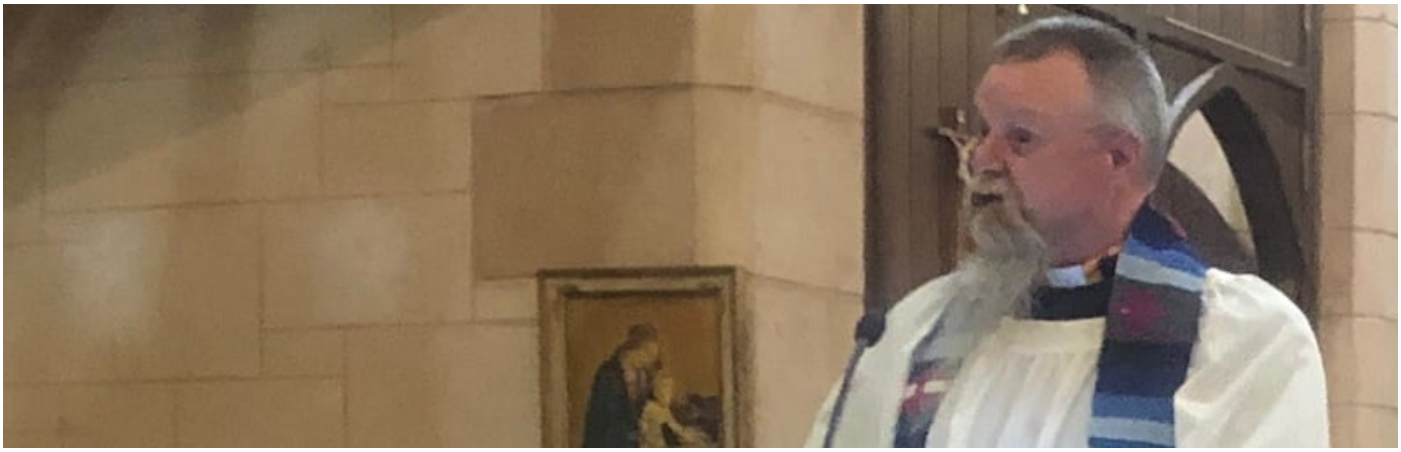


A new priest for Coromandel Valley

The Parish of Coromandel Valley (All Hallows Church, Blackwood and St Johnâ??s Church, Coromandel Valley) began 2022 at a cracking pace.

We enthusiastically set about preparing for the arrival of our new parish priest, Rev Martyn â??Woodyâ?• Woodsford, with family Tracy and Zach, due to arrive in South Australia from Liverpool in the UK on 27 January 2022.

Early in 2021 we had farewelled with sadness Rev Nic Denny-Dimitriou, wishing him well for his new appointment in Brisbane Diocese. For the following 12 months we were blessed to have Rev Martin Bleby as our Locum. Martinâ??s care, leadership and teaching were outstanding, and he contributed enormously to the wellbeing of the parish as a whole.

Bishop Denise and Rev â??Woodyâ?• Woodsford

For part of the year, Martin was assisted by Fr Gary Priest and Rev Wendy Morecroft, forming a strong and much-loved team.

The machinations of a parish nomination committee will be well known to readers who have undertaken that role. We were grateful for the patient and wise leadership of +Denise, who led us through the process.

By August we had a short list of applicants, and Zoomed with Woody in the UK. Before long the Nomination committee agreed unanimously to invite Woody to become our priest.

The Commissioning service was a truly joyous occasion, led by +Denise. Woody chose some of his favourite hymns: *Immortal, invisible; And can it be; Oh for a thousand tongues to sing;* and *How great thou art.*

As the symbols of ministry were presented to Woody, we will never forget the moment he insisted on keeping and wearing the stole gifted to him by Robyn Priest, a stole that belonged to Fr Gary, rather than pass it to the table with the other symbols.

Bishop Denise and Rev Martin Bleby welcome Woody

At the Peace, Woody taught us three new ways to give a gesture of peace. After the service we enjoyed a COVID-safe supper outdoors in the carpark between the church and church office, with a very light sprinkle of rain, and flying foxes silently darting about overhead.

The skills and experience Woody bring sit very well with where we are at as a parish. Nic and Martin began and continued to lead us through our Mission Action Plan.

Where we are now is something of a critical threshold as we shift and change and meld with the needs of the 21st century world. Because there is no doubt the world has changed, and not just in the sphere of public health and climate change.

There are enormous global, national, local and internal issues with which we as a church will have to engage, and upon which we will have to act, and not be silent. Faith AND works. Since Woodyâ??s commissioning Russia has invaded Ukraine.

Images of violence, cruelty and destruction confront us daily in the media, and daily we pray for the Ukrainian people and for peace.

As one of two Priestâ??s Wardens in the parish I light-heartedly remarked in my welcome message to Woody that *sometimes I think there should be another Beatitude: Blessed are those who make the comfortable uncomfortable, for they will be given points for trying!*

We all retreat into our comfort zones from time to time, and thatâ??s fine. Itâ??s a place of refuge and replenishment. But we need to emerge strongly from our comfort zones to do our best to live and do as Jesus would. To challenge and be challenged. To embrace change and to grow, as individuals, as a parish, as a community.

The Coroparish Nomination committee discerned Woody as the one to help us leave the comfort zone and be participatory Christians out in the community and the wider world. We are looking forward to knowing Woody, Tracy and Zach well, and to becoming a team to work for the greater good of all.

Thank You, Woody, for joining us as our parish priest. Welcome.

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