



All Souls, St Peters celebrates 140 years

All Souls church in St Peters has marked 140 years of ministry at its Patronal Festival on Sunday 5 November with the regular congregation joined by many members of the wider community to celebrate the long community history.

The parish was founded when the Church of England was offered two plots, now 49-51 Sixth Avenue, and a small wooden church was licensed for divine worship on All Souls' Day, Friday 2 November 1883.

Bishop Denise Ferguson, who preached the sermon at Sunday's service noted the report by Rev'd Dean Rowney who wrote 'The name of the church was apparently influenced by the churchmanship of the first Priest in Charge: Canon Arthur Dendy: "Few Anglican churches observed All Souls' Day in the early 1900s, considering it to be "Romish" practice."



Bishop Denise seated in the Bishop's Chair in All Souls' newly renovated Chancel which has been roped off for some years. "Make-safe" work has been done to remove cracked plaster. It is believed to be the first time a woman bishop has sat in the Bishop's Chair and presided at the Eucharist from behind the high altar at the church. Photo by: Kirk Robinson

The land on which the current church stands on the corner of Third Avenue and Stephen Terrace was purchased in 1907 but construction on the 450-seat Byzantine style church only began in 1915 with the building dedicated in May 1916.

It was not consecrated until 1926, however, due to regulatory and financial constraints. The old church on Sixth Avenue used for Sunday School and as a hall.

In 1936 Kay Hall was built in memory of the Kay sisters, Florence and Mary by their sisters Margaret, Christina and Sarah and then in 1955 the original land and church on Sixth Avenue was sold as seed money for a new hall

That was completed in 1957 named the Coles Memorial Hall after Canon Coles.



The congregation celebrates 140 years of All Souls, St Peter's ministry. Photo by: Kirk Robinson

In her sermon, Bishop Denise noted the origins of the Feast of All Soul's which was instituted in the 11th century by Odilo, Abbot of Cluny Monastery in France.

"The day was set aside to pray for the souls of the faithful departed. In the Roman Catholic tradition,

hence the earlier reference to a Romish practice, it was believed that humanity was born into original sin, and therefore the souls of the faithful departed required further purification before they reached their final and eternal resting place in heaven. During this time of purification, the soul resided in Purgatory,” she said.

“I don’t know about you, but as a child when I heard talk of Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory it was certainly distressing.



All Souls’ Brass Ensemble, which is made up of volunteer musicians from several brass bands including Campbelltown City Brass Band. Photo by: Kirk Robinson

“Personally, I prefer to claim the Celtic approach, which affirms that what is deepest within us is the image of God, obscured by sin but not erased. The Celtic approach believes that all of God’s creation is good, a blessing, and in essence is an expression of God; and that the essential goodness of God in humanity is fully restored through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.”

Regardless of its history, Bishop Denise said the commemoration of All Souls, and remembering and honouring the lives of those who have gone before us is important, and I am glad that this aspect of the tradition of All Soul’s remains in the Anglican Church.



People's Warden Emma Robinson with Stuart and Valerie Langshaw. "Mr Lang" was Chaplain at Woodlands Girls' when Emma was at high school. Photo by Kirk Robinson

"Much has happened in this parish over the past 140 years. If you have had an opportunity to visit the parish website, you will see that All Souls' Parish has alternated between flourishing and struggling throughout the 20th Century, and into the 21st Century, as have many Christian communities," Bishop Denise said.

"However, despite the challenges, All Soul's strives to remain relevant in a world of distraction and demand and continues to offer faith-based community support, facilities, and friendship. All Soul's continues to be a blessing to the community it has faithfully served for 140years. "



Bishop Denise and All Souls' Parish Priest the Revd Julia Denny-Dimitriou with the Mayor of Norwood Payneham St Peters, Robert Bria. Photo by: Kirk Robinson

"It is heartwarming to have so many people from the wider community present this morning.

"Today, we give thanks for the journey so far, and for the faithful witness of the saints and souls who have been a part of that journey."

Looking ahead, Bishop Denise acknowledged with sadness the current environment where most organised religion has been pushed to the fringe of society.

"Without a faith base and the sense of belonging we find in community, or as we Christians might say 'loving God and our neighbour as ourselves' our moral compass becomes skewed," she said.

But she reminded the congregation that the future is not a solitary journey.

“As St Paul wrote to the people of Rome *‘nothing will ever separate us from the love of God’*. The love that called all things into being and resides at the heart of all humanity. God is inherently with us every step of the journey...

“Even though All Soul’s, St Peter’s faces many challenges, you are also abundantly blessed. However, sometimes the blessings become clouded by the weight of the challenges. I encourage you to look beyond the clouds and own those blessings.”

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