

St Mary's 150th

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It is lovely to be here. As Suzanne said, Bob was rector from September 1989 to December 2000. That also means I have been gone for 21 years and six months. We have all grown older, so please don't hesitate to give me your name if it looks like I don't recognize you!

Even with the passing of time, I feel at home at St Mary's. It's a sense of home that derives from connections with a large number of people – some whom I have maintained connections with over the years, others whom I am so glad to see whenever I visit, or many who are no longer with us but whom I call to mind as I thumb through the wonderful photo album so beautifully put together for us by Joan Connolly and Jenny Rogers. St Mary's hospitality was apparent from the beginning, as evidenced by the countless volunteer hours Jack Walker, Bill Lennox, and Don Halliday spent updating the rectory and providing such a lovely home for us. Amelia and Robert also felt very welcome and fondly recall learning to drive stick shift in the St Mary's parking lot. Although, as in any ministry, there were challenges along with the good times, we also felt appreciated when we left.

Sharon Hanns has asked me to share some memories from our time at St Mary's and so I have chosen to highlight a few events, rather than people, as I would be bound to leave somebody out and feel awful after the fact. Frederick Buechner, one of Bob's favourite authors, believes that in telling our stories we help others hear their own stories. And so I hope my memories bring to mind stories you have lived and stories you may be writing at St Mary's now.

Times change and parishes change, and I have no idea what things I remember fondly have a place in St Mary's today.

Holy Week and Easter – Psalm 22 chanted from the balcony during the stripping of the altar on Maundy Thursday.

The early morning Easter Vigil, starting in the dark in the chapel and the procession into the brightness of the new day in the main sanctuary.

The lectionary-based Care and Study groups – using the Serendipity model of the three-legged stool: a commitment to group life, learning, and mission. Different times and different places

mean the structure of the groups have differed, but I continue to be committed to small-group ministry and the practice of discussing faith, studying the Bible, and sharing questions.

A lot of organized events come to mind where people came together and had a good time: rummage sales, bazaars, parish meals, pub nights. It probably was a transition moment from an earlier era, as such events took a lot of work, and, with more and more families holding down two jobs or more, people's bandwidth today is not the same. I think it was the 1993 Pub Night that coincided with the final game in the World Series and we were all glued to a little TV in Wrixon Hall as the Blue Jays won.

The Over-Fifties lunches. Dorothy Parker and Doris Nicol were the driving forces behind them, both considerably older than many of the guests (Dorothy turned 80 in 1995). I turned 80 this month and, while that age looks different to me now, there is no way I would be capable of producing the first-rate meals they served.

The parish connections to L'Arche Daybreak, including core members Sifu, Peggy, and Thelus. I have a vivid memory of Henri Nouwen in the rectory. Henri had preached at the morning service and we had a full house for lunch. I can still see him listening to one of our guests. His focus was so intense that it was as if they were the only two people in the room.

Welcoming the Noorzad family – refugees from Afghanistan – the young lad being fitted with a proper prosthesis and the girls being educated.

The church renovations of 1995 and 2000 were important milestones in our time here. In 1995, the renovated nursery, kitchen, hallway, and new offices and elevator contributed to making St Mary's more accessible and more welcoming. That sense of space and light that has always been part of the sanctuary now greets you as soon as you enter the building. The renovations to the sanctuary in 2000 opened the space even further, with new lighting and colour. When the Spirit Movers came from Daybreak it was a joy to see a number of them in wheelchairs receiving communion alongside those standing.

We were also here for the 125th anniversary year, which concluded with a party in the garden, making it all so lovely to be here with you today.