

Speech by Elizabeth Willis, author of *People of the Risen King: a history of St Jude's Carlton 1866 – 2016*, at the launch of the book in the St Jude's Church Hall, 28 October 2017

Firstly, I'd like to acknowledge that we are meeting on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation and to pay my respects to their elders past and present.

Thank you all for coming tonight. It's been a delight for me to research and write the history of St Jude's for its sesquicentenary. It's taken rather longer than first expected: archives went missing, my computer died – twice! Thank you, Bishop Richard, for asking me to write it, and for our early discussions about the project. Thank you too to Chris Mulherin, who, as sesquicentenary locum vicar, wrote a very encouraging foreword, and to John Sugars and Gina Denholm who saw the book through the press. Thank you too, to the vicar John Forsyth and the parish council for supporting its publication. Thanks too to Bishop Paul Barker, Bishop John Harrower and Dr Marcia Cameron who read and enjoyed the manuscript, and to Peter Adam for his keen interest and for launching the book with such enthusiasm.

Some of you have come quite a way to be here, and for some your links with St Jude's go back many years. I've enjoyed talking with you about your connections with St Jude's and including your memories in the history. Over here are Bob and Loris Flavell – who were involved in setting up a Sunday School in the Children's Hospital in the late 1950s.

Mrs Pauline Kelly who is the daughter of the Reverend Lance Shilton is here: it was under his ministry that St Jude's began targeted evangelistic work among University students, and training new Christians to reach out to other people in Carlton and beyond.

At the end of the 1960s, Murray Seiffert and his wife Marjorie floated the idea of moving into a flat on the new Carlton housing commission Estate to live an 'incarnational ministry' there. Their plan was thwarted because they were transferred to work in the country, but their conversations and example helped crystallise the idea of the Estates Church, that was finally established 15 years later

David Binns, the vicar in the early 1970s, has travelled from Adelaide to be here. Soon after he arrived as vicar, David famously prayed with a churchwarden that the small congregation would grow until the church was filled again; and the way this prayer was answered has been a source of great thankfulness over the years

It's lovely to see Bert Pratt, who with his wife Hilary spent eight years running the St Jude's Community House for fragile Christians, beginning in the late 1970s; and Jay Hutchison, who led a residential Discipleship School, the forerunner of today's Equip programme, in the early 1980s

And it's good to welcome Mavis Payne, who was Associate Minister of the evening congregation in the 1980s, and the first woman to lead an Anglican congregation in the Diocese of Melbourne.

The history is called *People of the Risen King* because I wanted to write a history which did not only focus on the work of the vicars, important though this has been, but which also looked at the experience of lay people. Especially I have written about the changes in Carlton and how these have shaped the work of the church; about different ways that laypeople have worked to relate to their

neighbours in Carlton, and about how their understanding of their faith shaped the activities they organised and participated in. I've looked at changing theologies and different worship styles, at relationships with the Diocese, and at what people understood their task as members of a church to be.

St Jude's in the mercy of God has both survived and thrived. One window into the way that St Judeans have thought about their gospel task is to look at what they did.

So let's for a minute look at some of the things that have happened in this old hall since it was opened in 1891. 120 years ago children from impoverished homes in the back lanes came to Sunday school here; they learnt the catechism and stories from the Bible, and St Jude's also ran a free library which was very important for children from impoverished homes in the back lanes whose parents couldn't afford to join a subscription library. In the same decade young men could join The St Jude's Excelsior Athletic and Literary Society – they had a particularly high falutin' name. The church organised a soup kitchen during the 1890s depression and distributed emergency relief when it could.

In the early 20th century work with children continued. David Brighton's father was a choir boy here during the First World War, and there is a photograph in the book of him looking especially angelic in his black and white robes. I am quietly bemused when I think of the sectarian riot over conscription that began outside in Keppel Street in December 1917 – though it was no laughing matter for the vicar who was chased through the Melbourne cemetery by an angry crowd after a meeting of the Protestant Federation here.

In the 1920s teenage girls and older women had working bees here to make padded quilts and clothing to be distributed by missionary Mary Armfield in China. There was a St Jude's Football Club and a Cricket Club, Boys' Brigades and Girls' Friendly Societies, and to some extent St Jude's became an 'associational church', which is a polite way of saying that it became more like a club.

In 1953, when Lance Shilton was vicar, there was a mission to Carlton, where 'every home, hostel, apartment, house, shop, factory and hotel' in Carlton was visited with an invitation; and I am moved by accounts of the prayer meetings here during the mission when people who had been going to church for decades prayed aloud for the first time. Colombo Plan students from India and Sri Lanka who came to Melbourne University in the 1950s played badminton here and were welcomed into the congregation; some became Christian leaders in their home churches. Also in the 1950s, the Overseas Christian Fellowship held its first meetings in this space.

For a few months in the early 1970s several homeless people slept in the hall – though the churchwardens expressed concern about this development when one man pulled a knife on the vicar after he intervened in a domestic dispute. There was the unruly Notlrac Club where up to 40 children played games and had the Narnia stories read to them; the wardens had an anxious time with that as well, because the boisterous games damaged the paintwork and occasionally knocked holes in the wall. And the Australian band The Skyhooks played their first gig at a dance in this hall.

Later in the 1970s, there were quarterly Agape meals here, where the whole church met on a Saturday evening, picnicked while sitting on rugs on the floor, listened while some members spoke about what God had been doing in their lives recently, prayed together in small groups, and then rolled up the rugs for a lively bush dance to end the evening. More recently, intensive Bible training and teaching has happened here – I have good memories of Summer Tuesday Fellowship meetings in the 1980s, and now there are Equip training sessions and work with university student leaders, Cross Cultures, a weekly meal and meeting for students from overseas, a youth group, study groups on climate change and creation care, ... the list goes on. And won't it be lovely when the renovations to this site are finished and we can use all the existing buildings, and the new meeting rooms, to continue to serve the people of Carlton?

Obviously I, and the people who have encouraged me as I have worked on the project, hope that the readers of *People of the Risen King* will include many people who have become part of the church fairly recently. I hope that you will read it with a strategic mind, as you think about the areas where the church is and has been useful and effective. I hope that it will throw some light on some of the challenges currently facing St Jude's – how did earlier generations face their challenges? And most of all, read it to be encouraged about the faithfulness of God who has used fragile human beings to work to extend His kingdom in this part of Melbourne.

Thank you all for coming – and enjoy the book!

Elizabeth Willis

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