



LORETO Mandeville Hall Toorak

Where Are They Now?



Frances Grimes (O'Neill) – Class of 1978

Fran remembers the long journey from Sandringham to Toorak every day as formative in the friendships made on the school bus and then the social times on the trains. Her sporting involvements with Athletics and Netball kept her occupied in lunchtimes as well as Saturdays. The trust and responsibility given by teachers was very much appreciated, through wild teenage years with volatile friendships.

By her senior years she was able to embrace and enjoy the extra-curricular retreats in the form of Stranger Camps (*come as strangers leave as friends*) at Macedon. Fran also appreciated the excellence of teaching and critique from teachers such as Sister Deirdre Rofe, Mother Beatrice who honed her writing skills, Sister Elizabeth Donnan patiently teaching Applied Mathematics and Physics and Mrs Neill who inspired her love of Anatomy.

After leaving school Fran studied Medicine at Monash University and was invited back to be on the Loreto Advisory board. She also spoke to Year 12 students and at retreats and seminars about her strong faith and where God was leading her in life.

In 1997 Fran was working as a doctor in the health co-op of Westgate Baptist Community. She was also part of the church leadership. That same year she, her husband Michael and their two girls moved from the Community to live and build a mud brick house on 3.5 acres while working at Foster Medical Centre as a General Practitioner.



LORETO Mandeville Hall Toorak

In 2010 Fran met with Gippsland Anglican Bishop John McIntyre and spent a year discerning a call to ordained ministry to which she responded by becoming a deacon in 2012 then an Anglican priest in 2014. She worked as a non-stipendiary minister in the Foster/Corner Inlet Parish from then on with particular care for Fish Creek Union Church – an interdenominational church. In 2017 she accepted a call to be Priest in Charge at Korumburra Poowong Parish and was commissioned by Bishop (now Archbishop) Kay Goldsworthy.

Fran is currently priest in Charge for the Korumburra Poowong Parish, and during the Covid-19 lockdown she is working remotely from her Fish Creek mud brick home. Preparing services on line has been a challenge mainly due to slow internet speeds (they rely on a satellite dish for internet as NBN doesn't reach their area), but are managing Zoom Parish Council meetings, and sending out online, mainly music, sessions to keep their young families connected. Occasionally she is asked to do special services like the recent Renewal of Marriage Vows at Mardan Chapel and a Pet Blessing at Arawata (all just before lockdown).

Being part of Fish Creek Union Church rising from the dust of white ants to become a vibrant missional church has been a highlight of Fran's career to date. Baptisms too, are always a highlight. A very memorable one was four girls in a family at Fish Creek all of whom she has observed growing in life and faith from the little six-week-old to the 10-year-old who was admitted to Communion at the same time.

Fran finds taking funerals of friends who have come to faith incredibly sad but also full of hope for the life they now live with God. Also, the privilege of taking funerals of people she has known since childhood at Sandy Point has been a great honour. A highlight in Fran's current Parish is the establishment of a Community meal in partnership with St Vinnies and the Neighbourhood House and service groups to provide not only good food but friendship for the isolated.

Asked what she does in her spare time Fran quipped: 'What spare time?' But thanks to the lockdown she has spent a lot more time in the garden and enjoying the beautiful beach at Waratah Bay. She has also been blessed with her daughter and partner and two-year-old grandchild moving in and introducing her to the wonder and beauty of God's creation.

Who knows what is next for Fran? But having to stop everything over the past six weeks has helped her to realise the beauty of her home called "Shalom" which encompasses wholeness and peace, and that her ministry can flow from all that God teaches her there; in reading in living sustainably, in creativity and in prayer, listening for His leading.

When considering the value of her Loreto education, Fran quotes Mary Ward: "Women in time to come will do much." Through the intelligent thoughtfulness and purposeful generous compassionate living and values taught, she has always considered being the best that God created her to be is all she can hope for. And when she fails God is there to pick her up and give her strength to go on.