the Conventional District of Guildford and Holroyd. In 1925 we joined the Parish of Guildford & Merrylands. Then in 1952 St. Matthew's (including St. Aidan's Church branch church, in rural Greystanes) became part of the parish of St. Anne's, Merrylands, becoming a separate parish in the early 1980s. In 1965, a branch church, St. Philip's, was established in Frances Street.

A new St. Matthew’s building was erected in Ridge Street in 1972, and a new Rectory in 1973, after the sale of the Arcadia Street property and St. Philip’s, in Frances Street.

Yet, details of buildings tell the least important part of our story. Foundation stones and the like cannot tell us of the many men and women, boys and girls, who have come to trust the Lord Jesus as their friend and Saviour. This happened through the proclamation of his gospel – from the pulpit, in Sunday School and Scripture classes, in Bible study groups and individually.

The real St. Matthew’s is much more than buildings. As Paul wrote, “You are a letter from Christ… written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.” – 2 Corinthians 3:2-3.

We can thank God for the faithful servants of Christ who have laboured for him in this place.

Why does St. Matthew’s exist as a church? To “declare the wonderful deeds of him who called [us] out of darkness into his marvellous light.” – 1 Peter 2:9.

When Archbishop of Sydney and Primate of Australia, William Saumarez Smith, opened the first St. Matthew’s church building, 125 years ago, he articulated why our church exists.

It was Saturday, 28th May 1892, at 2:30pm. The Archbishop spoke to the assembled crowd at St. Matthew’s Mission Church, Holroyd, in Arcadia Street, opposite the Holroyd Town Hall, which had been opened five years earlier. He spoke from the book of Acts, chapter 1. In that passage, the risen Lord Jesus commissions his disciples, just before ascending to his Father.

The Archbishop quoted Christ’s commission,

“Ye shall receive power, after the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem… and unto the uttermost parts of the earth” – Acts 1:8.

An account of the opening service says the Archbishop “stressed the need of personal witness to God’s Truth, and the influence for good of humble lives empowered by the Spirit of God. He … prayed that the church would become a centre of blessing to the district.”

For the last 125 years, that is exactly why our church has existed – and will, Lord willing, continue to exist – to proclaim the saving news of the Lord Jesus Christ, to call for repentance, and to hold out the words of eternal life to men and women from every nation.

Yes, as our original name reminds us, we are a mission church – that is, a church with a mission. For the last twenty years or so, we have summarised our mission...
with the slogan, “Building People Around Christ”.

We want to be “a centre of blessing to the district”.

So, how did St. Matthew’s church come to be?

It was in about 1890 that the Rev. Henry Tate, Curate at St. John’s, Parramatta, began to conduct Sunday services in the Holroyd district.

They were held in a building known as “The Old Dairy”, on the corner of Merrylands Road and Fowler Road. The Holroyd Post Office and Store was opened on this site in 1898.

On 9th January, 1892, Archdeacon W.J. Gunther, Rector of St. John’s, Parramatta, called together a local Church Committee to formulate plans for the erection of a Mission Church. Rapid progress was made.

Messrs. E. C. V. Broughton and Co., of Parramatta, donated three blocks of land in Arcadia Street, Merrylands West, for the site of the Church building. Archdeacon Gunther secured a grant of £50 from the Church Society, and a similar sum was raised by local subscription.

The foundation stone was laid on Wednesday, 20th April, 1892, by the Archdeacon. Most of the work was completed by voluntary labour.

There were several suggestions for a name, “St. Augustine’s”, “St. Barnabas”, “St. Matthew’s”. The name chosen was “St. Matthew’s Mission Church, Holroyd”, and it was opened and dedicated by Archbishop Smith five weeks later, on Saturday 28th May.

The original building was thirty feet long and twenty feet wide, weatherboard, and roofed with Sherwood tiles, donated by Mr. J. Cook, of Sherwood Tile Company.

Additions were made in 1901, when the Chancel and Transepts were completed; and in 1902, the Vestry and Library were added – as can be seen in these illustrations.

During 1910–11 the School Hall was built.

The stained glass windows which originally stood in the Chancel (and are now located in our current building) were given in memory of Mr. Frank Grey Faber (1834–1898), one of the founding members of St. Matthew’s.

One Mr Faber’s daughters, was Sister Edith Attwater Faber, pictured at right.

She enlisted in November 1914, and was put in charge of the surgical ward at the Imperial Military Hospital in Alexandria in Egypt. Another daughter was Elizabeth. She was set apart for Christian ministry as a Deaconess in 1917.

The windows, and other artefacts from our church’s earlier days, are reminders of a history of Christian witness here.

It is sobering to remember that every one of those who were present at the opening service in 1892 have now departed this earthly life. And every person we meet this week will do the same, in time.

Our great privilege as a church is to bear witness to the Lord Jesus, so that men and women, boys and girls, can come to know him, and to be saved from the wrath to come. We want others to hear news which will be the best news of all – if only they will turn to Christ.

From 1892 to 1913, St. Matthew’s was part of the parish of St. John’s Parramatta. In 1913, we joined with Christ Church, Guildford, to form