Club – 'Premiers 1926-27'*



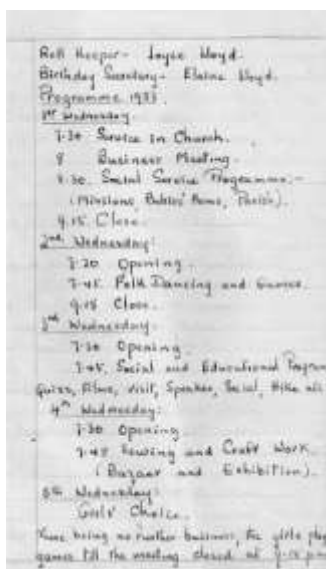
Debutantes Parish Ball – held in the Northcote Town Hall, 14 August 1953. 10/6 for a ticket, including a buffet supper.



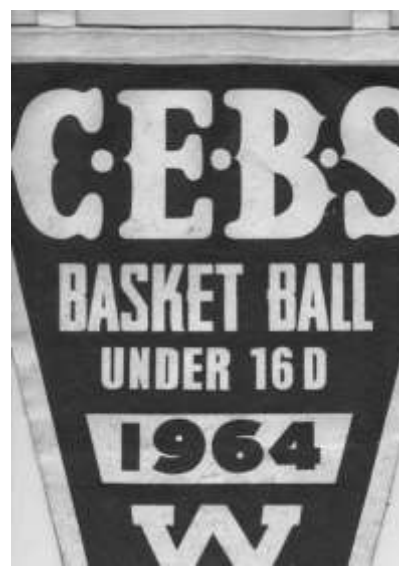
A lucky break for the St. James Under 13s cricket team, which recorded a draw after a match on 6 October 1962 was called off due to rain (after their first seven batsmen had made just nine runs in total).



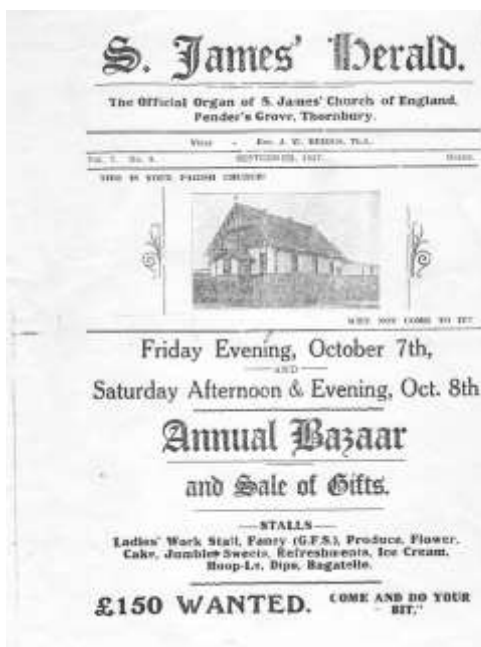
A three course dinner for 'St. James' Day Feast' for just \$10, held 2001, St James Hall.



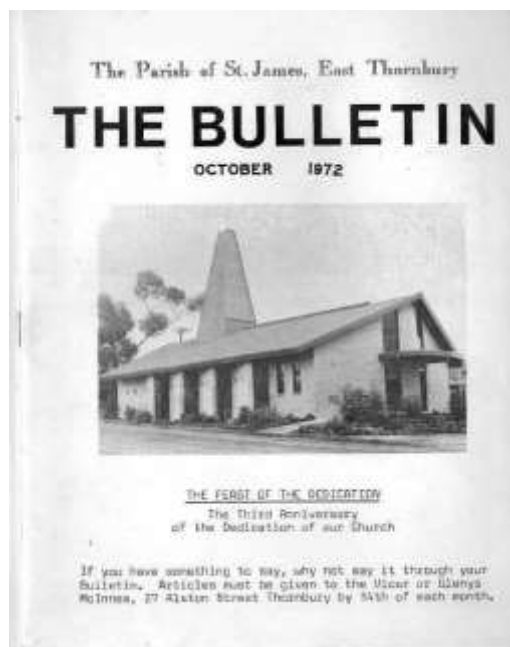
The monthly program of the G.F.S. (Girls Friendly Society) for 1953.



The St James CEBS basketball team – winner's pennant 1964.



S. James' Herald was produced each month from 1920 through to at least 1948.



'The Bulletin' – another monthly newsletter; was produced in the 1970s.



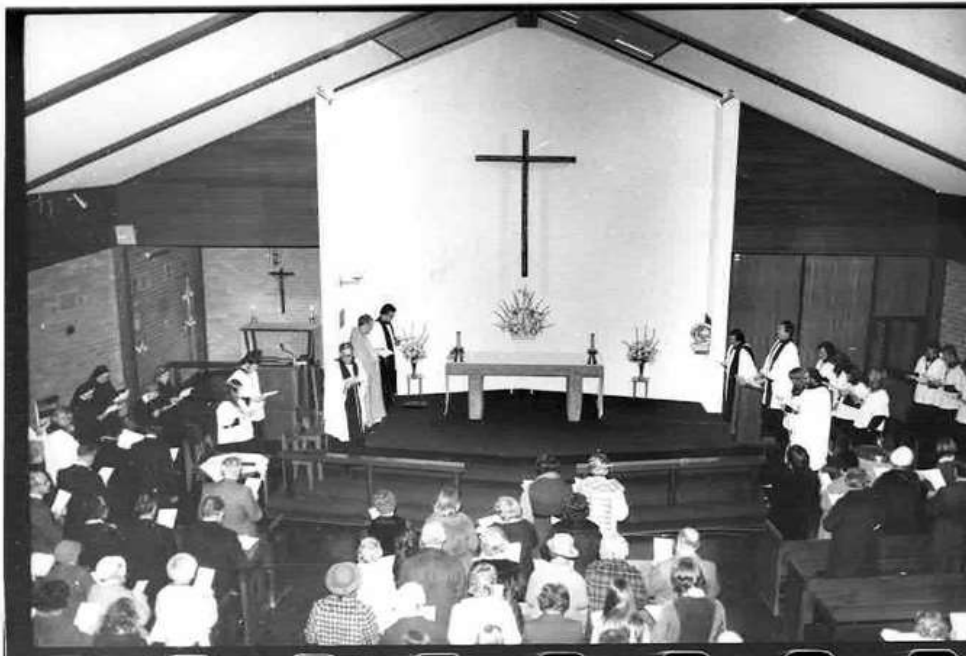
*Old vicarage and original church – 1930*



*Square dance 1970s*



*The nave and sanctuary of the original church.*



*The nave and sanctuary of the new church.*

## The Alan Sumner Stained Glass Windows

Alan Sumner (1911-1994) was a glass artist, painter and printmaker. As a young man, he worked in the glass studio of a large hardware store, joined the RAAF and after the war set himself up as a printmaker and glass artist while teaching at the National Gallery of Victoria. Sumner was commissioned by the then Vicar of St. James, the Rev'd James Jenkinson, to create windows for the original weatherboard church. The first in 1958 and the sixth in 1964. He went on to become an internationally recognised glass artist. (*Source material by Dr Colin Holden*)

The windows:

The Children's Window (at the back of the church over the font - 1958)

St. James the Great (to the right of the reredos in the sanctuary – 1958/59)

The Window of Our Lady (to the left of the reredos, a personal commission of Rev'd Jenkinson – 1960)

St. Patrick (a personal commission of Rev'd Jenkinson – 1960)

Martha and Mary (commissioned by two parishioners – 1960/61)

St. David (also a personal commission of Rev'd Jenkinson - 1964).

They were later transferred to the present church, under Sumner's supervision, in 1969, where they remain today.



*This booklet was compiled by Brad Miles, July 2024.*