

Chapter 18

MODUS OPERANDI:

THE LEGAL & FINANCIAL AFFAIRS OF THE PARISH

THE Parish of Mitcham is a unit within the Diocese of Adelaide. As such it is subject to the prevailing rules and regulations as laid down by the Synod of that Diocese, and is also obligated to contribute its due share of monies towards the upkeep of the Diocese and its various dependencies.

This chapter seeks to record the changing legal status of the Parish over the past 150 years and its financial commitments. I am indebted to Fr Andrew Cheesman and John Dibben for their advice on these matters, also to Peter Geytenbeek for his contribution on the various Stewardship Campaigns, Canvasses and Planned Giving Programmes held between 1958 and 1999.

THE PARISH AS A LEGAL ENTITY

In 1963 the Synod Solicitor, Mr G.E.H. Bleby, O.B.E., LL.B., read a paper at a meeting of the Church of England Historical Society in South Australia outlining the historical origins of Trust Deeds in use in the Diocese of Adelaide. In it he explained that the earliest Trust Deeds were basically conveyances to Trustees of land to be held for religious purposes. They provided for the method of appointing the first incumbent and his successors, maintenance of the Church and rectory, the appointment of Churchwardens, the holding of Vestry meetings, the appointment of new Trustees and the financial arrangements of the Church. Unfortunately they failed to foresee that some day it might be necessary to sell the particular property and build elsewhere, or that the need might arise to mortgage a rectory or a hall.

When Bishop Short arrived to take charge of the infant Diocese at the end of 1847, the Church was “well and truly launched on a sea of Trust Deeds”. Following the inaugural meeting of the Adelaide Diocesan Synod held on the 16th January 1855, the Vestry of each of the twenty-six congregations was asked to consider a draft constitution upon which the *Fundamental Provisions and Regulations* of the new Synod were to be based. By October a ‘Consensual Compact’ had been negotiated between the Bishop, Priests and Lay Representatives. Once signed by representatives of each parish the Synod was formally constituted. In essence it was a federation of self-governing congregations each governed by its own Trust Deed.

Model Trust Deeds (MTD)

What is known as the 1858 Model Trust Deed was adopted by Synod in May of that year.¹ It comprised two schedules: Schedule A setting forth the fundamental provisions of the Trusts of parishes in union with Synod (which were

unalterable) and Schedule B setting forth regulations not fundamental to be observed in the government and management of parochial churches (which Trustees could alter, revoke or add to with the consent of Vestry and Synod).

Until 1860 the Lord Bishop of Adelaide was the sole Trustee of the Church property at Mitcham, the land having been conveyed to him on 10th October 1848 by Robert Thornber.² In a conveyance dated 11th April 1860 Bishop Short surrendered his trusteeship of the land and building to Arthur Blyth, Richard Hicks, Alfred Hardy, James Lewis and Henry Taylor as Trustees under the 1858 Model Trust Deed.³

In 1911 a decision was made by the Vestry to become an Incorporated Association in order to facilitate the legal administration of all Church affairs and do away with the necessity of appointing new Trustees whenever someone died or left South Australia.

Subsequent versions of the MTD evolved over the years, and from 1884 they contained a power of sale, and a power to alter, revoke or add to their provisions. In 1927 a Model Trust Deed was adopted by Synod which contained an entirely novel provision for parochial and central councils (where a parish contained more than one congregation). Initially there were no parish councils as we know them, the care of Church property and the financial affairs of a parish under the 1858 MTD being in the hands of the Wardens.

When Bleby presented his paper in 1963 he noted:

When it is considered that within one parish there can be several Churches each operating under a different Model Trust Deed – some perhaps including provision for a parish council, while others did not – and when it is further considered that in connection with one Church, the Church itself, its cemetery, its rectory, and its hall can all be under different Model Trust Deeds, it will be readily appreciated that one is unable to deal with any particular piece of Church property without considerable research to ascertain exactly what Trusts are applicable to it.

The conversion of a Church from one Model Trust Deed to another from 1884 to 1927 inclusive is a relatively simple matter...[but] a Church which finds itself under the 1858 Model Trust Deed is quite incapable of getting rid of the fundamental (and largely outmoded) provisions of Schedule A...

He was well aware of the problems being faced in the Parish of Mitcham and probably had it in mind when he wrote those words, for although St Michael's came under the 1858 MTD, the daughter church of St Wilfrid when built in 1934 operated under the 1927 MTD and was

managed by a Parish Council. St Michael's also came under the Church of England Succession Act which had been passed to make provision for Churches found, after the death of Bishop Short, to be vested in the name of Augustus Short rather than in the name of 'The Bishop of the Diocese of Adelaide and his Successors'. In particular this applied to those Churches established during the brief period when government finance was available through Ordinance No.10 of 1847 (see page 7).

To add to the confusion, the old Rectory, the St Michael's Parish Day School (old Parish Hall), and the Mitcham Church of England Cemetery operated under differing Trust Deeds and Trustees! As the various Trustees of these properties died or left the Colony, the vacancies should have been filled "with all convenient speed by the Vestry, to be specially convened for the purpose". However, this seldom happened and crises frequently occurred, particularly when a new incumbent had to be chosen at short notice!

During the late 1950s strained relationships between the office bearers of St Michael's and St Wilfrid's almost caused a split between the two ends of the Parish, and Bishop Reed was asked for advice (see page 102). He told St Michael's Vestry "to consult their Trust Deed". When analysed, this revealed that the 'St Michael's Parochial Council', established in April 1940 at the suggestion of St Wilfrid's Parish Council, had no authority under the Trust Deed. It was the Wardens of St Michael's who carried the full responsibilities, and the Vestry could only advise them from time to time. The following motion was passed at an Adjourned Vestry held on 24th April 1959: "That the Vestry determine that the committee in the past known as the Parochial Council be replaced by an Advisory Committee, as the former body has no legal authority or justification." Furthermore, the Central Council, composed of the Wardens and several representatives from each Church, was also deemed to be illegal. The affairs of the Mitcham Parish Central Council were wound up at a meeting of the Wardens held on 21st May 1959, after which all formal communications were negotiated by the Wardens only.

The Parish as the Unit within the Diocese

During 1972 important changes were made to the Trust Deeds under which both St Michael's and St Wilfrid's operated. At their Easter Vestries both congregations voted to "seek the benefit of the new Church of England Trust Property Act of 1971 and the Synod Model Trust Deed of 1969". Under these new rules all existing Church properties were automatically vested in Synod and all existing Trusts and Trust Deeds revoked. On the 19th October 1972 a legitimate Joint Parish Council was re-formed.

Further steps towards Parish unity were taken at a Special Vestry held on 4th September 1977 when the decision was taken to have a Joint Parish Vestry consisting of elected members of the Parish Council, Wardens, Lay Synodsmen and Patronage Committee representatives; also to operate with one bank account and one set of offering envelopes. However, it was not until 1986 that St Michael's and St Wilfrid's legally became one parish instead of two congregations (see page 129). The Combined Annual Easter Vestry held on 4th May that year was the first held under a new Parochial Administration

Ordinance passed by Synod which permitted one Vestry and a single parish council to operate on behalf of a united parish. Mitcham opted to become an 'Optional Parish Vestry under Part II Division III'.

Problems Disposing of Property

The immutability of Schedule A in the 1858 MTD and the multiplicity of other Trust Deeds under which various properties were held led to innumerable problems over the years when it became necessary to sell land.

The first indication of impending problems in the Parish of Mitcham came in August 1880 when a Special Vestry was called to discuss the deteriorating condition of the Parsonage. The maintenance of the old building was a continual drain on finances and Charles Hardy, a leading solicitor and Vestryman, was requested "to make enquiries as to the position of the Title to the Parsonage property, and as to the possibility of selling or mortgaging such property" in order that they might build a new Parsonage "or make substantial additions to the present one". Ten days later he reported that "according to the Trust Deed of the property it was impossible either to sell or mortgage St Michael's Parsonage". The matter remained unresolved for over seventy years, and it was not until 1953 that Synod consented to the sale of the old Parsonage or Rectory (see page 96).

Similar problems arose with the old Parish Hall. When built in 1890 as the St Michael's Day School it was under the control of private Trustees whose powers were conferred on them under the 1858 MTD. St Michael's Vestry had the right to appoint new Trustees as old ones died or left South Australia, but this was often overlooked.

In 1951 it was found that the last three Trustees appointed had all been dead for years: Alfred Heath died on 18th August 1902, Robert William Thorpe on 17th January 1905 and Alfred Corker Minchin on 20th September 1934. At a Special Vestry meeting held on 15th July 1951, attended by the Synod Solicitor, Gordon Bleby, new Trustees were elected and the decision taken to vest the property in the Synod of the Diocese of Adelaide to avoid having to appoint new Trustees from time to time in the future. Unfortunately the appointment of new Trustees by the Vestry appears not to have been implemented by Church Office.

In April 1972 Vestry requested Synod that both the Church Acre property and the Parish Hall be "granted the benefit of the Church of England Trust Property Act 1971 in respect of the properties listed ... and that the Synod hold the said properties upon the Trusts of the Synod Model Trust Deed of 1969". All existing Trusts and Trust Deeds would automatically be revoked and the properties vested in Synod. The following August, the Synod advised that these requests had been granted in respect of the Church but that there was a problem with the Hall. It could not be granted without the concurrence of the appointed Trustees. This took seven years to resolve. E.R. (Ted) Smith, who was a Warden at the time, recalled it was quite a saga:

There are some matters not recorded about the sale of the Old Hall. It was built on one piece of land on one Title, but later a second and then a third piece of land

were acquired under separate Titles. The first two pieces were placed under private Trustees who had the power of self perpetuation. Unfortunately these gentlemen did not attend to this duty very well in spite of the fact that the then Chief Justice in 1889 issued an instruction to the remaining one of the three to proceed to appoint another two; he appointed one not two. Later, however, a third was appointed, but that was the last appointment made by members of the Trust. This left the Parish in the situation where there were no available documents of any sort relating to the buildings.⁴

The second and third pieces of land referred to were the tennis courts. During 1972 Ted reported regularly to St Michael's Advisory Committee:

18/5/72: Mr Smith reported that he had been in touch with the Land Titles Dept who had advised that a Possessory Title taken out in the names of 3 persons, e.g. the Rector and 2 Wardens, and the Title could then be vested in the new Act.

13/6/72: Mr Smith reported that he had had a discussion with the Acting Registrar General of Deeds concerning the portions of the Hall property presently vested in private Trustees, now deceased. It appears that the situation is most difficult of solution, principally because of the absence of the Declaration of Trusts. Mr Smith is continuing enquiries with the Supreme Court, the successors of the late Alfred C. Minchin and with Synod Solicitors in an endeavour to locate (a) the Titles (b) Trust Deeds.

11/7/72: Mr Smith reported that a search would be made by Supreme Court Officers in regard to Deeds etc. He had also contacted the Minchin family and found that a Mr Minchin in N.S.W. was a relative of the Late Trustee, and a communication was forwarded to Mr Minchin in N.S.W. but to date no reply had been received.

8/8/72: Mr Smith had instructed the Solicitor to search files and advise how far they had progressed in 1952 when Mr Crisp, Mr Bradley and Mr Treloar had been appointed Hall Trustees by St Michael's Vestry.

12/9/72: Legal expenses incurred by Church Office re Trust Deeds were to be paid by St Michael's. Ted Smith offered to pursue his own avenues of enquiry to keep expenses to a minimum.

Although the Standing Committee of Synod agreed in June 1978 to the request of Vestry that St Michael's should have the benefit of the Church of England Trust Property Act 1971 and the 1969 Model Trust Deed for the former Parish Day School building and land on the corner of East Parade and Princes Road, it was not until the 31st July 1979 that the Rector was able to report that "Title to the Hall property has now been clarified". The Examiner of Titles was prepared to accept a certificate under the hand of the Archbishop and Synod Seal Holders in the vexed matter of the transfer of the Hall property to the trusteeship of Synod. The Standing Committee of Synod [now known as the Diocesan Council] finally gave its approval for the sale of the Princes Road property on 14th August 1979 thus paving the way for the new Hall to be built in the grounds of St Michael's.

Since 1980, with the Church, Rectory and Parish Hall all built on the Church Acre and all vested in Synod, the aforementioned problems of outmoded immutable Trusts have become a mere memory consigned to the pages of history – but they should always remain a salutary lesson in the need for forward thinking and the careful wording of future legal documents!

WHO RUNS THE PARISH?

According to the 1858 MTD the management of the affairs of a Church were to be in the hands of a Vestry consisting of "the Minister, Churchwardens, and such members of the Congregation as are or shall be qualified in accordance with the Fundamental Provisions of the Diocese for the time being". To qualify one had to be an adult male communicant member of the United Church of England and Ireland, and be a seat-holder (pay an annual pew rent). The Annual Vestry was to be held "in Easter week", but other Special Vestries could be called "at any time by public notice, specifying the object of such Vestry meeting on the Church doors on two successive Sundays".

Initially all property was held by the elected Trustees who were also responsible, together with the Wardens and members of the Patronage Committee, for choosing a new incumbent and allowing him to occupy the Parsonage or Rectory.

Whilst it has always been the priest's prerogative to make decisions on matters of liturgy and the arrangements within the sanctuary, the approval of Vestry is required before alterations or additions are made to the fabric, furnishings and fittings of the Church. Under the present rules, the Archbishop's Buildings and Ornaments Advisory Committee (ABOAC) must also sanction any building work, or the installation of any new memorials or furnishings.

Appendix 8 lists members of the clergy who have served in the Parish of Mitcham.

Parish Administration in 2002

[Contributed by John Dibben]

Today the Parish of Mitcham with Torrens Park is an unincorporated body administered under the Diocese of Adelaide Constitution Canon 1979, Canons and Bills of the General Synod assented to by the Diocese of Adelaide, the Constitution and Trusts of the See. The body under the Associations Incorporations Act 1956–1965 as amended is 'The Diocese of Adelaide of the Anglican Church of Australia Incorporated', hereinafter called the 'Synod'.

The real property of the Parish is held by the Synod as Trustee in accordance with the Model Declaration of Trust Ordinance, and the Parish Trust Funds are managed by the Adelaide Synod Trust Fund. The Parish Churchwardens and Parish Council are responsible for the day-to-day management of the Parish in accordance with Parochial Administration Ordinance.

The Parish Priest is appointed by the Nomination Committee (formerly called the Patronage Committee) and is licenced by the Bishop. The Parish members of the Nomination Committee are appointed at the Annual

Vestry. When a vacancy occurs, the Bishop summons the Nomination Committee to select a new appointee. During a vacancy the Bishop may appoint a locum tenens.

The Parish Priest shall appoint a Priest's Warden and one quarter of the members of the Parish Council each year. The communicant members of the Parish shall appoint a People's Warden and three quarters of the members of the Parish Council at the Annual Vestry. The Vestry shall elect lay Synod representatives every three years.

The Synod has the primary responsibility for the good order and governance of the Diocese. Each parish is represented by its priest and elected lay persons who meet with the Bishop annually to receive reports and accounts on the state of the Diocese, appoint committees, and approve resolutions for the conduct of the business of the Diocese. The Diocesan Council appointed by Synod shall be a council of advice to the Bishop and the executive committee of the Synod in accordance with the Constitution.

Financial Obligations of the Parish

As a unit within the Diocese of Adelaide, the Parish of Mitcham has certain financial obligations to its Synod. Currently each parish is assessed on the assessable income of the Parish as defined by The Assessment Ordinance 1985. Synod approves Diocesan Expenses annually and determines the rate of assessment to be applied to the assessable income of each Parish. Diocesan Expenses include funding for staff, property, administration costs and grants of the Diocesan Administration Council, Ministry Development Council and Diocesan Leaders as presented to Synod and detailed annually in the Diocese of Adelaide Year Book.

Mitcham has a proud record of being one of only a handful of parishes that has regularly paid its annual Synodal Assessment in full.

As well as its Synodal Assessment, the Parish is expected to contribute to the Outreach and Mission of the Church through:

1. The Ministry Development Council which incorporates the Board of the Home Mission and Evangelism, and St Barnabas' Theological College (Ordination Candidates Fund).
2. Australian Board of Missions and Church Missionary Society (Australian and Overseas Missions).

Over the years the Mitcham Anglican Parish Guild has raised considerable amounts of money towards fulfilling these obligations (see page 252). Various social functions, such as Parish dinners, have been fundraisers for specific projects to assist other parishes in need or Overseas missionary work (see page 254).

Individual Mitcham parishioners also support many other causes such as the work of the Schools' Ministry Team, Anglicare, the Magdalene Centre and St Luke's Mission in Whitmore Square.

[John Dibben]

Duties of Churchwardens

The Office of Churchwarden is a very ancient one, and our present-day Wardens might be interested to know what was expected of their namesakes in earlier times in

England. The 1995 Michaelmas edition of the *Mitcham Parish Herald* featured the following article describing the 'Principal Duties of Churchwardens'. It originated from an old poster found in a Dorset Church and dates from the Elizabethan Settlement:

CHURCHWARDENS are Officers instituted for the advancement of RELIGION for the purpose of preventing Profaneness and Immorality, and to ensure that the Public Worship be performed with proper decency and reverence.

It is moreover a very essential duty of the Churchwardens frequently to visit all the Ale Houses and Victualling Houses within their Parishes, to see that good order is kept in the said Houses: They are to take care that no unlawful Games are permitted, that no Tippling is suffered; that no Prostitutes, or Idle or Disorderly Persons are harboured there; that such Houses are not kept open after eleven o'clock at Night; and that they are not kept open or Tippling or drinking permitted during Divine Service on a Sunday, Christmas Day, and Good Friday, but that utmost decency be preserved on these days.

Churchwardens are the Guardians and Keepers of the Church, and have the care and management of the Benefice during a vacancy... [during which] they are to Plough and Sow the Glebe; get in the Crop; collect the Tythes; Thrash out and sell the Corn; Repair the Buildings, and manage all Profits and Expenses for the benefit of the succeeding Incumbent...

Fortunately, the Parish of Mitcham does not have a Glebe! However, in 2002 the Wardens are the elected Executive Officers of the Vestry and of the Parish Council in accordance with the Parochial Administration Ordinance, and have responsibility for the repair of buildings and for the financial affairs of the Parish.

Appendix 10 lists the names of Churchwardens who have served in the Parish of Mitcham.

ENDOWMENTS, BEQUESTS & DONATIONS

In 1968 the Wardens received a letter from Church Office requesting permission to bulk all separate Trusts held on behalf of St Michael's into one pool for joint investment by Synod in order to get a higher rate of interest. It noted that the Parish held some \$5,516 in Diocesan Trust Funds made up of three separate amounts: a bequest under the will of Henry Strong Price made in 1890 (see page 42); the 'William Culross Memorial Fund' set up in 1911 (see page 61) and the Alfred Wilkinson bequest of 1922 (see page 75).

The interest from those three bequests is paid directly to the Rector of St Michael's as a supplement to his annual stipend, whereas the interest from all other Trust Funds held by Synod on behalf of the Parish of Mitcham accrues to the Parish. These funds are held as Units in a Market Value Fund. They comprise:

1. **Mitcham Fabric Maintenance Fund.** This was established by a bequest from the estate of Douglas



Fig. 18-1
Douglas Bertram
Crisp.
(Courtesy
Brian Crisp)

Bertram Crisp [Fig. 18-1], to which additional capital donations were made by Miss Judith Schroder and Mr and Mrs Ben Oborn, together with a bequest from the estate of the late Mrs Jean Oborn. Contributions have also been made from Church Funds and the income allowed to accrue. Funds may be withdrawn by resolution of the Parish Council for specific purposes connected with the maintenance of St Michael's Church.

2. **Mitcham Organ Maintenance & Music Fund.** Mitcham Parish Church Music Group made the main contribution to this account (see pages 257 and 290). Income has been capitalised each year. Funds are available by resolution of the Parish Council for music and organ maintenance at St Michael's Church.
3. **St Wilfrid's House Account & Florence Bowden Bequest.** The fund was established from the proceeds of the sale of a property adjoining St Wilfrid's, to which had been added a bequest from the estate of Florence Bowden (see page 217). A portion of the income may be withdrawn by resolution of the Parish Council to meet part of the cost of rental accommodation for an Assistant Curate, otherwise the income is capitalised.
4. **Melva E. Smith Bequest.** Income from the bequest is allowed to accrue. Funds are available by resolution of the Parish Council for maintenance, repair and improvement of the furniture, fabric and fittings of St Michael's Church.
5. **Edward R. Smith Bequest.** Income from the bequest is allowed to accrue. Funds may be withdrawn by resolution of the Parish Council for the maintenance of the organ, choir and musical presentations, and for the maintenance of the fabric of St Michael's Church. In 1993 approval was granted by the Supreme Court under a special Order under Section 69b of the Trustee Act for portion of the bequest to be applied for the refurbishment and enhancement of the Bishop & Son organ in St Michael's (see page 293).
6. **Building Fund.** Comprises bequests from the estates of Colin Fowler, Mrs Hewitt and Ken Byrne, plus a capital donation from Mrs Jo Trott. Funds may be withdrawn by resolution of the Parish Council for properly authorised Parish building purposes.

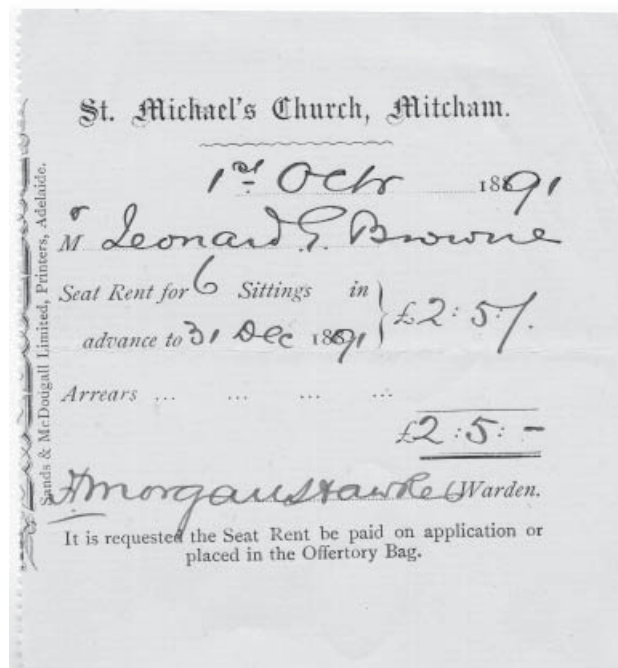
In 1995 the Parish Council adopted the revised Rules of the Adelaide Synod Trust Fund approved by the Diocesan Council and accepted Units of one dollar in the Market Value Fund.

FUNDRAISING: FROM PEW RENTS TO PLANNED GIVING PROGRAMMES

When St Michael's opened for Divine Service in October 1852 it adopted the traditional English method of paying the incumbent's stipend by the collection of annual pew rents (Fig. 18-2). The money was paid in advance and entitled the seat-holder to vote at meetings of the Vestry. He could also pay for extra 'sittings' for his wife and children, the family name being written on a card inserted into a special holder on the end of his pew. If a seat-holder was not seated by the time the 'five-minute bell' ceased ringing, that pew was considered to be free for that service. Certainly an incentive to be punctual! The servants of the gentry, such as their coachmen, sat on benches or stood at the back of the nave.

Pew rents, "for the purpose of supporting the Minister & for other general purposes connected with the Church", were not the only method of financing the Parish. Those who were not seat-holders were encouraged to contribute via the open offertory plate which was rattled under their noses by the Sexton standing by the door at the end of the service. It was also his job to personally collect pew rents from each household, for which he was paid a commission of 5%. Writing in the *Church Chronicle* in September 1866, the incumbent, Reverend W.B. Andrews, advised that a Weekly Offertory system had been in operation in Mitcham "for from two to three years":

Fig. 18-2 Leonard G. Browne's receipt for Seat Rent (Pew Rent) paid in October 1891 for his family of six. (MPA)



I have no hesitation in saying that I regard it as about the best means of raising or supplementing Church Funds. Without any stress or unequal pressure, it gives us on average nearly one hundred pounds a year to calculate on - and our congregation is not large. I think, that, though there will always be strong dissentients against its adoption or continuance, the mass of the congregation would in any case after fair trial be opposed to its discontinuance. We find that those who really desire conscientiously to contribute their proportion to the maintenance of our Church Ordinances are for the most part thus minded. P.S. I may add that the adoption of the Weekly Offertory does not (as might be feared) in any appreciable degree act as a cloy upon Church attendance.

Whenever money was required for large projects a special 'fund' was opened. In 1869 parishioners were being asked to contribute to a 'Parsonage Repairs Fund', an 'Organ Fund', 'Stipend Fund', 'Carriage Shed Building Fund', 'Plastering Church Fund' and a 'Choir Alterations Fund'!

Over the years the clergy frequently complained that they suffered a dramatic drop in their stipend whenever a rich seat-holder left the district. In 1890 Reverend F.W. Samwell said he could not see why "the removal of a seat-holder from Mitcham should seriously jeopardise his stipend". As an example he noted that while the bequest of £250 received under the will of Henry Strong Price was most generous, the amount of interest payable (£12 10s 0d) was only one fourth of the £50 donations Price had been in the habit of giving over the past two years in lieu of the set pew rent of £12. At Samwell's suggestion a 'General Stipend Fund' was set up to supplement the amount derivable from pew rents and endowments.

Pew rents continued to be paid by a handful of St Michael's parishioners until 1941 by which time only £7 was being received annually. By then the envelope system had been in general use for about forty years.

The Envelope System

The first mention of using envelopes as a regular means of contributing to Parish funds was made by Clampett in May 1901. He noted that although the system had been introduced into many churches, Mitcham "should be able to get on without it". However, following the appointment of the first curate in January that year, Clampett probably accepted the inevitable. Some years later he noted that "the Envelope System has proved very successful".

In 1929 a new system called the 'Duplex Envelope' was approved by Synod. Purported to have brought "remarkable instances of success", it was aimed at securing regular weekly amounts from non-churchgoers, or the very occasional attendant. One side of the envelope was to be used for money for parochial needs, and the other side for non-parochial. At the time Clampett was sceptical about obtaining regular donations from those he called "detached", and wrote that "even if it proved necessary to try it at St Michael's, personally, I would regret the necessity of it". By August 1932, when the Parish bank account was overdrawn, he reluctantly agreed for the Wardens to send out letters seeking support for the new

Envelope Scheme, saying: "Things have so changed in the Parish that we are no longer a wealthy congregation, hence the necessity for more general support." As he expected, it did not secure many responses!

Blessing Boxes

Following Clampett's retirement in 1939, the incoming Rector, Reginald Pearman stressed that although St Wilfrid's had been using the Weekly Freewill Offering (WFO) envelope system since the Church opened in 1934, St Michael's still had "no regular system of finance in operation".

After investigating several methods it was decided to inaugurate a system known as Blessing Boxes at the start of 1941. Each family was encouraged to take a box into which they undertook to place at least one half-penny a day as a small token of thanksgiving to God for the many blessings received. The contributions were in addition to ordinary Church collections. These small cardboard boxes, designed to hang on the wall in a prominent position, were collected every quarter by a team of ladies under the direction of Mr D.B. Crisp.

In 1949 it was announced that the Blessing Boxes were to be scrapped at St Michael's and replaced by the old Duplex Envelope system, rather than the WFO still in use at St Wilfrid's. Following the 1954 earthquake St Michael's was faced with the enormous task of raising sufficient funds to undertake the restoration of the badly-damaged Church and Rectory. Frustrated by lengthy delays and lack of money the Rector announced in June 1957 that the only way of overcoming these problems was to invite an outside organisation to conduct a fundraising scheme.

Planned Giving Programmes

[Peter Geytenbeek has contributed the following information. He has had over thirty years hands-on experience in assisting and organising various Canvasses, having served as Committee Chairman in 1977 and 1980.]

After World War II a new approach to fundraising came into the Australian scene. The American-based Wells Organisation was a body which provided, for a fee, a scheme whereby a parish embarked on an organised fundraising exercise which made use of the human resources, that is the man in the pew, to raise the finance needed, not only for annual expenses but often for the added provision of new church buildings. While this group was effective, the commercial approach and some of the methods used did not meet with the approval of many church people.

Initially the Wells Organisation was considered by Mitcham, however in 1958 the Parish engaged instead the newly-formed Department of Promotion, a unit within the Diocese of Adelaide, to run an 'Every Member Canvass' designed to meet the three-year needs of the whole Parish.

A great deal of planning went into this joint venture supported by the Central Council (see page 101). A fine booklet was prepared setting out the needs of the Parish as a whole and the foreseen needs of the two congregations. In his Annual Report to both Vestries in May 1958 the Rector said: "The provision of increased parochial staff must be one of the first objectives of the coming Canvass." Every

family was visited by the women of the Parish who invited them to a 'Loyalty Dinner' which was held in the Adelaide Town Hall. The men of the Parish had been well trained as visitors, and the programme was regarded as most successful when almost 98% of the gross target of £18,000 was pledged. This method of fundraising was accepted by priests and most parishioners for the next forty years.

Two years after the 1958 Canvass the St Wilfrid's Vestry accepted the offer of the Church Army to provide two Evangelists for a period not exceeding six months, to carry out a house-to-house visitation in the whole of the Parish in preparation for a Parish Mission which would lead up to another Canvass in July of 1961. There was a need to discover who owed allegiance to the Anglican Church in the Parish, and to assess where the 'hidden' parishioners lived and what their needs might be. After the six-month survey the Church Army Parish Mission, held from 23–30 April 1961, was a very successful and encouraging event. For the first time families in the Lynton and Clapham areas and in the eastern part of Netherby were contacted, and it was realised that these contacts should be maintained, but the perennial question "By whom?" remained unanswered.

In May 1961 St Michael's Vestry agreed to conduct a second Canvass in September. But in July a Special Vestry of St Wilfrid's parishioners decided against another Canvass, and instead asked their members to continue pledging for the next two years at the level they had promised in 1958. However they decided to proceed with plans and specifications for alterations to the Church, and later in the same year they purchased a house adjacent to St Wilfrid's as a dwelling for the hoped-for clerical assistant (see page 213).

St Wilfrid's held a Church Fair late in 1963 and the proceeds of some £1,400 helped reduce the bank overdraft resulting from the above two operations. In April 1964 the parishioners of St Wilfrid's were invited to join St Michael's in a combined professional Canvass in 1964–65 but the former were not in favour. In December 1964 a Special Vestry at St Wilfrid's decided not to have a professionally-run Canvass but to run their own in March 1965 under the chairmanship of the Minister's Warden, Mr Gordon George. Their goal was to maintain normal expenditure and to aim for clerical assistance in four years time. It listed no specifics and allotted no priorities, but spoke of "the maintenance and extension of the work of the Church in the Parish, in the Diocese and in areas outside of the Diocese".

St Michael's gave much thought to the objects of their Canvass, spelling out the main three goals as: reduction of the overdraft undertaken for Church restoration, the development and maintenance of the grounds, and clerical assistance. In February 1965 a joint meeting of Wardens from the two Churches was advised that the St Michael's Canvass fell short by £1,300 of the amount required over the ensuing three years. However some useful action led to a report by the Continuation Chairman in April that "the target of £14,000 for the next three year period was almost in sight". At St Michael's Annual Easter Vestry people were told that "extra clerical assistance was a matter of urgency, but on present indications it

was unlikely that we should be ready for any major programme for probably six years".

In 1966 St Wilfrid's held an appeal for funds to meet the loan repayments on the Church extensions. The following year the two Councils met to discuss a Canvass by Church Advisory Services Pty Ltd, and at their Easter Vestries both congregations decided to conduct a Joint Parish Development Programme which was carried out in October/November. Instead of holding a Canvass 'Loyalty Dinner' the women of the Parish called on each household and made appointments for the men to do the visiting. Of the 524 families visited, it was found that 36% were 'new' to the Parish reinforcing the view that each year some 10% of families moved from the Parish. With a three-year total of \$40,000 pledged, this successful campaign led to the appointment of a catechist and a retired priest, who both began part-time work in the Parish.

It is interesting to note that despite the intention in 1958 to follow that very successful Canvass with another in 1961, a full-scale Every Member Visitation embracing both congregations was delayed for a six-year period. This reflected a difficult and unfortunate time when the two bodies of worshippers, acting under differing Trust Deeds, with different needs and different philosophies and only loosely bound to a common Central Council, were often unable to set joint goals. Progress was made, but with some difficulty and a degree of unhappiness (see page 102).

Three years later in 1970 St Wilfrid's Vestry decided not to take part in a Canvass by professional consultants in that year, but asked the W.F.O. members to continue their support. However, at the same time, St Michael's decided upon a renewal programme and again engaged Church Advisory Services for the task.

In 1976 the People's Warden at St Wilfrid's was appointed Chairman of a Programme Committee to plan a W.F.O. recommitment programme. With the arrival in November of Fr Andrew Cheesman as the new Rector of the Parish, things moved quickly. In May 1977 a combined Vestry recommended engaging the Methodist Department of Promotion for a Parish Stewardship Programme. This commenced in November with a Parish Dinner held in the Wonderland Ballroom on Belair Road. Of great significance was the establishment of a Joint Parish Council with representatives from each Church, and a Joint Financial Account with a single Parish Treasurer. Thus for the first time the Parish was united under the one Trust Deed.

The 1977–78 programme was most successful with a substantial increase in the number of parishioners pledging and the weekly income over the three following years increased by 42%. As a consequence a deacon was appointed and plans laid for the sale of the old Parish Hall on Princes Road and the building of a new Hall within the grounds of St Michael's. In March 1980 the Joint Vestry agreed to re-employ the Department of Promotion for a further Stewardship campaign in October.

Over the following fifteen years new Canvass programmes were run by Uniting Church Stewardship Australia to cover five more three-year periods commencing in 1980, 1983, 1986, 1989 and 1992.

In 1994 and 1995 the Parish looked carefully at its planned giving and after consultations with other parishes decided to conduct its own Canvass using the excellent skills within its membership. In August 1995 some twenty Stewardship Visitors were commissioned for the first 'self-run' programme. Important in the planning was the use of modern technology, with a computer and printer enabling clear analysis of former programmes and first-class literature and documentation to be prepared for future events. Excellent preparation by a small committee and the twenty Visitors working over a longer period led ultimately to a good coverage of the Parish. The overall result showed an increase in income and a marked reduction in expenses.

In September 1997 a second programme was run after a shorter-than-usual period of preparation. The most recent programme, again run by the Parish with no Dinner, ran in August and September 1999. This was a difficult year as the Canvass coincided with Sesquicentenary celebrations which included a large and very successful Bazaar & Street Party which tended to take some emphasis from the Canvass. Results were reasonable and lessons learned for the future.

Loyalty Dinners & Logistics

Over the years this succession of Planned Giving Campaigns has had many common features. All homes had to be visited, and as time passed it was found that this task asked a great deal of the women of the Parish. Many houses were empty during the day as the new generation of women were at work: finding them at home was often time consuming. The Loyalty or Parish Dinner was a major function designed to bring old and new parishioners to the one place at the one time. The first Dinner was held at the Wonderland Ballroom, followed by two at Unley High School and another at the Fullarton Park Community Centre. Initially the meal was catered for either by a commercial company or by another parish aiming to raise funds for their own needs. To save this outlay the parishioners of Mitcham in 1984 and on a subsequent occasion provided the meal themselves. It is not always easy to visit strangers, but the enthusiasm generated at these Dinners made the task comparatively easy. In general from twenty-to-thirty men volunteered as Visitors (Figs 18-3 and 18-4) and thus none had more than about ten families to visit. In recent years a number of women have also served as Visitors.

Were the Goals Achieved?

As time passed more of the 'new' parishioners were found to be younger couples with both partners working, large mortgages to pay off and little weekend time for the priority of worship. Many older members of the Parish were pensioners or retirees on fixed incomes and not always able to respond to the request to increase or even maintain their level of regular giving. After reaching record levels in 1983-85 the annual numbers of communicants (a useful measure of total activity in a parish) fell and the agency fee for running a Canvass rose from 5 weeks income in 1977 to 6.4 weeks of Parish income in 1992. Over the same period the numbers of committed parishioners fell

from some 200 to 150. The efflux of time saw many old and very committed parishioners die. These figures reflect a plateau in Anglican numbers and a falling-off in Church attendance by a younger population with differing lifestyles from those of their parents.

The outcome of these programmes – all regarded as successful, though not always meeting their stated financial objectives – was the attainment of the main objective: namely, sufficient funds to appoint additional clerical assistance. Between 1978 and 2001 eleven deacons were appointed who, after about two-years training and experience under Fr Andrew's guidance, were ordained as priests and moved on to serve the Church elsewhere in the Diocese and beyond. More importantly, while in the Parish, the deacons greatly aided the priest and generally had a marked influence on the activities of the young people. In addition the sounder finances made it possible to carry out much needed maintenance on both Church buildings and to maintain the Parish's fine record of meeting all Diocesan and Missionary quotas.

Much has been done in the Parish of Mitcham and despite the often slow-moving processes and occasional conflicts it can be said that Planned Giving Canvasses proved the best way to go. Through them the Parish maintained an active Outreach, a spasmodic building programme and the provision in more recent times of clerical assistance. Apart from the maintenance aspects, the flow of young trained men to the ministry in the Diocese and elsewhere has been



Fig. 18-3 *Planned Giving Campaign 1986. Following their commissionings the Visitors discussed the task ahead over a special luncheon in the Hall. (MPA)*

Fig. 18-4 *Some of the cooks in the kitchen preparing the luncheon for the Visitors. (MPA)*



an outcome which would not have been possible but for the contributions of all parishioners and the stimulus stemming from the Every Member Canvass programmes.

[Peter Geytenbeek]

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Appendix 9 provides a guide to currency conversions from 1850 to 2000. As currency value must be realistically related to its purchasing power the equivalent amounts are suggested as a guide only. The information was calculated from Retail Price Indexes published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in *Year Book of Australia 2001*.

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The Parish of Mitcham has been fortunate in having had amongst its elected officers many men with financial acumen. One such man is John Dibben (Fig. 18-5) a qualified Chartered Accountant who has used his God-given talents to help his Church in many ways. At varying times over the past fifty years John has served on Parish Council, often in the demanding role of Warden, Secretary, Treasurer or Auditor. He is a Lay Assistant, Synod Representative and member of the Nomination Committee. In his younger days he was a leader of the Young People's Fellowship, a Sunday School teacher and founder and captain of the Parish Cricket Club (see page 257).

John's flair for figures, innovative thinking and wise counsel have benefited not only the Parish of Mitcham but also the whole Diocese. In its sesquicentenary year in 1997 the Diocese of Adelaide honoured John "for many years of outstanding service to the Diocese and, in particular, to financial management in several areas of diocesan life". These have included serving as Foundation



Fig. 18-5

John Dibben.
(Pamela Oborn,
2002)

Chairman of Anglican Child Care Services, a member of Diocesan Council and as Chair of its Finance Committee; Honorary Treasurer of St Peter's Cathedral Council; member of the Council and Finance Committee of St Barnabas' Theological College and as a Board member of the Adelaide Theological Colleges Campus; Chair of the Finance Committee of Anglican Community Services; Foundation member and part-time Bursar of St Andrew's School; Foundation Board member and Hon. Secretary of Anglican Development Fund. To name but a few!

In his Annual Report to Vestry in 1984, Fr Andrew Cheesman spoke of John's contribution to the success of the 1983 Mission and Stewardship Promotion saying: "John's ability to engender loan funds in the first place and to use them wisely, as well as managing our day-to-day housekeeping frugally, has become a by-word in the Diocese at large."

We are at the end of our little story, and in its incidents we may see, from time to time, traces of anxiety and effort to upraise our holy faith in this parish, and to create for the ministration of the Church some elements of permanence, usefulness, and becoming dignity. The labours of others are now our possessions: we should be solicitous about so great a heritage, so that, by taking pains, we may hand on to our successors... accomplishments not less marked by effort, unity and affection than those of our predecessors. May we never lose the sense of the need, the beauty, and the aid of holy worship. For us let it be an outward expression of our religion, of our faith...

Our review is over: may it stimulate us to fresh zeal and sustained effort.

Albert Wyndham Clappett, 1902