

St. Mary's, Saanichton

100 years of work, worship, and witness

by KEN PEDLOW

One hundred years ago this month the first steps were taken towards establishing an Anglican Church in the community of Saanichton on the Saanich Peninsula north of Victoria.

In April, 1893, a number of parishioners, at that time attending St. Stephen's a couple of miles to the west, decided it would be preferable to have their own church building. Within a relatively short period plans and specifications were finalized, funding obtained, and the small wood frame structure completed on Cultra Avenue in Saanichton.

On July 6, 1893, the new church was dedicated. Eleven years later, after many concerts, dances, theatrical productions, bazaars, and teas, the mortgage was paid off and the church was consecrated on June 16, 1904, and named St. Mary's.

As part of a joint parish, first with St. Stephen's and Holy Trinity, then with just the former, the congregation both prospered and saw hard times. Over the years a number of small improvements were made and memorials donated. In order to provide space for a Sunday school, a disused air force training building from Patricia Bay airport was purchased to become the church hall. In 1959, the parish bought 1.68 acres of land, immediately across the street from the church, for future expansion, if necessary. St. Mary's became a separate parish in 1983 under the Rev. Robert Sansom, rector. Rather than being a quiet pre-retirement post in g, it was during the subsequent four years that the new St. Mary's was constructed on the nearby property. Completed in April, 1987, and dedicated the following October, the beautiful

new building was, and still is, the most modern Anglican church on the peninsula. Its bright and spacious feel is especially appreciated by the congregation. A mere four years later, the church was debt free and consecrated on November 1, 1991.

Parishioners at St. Mary's take great pleasure in their accomplishments over the years, but are particularly satisfied with their niche within the community of churches in the area: though our facilities are modern, our worship is traditional. There are many activities for seniors Support Group. The Sunday school, though presently rather small, is an integral part of the church community.

Since paying off the mortgage on the new building, the outreach efforts of the parish have also been most gratifying through the use of a system of voluntary monthly giving through special outreach envelopes. Monthly thrift shops also provide an important outreach service in our community.

1993 is a year of particular significance, for not only is it our Centennial, but we will see our rector of the past four years, the



Rev. Canon Murray Ames, retire. He has played a major role in the development of the parish life and community for which the building was intended. We pray that his successor will be able to build on the solid foundation which exists at present.

As part of our Centennial celebrations we are planning a number of special events including a parish banquet on July 3, our main Centennial celebration service on Sunday, July 4, at which Bishop Jenks will officiate, and a special anniversary Eucharist on July 6. Other events planned include a deanery flower festival in August and the preparation of a parish cook book and pictorial directory. In celebration of our anniversary we are also expecting to purchase a new organ to further improve our music ministry.

God has blessed us richly in the past and now, as we meet the opportunities and challenges of our second century, we seek again the guidance of his Holy Spirit. We pray that all our work and worship and witness at St. Mary's may be to his praise and glory, and for the good of his kingdom.

Ken Pedlow is St. Mary's rector's warden and chairman of the Centennial Committee