

St Martinâ??s farewells priest after 21 years

Priestâ??s Warden Bev Rosser looks back on Revâ??d Canon Mara Di Francescoâ??s time at St Martinâ??s Campbelltown as the popular priest begins a new chapter

Mara arrived at St Martinâ??s in 2002 as a breath of fresh air. Her enthusiasm over the years has brought significant change to St Martinâ??s, with a decided focus on â??community engagementâ??. During her time St Martinâ??s has become a vibrant, community-centred church whose parishioners have been encouraged to volunteer within the church and outside.



Revâ??d Canon Mara DiFrancesco at her farewell party with, left to right, Bev Rosser (Priestâ??s Warden), Eda DiFrancesco, and Darian Leckie (Peoples Warden)

As a priest Mara has a deep faith, a strong personal relationship with God and a good understanding of liturgy. She has been a dedicated pastor to her flock, and her pastoral care has always been a particular feature of her ministry.

She is a forward planner and entrepreneurial, establishing new and innovative programs. Adept at recognising and encouraging other peopleâ??s gifts and skills, Mara has always seemed to have boundless energy in carrying out her own work. Her commitment to St Martinâ??s over almost 21 years has been exemplary.

Mara has developed close ties with local government, Anglicare, ABM, and BCA. More recently St Martinâ??s has formed a relationship with Foodbank SA which now visits St Martinâ??s fortnightly to distribute food to families in need.

She has also arranged a sponsorship with Disabled and Helpless Rehabilitation Service Centre (DHERSEC) Nepal, and Jonglei Health Science Institute in South Sudan, a Christian mission that trains

mid-level health workers.



Marion Clayton, Verity Rosser, Peter Lammas, Caralyn Lammas, Liz Lammas, Deb Thornton- Wakefield, Bruce Clayton

In her time at St Martinâ??s Mara has introduced a number of special liturgies and programmes for important church occasions, including:

- Special studies for Lent which have proven immensely popular year upon year.
- Good Friday Service with Stations of the Cross as well as a special Good Friday liturgy, followed by hot cross buns for breakfast.
- Sunrise Service at 6am on Easter day, commencing in the garden for the Lighting of the New Fire, then proceeding into St Martinâ??s Chapel for a service, with this being followed by a full breakfast, with a 9am Easter Day service.
- An Anzac Day commemorative service.
- Harvest Festival Service in October, when the altar area is decorated with fruit, vegetables and non-perishable food donated by parishioners and delivered afterwards to Anglicare.
- Christmas Services â?? two on Christmas Eve and one on Christmas Day.



Enjoying Brunch: Left to right Suzie Milne, Lyn Cook, Julie Tamblyn, Keith Thomas, Revâ??d Mary Lewis

Maraâ??s early background was in hospitality â?? both she and her husband Ian are trained chefs â?? and since Mara arrived, St Martinâ??s has become recognised for its â??feedingâ?? of people, at various lunches, dinners and afternoon teas.

That culminated in the establishment of our Chat and Chew CafÃ©. Although run by volunteer parishioners, both Mara and Ian still regularly help out.

During Maraâ??s tenure at St Martinâ??s, the following have been instigated:

- Car Boot Sales on the fourth Saturday each month.
- Seasonal Conversations, a programme which occurs four times each year with a lunch to follow. Each Conversation features a specially invited guest speaker.
- Chat and Chew CafÃ© conducted monthly on Car Boot Sale days, and once per month on Foodbank visits.
- Dinners for various occasions, where parishioners are encouraged to invite friends.
- St Martinâ??s in the Community Barbecue Trailer â??built by volunteer parishioners the trailer is used not only for St Martinâ??s functions, but also as Outreach functions at St Peterâ??s Cathedral and Trinity Church Adelaide, as well as Campbelltown City Council Neighbourhood get-togethers.
- Reggieâ??s Shed Op Shop which operates on Thursday mornings, at Car Boot Sale days, and on all Foodbank days.

In recent times Mara has been a driving force in the planning for a new Clergy House currently under construction.

Mara has always encouraged her parishionersâ?? involvement in all facets of church life, and there are a number of active groups. The Menâ??s Group and Ladiesâ?? Guild have been long established, but the Book Club, Movie Group, Walking Group, Backpack programme for homeless youth, and Shelter program supporting women who have suffered domestic violence, are all comparatively new innovations during Maraâ??s tenure.



Bishop Denise Ferguson, Vincent Tazia MP, James Stevens MP, Jill Whittaker (Mayor of Campbelltown CC) as Maraâ??s farewell service.

As Rector of St Martinâ??s Mara also has been the Chair of St Martinâ??s Cemetery Authority â?? the St Martinâ??s Heritage Cemetery was established in 1856, and over time has developed into a beautiful garden setting. In very recent times a mausoleum cemetery has also been established.

Over the years Mara has kept a close eye on government grants that become available, that the parish might be eligible for, and on a number of occasions our applications have been successful. Such grants have assisted St Martinâ??s with the purchase and instalment of solar panels, solar battery, upgrade of our kitchen to commercial standard, establishment of a childrenâ??s playground, upgrade of security, installation of outdoor blinds and the provision of a defibrillator.

We wish her well for her work in the future.

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