

**180<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Sermon** (see SermonPresentation.pdf file for the pictures)

**[Picture 1 Logo 180]** On 30<sup>th</sup> August 1832, Major Charles C Michell the Surveyor General at the Cape, Charles Stuart Pillans, N J Jones, W Hawkins (the Honourable East India Company's agent at the Cape) and James Watt (deputy Assistant Commissary-General) applied to the Governor of the Cape Sir Lowry Cole, for the land on which we are this morning so that an Episcopal (or Anglican as we now know it) Church could be built on it. It was one morgen 376 square roods. The **[Picture 2 Daniel Wilson]** Bishop of Calcutta, The Rt Rev Daniel Wilson, on his way to his diocese, stopped At the Cape and spent just over a week doing Episcopal duties including, on the 5<sup>th</sup> September 1832, blessing this portion of land in Rondebosch.

**[Picture 2: Michell-St Pauls]**

By 16 February 1834 a church building had been completed and was ready to be opened for worship. Who were the first parishioners? What were they like? What did they do for a living? What they constructed, both materially and spiritual, would last a long time, be renewed, would grow and change as time past until what is now St Paul's stands proud on this rise above what was in the past, the flood plain of the Liesbeek River. What they and the succeeding generations achieved can be seen as we look around. **[Google Earth picture of site]**

What I plan to do in this sermon is spend some time exploring, through words and pictures, something about those first worshippers, see the problems they faced, trying to explore their mindset, seeking the qualities they had. Then, I hope to show you where they found the answer to their issues and how we today have problems and issues so similar to them and how we too can find the answer to these in the same place or rather person as they did, so that we can, like them, leave a heritage that will continue to grow and develop, change and transform for at least another 180 years.

Perhaps this format of preaching might be different from what you are used to. For those who are not into history, do bear with me as we explore the early days of the Parish of Rondebosch so that we can use their story as a foundation, an example or model that we can use to build on for the next 180 years.

**[Picture 2: Michell-St Pauls]**

Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> February 1834 and the opening of the first church building on this site. It was an attractive building, just up from the Main Road to Wynberg. The Property was on an open piece of land between the two parts of the estate belonging to Abraham De Smidt. **[Picture 2: Deeds Office Sketch]** One of the history writers tells us that in order to start building they had first remove indigenous people who were squatting on the land. How did that affect the people who came to worship on that opening day, I wonder? Were they unaffected and behaving like typical colonialist, taking what they wanted for their own use without caring for the rights of the indigenous people?

**[Picture 2: Michell-St Pauls]**

The Guest of Honour was the Governor General. Once again we might raise an eyebrow and ask why a political figure like Sir Benjamin D'Urban be the guest of honour and not a senior Church person? Well, we must remember that there was as yet no Bishop of Cape Town. Legally, Cape Town, like all colonies fell under the Bishop of London but in practice it was the local governor who was seen as the ordinary that is having jurisdiction over the church in this territory.

Who would have been at the service? Well, the people of Rondebosch. Who were they? Well, Rondebosch had begun life as farmland for the DEIC free burgers. The names of some of the blocks of flats reflect this because they are named after the original estates. Once the British come here permanently in 1807, English merchants started operating in the City and as the city bowl was hot and dusty they sort accommodation in the outlying village of Rondebosch. Here it was cooler and green tucked under the back of Table Mountain. The Liesbeek River flowed through Rondebosch the whole year round reminding the residents of English countryside. But it did mean that the

men of the families had to travel to centre town each day and with at that point no public transport it meant that before buying here you had to have enough money to have a horse-and-trap to get to work each day.

One historian of that period described the Main Road to Wynberg as being lined with villas. Among those would have been Rustenberg House, the home of the Cloete family [**Pic Rustenberg House**]

In fact, Rondebosch was filled with the elite of Cape society. Just across the Liesbeek River bridge from St Paul's was 'Belmont' where the Ebden family lived. The patriarch of this famous family was John Bardwell Ebden who [**Pic Ebden**] served on the Legislative Council, was involved in the anti-convict protests and business wise was founder, with others of the Cape of Good Hope Bank and the Commercial Exchange. He had an ambitious and combative personality and he was known by the nickname "the storm petrel" because of his reputation of frequently being in fights. Other merchants included Charles Stuart Pillans, William Hawkins the HEIC last agent at the Cape and N Jones.

**[Pic: Maclear]** Arriving in the Cape in January of 1834 was the new appointed Royal Astronomer who lived in the Royal Observatory. This was Thomas Maclear. He came out with a man servant, Thomas Bowler who was more interested in painting watercolours than being the servant to Maclear and so he later left service and begun teaching art to the young ladies at the Cape and later at Diocesan College. [**Pic Bowler**]. He drew and painted St Paul's Church after the new church was being planned and built. [**Pic Water Colour and Sketch Int**]

Another astronomer here at the Cape who worshipped at St Paul's was Sir John Frederick Herschel [**Pic: Herschel**]. He also arrived in 1834 and lived in Feldhausen in Claremont, which is where Grove School is today. He would walk to St John's Wynberg for church but after St John's gable collapsed he made his way to St Paul's on a Sunday. In his diary Herschel makes reference to other members of the congregation besides the white settlers. He is very complimentary on the fact that the white master and slave owners would bring their black servants and slaves to divine worship. [**Slave pic**]

So St Paul's would have had white and black parishioners right from its very beginnings. But that doesn't mean they were treated equally. In order to pay for the new Church building, shares were sold with dividends being paid on them annually until the Parish could afford to buy them back. Furthermore, the pews would have been rented out to parishioners with only a few, right at the back, being free for the poor to use.

These poor would have been the indigenous khoi and mixed people of khoi-slave unions. Artists such as Charles Michell, the designer of the original church and surveyor-general and as well as those of another surveyor-general, Charles Davidson Bell tend to show the worse side of the characteristics of the indigenous people [**illustration**]. R L Watson writing in his book, *Slave Emancipation and Racial Attitudes in Nineteenth-Century South Africa* says: *Taken together, these factors produced a multi-faceted negative image of both blacks and Coloureds in the minds of many white people: they were dangerous, without discipline or morality, filthy, rootless, deceitful, and lazy. The result was that in the 1830s and 1840s, an ideology developed that merged blacks (Xhosa, Mfengu) and Coloureds (freed slaves, Khoisan, et al.) in the minds of whites and, at the same time, confined them to the bottom of the social order where they could be more easily exploited. Developments that occurred later in the century, particularly those associated with industrialization, added important additional features to the South African racial order*

Were any slaves present at that first service? Well, emancipation would only occur on 1 Dec 1834 but it was followed by a further four years of compulsory apprenticeship with the slaves' former owners. Despite the system of apprenticeship, numerous slaves deserted their owners, while those who remained to serve their apprenticeship increasingly adopted a less subordinate attitude towards their masters. Desertion and insubordination hence became characteristic of the slave-master relation after Emancipation. It is estimated that the slave population of the Cape

stood at 59 000 souls at Emancipation. So I'm sure some of those 59k would have been in church and certainly certain entries in our Baptism, marriage and burial registers seem to confirm this. Here are two baptismal register entries **[pic register]**

*On this 23rd day of October 1836 Martha surname Elizabeth daughter of Rosulannie free adult native of the Cape born 2nd July 1819 was baptised by the Rev'd Edw. Judge MA  
Witness: William Robertson; Sarah Wilhelmina*

*I hereby certify the above register of Baptism to be a true copy of original register. John Fry Provisional Chaplain*

And

*On this 27th day of July 1840 Marietze, female apprentice of D Cloete about 9 years old was baptised by me.  
Godparents: Mrs Daniel Cloete, Miss Louisa Duboissen; Daniel Cloete. Signed John Fry Provisional Chaplain*

The whole slavery ethos developed its own terminology and in our registers you will find terms such as Liberated Blacks , Prized Negro and Apprentice occurring frequently.

There would be one other group of poor people who were neither indigenous or slaves and this would have been children particularly boys who had been sent out from the UK by the Children's Friendly Society. **Pic CFS Boy** They were sent out to the Cape as emancipation approached so that there would not be a labour shortage. One of these boys who could have been in the congregation on 16 February 1835 was George Peltret whose direct descendant is Robin Peltret the paediatrician and Monica Sutherland from Reform Road and chair of the Rondebosch Ratepayers Association.

So 16 February 1834. We have a full church but what could they expect at the service? They would have looked around the little church **[Smyth picture]** and it would have been very different from what we see today. This is not only because of the size difference but also because in those days the centre of attraction would not be the altar as today but rather the pulpit. **[Cathedral]** This painting by Thomas Baines, another person connected to St Paul's, shows the interior of the old St George's Church in Cape town which later would become the Cathedral. That church was only completed by the end of 1834. Here we can see those without pews because of pew rent, standing at the back. The organ pipes seem to be the visible centre and we can just see the preacher in his pulpit. In those days three tier pulpits were the thing where the rector, the curate and the parish clerk were on the different levels. The parish clerk's responsibility was to start the singing of the psalms and generally control the service with his loud carrying voice.

But what sort of service would it have been? A Eucharist, as we are celebrating today? No, it was in fact Morning Prayer from the Book of Common Prayer. We know that the congregation sung Bishop Thomas Ken's famous Morning Hymn - Awake, my soul, and with the sun//Thy daily stage of duty run; //Shake off dull sloth, and early rise To pay thy morning sacrifice. They also sung Psalm 24 The earth is the Lord's, and all that therein is : the compass of the world, and they that dwell therein. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors : and the King of glory shall come in. Who is the King of glory : it is the Lord strong and mighty, even the Lord mighty in battle. We don't know if it was sung to Anglican chant as we sung Ps 84 this morning or in a metrical version of Tate and Brady or perhaps Sternhold and Hopkins.

The Preacher **[pic Edward Judge]** was the Reverend Edward Judge, the Senior Colonial Chaplain. His text was from Genesis 28:vv16&17. But let me read the report of the opening service from the *SA Commercial Advertiser* of the following Saturday. *The Sermon was preached by the Senior Colonial Chaplain, who selected for his text, Genesis XXVIII., parts of the 16th and 17th verses: Surely the Lord is in this Place: This is none other but the House of God; and this is the Gate of Heaven.*

*From these words the reverend gentleman took a short historical view of the erection of Houses, separated from profane and common uses, for the public worship-of Almighty God; spoke with much earnestness of the usefulness of social prayer and praise, in the Sanctuary of the Lord's Day, especially with reference to the moral and religious habits of the mass of the people, in the present actual state of civilisation and knowledge, and concluded by applying his subject to the occasion, and by making a brief but emphatic appeal to his hearers on behalf of the Church funds. The collection at the door after Service, was, we hear, exceedingly handsome, and more than the most sanguine had ventured to anticipate*

*We cannot conclude our notice of the proceedings of the day without congratulating the first projectors of the Building and the Trustees upon the successful termination of their exertions. We have no doubt but that the new Church will prove a great blessing, as it is now an ornament, to the delightful Village of Rondebosch and its immediate neighbourhood.*

As that first congregation sat in the first church building on this site and listening to The Rev Mr Judge, what was going through there minds? What concerned them? **Pic Old Church**

When we come to church we come with our issues, seeking solutions from God. I doubt that those first congregant had it any differently. Here they were at the foot of Africa. Did they view this as their home? So often in the minutes of the vestry and in later years the Parish magazine one finds references to parishioners or the clergy returning to the UK and words "returning home" occur. So was the Cape Colony merely a temporary lodging place or a permanent home for them and their progeny. Another issue which is fairly universal and timeless is finance. Some of the congregation were rich, riches perhaps made through the labours of slavery and now emancipation was just around the corner. Those human beings who made up the rich peoples capital assets would be given their freedom. Could the rich make as much money having to pay salaries to their labourers? Would they face financial ruin? The compensation offered by the British Government to the slave owners had to be collected in London and agents doing this task, even if they could be trusted, would skim a large percentage off the top. How would the new freed slaves respond to their former masters? Would there be riots and revolution? What about their own families, with children growing up and needing education. Would they have to send them "home" to the UK for schooling or would the newly formed SACS be of a high enough standard? And the young children, who would teach them the infamous three 'R', reading Writing and Arithmetic? Those families sitting here in the old St Paul's must have all these thoughts in their minds.

I suspect that some of those present would have prayed about these issues and being practical adventurous men and women they might have realised that Church could play a role. How could St Paul's help?

Well, one could say that conditionally the church was open to all – slave or free, indigenous or settler. Yes, there was Pew Rent but there were also Free Pews. Baptism, Marriage and Burials were available to all as our registers show. Because this was an English Church – not like the Grootte Kerk in the centre of Cape Town, the settlers began to feel more at home. Going to Church on a Sunday here in the Cape Colony was just like going to Church back 'home' in England – St Paul's helped to create a feeling of 'home-from-home' for them. Thirdly the church treated them freely and the church would within a few years start a school where children of the parish regardless of race and even creed –Muslim children were welcome - could attend **[School pics] [more pics]**

But let us move forward to 2014. **[mod pic]** Are the issues that the first congregation worried about similar to ours? Many of you are not settlers from Europe but settlers from the rest of Africa. Do you consider Cape Town as 'home'? Would you send your children back to where you came from to ensure a good education? You whose children have left the Cape to work overseas, do you still consider Cape Town as home? Does the empty nest create issues with you? And finances, well, how can we afford to visit our children with the Rand at over 11 to the \$ and 18 to the pound. We don't have slaves that are about to be released. But the freedom that came in 1994, now 20

years on has that changed your lives? Has transformation of Rondebosch affected you? **[Pic Main Road]** From this [1] to this [2] Or this [3] to this [4]

And education. It is great to have a world renowned university occupying more and more of our suburb of Rondebosch – or is it? **[UCT]**

The Rondebosch Church, later named St Paul's offered answers to the first congregation gathered here on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1834. **[St Pauls Today]** Does St Paul's offer answers to you, the congregation gathered here on 16 February 2014? The Church building is not a living thinking being. What is living and thinking are the members of the Church, the people of God. It was the original 1834 parishioners and their successors who created a place for worship, for education, for pastoral care and a beautiful building for all this to take place in. Thomas Merton, the famous catholic monk and writer on spirituality said in his book *New Seeds of Contemplation*: "*Let there always be quiet, dark churches in which people can take refuge....Houses of God filled with his silent presence. There, even when they do not know how to pray, at least they can be still and breathe easily.*" Many who enter this building feel that God is present here. As they kneel in a pew and look towards the high altar they see the magnificent East window and that becomes the central thought of their contemplation. In the centre panel of the Stained glass window is what makes our faith unique. **[Central panel ]** Our God came down to earth and was put to death on the cross but three days later he rose from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep.

But it is the four side panels that move me. We have explored them one Lent but let me remind you. Mr George John Nicholls had two daughters that drowned off Kalk Bay and also a son who died here in South Africa. After he had returned to the UK and upon the death of his wife, he included in his will instructions that an East Window should be erected here at St Paul's where the Resurrection should take the central place but that on each side the virtues of Faith, Hope, Love and Humility should be displayed. He asked that Faith should have face of his wife, **[Pic Faith]** humility **[add humility]** have the face of his son George Robert Nicholls and Hope and Charity should depict his two daughters – **[add hope]** Hope his daughter Madelaine and **[add Charity]** Charity his daughter Emma. His will explained why he had chosen these virtues for each. Each of these loved one displayed these virtues. But this was only family and I'm sure all families of St Paul's then and now have these virtues to a greater or lesser degree.

So as you enter in 2014 and kneel and pray. Look up at that East end window. Give thanks to God for those in our parish who have faith, who have hope, who have love and who have humility so that this parish can offer you safety, protection, love and strengthen you. **[Last Slide]** But then look at the centre panel – the Risen Lord who instilled in our parish these virtues over the last 180 years and pray that his central presence may continue in the hearts and minds of all who worship here for at least the next 180 years. Because Jesus is the answer