

# A "Not So" Short History of Saint Thomas - Over 100 years in the Making

Our History is the Saint Thomas "*Book of Acts*" and like the Biblical one, we do not encounter every single thing said or done. We can, however, discover the Holy Spirit's work in our midst. Take in the actions of ordinary people and ordained men and women. Learn how they responded to change in adversity or abundance, were inspired and took action during various seasons of the church's life over these last 100+ years.

I felt a sense of awe and wonder as women gathered, a community created beautiful mosaics, reached out to the hungry and still continues today to feed them and empower the homeless. There are many creative responses. Some have completed their course, others have moved beyond our walls, while a few continue with us to this day. How will the Holy Spirit inspire us to respond now? Jesus asks us to "feed my sheep" - could that also mean feed my spiritually hungry sheep?

Many thanks to The Rev. Wendy M. Smith, PhD who thoughtfully preserved these stories. Much of her original writings are contained in the following sections. Thank you for allowing us to retell them...our very own Haggadah. - Kristin Munday

## Early Years

- Saint Thomas Episcopal Mission founded in 1911
- Purchased parcel of land in Sunnyvale in 1912
- First church built in 1916

## Women Gather and Saint Thomas Mission is Born

**EPISCOPAL MISSION IS FORMED AT SUNNYVALE**

Rector of Trinity Church Presides at Organization  
*Aug. 7, 1911 Meeting.*

Yesterday at Stowell Hall, Sunnyvale, the Rev. Halsey Werlein Jr., rector of Trinity Church, San Jose, organized St. Thomas' Mission, the same to be a part of Trinity Parish, San Jose, until such time as it shall be self-supporting. There were 13 people present at the service. Evening prayer was said at 7:30, with a forceful sermon by the rector. An interesting program of music was rendered by a vested choir of six men from Trinity Church Choir, under the leadership of Clarence T. Urmey. The numbers included appropriate hymns, the 23rd Psalm, the "Nunc Dimittis" to a Gregorian tone, a baritone solo by Dr. H. S. Chandler and a male quartet, "The Shadow of the Evening Hours," sung by Fred Beck, first tenor; S. P. Reed, second tenor; W. J. Hayward, first bass, and Dr. F. C. Hartman, second bass.

After the service a meeting was held of those interested in the new mission, and the rector announced the following Trustees: Warden, Dr. W. Patterson; Treasurer, Dr. L. B. Barnes; Clerk, G. T. Balch; additional Advisory Trustees, Dr. P. J. Woolley and Cecil Stubbs.

The Rev. Mr. Werlein made some encouraging remarks, a report was made on the finances of the mission, and reports were received from a committee on the matter of a church building, and from the Women's Guild, a flourishing society, of which Mrs. G. T. Balch is the President and Mrs. S. L. Berry the Secretary. Several members of Trinity Parish were at the meeting, among them being Judge John E. Richards and Mrs. Richards, the latter being President of the Women's Guild of Trinity, San Jose.

There are between 25 and 30 families of Episcopalians in and near Sunnyvale, and the outlook for a most promising mission is very bright. For the present the services will be held in Stowell Hall every Sunday afternoon at 2:30. On next Sunday, the Sunday before Christmas-day, during the service Christmas carols will be sung by Trinity Choir Boys.

Courtesy of the Saint Thomas Episcopal Church archives.

A year before the city of Sunnyvale was incorporated, on October 26, 1911, a meeting was held among 14 women from Trinity Cathedral, San Jose, and 5 Episcopalian women of Sunnyvale, to form a guild, and to join together in Evening Prayer. A week later they met again and decided to hold a rummage sale, to raise money to fund an Episcopal mission. On December 19, 1911 the Rector of Trinity, the Rev. Halsey Werlein, Jr. and his choir director, Clarence Urmy, held a worship service in the Masonic Hall, attended by 55 people. The rector declared the Mission duly opened, and it was named Saint Thomas, both because it was near the Feast of Saint Thomas, (on the 21st) and also because some present doubted whether the mission could survive.

Clarence Urmy was placed in charge of the new mission. The Warden was Dr. William Patterson, and the treasurer was L.F. Barnes. Services were held at 4:00 P.M. on Sundays in the Masonic Hall on South Murphy Avenue. By the end of the first year, the Ladies Guild had \$307.15 in the bank, and paid for the purchase of a lot on North Murphy Avenue, putting the receipt from the payment of the mortgage in the alms basin on Christmas Day, 1912.



Clarence Thomas Urmy (rear-center) with choir at Trinity Church (now pro-cathedral), San Jose. Courtesy of Saint Thomas Episcopal Church archives.

In December 1915 that lot was traded for a lot on the corner of Sunnyvale and McKinley owned by C.E. Stowell. Immediate plans were made to build the church.

## **Building the First Church**

Mr. Epps was the Warden that year, and he had considerable experience in building. All the parishioners contributed labor, and many gave materials as well. Some local merchants contributed materials, and people who were not parishioners also worked on the building. The Guild sewed vestments and altar linens. The stained glass window over the altar was a gift from Saint Matthew's, San Mateo, and there was a round wick oil stove which stood in the middle aisle. The total cash outlay for building the church was \$700, including a loan paid off by the end of the year.



The first church building (Sunnyvale, California) consecrated on November 26th, 1916. Courtesy of the Saint Thomas Episcopal Church archives.

Saint Thomas continued to be associated with Trinity, San Jose, as their rector also served as the mission's priest. In 1918, the Rev. A.W.N. Porter was rector and followed in 1926 by the Rev. Mark Rifenbark. Later in 1926, the Rev. E.H. Maloney, rector of Trinity, Menlo Park, took over the 7:30 P.M. Sunday service which had an attendance of about 25 people. From 1933 to the late 30's the Rev. Britton D. Weigle was assigned as priest to serve both Saint Thomas and Christ Church, Los Altos. Services were held every other Sunday evening. The Guild remained active, meeting the 2nd and 4th Thursday afternoons, keeping the Saint Thomas spirit alive. During this time a winter storm took one-third of the shingles off the roof, and rain ruined the vestments.

### **Ladies Guild Rescues Mission**

Meanwhile, the City of Sunnyvale assessed the church about \$1000 for the paving of Sunnyvale and McKinley Avenues. The Ladies Guild went to work to raise the money, and met every payment, saving the church. At one point the Vicar of Christ Church, Los Altos, proposed that the church be sold to pay for a vicarage for Los Altos.

### **Mr. Smith Goes to Convention**

Charles Smith writes that he went to his first diocesan convention in 1938, where he heard the bishop declare that: **Bishop Karl M. Block, Diocese of California All of the missions and parishes have paid their assessments in full, except Sunnyvale, which has paid nothing!**

Charles Thomas Gray (C.T.G.) Smith (1879-?) and wife, Alice Josephine Bristol Smith. Courtesy of the Saint Thomas Episcopal Church archives.

So, Charles located the treasurer for the diocese and discovered that the assessment was \$5.00. He paid it himself.

C.T.G. Smith was not finished saving Saint Thomas. During the Great Depression, the church experienced financial hardship as many Americans scrambled to make ends meet. Circumstances had become so dire that the Bishop of the Diocese of California, Edward Lambe Parsons (1924-1940), announced that he was closing Saint Thomas' doors. Having heard this, C.T.G. Smith jumped into his car and drove up to San Francisco. He pleaded with fellow New Yorker and bishop to reconsider, pledging his personal finances to carry the church by paying-off all its

debts. Mr. Smith's commitment to carry the church until their circumstances improved moved the bishop to withdraw his decision. Saint Thomas continues today with heartfelt gratitude for the courageous and generous acts of this one man. A commemorative day was set aside in his honor, the C.T.G. Smith Day.

## **1940s - 1950s**

- Vicars oversee worship at Saint Thomas
- Membership increases from 45 to 200 families
- Two and half acres purchased on Sunset Avenue
- Second larger church constructed in 1956

### **Vicars Carry on Work of Saint Thomas**

There were five Sunday services held in 1941, and then in December Bishop Block held a meeting with the leaders of Saint Thomas and Christ Church. He appointed the Rev. Albert Olson as Vicar of Christ Church, with responsibility to hold services at Saint Thomas on Sunday mornings at 8:30. In 1946, a priest of the Old Catholic Church who had been an Army chaplain, became affiliated with the Diocese of California. He was retired from the Army with a full pension and wanted to volunteer to serve the neediest parish in the diocese. The Rev. Col. Sutherland served as part-time vicar to Saint Thomas for 7 months, until he had a heart attack while leading worship, and had to retire again. Due to his leadership, attendance had jumped from 5 to nearly 50, and the first 11:00 A.M. services were held at Saint Thomas. The Rev. Long took over services for a year, and then the Rev. David Gilmore of Los Gatos continued in 1947.

### **Mission Begins Expansion**

On June 1, 1947, Bishop Block met with the officers and members of the mission, and accepted Saint Thomas as a regularly organized mission of the Diocese. When it was brought to the Bishop's attention that the mission's church was holding Sunday School without restroom facilities, the Bishop said that wasn't decent. He directed Charles Smith to contact an architect, and send him the bill. The architect said there was no room to build inside the church and that to build a "wart" on the outside would be unsightly. Instead, he recommended constructing a wing the full length of the east side, with a kitchen, social hall and restrooms. In the spring of 1951, the Rev. Kenneth Eade graduated from Church Divinity School of the Pacific (CDSP) and was appointed Vicar of Saint Thomas. He was ordained deacon in August, got married in September, and was ordained priest the following February. A house next door to the church had been purchased for a vicarage, and with a full-time clergyman in residence, attendance began to grow. Sunday school classes were held in the church, the sacristy, the vicarage, and the garage of the vicarage. The yearly budget was approximately \$5000. A group of men decided it was time to build that wing on the church, and spent Saturday afternoons dismantling an old building in Palo Alto for the lumber, doors, electrical and plumbing materials. Everyone pitched in to dig ditches, nail wallboard, lay tile, build, and paint. At one end was the kitchen and at the other the restrooms, with a social hall in between. The cost was \$900. In the backyard of the vicarage were cherry trees, from which the vicar collected and sold the cherries to pay for acolyte robes, tracts, and other necessities. A choir was formed during the early 1950's, and the first choir director was

John Hagopian. The Rev. Richard Byfield arrived in June 1953 to become the second vicar for the mission. He found 45 families when he began his ministry, and increased the membership to 200 families. He led the development of Adult Education classes, introduced the Seabury Series to the Church School, and organized the men's club.

## **Vision for the Future**

In 1955 it was becoming apparent that the church property in downtown Sunnyvale was increasing in value as the city expanded, and that in the future, the mission might need a larger church. Bishop Block encouraged mission members, and provided money from the Centennial Advance Fund and other sources for the purchase of two and a half acres on Sunset, as well as a new vicarage on Iowa. Before building began on the new property, a dispute arose between the City Planning Commission and the City Council, about whether to extend McKinley Avenue through the Sunset property. Russell Schildt served as legal counsel for Saint Thomas, and attended many meetings with the city on behalf of the mission, without fee, until the matter was resolved. This delay was fortunate, as it gave Bishop Block the opportunity to hold a "Baby Bond" campaign in 1954, which raised \$15,000 toward the new building. Later a building fund campaign raised \$30,000, and construction (of what is now Cowans Hall) began in the spring of 1956. The new church was completed in January 1957, and the first worship service was Dick Byfield's farewell, as he left to serve on the Diocesan staff. The Vicar's salary was \$3,600 per year. In March our third Vicar, the Rev. Allan McMahan arrived with his family. He organized the Bishop's Committee to oversee the building, the landscaping, and memorials. Bill Lloyd built a Children's Chapel in the education wing (now the Office), which included the children's altar, still at the parish. While trying to sell the old church, the property was rented to a Lutheran congregation, and finally sold in 1959 for \$35,000.

## **1960s - 1970s**

- Mosaics depicting Saint Thomas the Apostle's life designed and created in 1963
- FISH created in 1965
- Saint Thomas becomes a parish and The Rev. Warren Debenham its first rector in 1965
- Keith Boyle's altar panels create SJ Mercury News sensation "Wild Colors in New Church" in 1966
- The Rev. William "Bill" Cowans becomes the second rector in 1974

## **The People Fill the Gap**

In the summer of 1960, Allan McMahan was called to Saint Matthias, Seaside, and the church was without clergy for 3 months. The wardens and bishop's committee had everything organized, from the church school to the pledge drive to the junior choir, which impressed the Rev. Warren Debenham when he arrived in October of 1960. It was during that same year that Barbara Tolhurst became the choir director, and Joyce Kelly was the organist. As the area continued to steadily grow in the 60s, so did Saint Thomas. At times, the pews were overflowing; chairs often had to be set up in the Family Room. In 1962, the West Valley Parent Preschool began to rent space from Saint Thomas for their cooperative nursery school program. In December 1962, the

Guild held a rummage sale, and everyone was quite upset in January when the \$600 profit could not be found.

### **Mike Inspires Parish Mosaics Project**



Episcopal Church archives.

Community mosaics project, 1963. Courtesy of Saint Thomas

In 1963 the Vicar was approached by Mrs. Alden Fisher, known as Mike, who suggested that mosaics be commissioned for the walls of the sanctuary. An artist's estimate of the cost was prohibitive, so Mike suggested a do-it-yourself project. She enlisted the help of her former art teacher, Dr. Ross Teller, who gave a 10-week course. The congregation were asked to submit ideas for the mosaics, and the theme of the life of Saint Thomas and his Work with Christ, was chosen. Two more 10-week classes were necessary to complete the 6 mosaics. Meanwhile, the members of the parish contributed tiles, crockery, colored glass, old jewelry, marble, slate, pebbles, buttons, and marbles. Approximately 1500 hours of labor, but only \$60 of expense, went into the project, and the mosaics were dedicated in May, 1964.

### **Parishioners Launch FISH Non Profit Organization**

In 1965 parishioners became aware that there were people in Sunnysvale who needed emergency help from time to time. They created the non-profit organization FISH that same year in an effort to provide food, clothing, furniture and transportation to local people in need. After a few years, the program outgrew Saint Thomas' available space. FISH then relocated to the Congregational Church on Bernardo Avenue, becoming an ecumenical effort where it continues to serve the community today.

### **Growing Mission Becomes Parish**

The fourth vicar, the Rev. Warren Debenham (1960 – 1974) led the church in changing from a diocesan funded mission to a financially self-supporting parish in 1965, becoming the first rector of Saint Thomas. He was assisted by Fr. Rouillard—a Native American priest—and Dean McCoid, a vocational deacon. During this time, Christine McLetchie became the Choir Director, and also played the organ. With parish status attained, the Vestry began making plans for building a new sanctuary for the church.

## **A New Sanctuary is Raised**

Architectural firm Worsley, Rankin and Williamson was engaged to design the new sanctuary, and artist Keith Boyle of Stanford University was commissioned to create the altar panels. The architects, artist and contractor worked together to unify all of the various elements with the intention of expressing joy, mystery, and fellowship. Fonny Ho served as consulting engineer, and Les Burdick was in charge of the Building Committee. Many parishioners contributed to the project, including Rudy Schmidt, a woodworker and craftsman who made the three-dimensional cross that still hangs over the altar. Others, like the Vestment Sewing group, also contributed to the worship space by sewing all of the decorative hangings for the altar, pulpit, and lectern, as well as stoles and chasubles. Perhaps the most unusual feature was the shallow moat that surrounded the church, symbolizing the entrance to the Christian life through the water of Baptism. The church was completed and dedicated in December 1966, 55 years after the mission's founding. The original sanctuary building then became the parish hall.

## **Wanted: Associate Rector Needed for Growing Church**

The continuing increase in membership, to 325 families, led to the call for an associate rector which was filled by the Rev. William Cowans in 1968. Over this period, two parishioners were called to ordained ministry. After a year at Church Divinity School of the Pacific (CDSP) in Berkeley, the Rev. B.J. Hoover returned as a supporting priest, and the Rev. Robert Williams, as a vocational deacon. In 1969, Saint Thomas and Saint Andrews Saratoga participated in a program to bring Sioux Indian children from South Dakota to live with families and attend school in Sunnyvale for a year. Charla Rose Tenfingers, Agnes Randall, Jenny Eagle Bull, Gerald Fills the Pipe and Deborah Black Elk were hosted by Saint Thomas families. Church growth was interrupted by a recession that hit defense-related industries in Sunnyvale from 1970 to 1972, leading to a decrease in membership. Calls for emergency assistance increased, resulting in the creation of Sunnyvale Community Services in 1970. Saint Thomas leased office space to the fledgling organization during its first months of operation. It was a transitional time for the parish: Karen Whiteley became the organist, and Paul Slattery directed the choir. Then in 1972, Jane Marguerite Russell took over the choir. Also that year, a Billy Graham crusade held in the area inspired parishioners to start a Wednesday Bible Study.

## **The Rev. William Cowans Becomes 2nd Rector**

In early 1974 Warren Debenham was called to St. Albans, Albany, and in the spring, amid some controversy over matters of worship and theology, the vestry called The Rev. William "Bill" Cowans to be the second rector. Bishop C. Kilmer Myers presided at his induction. In the next few years, the parish participated in the use of Trial Liturgies, leading to the adoption of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer. Several parishioners were trained to be leaders of the Bethel Bible Series, and the whole parish participated in Bible Study. The land behind the church was transformed into a Bible garden under the leadership of Lillian Maylard, with fruit trees, flowers and shrubs of the Holy Land, and a statue of St. Francis. Claribel Dare began as organist in 1978, serving over 30 years before retiring in 2009. In 1979, under the leadership of Carol Campbell and Marjory Hanrahan, a small library was expanded.



## **1980s - 1990s**

- Third Church building consecrated by Bishop Shannon Mallory in 1981
- Our Daily Bread founded in 1983
- The Rev. Joan Cotrell became Associate Priest in 1985
- 75th Anniversary of Saint Thomas' founding in 1986
- The Rev. Wendy M. Smith, Ph.D. becomes the third rector in 1996

### **Saint Thomas is Consecrated**

From 1966 to 1981 the parish carried a mortgage on the church building. Paying off the mortgage was a monumental event, because it meant that the church could finally be consecrated. A special ceremony and celebration was planned for the entire parish. On the Feast of Pentecost, June 7, 1981, The Rt. Rev. Shannon Mallory, first Bishop of the Diocese of El Camino Real (1980-1990), came and officiated at the consecration of Saint Thomas Episcopal Church. The first reading from Ezekiel was delivered in Hebrew by the Cantor of Congregation Kol Emeth. Rector Bill Cowans wore a cope given to the parish as an anonymous gift. The mortgage was ceremonially burned. A trumpet, trombone and bagpipes, as well as senior and junior choirs, added to the elation felt by all that day. A luncheon in the courtyard followed. Harold Anderson was senior warden and Brenda Jones, junior warden at that time. There is an audiotape archive of the service in the parish library. During this same year, Jane Marguerite Russell stepped down as choir director and was replaced by Winnie Stribling who added a handbell choir. A four-octave set of Malmark bells was acquired through memorial funds and other donations.

### **Bible Study Mobilizes Parish**

In 1981-82 The Rev. Bill Cowans and Harold Anderson led a Bible study on the parable of the Sheep and the Goats from Matthew 25. Matthew 25:35-36 (English Standard Bible)" **35** For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, **36** I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.

It was a pivotal event in the life of the church, mobilizing the people to create ministries reflective of the words of Jesus. The Home Ministry program was the first to be born out of these collective efforts, offering help to parishioners in need of transportation, companionship and care after surgery. A jail ministry, led by Gary Letson, was the next to unfold.

### **The Vision for Our Daily Bread Emerges**

It began with the planning of a Thanksgiving meal that was served to the hungry at Saint Thomas on Thanksgiving Day, 1982. This celebratory meal opened the door for the creation of Our Daily Bread (ODB) on March 7, 1983 which expanded its mission to serve a free hot lunch three (3) days a week to whomever was hungry. We initially expected about 25-30 lunch guests. Who would ever have guessed that by 2014, that number would grow to over 300 per day? Harold



Anderson and Teresa Morse spearheaded the effort, establishing two policies that are still in effect today: (1) the only question we ask of diners is, “are you here for lunch?” and (2) we do not require diners to listen to a Christian message. Ed Rogers (1912-2002) was one of ODB's earliest supporters. He served as a head waiter and greeter, welcoming diners with his broad smile and kind words. In fact, it was Ed who first referred to the hungry as "diners" as a sign of dignity and respect. Thanks to Ed's insight, this is how we continue to view our guests today. Among many gains, there were also heartfelt losses. In 1983, a beloved parishioner, Ruth Schmidt, passed away after 20 years of faithful service as parish secretary. Teresa Morse stepped in to assume her duties and served as parish secretary through 1989.

### **Here We Grow Again: Church Receives First Woman Associate Priest**

The church experienced a period of growth leading to the need for additional clergy. In 1985, Father Bill called the Rev. Joan Cottrell as Associate Rector. She became the first woman priest serving Saint Thomas after her ordination at Grace Cathedral, San Francisco in December. The Rev. Sjoerd Bonting, a worker priest from the Netherlands, also joined the clergy. Michael Fay took over as Director of the handbell choir, recruiting many new members and organizing concerts. He collected donations to purchase a fifth octave of handbells. In this same year, two classrooms were combined to provide space for many more books. A library—The Gardner Memorial Library—was gifted by Dave and Carol Campbell in memory of Carol's parents, Rita and Herb Gardner. This opened up a space at the far corner of the church, which became the Chapel of the Resurrection. This sacred space was the heartfelt gift of the rector's mother, Mrs. Agnes Cowans, in loving memory of her husband, William, who had also been a priest. It was designed by Norman Burdick. At this time the nursery school left, and offices were built in the space they had occupied in the office wing. Patricia Pietrzyk, who had been directing the junior choir, assumed direction of the senior choir -- a role she continues to the present day.

### **Parish Celebrates 75th Anniversary of its Founding**

Saint Thomas celebrated the 75th anniversary of its founding in 1986. A grand celebration banquet to commemorate this special occasion took place in May. In 1987, the Rt. Rev. Morgan Porteus, retired Bishop of Connecticut, came to preach sermons for Holy Week. One year later, he and Associate Priest, Joan Cottrell were married in Grace Cathedral, San Francisco and she relocated to Massachusetts to join her husband. Father Bill next called the Rev. Patricia Rome Robertson as Associate Priest from Massachusetts to fill the opening. Rev. Patty served from 1988 to 1992. There were some changes in staffing about this time. Most notably—beginning part-time in 1987 and moving to full time in 1990, Rosie Harris replaced Teresa Morse as secretary, keeping the office and church in order until 1996.

### **A Chinese Church Begins**

Outreach continued to be an important mission of the parish and in 1990, under the leadership of Maria Ridgway and Chris Schmidt, seven Chinese families from Hong Kong began meeting for worship once a month. Becky Shan pursued her call to Holy Orders, and gradually the group coalesced into the Chinese Episcopal Church.

## **Men's Rotating Shelter Organized**

Then in 1991, Saint Thomas became one of 12 faith-based communities recruited to create a rotating shelter for homeless men. Cupertino Community Services provided the oversight, job counseling, and shelter supervisors, while the host churches and synagogues contributed breakfast, sack lunches, dinners, and space for the men to roll out their sleeping bags. Saint Thomas was the first to open its doors to the men. What we've discovered over time is that a majority of the participating men are able to secure jobs and housing before they leave the program. We continue to host a new contingent of 15 clean and sober men who are ready and wanting to take that first step. Along the way, we've only missed one year as a host church -- during the time of our campus remodeling in the early 2000s. The men participating in the shelter have blessed us with their presence, and we continue to grow through our shared fellowship. In 2011-2012, the program experienced an interruption due to a lack of funding. Chris Schmidt was one of several people who worked to garner community support, enabling sufficient funds to be raised and the shelter to be restarted.

## **Changes are Coming**

By 1992 Pat Robertson was called to be Vicar of St. Ambrose in Foster City. A committee was formed to search for another associate rector, but by the time they were ready to do interviews, the parish could no longer afford to financially support the position. This was a period of transition for Saint Thomas. In 1993, Michael Fay left and Jay Nickel filled-in as director of the handbell choir, serving for about a year. The Rev. Bill Cowans also had surgery in 1993, and the Rev. Margaret Irwin filled in for several months while he recuperated. Two significant events occurred at the end of 1994: the Chinese Church was invited to move to Saint Jude's, Cupertino, and became a diocesan mission called Holy Light Episcopal Church. Rev. Bill also retired at the end of 1994 after 22 years of ministry at Saint Thomas. The parish hall was renamed Cowans Hall in his honor. The Rev. Ruth Eller came in 1995 to serve as Interim Rector for a year. She held a History Night, and introduced the parish to a variety of liturgies and musical styles. In the fall, the roof on the church began leaking so badly that it was necessary to replace it quickly. Funds were donated without any formal campaign, and a roof was added before the November rains came. Rev. Ruth served nearly two years, helping the church prepare for a permanent rector.

## **3rd Rector Rev. Wendy Smith Prepares Saint Thomas for the Future**

Then in April 1996, the Rev. Wendy Smith, Ph.D. was called as the third rector of Saint Thomas. She was instituted by Bishop Shimpfky on June 25th. The next few years would be a time of planning and preparation for the future of Saint Thomas. Under Rev. Wendy's leadership, the parish would undertake a master planning process, leading to a capital campaign and major renovations to the campus. Beginning in 1998, a Master Planning committee was created to envision the ministries Saint Thomas expected to undertake over the next 10 to 15 years. Using input from the whole parish, Rev. Wendy and the Vestry prioritized three focus areas: a ministry to children and youth, pastoral care, and outreach to others. They developed a process around these priorities, establishing the goal of improving the quality of existing space while providing additional space for children and youth programs.

## **ODB Co-Founder Harold Anderson Celebrates 80th Birthday**

In January of 1999, Bishop Shimpfky asked the Rev. Wendy Smith to be chair of Diocesan Council and in the June of the same year, Wendy called the Rev. Michael Ferrito as Assistant to the Rector on a half-time basis. In September, Harold Anderson held his 80th Birthday Brunch at St. Thomas, with parishioners and friends attending from near and far. Kedith Wickware and Scott Whisler resurrected the handbell choir, to the delight of many parishioners. Another two years of planning and preparation took place.

## **2000 - Present**

- Kitchen and parish hall rebuilt to accommodate 250 Our Daily Bread diners in 2001
- Renovations including the design and construction a labyrinth from 2002 to 2003
- ESL classes launched in 2002
- Episcopal Resource Center is formed in 2004 to 2005
- Centennial celebration of Saint Thomas' founding in 2011
- Rev. Wendy Smith retires and Rev. Robert L. Keim becomes Interim Rector in 2013
- Rev. Salyng Wong accepts the call & is installed as Fourth Rector on January 22, 2016

## **Loaves & Fishes Capital Campaign Launched**

In the spring of 2000 the Loaves and Fishes Capital Campaign was launched to pay for the campus renovations. This coincided with a fundraising campaign by Our Daily Bread. Another project started during this time, centered around providing a [columbarium](#). The Columbarium Committee was formed and assisted by Jim Woods, who designed and installed a columbarium in the southeast corner of the church. It has been a quiet place of solitude and remembrance for all who have loved ones inurned there.

## **Visions of the Parish Coming Together**

Campus renovations were completed in three phases - first, the expansion and rebuilding of the kitchen in 2001, then the construction of an education wing in 2002, and a third phase to renovate the office wing and parish hall from 2002 to 2003. With the kitchen renovations, a room adjoining the parish hall was rebuilt to provide a food preparation space for the 250 diners coming to Our Daily Bread. Then from 2002 to 2003, the Office Building was renovated, the courtyard and the landscaping around the church were redone, a labyrinth was built, and a new Education Center was constructed behind the church. English as a Second Language (ESL) classes were launched in 2002, and the parish library collection was opened up in 2004 and 2005, to become a multi-diocesan Episcopal Resource Center, serving both the Dioceses of El Camino Real and California.

## **Family Ministry Director Added**

Rosemary Halas became Family Ministry Director in 2005 and helped shape Sunday School and Family Ministry programs for several years. That same year, Courtney Tan replaced Parish

Administrator Sharen Six on a temporary basis, following Sharen's departure. Due to Courtney's hard work and dedication, she was soon asked to become a permanent staff member. In 2006, we celebrated the 40th anniversary of the completion of the sanctuary building with an address by one of the architects, Carroll Rankin, and the presentation of a quilt. From 2007 to 2011, church members created and operated the Safe Haven Transfer Center, offering children of separated parents a neutral place for safe transfer between custodial and non-custodial parents for visits. Sue Beckham succeeded Rosemary Halas as Family Ministry Director in 2010. She continues to provide the children and families of Saint Thomas with creative learning programs and events, including Vacation Bible School in the summer, and Christmas Pageants.

## **Saint Thomas' Raises Up People for Ordained Ministry**

Over many years, Saint Thomas has been a parish which discerns and raises up people for the ordained ministry. One of the first was the Rev. Robert Williams, who was ordained in 1969 and served as Deacon at Saint Thomas until his retirement in 2009. Through 2010, five Deacons and 11 Priests were sponsored for Holy Orders by Saint Thomas. Among them have been the Rev. Canon Sheldon Hutchison, who currently serves as our Assisting Priest, and the Rev. Michael Ridgway, our Deacon since 2010.

## **Saint Thomas Celebrates 100th Anniversary of its Founding**

A Centennial committee was formed well in advance of the monumental anniversary. A theme was determined for the event:

**Where There is Vision the People Thrive.** So began three years of planning and preparations, culminating in a year-long program of commemorative events during 2011. The series of celebrations began with the 99th anniversary of the founding of Saint Thomas on December 17th, 2010 and ended similarly with the commemoration of the 100th anniversary on December 17th, 2011.

The following is the list of the special events:

- **Dec 17th:** Lessons and Carols in the Sanctuary
- **Jan 23:** History Night with honored guest, the Rev. Warren Debenham, our first rector.
- **Mar 6:** Music of the Decades, a choir concert of both popular and sacred music from every decade since Saint Thomas' founding, followed by a reception in Cowans Hall.
- **May 15:** Outreach Sunday, with preaching by the Rev. William Cowans, our second rector, followed by a luncheon and recognition of the 15 outreach ministries started at Saint Thomas.
- **Jun 12:** Discipleship Sunday, giving thanks for the 5 Deacons and 11 Priests sponsored for Holy Orders by Saint Thomas over the years, followed by a parish picnic in Washington Park.
- **Jul 15-17:** Family Camp Reunion at the Costanoa Resort, Pescadero, continuing a long-standing parish tradition.
- **Oct 1:** Visions of our Future, a day of discernment with Bishop Mary Gray-Reeves, using an agricultural metaphor to look at the "seeds" (ministries/programs), "soil"

(environment) and "crops" (future ministries) Saint Thomas might consider planting and growing during our second century.

- **Nov 6:** Evensong Service at 2:30 pm, as it was celebrated in 1911 using the 1892 Book of Common Prayer, followed by a Grand Centennial Celebration Banquet at the historic Del Monte Building, Murphy Street, Sunnyvale, near the location of our original church site.
- **Dec 17:** Lessons and Carols Service and a 100th Birthday Celebration, complete with cake and champagne.

## **Grand Banquet a Success!**

The banquet was attended by 210 people, including many new and old friends of Saint Thomas. The grandnephew of one of the founders Clarence Urmy, Tom Urmy, and his wife Deanne and son Carlo, flew out from Massachusetts to join in the celebrations.

## **Centennial Celebrations: A Community Effort**

The joy and beauty shared during the centennial celebrations were realized through the time and talent of the people of Saint Thomas. Angelo Lopez provided the cover drawing for the banquet program which hung in the church through the end of 2011. We are truly grateful for the efforts of so many people, especially the Centennial Committee members who tirelessly coordinated all of the many details. The committee chairs were Donna Cobb (summer 2008-2009), Jan Letson (2010) and Gage McKinney (2011) and assisting these hardworking leaders were: John Buck, Carol Campbell, Pat Dare, Anne Davis, Violet Fugate, Mildred Lincoln, Martha McAllister, Wendy Tracy, Marilyn Winans, and Wendy Smith. They met once a month over three years of planning with supportive work by a number of subcommittees, also receiving invaluable help from the Archives Committee: Elaine Ho, Norma Medlin, and Ruth Hoffman.

## **Children Open Time Capsule**

We have many fond memories from these celebrations. At the 10:30 am service on November 6, 2011, the children were invited to open a time capsule which had been sealed at the 75th anniversary. We used this occasion to envision what we would like to place into a new time capsule on December 17th, the actual date of our founding, to be opened again in another 25 years. We discovered a 19-page document from the 50th anniversary in 1961 and a 23-page document from the 75th anniversary giving a detailed history compiled by June Amos. There were several bulletins from services and a 25-foot long scroll which the children and Wendy unrolled for all to see. The scroll had messages and drawings from many hands, both adults and children. One child asked if we could make another scroll, and of course the answer was yes.

## **Parish Prepares New Time Capsule for Year 2036**

On December 17, 2011 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the founding of Saint Thomas, we prepared the time capsule that had been opened on November 6th for a future generation of parishioners to discover when the box is reopened in 25 years (2036). Members of the Centennial Committee, a representative of the Archive Committee, and Wendy each placed items into the capsule before sealing it.

### **List of Items Included in the Time Capsule:**

- Centennial dinner program
- The California Troubadour by Gage McKinney
- Photos of the 3 parish congregations taken on December 11th
- A photo of the oldest member of the parish (Evelyn Lloyd at 99) & the youngest (Lucy Parker, 5 weeks)
- Bill Cowans' Homily at the Centennial Evensong
- Gage McKinney's Address to those gathered for the Centennial Banquet
- Children's Papers from Sunday School, and the 6th Station of the Cross they made the prior Lent
- A Memory Stick of photos from the last 10 years
- The Discipleship Sunday brochure about the 5 deacons and 11 priests sponsored for Holy Orders
- A Compact Disk of the Music of the Decades Concert
- The Centennial banquet poster
- Outreach Sunday handout, with the 15 projects and programs started at Saint Thomas
- Three Journey of Faith books, containing many parishioners' writings
- Rev. Wendy's November 2011 article about the Icons of Saint Thomas
- The Welcome brochure the parish sends to newcomers
- Timelines of our ten decades compiled from the History Night posters in February

At the beginning of October 2012, we shared our gratitude and bid a fond farewell to Courtney Tan, as she left us after more than 7 years of service as our parish administrator. In addition to her invaluable service on so many fronts, Courtney's creative cakes and homemade costumes were enjoyed by many in the parish. She is dearly missed. Soon afterwards, in early 2013, Rev. Wendy announced her plans to retire in August 2013 after 17 years serving as our 3rd rector. A number of celebrations were planned to honor Wendy's time with us. At her memorable retirement dinner in July, she was delighted to receive the gift of a special quilt bordered with the names of all her parishioners. In September 2013, Saint Thomas welcomed the Rev. Robert "Rob" L. Keim as our Interim Rector. A 12-member Rector Search Committee was formed in January 2014, and charged by the Vestry to begin the important work of finding and calling a new permanent rector to lead the parish.

### **Pastor Salying Wong Accepts Call As Fourth Rector of St. Thomas**

After a thorough Search Committee process and a final decision by the St. Thomas Vestry, Pastor Salying Wong joined St. Thomas as our new Rector in early October 2015. She was then officially installed by Bishop Mary Gray-Reeves in a beautiful, joyful ceremony held on January 22, 2016. We are excited to continue our faith journey with her as our spiritual leader and guide.