

*Moosabbin Historical Society*

# ST. JOHN'S EAST BENTLEIGH

HISTORY AND  
INFORMATION







## *Upon This Rock I Will Build....*

*The pioneers of St. John's first met for worship under a tree in Leary's paddock located in East Boundary Road just north of Centre Road.*

*This service was held in 1850, when the district was known as East Brighton.*

*Later, regular Sunday services were conducted in St. Stephen's School, then situated in Tucker Road. In 1868 the land on which the Church now stands was given by Mr. John M. Smith.*

*In 1870 the foundations for the original Church building were laid, but due to lack of finance the building was not completed until three years later. On May 11th, 1873, the Church was opened for worship, and Bishop Perry preached there in June.*

*Market gardens surrounded the Church in those days, and the industrious parishioners not only succeeded in having St. John's consecrated by the Bishop of Melbourne, Bishop Moorhouse, in 1885, but also in erecting a Sunday School hall the following year. This weatherboard building was used for divine worship during the building of the new Church in 1961-62.*

*Throughout its history many Vicars have cared for the parish, the average tenure being only four to five years. In spite of tremendous growth and change in the population, certain traditions have continued at St. John's. These may be summed up under the four headings of — witness, simplicity, friendliness, and beauty.*

The **WITNESS** of the congregation has been maintained by the strong emphasis on the preaching of the Word of God. This is continuing to be demonstrated by the foundation stone in the new Church being laid under the pulpit — the foundation of all our daily and occasional offices being the Scriptures. A steady stream of lay readers and men to teach in the Sunday School has been one result of this biblical emphasis.

The bell which was removed from the original Church still bears witness to the neighbourhood that the doors of God's house are open. The spire can be seen from both the Bentleigh and East Bentleigh shopping centres, and points like a slender finger of faith to the Invisible and says "This is real".

**SIMPLICITY.** The Communion Table, both in the original Church and the present one, is not dressed with frontals nor during the celebration is the chalice and paten covered with burse and veil. This may seem an omission to some, but perhaps it may remind us of the simplicity of the Incarnation in this our central act of worship.

The combination of lectern and pulpit in the new Church allows for the nave font to be placed centrally before the congregation in order that children may be more conveniently baptized and welcomed into the family of Christ's Church. The seasonal colours are displayed in the pulpit — the place of teaching.

A spirit of **FRIENDLINESS** has always prevailed at St. John's. This was partly due to the size of the original Church where the worshippers were in close proximity to the sanctuary, and also due to the hearty participation of the congregation in worship. The provision of a set of bible, prayer book and hymn book in each seat in the new Church helps to make this participation more effective.

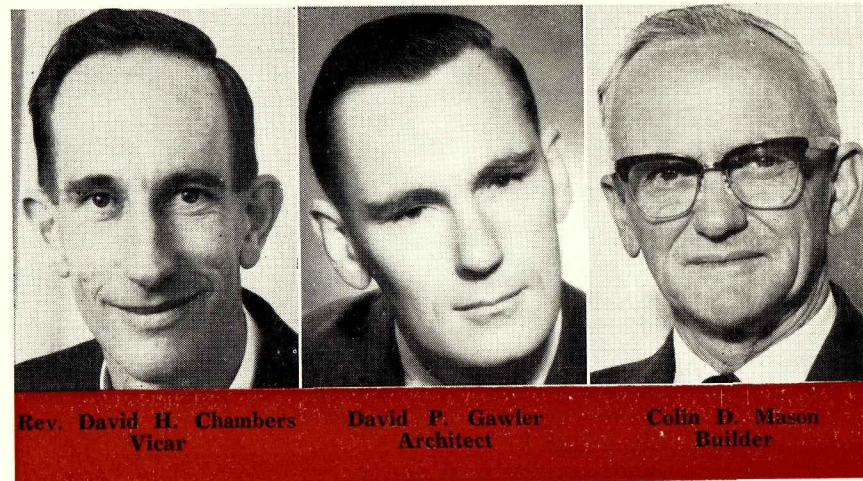


**BEAUTY.** Most of the furnishings and fittings from the old Church have been included in the Pioneers' Chapel, while the three stained glass windows beautify the whole Church in their new position. The large painting of the old Church in the narthex reminds us of the early days of Church life in this country, and space is available for two more paintings of this size. The symbols around the external walls of the Church depict some of the historical expressions of our faith. It is very gratifying that the Architect, Builder, and so many of the sub-contractors have contributed towards the expense of this brochure, as the offering of our talents and treasure to Almighty God should infiltrate every department of life. Whatever is received from the donations to this brochure will go towards the cost of the furnishings of the Church.

The experience of building a new Church is tremendously rewarding. The process of growing together as a team involving the Vestry, the Vicar and the Architect is of vital importance, and the co-operation of Architect, Builder and Vestry in the fulfilment of the task is essential.

We discovered that there were three stages in the building of our new Church, commencing with the appointment of a sub-committee of the Vestry in April, 1959. Approximately a year passed before a plan was evolved. In June, 1960, the suggested design and ground plan was submitted to a general meeting of the congregation when the Architect addressed the gathering. Having completed this stage, detailed plans and specifications were necessary before financial negotiations could be entered into.

From the very outset the Vestry were unanimous that the Church should be a building worthy of God's Name, and that it was better to delay building operations rather than curtail



the cost and size of the building. At least another 12 months passed before any finality could be reached on the finance available. At the same time approaches were made to the Diocesan authorities for permission to build, and tenders were called in May, 1961. After consideration, an amount of £40,174 was agreed upon, including the tender price for building, furnishings, and Architect's fees.

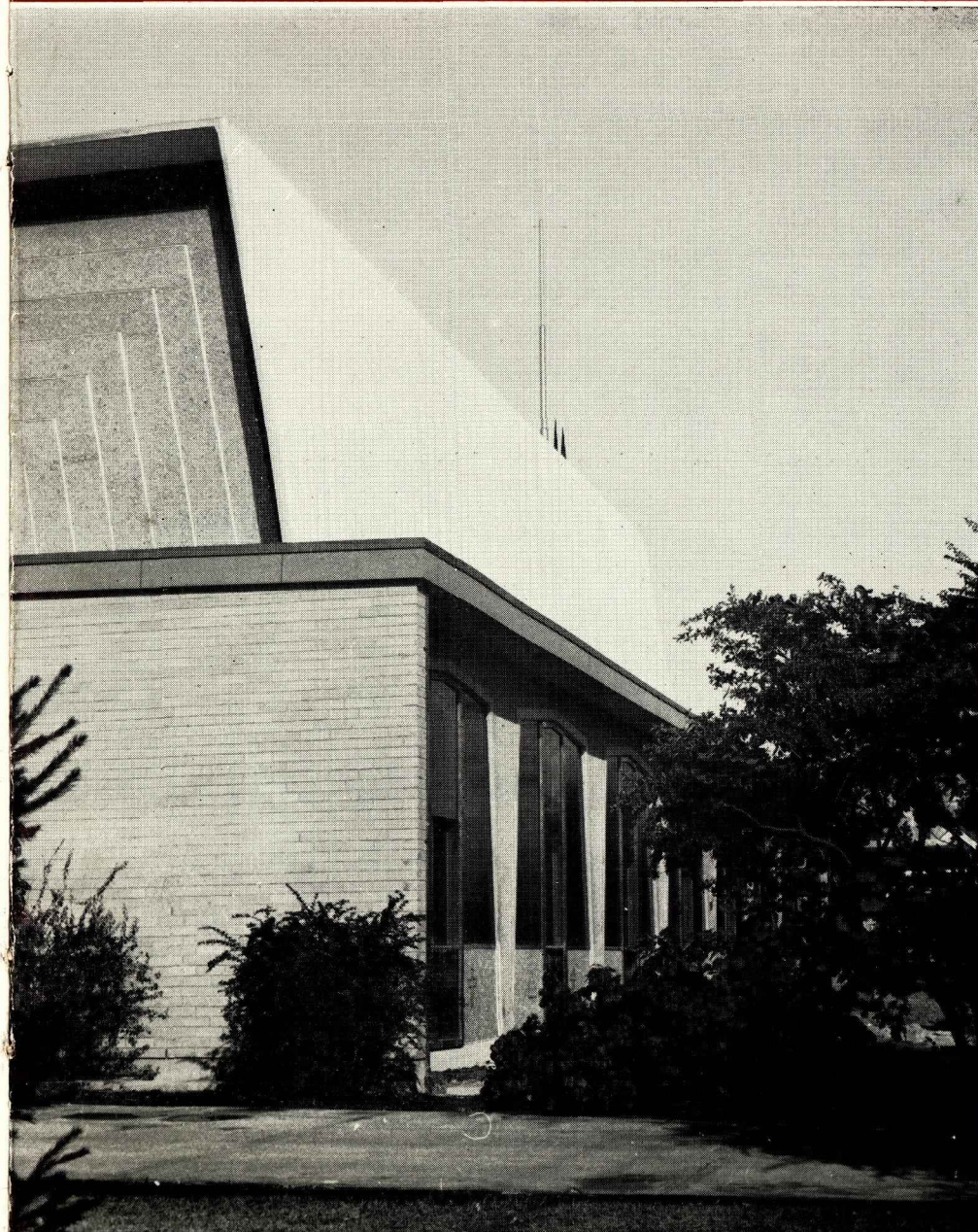
The final stage commenced with the demolition of the original Church and the laying of the Foundation Stone in August, 1961.

It is with thanks to Almighty God that we see this fruition of vision, love, continual assistance, labour, and corporate understanding.

“Here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, our selves, our souls and bodies to be a reasonable, holy and living sacrifice.”



**A DOOR OF FAITH . . .** The pinnacle or spire was sheathed with stainless steel by H. Hamilton Pty. Ltd., Engineers, 865 High Street, Reservoir.



## *Heartily as unto the Lord*

*C. D. Mason, Builder*

Building Churches always gives me a special satisfaction, because some years ago I had a definite spiritual experience which gave me a completely different and new outlook toward my Church, my home, and my business life.

While I enjoy building all types of constructions, and homes for people, I am always thrilled to have the opportunity of building their spiritual home, the Church; and so I am honoured to have been chosen by your Vestry to build this Church, and I especially want to thank your Vicar, and your Architect for their co-operation and help.

I also pay a tribute to members of my own staff who have each had their part to play in its completion, and to all the sub-contractors for their good work and trade ability.

Despite the delays the Church has been completed on time, and according to schedule.

I trust that it will be the birthplace of many new Christians and a true spiritual home where its members are nurtured in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ.



# *On Building a Church*

*D. P. Gawler, B.Arch., A.R.A.I.A.*

Building a new church presents a challenge and an opportunity to an Architect to take a step forward in the centuries old development of church building. At times this development has stood still or even regressed, but the buildings resulting have always been, and will always be, among the best produced in any period.

**The earliest churches** were adaptations of the common buildings — well built stone barns with timber roof framing shaped by necessity and narrow slit windows with arched heads supporting the stonework above.

This pattern was developed to the limits of the materials used, flying buttresses and elaborate roof trusses permitting wider roof spans at greater height above the ground. The addition of stained glass and ornamentation resulted in most impressive works of art, which are still admired.

The ancient churches were built in the best way then known, of the best materials then available, and were planned according to the needs of their time, but they do not represent a solution to present-day problems.

**We must follow** the logical procedure of analysing our own needs, taking stock of our resources and building in the most appropriate manner.

**The changing pattern of worship** and the increased diversity of church activity call for more flexible planning than was

common even a decade ago. The liturgical movement has changed the ideals of church layout, bringing the congregation and the sanctuary together.

Provision must be made for film projection and for other new forms of services. Above all we should build for the transient needs of the present generation, while they exist.

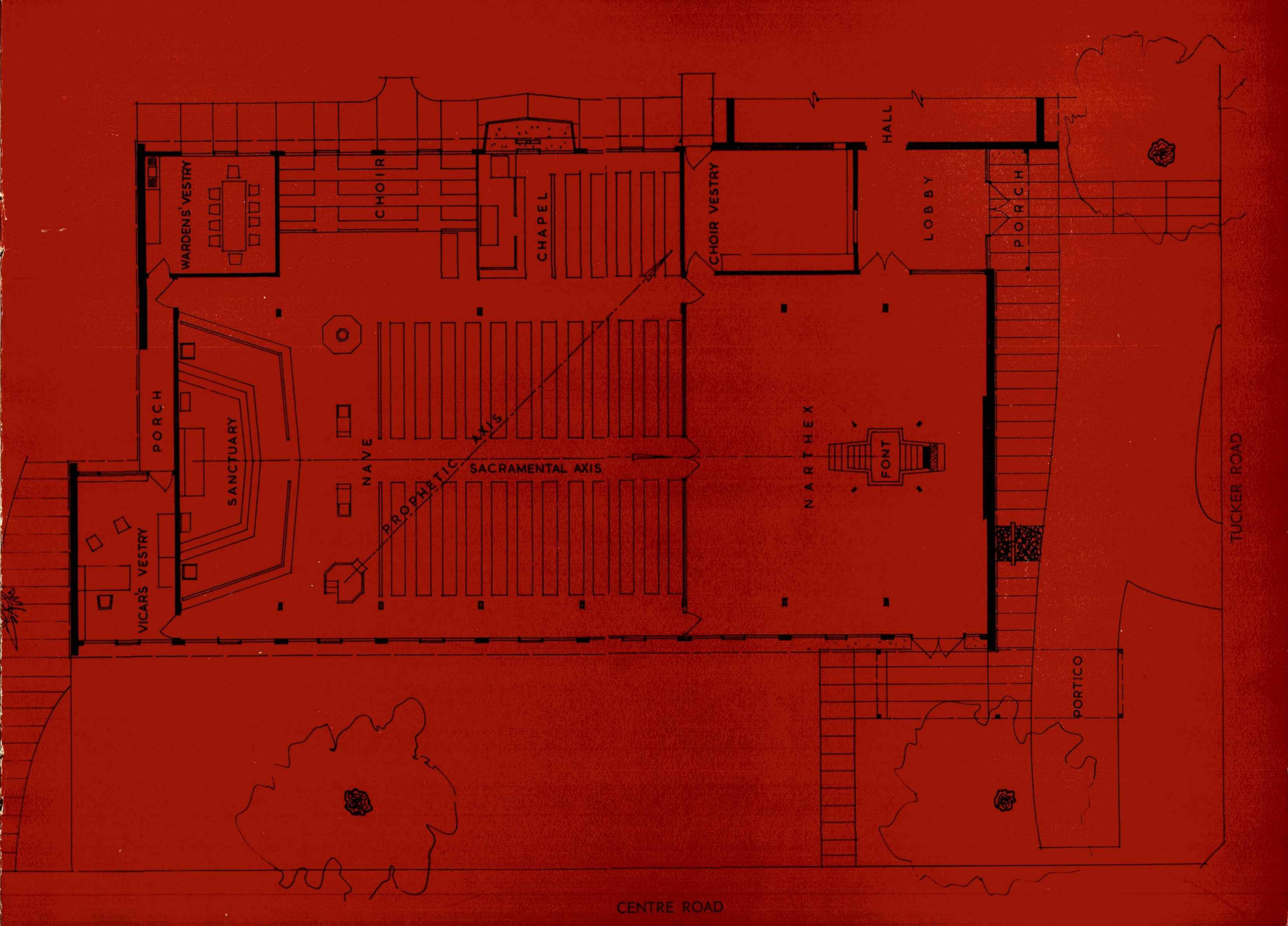
**What does a parish require?** — Only the members of that parish know and even they are not in agreement until full discussion has taken place. Not the least of the Architect's tasks is to investigate and if necessary to educate (or be educated) until a clear picture of the needs of the parish emerges.

**The answer** to these needs is expressed in a scheme or schemes in terms of spaces and materials within the site limitations and the budget, of suitable atmosphere inside, and appearance from all angles outside, more than usually durable and above all "looking like a church". If the problems are solved with honesty and the materials used in an appropriate manner, then the building should establish the style — just as the early churches, so built, established the traditional pattern.

There is, of course, considerable choice in selection of materials and application of them, and herein lies the main challenge to the Architect — to progress or to stand still — to lead or to be led. Only time can give the full answer.

**Church planning** goes beyond the formal layout of a single building — the full site must be considered and the "worship centre" co-ordinated with halls, meeting rooms, etc., to best serve the needs of the parish within the limits of site area and finance.





VICAR'S VESTRY

PORCH

SANCTUARY

NAVE

PROPHETIC AXIS

SACRAMENTAL AXIS

CHAPEL

CHOIR

WARDENS' VESTRY

CHOIR VESTRY

NARTHEX

FONT

HALL

LOBBY

PORCH

PORTICO

CENTRE ROAD

TUCKER ROAD



St. John's site development was planned in 1957 to allow for

- (a) building of the new hall,
- (b) moving the kindergarten to form a parish office,
- (c) demolition of the existing church to make way for a new church in the best possible position,
- (d) establishment of tennis court,
- (e) establishment of car park,
- (f) replacement of the vicarage,
- (g) replacement of old hall with a two-storey meeting room unit.

To make maximum use of the site and give flexibility, the buildings are linked together giving close association, eliminating "dead spaces" and reducing external wall area. The church proper is planned within the limits set by the two street frontages.

**The nave** rises above the surrounding areas and is illuminated from three sides with heavy glare reducing glass which also suppresses street noises.

**The sanctuary** is part of the same area with its red carpeted dais and solid wall forming a foil for the white drape and cross.

**The narthex** at the rear is separated from the nave by a plate glass screen and serves as —

- (a) a sound buffer for the nave,
- (b) a visual transition before entering the high nave,
- (c) an area for discussion before and after services,
- (d) a baptistry containing the immersion font, situated beneath the tower on the joint axes of church and hall,
- (e) an area for special displays.

However, the main purpose of the narthex is for extra seating space to accommodate peak attendances.

**The side chapel** also increases accommodation and, like the choir, is separated from the nave by a change in ceiling level.

**The choir** is placed at the side to permit the congregation to approach as closely as possible to the sanctuary while allowing processional movement.

**The form** — St. John's consists of three main elements, the low plateau from which rise the high roof with its large west window and the tower with stainless steel pinnacle. This gives emphasis to the higher nave, and a view of the tower from inside the church.

The shape of the main roof is evolved from the tall triangle —spire shape—with the top truncated, and this shape is repeated as a general theme throughout the building. The choir and chapel areas have fan vaulted ceilings to give closer relationship with the nave.

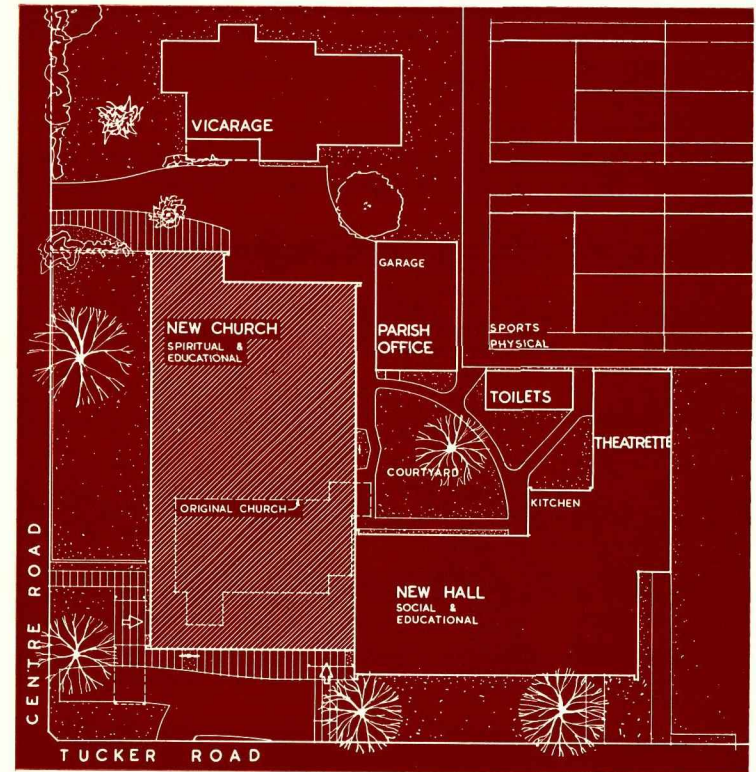
**Finishes**—The structural elements have been exposed wherever possible and decorative finishes have been generally suppressed to accent the religious motifs set in appropriate places.

These include three stained glass windows taken from the original church and suspended within the west window, which has among its coloured glass panes, positions for future stained glass panels. The cross symbol externally has been brought down to human level in the form of a life-sized concrete cross against a bare brick wall with single jet fountain at the foot symbolising life.

The sanctuary cross is also in the brutal form of steel to symbolise the real significance of the cross, while the focal points of pulpit and communion table carry the symbols of "eagle" and "facets of the world".

**The building of St. John's** is the result of full co-operation by all concerned and only time can fully evaluate our efforts.





**NO DARKNESS AT ALL . . .** The clean and simple line of the steel framework and tower provided the contractors for this work, Andasteel Constructions Pty. Ltd., of Clifton Hill, with some far from simple problems in both detailed drawings and fabrication. The attractive lines of the boxed frame sections were achieved by continuous welding by a semi-automatic submerged arc process, which was used also in the fabrication of the tapered box members of the tower.





## 1

**COME FOLLOW ME . . .** The attractive and hard wearing vinyl tiles supplied and laid by Cotter Floors Pty. Ltd., of Bouverie Street, Carlton, cover the main floors of the nave and narthex, also two vestries and lobby.

The immersion font is copied from the one in St. Paul's Cathedral, which in turn was modelled from the remains of one discovered in the ancient Cathedral of St. John, Tyre, built in the year 315 A.D. The three steps leading into the font are suggested by a picture Dante described. In this picture, three steps led to the gate of pardon — the first was of white marble, so highly polished that every man could see himself clearly. This makes him realise the ugliness of sin and he feels remorse. The second of Dante's steps was of rough hard granite, painful to tread on. Repentance also requires a turning away from our old life. The third step was of red porphyry, the colour of sacrifice. We also need to make amends, and restore what we can, for our repentance to be complete.

## 2

**IN SHINING GARMENTS . . .** The West Window to the Nave, featuring Bronze Mullions, combines the colours of green, blue, amber, peach, and grey, in thick Rough Plate Glass, with the three centre panels glazed in grey Plate Glass as a background to the group of three Stained Glass Memorial Windows.

The glazed screen to the Narthex is of grey Rough Plate Glass, as are the Church windows, which have peach centre panels glazed into Bronze Frames.

These frames and glass were supplied by R.M.S. Pty. Ltd., Hawthorn. The glass used in the building was manufactured by Spiegelglas Verkaufs Agentur, of Cologne, through their Australian Agents, Paul Segart Pty. Ltd., Sydney.

## 3

**HIS GLORY PROCLAIM . . .** The Stramit roof structure, reflecting the bold concept of the design principle, was chosen by the Architects to meet the needs of beauty, insulation and economy of construction.

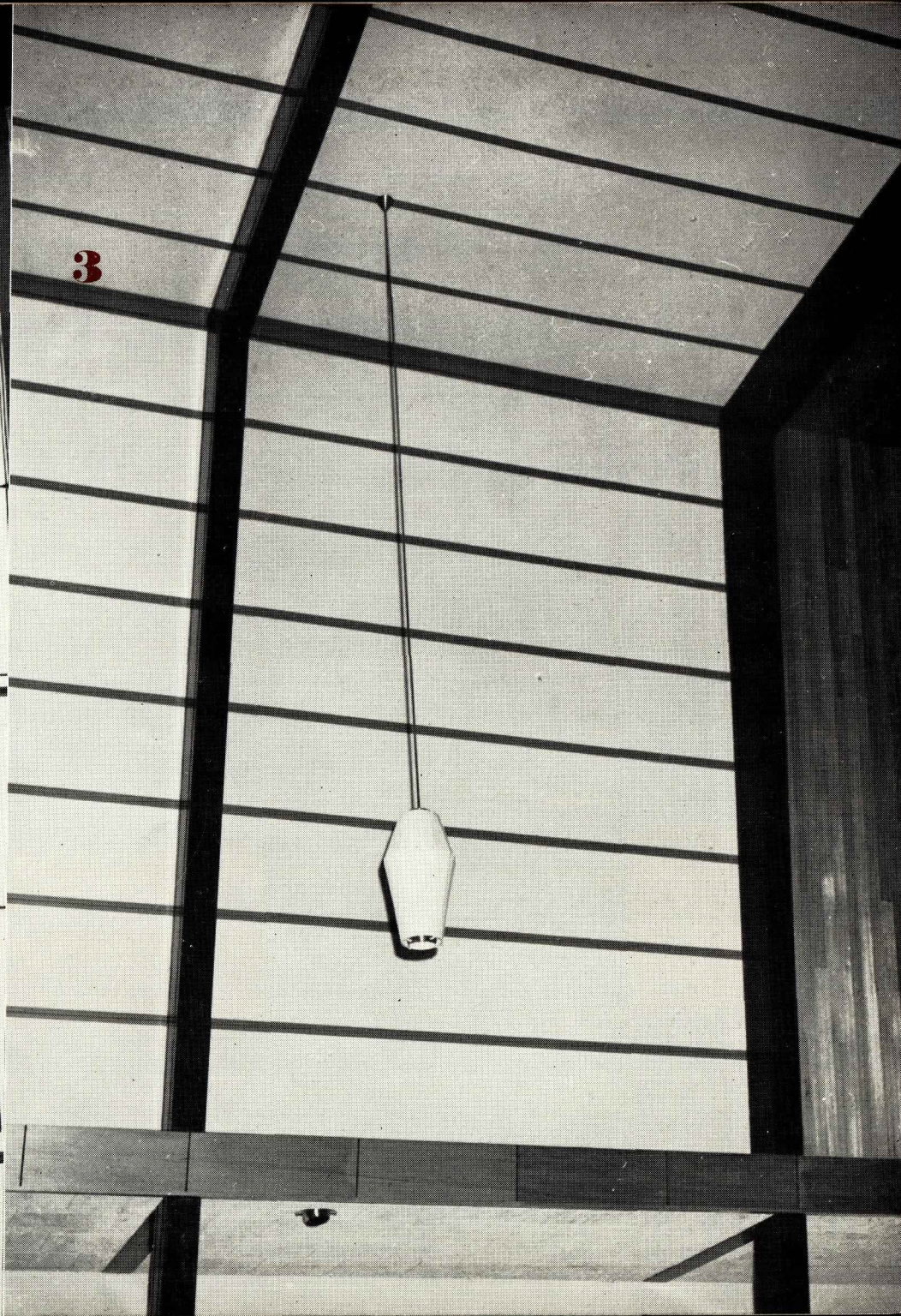
The complete system provides a symmetrical, textured wall and ceiling panel suitably pre-decorated to complement those colours within the Church itself.



2



3







**THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT . . .** The furnishings of the Church were manufactured and supplied by F. N. Mann Pty. Ltd., of New Footscray Road, Footscray.

**THY LOVING KINDNESS . . .** The artistic welded steel chapel screen, as well as the black steel frieze in the furniture, was made by Craftsteel Industries, Welding Engineers, of Charlton Avenue, Cheltenham.

Similarly the specially designed communion rails, sanctuary cross and copper symbols were made by these competent tradesmen. The position of the communion rails allows the congregation to assemble for the fellowship meal around the altar-table as a family. The copper symbol in the front panel of the holy table reminds us that this central act of our worship is not for our own exclusive comfort, but to share with all men by our being for them broken bread and poured out wine. The four occupations of men are represented by the sheaf of corn for agriculture, the ledger for commerce, the gear wheel for industry, and the hammer for creative craft.







Nimbus — a circle of light surrounding the head with three rays, suggesting the presence of the three Persons of God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in our thinking.



Scales — represent the unjust trial of Jesus prior to the crucifixion. In the Old Testament, the scales were used as a symbol of God's justice.



Crown of leaves — the crown of leaves or flowers which formed the prize at the ancient Greek Games has become associated with the idea of the Victory of Christ over evil. A circle also suggests the eternal nature of God.



Crosses took many forms in the ancient world. These are two variations of the Tau Cross—named because of its likeness to the Greek letter tau, which became our English T.



The Latin Cross — this was the traditional shape of the cross on which Christ died. It has become a reminder for all Christians of Christ's sacrifice for us and His victory over sin.



The Anchor Cross — this was used as a disguised cross by the persecuted Christians in the catacombs of Rome. Its origin was their confidence in the reliability of God.



The fish. Another disguised sign which the persecuted Christians used in the catacombs of Rome. The letters in the Greek word for "fish" were also the first letters for the words "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour".



Two ways of writing the Greek letters Chi Rho, equivalent to the English letters Ch and R. These are the first two letters of the Greek word for Christ.



The Epiphany Star. A symbol of hope, reminding us of the journey of the Magi to find a Saviour.



The bundle of rods with the axe in the middle were signs of authority in the ancient world and are a reminder of the part the Government of Rome played in the condemnation and crucifixion of Christ.



These letters were placed on the cross on which Jesus was crucified. They stand for the Latin words "Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum", meaning "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews".



Yod. In the centre is the Hebrew letter Yod, which is the first letter of the Hebrew word for God. The triangle represents the three Persons in one God.



IHS. These letters stand for the first three letters of the Greek word for Jesus.



Alpha and Omega. These are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, reminding us Christ is the Beginning and End of all things.





**A KINGDOM PREPARED . . .** The foundations, footings and floors, all of ready mixed concrete were supplied by Specified Concrete (Vic.) Pty. Ltd., of Melbourne, Newport and Cheltenham.

The paths and paving were constructed by Frank Terrazzo and Concrete Company of Brighton Street, Richmond.

The pre-cast concrete arches were manufactured and supplied by Bucklands Concrete Industries Ltd., of Keys Road, Moorabbin.

The Porch steps from the original church have been relayed as the steps in this Portico to remind worshippers of the faith of their fathers.

**DENY THYSELF . . .** The wire cut Nu-bricks were supplied by Brick Industries, of Middleborough Road, Burwood. This feature brick wall provides a well finished decorative background for the free-standing life-size cross.

The photos in this brochure are by courtesy of Alfred Gooding of 609a Centre Road, East Bentleigh.



COLLECT FOR SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST'S DAY

MERCIFUL Lord, we beseech thee to cast thy bright beams of light upon thy Church, that it being enlightened by the doctrine of thy blessed Apostle and Evangelist Saint John may so walk in the light of thy truth, that it may at length attain to the light of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.