

Amalgamation of St Philip's and St Mark's Churches (2006)

St. Philip's continued to evolve as a parish over time. However, as Reverend Graham Goode noted at the Annual General Meeting in 2006, the maturity of the Church was accompanied by declining attendance and finances. In 2004, the parish undertook a Discernment process to determine its future. It also pursued a "cluster" arrangement with four other churches in 2005. A Task Force from St. Philip's was created and by early 2006, was in active discussions with their counterparts at St. Mark's Anglican Church, Marda Loop. St. Mark's, which had also experienced decreases in membership, church attendance, and financial revenues, was receptive to negotiation. The dialogue between the representatives of both churches was "lively and frank" and the committees found a lot of common ground. A draft proposal for a potential partnership was given to all parishioners in February 2006. The committee recommended that the Church building and property of St. Philip the Evangelist be sold, and that a new partnership ministry be established on the St. Mark's site. St. Mark's, with its larger facility and high-visibility locale, was the logical choice for a combined parish home. The Church property of St. Philip the Evangelist was subsequently sold in November 2006 to Living Spirit United Church.

The congregations of St. Mark's and St. Philip's met separately for information sessions during the month of March 2006. There was a joint worship and information meeting for both parishes on Sunday, April 30, at St. Philip's. The congregations voted affirmatively to form a new partnership ministry, located at St. Mark's, on May 7, 2006. Rev. Bob Bettson, rector of St. Mark's, said, "In the past, some church mergers have been arranged from above and they haven't always been successful. But this was very much coming from the grassroots". Each congregation voted to "disestablish" their parish at their respective Annual General Meetings, and voted to "establish" the new Anglican parish.

The final service at St. Philip's was held on May 28, 2006. It was a time of mixed emotions. 2006 marked the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Church, so the order of service included the Old Testament reading from the Dedication service of 1961 and the Epistle and Gospel lessons that were read at the service of Consecration in 1983. Rick Merryfield, long-time parishioner and leader of St. Philip's Praise team said of the service, "The atmosphere was amazing. There were tears, of course, but there was also a feeling of a new start, that it was time to move ahead".

The two congregations began worshipping together at the St. Mark's site on June 4, the Feast of Pentecost. To celebrate the occasion, pink flamingos decorated the lawn of the church. As a temporary measure, it was decided that the new parish would retain both names – thus, be called the Anglican Parish of St. Mark & St. Philip. This name was confirmed early in 2007 by Bishop Derek Hoskin.

Sources:

St Philip the Evangelist: A Short History of the Parish from 1952 – 1961

Calgary Herald, World of Religion page, March 18, 1961

The Sower, March 1977

The Sower, November 1983

The Sower, June 2006

Calgary Herald, Religion Page, December 23, 2006

Thanks especially to Audree Wilson for her collection of historical documents pertaining to St. Philip's