

## OUR PARISH STORY OVER TIME

### The Early Struggle

Extract taken from "Church of Our Fathers" by A E Clark quoting from an article written by the Rev C.J.Chambers one time Vicar of "Waterloo (Yarragon), Trafalgar and Moe.

Moe presented me with an inaugural congregation of seven souls, including children. Someone had kindly swept out the large Mechanic's Institute Hall and the peculiar musty air, which, of course, was a great thing for us. I do not remember who played. It was Morning Prayer and Litany for Holy Communion. Our congregation remained at about seven for approx. eight months, when the Venerable Henry Langley, on a visitation tour, peremptorily ordered me to cut out Moe and concentrate on other places, or try to find a way over the swamp to Willowgrove, or somewhere. Moe had never been a success, and, in his opinion, never would be. "Tell them I say so, waste no more time there." Well, I did not like this at all. I had a feeling that something was really moving, and asked for three months more. The request was granted, and I made the most of the facts—and succeeded. Of course, all were delighted and none more than the Archdeacon, who was simply grand. This was the way of it. I told the little congregation the position and quietly talked it over with some of them privately. There seemed, however, to be no stir among the dry bones, beyond an expressed sadness. However, somehow or other I felt happy. A fortnight after my public announcement, one day I called on the Bank. The young accountant, Mr. Deschamp, upon my leaving, called me back and informed me of a credit balance to the church account, about £13, and asked for instructions concerning the same. How long it had been lying there unused in the bank or how it was raised, or for what it was originally intended, he did not know. I could not by any means learn more about the matter.

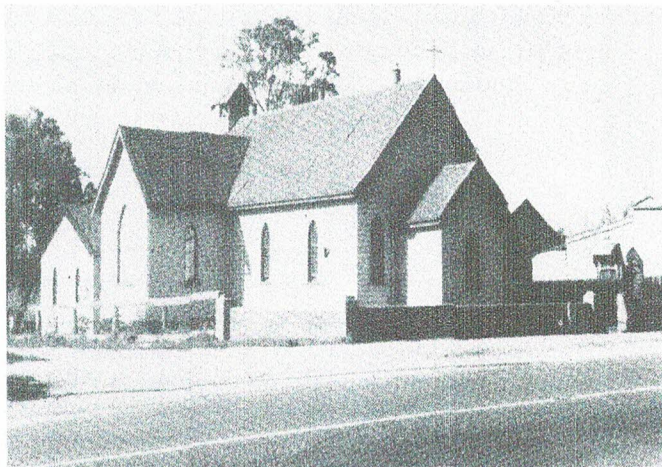
The Moe Mechanic's Institute Hall



However, Mr. Chambers continues:—"I at once visited Mrs. Jardine, Coffee Palace Proprietor, and one of the dispirited faithful seven, and told her that God had saved the amount for us as a nest-egg for a church at Moe, and at last persuaded her to this view. About six weeks later, while Mrs. Jardine was busily engaged on a Tea-cosy for a Roman Catholic Bazaar, about to be held in Moe for the building of a church, conscience suddenly awoke, and the lady immediately ceased her work, changed her dress, and made straight over the railway line to Mr. Fechner, saddler, and professing atheist, with a smiling demand that he should attend church. He gave her £1 but refused to go to church.

Astonishment gave way to interest and the lady's smile succeeded, for she was sent by Fechner to Haigh Bros., Wheelwrights, etc. She collected £2 from this source and then came to Mr. Savige, total something more than £4.

This was good news for me on the following Sunday morning, and its argument was unanswerable. Excepting for one person, all the subscribers to date were either professed infidels or absolute non-church-goers. The congregation increased. Very gently a spiritual inquiry became apparent, and having enlisted the sympathy and co-operation of a good German farmer, who kindly prepared drawings while I prepared the specifications and, within little more than a year from that date the little Church of Holy Trinity was built, not only free from debt, but with a credit balance of 6/6. Except for the high dado, the building was only a skeleton, but a church none the less. As nearly as I remember the Archdeacon opened and dedicated it." [The actual date, although not given by Mr. Chambers, was December 3rd, 1895.] "From that time onward the building was never large enough for the ordinary congregations. God raised up a Lay helper, and my brother sometimes came from Melbourne, so we found it possible to give Evensong periodically.

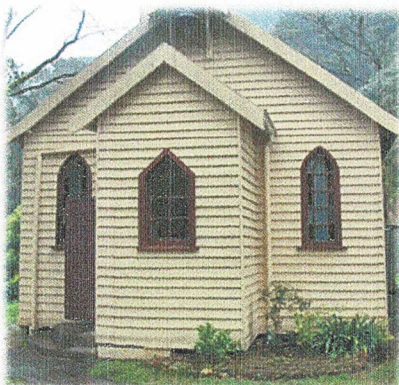


## OUR PARISH STORY OVER TIME

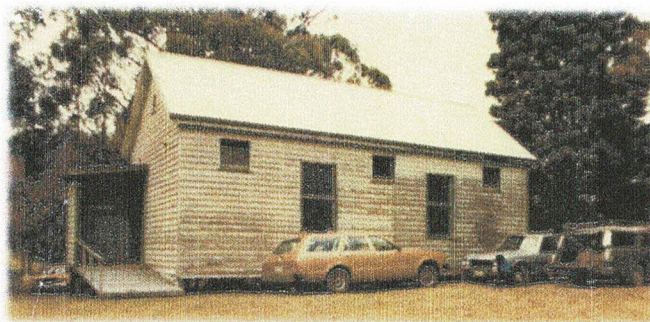
Research is from Church of Our Fathers by A E Clark and Light and Life– A History of the Anglican Church in Gippsland by I T Maddern

The History of the Church in Walhalla and Yallourn, both connected with our parish tells two very different sides of life and development in Gippsland and both connected to mining.

We begin with **Walhalla** a gold mining town previously known as Stringers Creek which sprang to life when Edward “Ned” Stringer and his three companions found gold in the creek in December 1862, then in February 1863 two prospectors found gold in a quartz reef known as Cohens Reef and the development of underground mining. In its boom the town was home to about 4,000 people which was smaller than other alluvial gold settlements.. The first Church of England was built in 1872. The church was consecrated in the name of St. John the Evangelist on March 20th 1878. The cost of reef mining and the issue of water seeping into the tunnels saw a decrease in mining in Walhalla. The Railway from Moe reached Walhalla in 1910 but it was really just in time to see the mines beginning to close down and the railway became useful for people to remove their property from the town. It was decided at this time to pull down and relocate the church to Wonthaggi. This was not popular with the town folk and so it is said that most of the work had to be done at night. Similarly the Rectory was moved to Thorpdale. A new smaller church was built at Walhalla and opened on the 16th March 1919. It is said that the towns people resented what was done and lost interest in the building. A priest remained until 1911 but in 1912 it came under the direction of the clergy of Moe and later Newborough after it was proclaimed a parish. In 2023 there were 20 people living in the area. The Church is still faithfully maintained by a small group of parishioners and is used occasionally for weddings, baptisms etc.



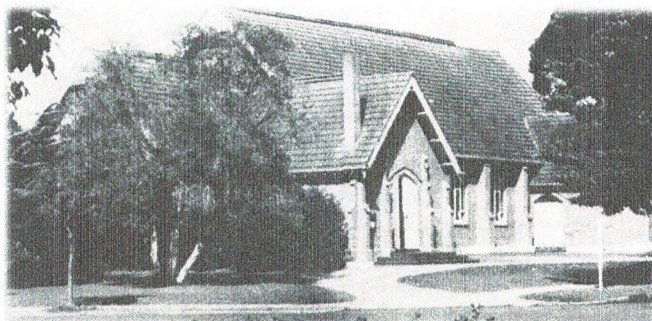
**The Church of St Thomas, Erica** The first church on this site was a Methodist Church built of timber from a demolished building in Walhalla, on land given by Mrs.J.Gloz Snr in 1912. The building became beyond economic repair so the Methodist church handed it over to the Church of England and a new building was sourced for the site. The chosen building was formerly the public hall at Gould (a township which no longer exists as it was flooded by the Moodarra Dam. This church was dedicated in 1963 and monthly services were held there until 2014 when the church was closed and put up for sale.



### The Parish of Yallourn

The first discovery of Brown Coal in the Latrobe Valley was in 1873 but it wasn't until the 1920's that its potential was realised and the State Electricity Commission was established and mining commenced in Yallourn. On the 31st December 1921 the revd P.H.Dicker arrived and the first service was held on the 8th January under a Pine Tree and it wasn't long before services were regularly conducted in the Mess Rooms of the Old Brown Coal Mine at Morwell Bridge and in a temporary school building in the embryo township of Yallourn. A dual purpose building to serve as both church and hall was built and opened on the 17th May 1924. In 1958 a new Sunday School building was erected and in 1959 the dual purpose building was converted into a church

With the growth of Yallourn it became an immediate Parish on its own. *(continued page 11)*



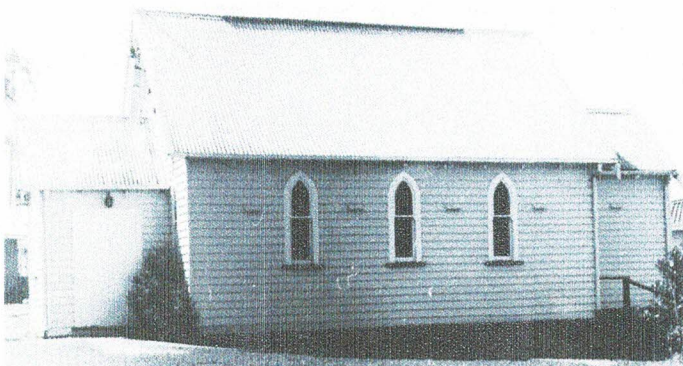
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In the 1980's it was decided to mine the coal which was under the township of Yallourn so the town was closed and all the buildings moved out or demolished. During this time the Yallourn parish ceased to be and became part of the Parish of Newborough.

The Church of **Saint James** was dedicated on the 12th November 1927. Originally the town was known as Brown Coal Mine until its name was changed to **Yallourn North** in 1947. For a short period of time in the 1950's Yallourn North had a resident Curate, but as finance made it more difficult to maintain this position ministry was provided from Saint Johns.

A Church / Hall was dedicated at Morwell Bridge on July 2nd 1938 and regular services were conducted until the 1950s. Eventually the need to extend the coalfields saw this building relocated at Yallourn North as a hall. The building was sold in 1976 and a meeting room added to Saint James.

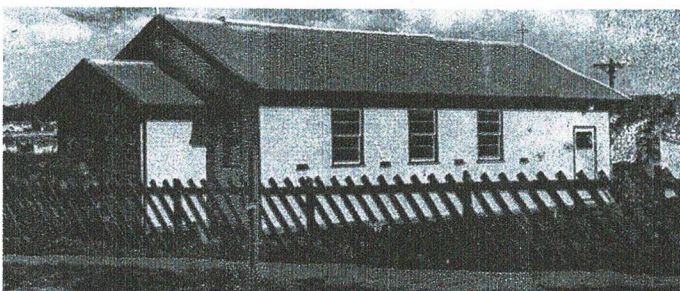
As it became part of the Parish of Newborough services were conducted on the third Sunday of the



month and then later as part of the Parish of Moe-Newborough each 5th Sunday. Since 2020 services have only been held occasionally.

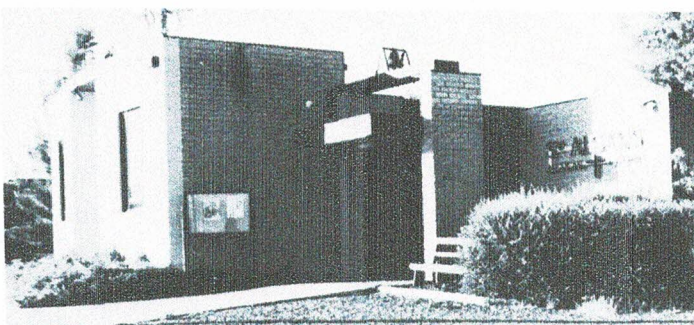
### THE PARISH OF NEWBOROUGH

First services in the Newborough area were held in the Town Hall. Moe Parish was then able to source a marquee and given the right to set it up on the



corner of Thoresby Street and Southwell Ave. This was soon followed by the building of a Church hall

On the 6th September 1954 Newborough became a separate parish. The Reverend R.H.D.Collyer, who had been assisting at Moe became its first Rector. With the demise of Yallourn the Victorian Government made available compensation to community organisations And a few property owners in Yallourn as the township gradually decreased in size. With some of this capital, it was possible to assist maintain a ministry in Yallourn, erect a new Rectory in Newborough and plan for a new church complex in Newborough. As a result a new Church was built on what had been the Methodist Church site on the corner of Old sale Road and William Street. It was opened and dedicated in June 1980.



### The Church is Dedicated to Saint Aidan

Aidan of Lindisfarne, born in Ireland, may have studied under [St. Senan](#) before becoming a [monk](#) at Iona. At the request of King Oswald of Northumbria, Aidan went to Lindisfarne as [bishop](#) and was known throughout the kingdom for his [knowledge](#) of the Bible, his learning, his eloquent preaching, his holiness, his distaste for pomp, his kindness to the poor, and the miracles attributed to him. He founded a monastery at Lindisfarne that became known as the English Iona and was a center of learning and missionary activity for all of northern England. He died in 651 at the royal castle at Bamburgh

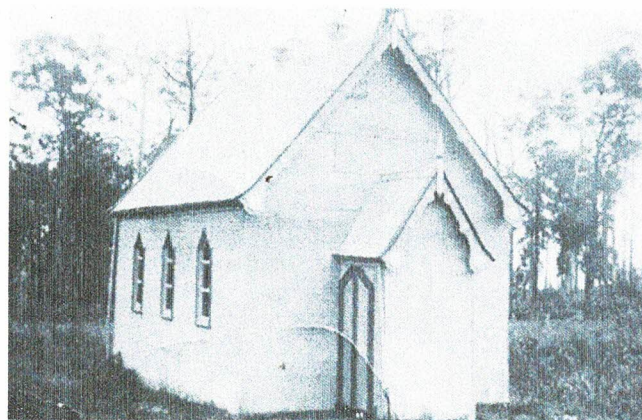
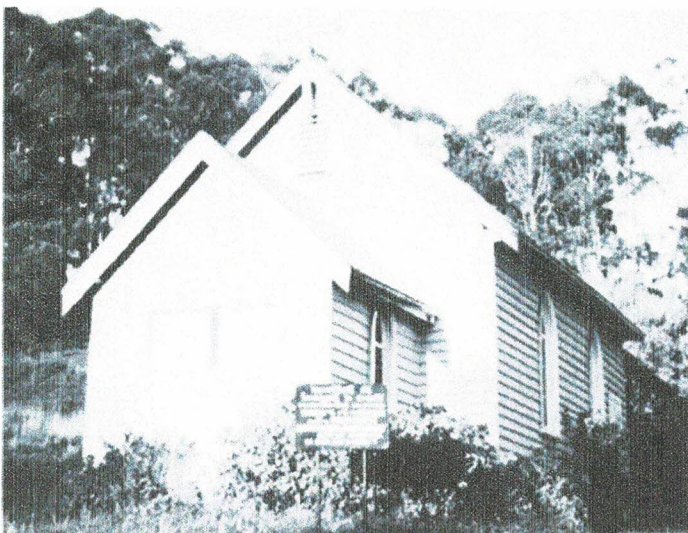


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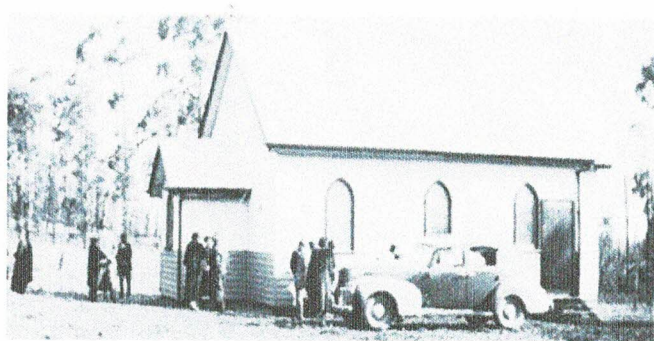
**Research is from Church of Our Fathers by A E Clark and Light and Life– A History of the Anglican Church in Gippsland by I T Maddern**

In August our story commenced with the vision and building of Holy Trinity Moe. It should be noted that the original church was very small and so further funds were raised to extend the building and the improved building was dedicated by Bishop Pain on 10th July 1904.

While we have been concerned with Holy Trinity, this was not the first Church to be built in what was to become the Parish of Moe (remembering that Moe did not become a parish of its own until 1925). The first was **St. Matthews Coalville** which was opened on the 3rd June 1892. The site was given by a Dr. Lawrence (he had a practice in Collins Street Melbourne). The site was on top of a hill in the area opposite where Rosato Road meets Coalville Road. The land is currently the Hasthorpes farm. The little church used to sway in the wind and the congregation was convinced it would blow over so they managed to obtain a new site on the corner of school road and the church was relocated. It closed in 1971 and was demolished in 1973.



closed and sold in 2014.



**Saint Georges** also began as a congregation meeting in various premises. In 1927 Mr George Adler of Tanjil South wrote to the Hon. Secretary, Mrs. M. Whittakers offering an acre of land adjoining the state school. It was accepted surveyed and handed over. Mr F.H Galden of Moe drew up plans and specifications and by the end of September 1930 the building was complete. It was licenced and Dedicated by the Bishop on March 28th 1931. The last services were held in 1970. The building was then removed to Gormandale in the Parish of Rosedale and re-established as St Lukes Gormondale.

In 1947 Church of Our Fathers records that "services were held in Willowgrove, and now quite a little settlement is springing up between Moe and Yallourn. It is called Newborough.

Other churches to be built in the parish were Saint James Hill End and Saint Georges Tanjil South.

**Saint James** like most other places began as a congregation meeting in a hall or a home. A Mrs. Lovibond gave an acre of land and it was believed that she advanced the sum of money for the building. It was opened by Bishop Pain on the 26th April 1908.

It was destroyed by bushfires in 1939, was rebuilt, licensed and dedicated on November 9th 1940. The Church was eventually

At the same time the parish had negotiated an area of land in South Street Moe where a Marquee Church was erected to serve the growing Moe South Area. The Parish was successful in securing an agreement with the Government to build a pre-school on the South Street land to serve as a kindergarten, church and combined church and community hall. At the time this was one of the biggest growth areas in the Diocese.

The Bishop noted that his advisors estimated that

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## OUR HISTORY CONTINUED

they would need to provide, at once, buildings in this developing area at a cost of 20,000 pounds and to provide at least four extra clergymen.

In 1947 Moe and surrounding area had a population of 2811 by 1954 this had grown to 12427.

Similarly the congregation at Holy Trinity averaged 66 in 1947 but by 1954 Holy Trinity had 54, Saint Lukes 53 (107 in total) and Newborough 100. The parish also had flourishing Sunday Schools, Girls Friendly Society (GFS) and Church of England Boys Society (CEBS) at both Moe and Newborough.

With the growth in the Moe population being centred on the South side of the railway community facilities began in that direction. The South Street Primary School was opened in February 1951, Moe High School in February '53 and the Elizabeth Street School in July '56. The first St Kieran's Roman Catholic Church was built adjacent to Holy Trinity in 1900 and then moved to Lloyd and Wirraway Street in 1950. The Vale Street Oval opened in 1959. The Church taking note of this development looked for an opportunity to also develop on the Southern side. A parishioner offered to sell land which he owned in Fowler Street where the current Community Health Centre is situated but the Shire had land in South Street which they proposed could accommodate the Church of England, Methodist, Baptist and Roman Catholic Churches. As the other denominations took up other sites the total area was taken up by the Church of England. This was a great act of faith at the time in growing the churches ministry in Moe. As mentioned before services began in a Marquee until the new Kindergarten /Church / Hall was built in what is now known as Luke Street thanks to the support of a Government Grant. The Kindergarten operated here until 2019. The building hosted community activities such as Table Tennis, Volley Ball, film nights and dances as well as Sunday School and Childrens and Youth Groups and then was transformed into a place of worship every Sunday. Eventually in 1966 it was decided to build a stand alone Church on South Street. This building was opened and dedicated in 1967. The Kindergarten / Hall then became more available for a wider range of activities which included a Coffee Shop and a catering venue where the church ladies hosted many Weddings and Birthday celebrations.

In 1969 a new Holy Trinity Church was built and opened with the old church being relocated to Gippsland Heritage Park. The Hall was relocated to the Anzac Street block. Holy Trinity celebrated its Centenary in 1979 .

In 1982 a new Rectory was built beside St . Luke's and the old Rectory was leased by Anglicare and later to Gippsland Employment Skills Training and then became part of our parish Opportunity shop program.

St Lukes Church was eventually enlarged with a new Narthex, Office Area, Kitchen and toilets. This was paid for by the sale of three blocks of land along Luke Street and into South Street. With the completion of the building the Church was Consecrated in 1990. The Parish of Moe began to consider centralising its activities on the South Street block and after an extensive consultation process this was agreed.

This also occurred at the same time as the Parish was asked by the Diocese to sponsor a Ministry to the Sudanese population that had moved into the Valley. At first that Ministry was established at Holy Trinity and we attempted to gain funding to improve the facilities to allow for the large congregation of over 100. This was unsuccessful so they moved to St Lukes having a service following the parish service and allowing them to use the hall for the large Sunday School. Unfortunately due to the lack of employment most of this cohort moved back to Melbourne and those remaining joined local churches in Traralgon and Morwell.

We continued to develop plans for the up grading of the South Street facilities. A plan for a new Church Centre was produced by a building designer in consultation with the Diocese and an in principal decision was made to proceed. At the same time, we began consulting with the parish of Newborough regarding shared ministry and eventually this led to the formation of a single parish.

St. Lukes was still a very active centre for worship and activities such as play groups, childrens and youth groups etc until COVID hit and the parish closed all activities other than worship which was centred at St Aidan's where we could spread out.

## OUR PARISH STORY OVER TIME FROM HISTORY TO THE FUTURE

Discussions in 2013 between the Parishes of Moe and Newborough about co-operative ministry and sharing resources led to the parishes seeking a half time incumbent for each parish. Fr. Sathi Anthony was appointed and arrangements were made for him to be able to share his ministry across Moe and Newborough. Fr Sathi was inducted as Rector of Moe and Rector of Newborough on the 17th February 2015. This arrangement then led to the parishes inviting respective wardens to attend each others Parish Council.

Discussions eventually turned towards the return to operating as one parish. The process for this to happen was organised through the Diocese and on Sunday October 8th 2017 the Parish of Moe-Newborough was instituted and Fr. Sathi inducted as Rector.

We continued to move slowly. Whilst we had already commenced having combined services once a month we now worshipped week about at each centre with a fifth Sunday Service at Yallourn North. All parish groups and organisations continued but now as a united parish.

It was clear that the newly formed parish needed to look at the issue of parish land and buildings as the cost to run and maintain facilities was ever increasing. The Erica church had been closed and it was put up for sale. It was initially sold but issues arose over access to the property and the sale fell through. This issue has been put in the hands of the Diocese but still not resolved. The Church was deconsecrated on the 11th September this year.

COVID hit the parish in March 2020. When we were allowed to commence services with limited numbers and personal space requirements the decision was taken to hold all services in one building to save on the cleaning issue and St Aidans was chosen because the fellowship area at the back could be cleared away and pews spaced out over the whole floor space. COVID restrictions continued through to September 2021 in various forms from no worship to limited numbers attending and no groups or fellowship activities and meetings. We slowly emerged from these restrictions into the beginning of 2022, though many parish organisations and programs have still not recommenced.

Fr Sathi celebrated his last service in December 2022 and went on leave returning for a farewell in March 2023.

Out of convenience we continued to hold Sunday worship at St Aidans and Wednesday Eucharists were reconvened at St Lukes. We have worshipped at St James on St James Day and the Sunday after Christmas.

Bishop Andrew Curnow was asked to prepare a report on the future parish development and the use of buildings. This report was presented to the parish just after Easter 2023. The Parish also had a consultation led by John Mark Ministries in January 2024. The recommendations of this consultation were all accepted with the main one being that through an intentional listening process the now Moe-Newborough Parish should redetermine its vision for the next 5 years and then on doing this revisit the issue of buildings .

This work has now commenced with a Parish Meeting to discuss our vision and then the appointment of a group of people to work on the vision and bring it back to the congregation.

The parish was also asked by the Diocese to consider the appointment of a part time priest in the person of Fr Giles Motisi from Papua New Guinea who while taking up the position of Priest in Charge would also study for his Masters Degree at Ridley College with the intention of returning to his post as Deputy Principal of Modowa Institute in Popengetta in 4 years time. Fr Giles and family were welcomed and inducted into the parish on April 9 2025. His ministry has already had an influence on the parish as we learn together from our different cultural backgrounds.

As we have come out of the COVID period it is clear that there is a desire to move forward and find a real purpose for our continuing ministry in the Moe –Newborough Community. We do this as we celebrate 100 years since the Parish of Moe became a parish separating from Trafalgar and Yarragon in 1925. It is also 130 years since the first Holy Trinity was dedicated in December 1895.

It has been a worthwhile experience to go back over our history in the past few issues of our parish paper but now it is clearly time to set out our vision for the future. We hope that every member of the parish will pick up this challenge and be part of the work that has now commenced. The move of the Moe Op Shop to the Anzac Street Site and its co location with the Madge Vinnell Centre has made this an important ministry site. The Listening Post, the Prayer and Meditation Group and more recently the revitalisation of our Community Garden at St Lukes as part of an Anglicare Program have been part of our future planning.