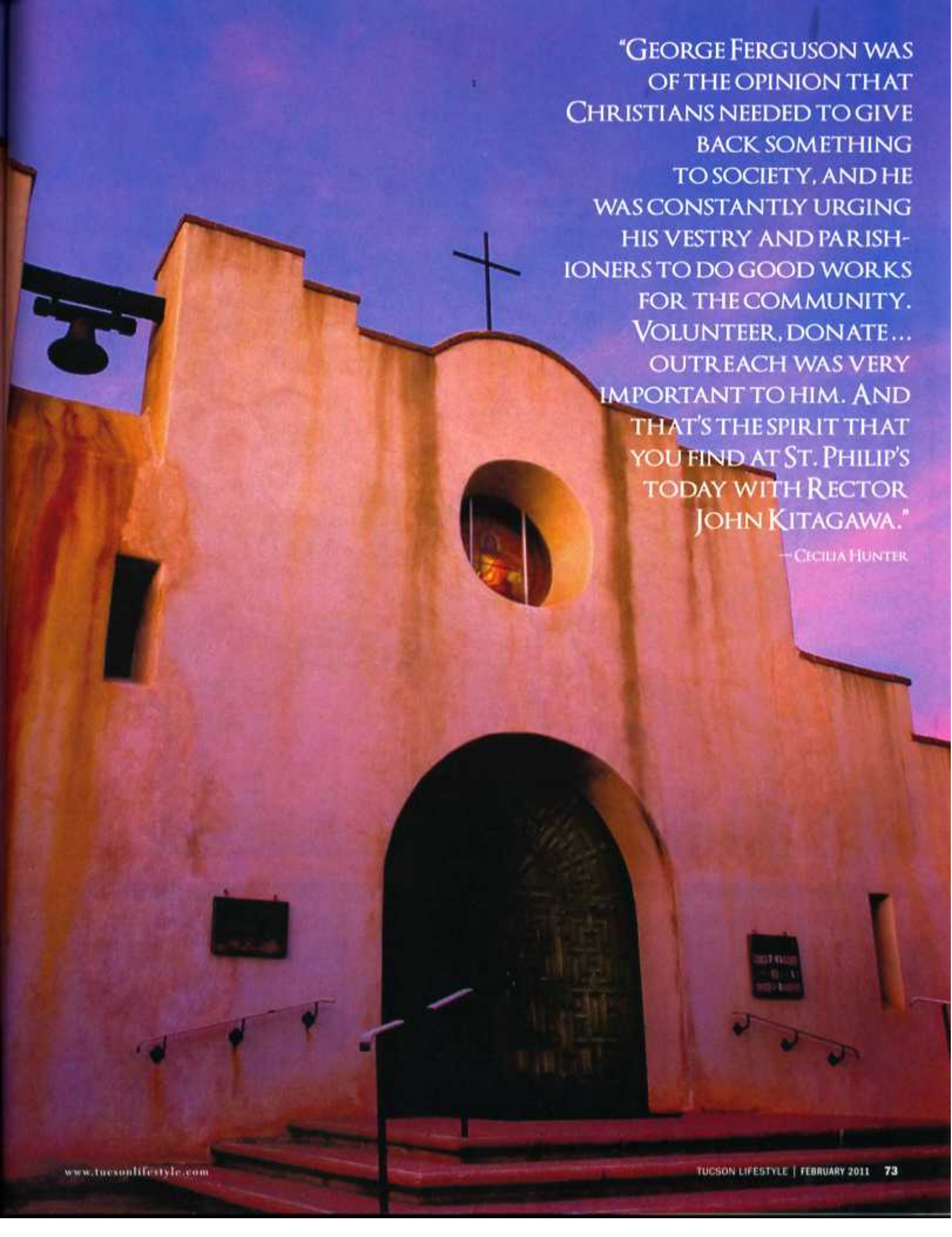


A Tucson Landmark

# KEEPING THE FAITH FOR 75 YEARS

When St. Philip's In The Hills Episcopal Church opened its doors in 1936, the population of Tucson was around 34,000, and the area that is now the intersection of River Road and Campbell Avenue was dirt roads and desert. There were probably more jack-rabbits watching the construction of the iconic church than there were people.

BY SCOTT BARKER

A photograph of the exterior of St. Philip's church at dusk. The building is a light-colored, possibly stucco, with a prominent arched entrance. Above the entrance is a circular window with a cross on top. The sky is a deep blue and purple. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

"GEORGE FERGUSON WAS OF THE OPINION THAT CHRISTIANS NEEDED TO GIVE BACK SOMETHING TO SOCIETY, AND HE WAS CONSTANTLY URGING HIS VESTRY AND PARISHIONERS TO DO GOOD WORKS FOR THE COMMUNITY. VOLUNTEER, DONATE... OUTREACH WAS VERY IMPORTANT TO HIM. AND THAT'S THE SPIRIT THAT YOU FIND AT ST. PHILIP'S TODAY WITH RECTOR JOHN KITAGAWA."

—CECILIA HUNTER

# A

## CCORDING TO ST. PHILIP'S ARCHIVIST

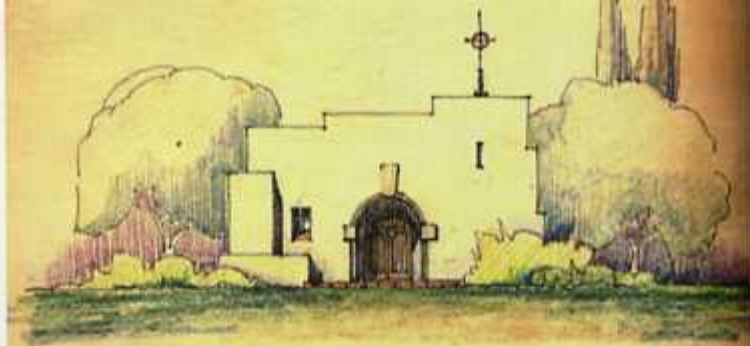
Cecilia Hunter, "The men involved with the project had a vision. Architect Josias Joesler and developers John and Helen Murphey were building Catalina Foothills Estates, and they decided that the church should be right at the core."

The Murpheys thought about the project for about two decades. And for inspiration, they drew on their many trips to Mexico, where each little village typically had a church that was the center of the life of the citizenry.

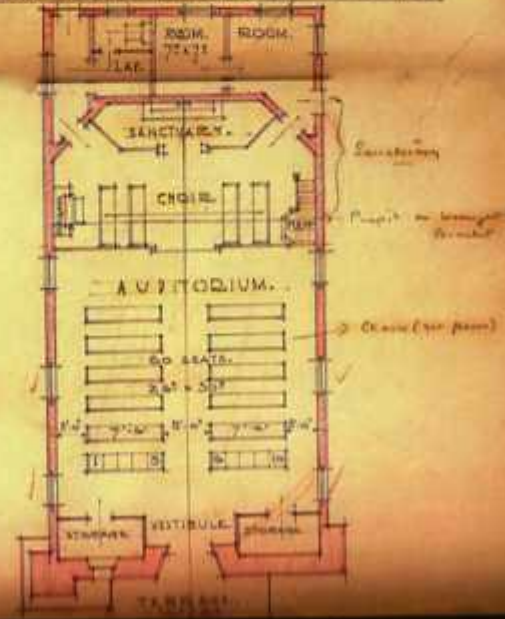
Joesler was born in Zurich to a father who was also an architect, and he'd spent years in Spain, North Africa, Cuba and Mexico. He was heavily influenced by the styles of building he'd seen in arid lands, and in the Murpheys, he'd found a champion for his distinctive style.

The other piece of the puzzle dropped into place when George Ferguson — the future rector of St. Philip's — and his wife May came to town to visit her son at the University of Arizona. They liked Tucson and for a while stayed in a suite at the Pioneer Hotel. Ferguson landed a position preaching at Grace St. Paul's Episcopal Church. The Murpheys became acquainted with him there, and regarded him as the perfect person to be the spiritual shepherd at the soon-to-be-built St. Philip's.

By all accounts, the Murpheys were hands-on builders. "Helen and John Murphey physically worked at constructing the church," Hunter relates. "They went into Mexico and brought back the pews and other pieces. The popular legend about the huge front doors is that Helen Murphey had them built in Mexico and brought them up here and decided that they didn't look old enough. So she got a hammer and started beating them up, and shot them with a shotgun so they'd look old." ▶



FLOOR PLAN & ELEVATION. SCALE 1/8"=1'-0"



ABOVE 1930 Joesler Plan.  
OPPOSITE PAGE St. Philip's, circa 1950.

"THE 12-FOOT ARCHED WINDOW IN THE SANCTUARY THAT OPENS ON THE MOUNTAINS IS SOMETHING THAT REALLY SETS OFF ST. PHILIP'S ARCHITECTURALLY, TO BE VERY SPECIAL AMONG CHURCHES." — JOHN BREMOND

1936

Helen and John Murphey, developers, designed Catalina Foothills Estates as a Mexican plaza with a central Church and businesses.



1936

The Murpheys selected architect Josias Joesler to build the Church in a Spanish Mission Colonial Revival style.

MAY 1, 1936

Rev. George Ferguson to be the priest at the new, tentatively named, St. Philip's Episcopal Church.

DEC. 16, 1936

Rev. George Ferguson, rector, invited Dr. H.B. Leonard, Leo B. Keith, Carl Gustafson and Walter Roediger to meet to discuss plans for the church.

DEC. 24, 1936

First service held at St. Philip's in The Hills Protestant Episcopal Church with 235 people crowded in a space to seat 198.

FEB. 5, 1939

Bishop Waiter Mitchell welcomed St. Philip's as a parish with Board of Directors, now Vestrymen, and George Ferguson, Rector.

OCT. 15, 1939

Women's Auxiliary to St. Philip's was formed.

JAN., 1940

151 communicants, 13,740 church attendance, and 252



church services. First expansion added rooms for Sunday school, Rector's office and Vestry room. Meditation room had an altar. Arcade chapel wing and patio with fishpond completed.

#### MAY 20, 1942

St. Philip's held services in private homes and Blenman School, because gasoline rationing made it difficult to get to Church. Eventually Vestry tried to build a church in that area for local residents.

#### JAN. 16, 1945

Helen and John Murphey give six acres of land around the Church and canceled church indebtedness to them for construction of St. Philip's.

#### NOV. 30, 1947

Chapel of the Nativity transept to seat additional 150 people, with an arcade porch and patio constructed and dedicated, and new organ installed.

#### JAN. 11, 1948

Church organ enlarged by 600 pipes and additional stops as memorial to all who were baptized, married or buried at St. Philip's.

#### MAY, 1948

John Murphey lent barracks used during WWII to church for classrooms and youth activities. By 1951 he made this a donation and added an auditorium and

classrooms. One barrack was called La Casita and used as first home of the Sexton.

#### DEC. 11, 1950

Joesler presented Master Plan for additions that were made the following year, for expansion of Church, added classrooms, including kindergarten, assembly hall and bell tower, memorial cloister, including a chapel, and living quarters for Sextons.

#### DEC. 8, 1952

Rush Kress began donations to the Church of money and art.

#### JAN. 12, 1953

St. Philip's built a chapel and named it St. Michael's and All Angels on eastside of Tucson. Rev. Clinton Fowler named Vicar.

#### DEC., 1957

To celebrate the 25th anniversary of St. Philip's, the Church was



St. Philip's did indeed look older than its years, as if it had existed in the landscape since the days when Tucson itself was a sleepy village. The rector and builder certainly treated it with the respect a venerable institution deserved. "Ferguson worked for several years without pay. He and John Murphey entered into an agreement that Joesler would design the church, and Murphey would do it at cost, but ultimately five years after the church was built, Murphey even forgave the cost. And it wasn't until the early 1940s that they finally convinced Ferguson that he had to take some pay. But then he turned around and spent it on the church."

Over the years, as the community grew, the church grew, with recent major additions taking place in the mid-1980s, and in 1998. One

of the biggest additions — in terms of its spectacular impact — can't be seen from the street. "Rush Kress, the philanthropist who was heir to the five-and-dime fortune — was a personal friend of May Ferguson," notes Hunter. "They grew up together. When the Fergusons moved to Tucson, the Kresses came to visit and lived here for a while. He gave a lot of artwork to the church because of that relationship." ▶

TOP Rev. George Ferguson.  
St. Philip's archival photo.

ABOVE John Murphey.  
Photo courtesy of the Arizona  
Historical Society/Tucson.



expanded by moving the altar back 50 feet and constructing a Baptistry. East of the chancel area was an equipment room, acolyte alley, a sacristy, bride's room and arcade porch to complete upper cloistered patio.

### JAN., 1959

Woman's Auxiliary adopted a new constitution, changing name to The Women of St. Philip's. They operated the Little Shop and started an Arts & Crafts Guild.

### JAN., 1961

John Murphey donated the park on the corner of River Road and North Campbell Avenue, to be known as St. Philip's Plaza. A preschool and nursery building were built in what is now Teen Center.

### OCT., 1962

St. Philip's received first of Kress Foundation art works.

### MAY, 1964

Mildred Fowler donated new altar frontal dedicated to the memory of her husband, Raymond Fowler.

### AUG. 31, 1964

Model of new, proposed Chapel of Christ the King on Ina Road, presented by church architect Gordon Luepke. St. Philip's built the Chapel.

### 1965

Princess Margaret of England visited St. Philip's.

### MAY 26, 1968

Articles of Incorporation were revised and Church name was changed to St. Philip's In The Hills Episcopal Church.

### SEPT. 1968

Rev. George F. Ferguson died in New Mexico. Rev. William E.

Perry, senior Presbyter of the Parish, confirmed as "Priest in Charge."

### MAY 1, 1969

Arizona Bishop Harte received Rev. Joseph T. Heistand from Virginia Diocese, as Rector.

### JUNE 10, 1969

Rev. Bob Vance chaired committee to create a new Sabino Canyon chapel to be named St. Alban's.

"WE WERE THERE ON THAT SUNDAY IN 1965 WHEN PRINCESS MARGARET AND LORD SNOWDEN VISITED, BUT WE DIDN'T GO TO THE SERVICE. MY HUSBAND AND I HAD A PICTURE TAKEN OF OUR FAMILY AT ST. PHILIP'S EACH YEAR, AND IT TURNED OUT TO BE THE SUNDAY THAT SHE WAS THERE. WE WERE IN THE PATIO IN FRONT OF THE CHURCH WATCHING ALL THE COMINGS AND GOINGS OF THE SHERIFF'S CARS AND ALL THE PEOPLE THAT ARE AROUND A ROYAL FAMILY." — ANN VANCE



LEFT Princess Margaret attended services at St. Philip's in 1965. St. Philip's archival photo.

RIGHT Scenes through the years. St. Philip's archival photos.

### JAN., 1971

Parish now included 3500 people.

### APRIL 30, 1972

First St. Philip's Day Festival, later called a Medieval Faire, held. It included an art show and sale of items made by the Crafts Guild of St. Philip's.

### MARCH, 1973

Vestry received letter from Bishop

Harte calling for Episcopal Church to sever itself from the National Council of Churches.

### MAY 12, 1974

John and Helen Murphey given a silver tray inscribed with St. Philip's emblem; and a Cross in the north patio was identified as a memorial to the Murphey's son.

### SEPT., 1974

*The Mark of Zorro* starring Ricardo Montalban, was filmed

at St. Philip's and shown as the ABC Movie of the Week.

### MAY 10, 1976

Rector Rev. Joseph Heistand was elected Bishop Co-Adjutor of the Diocese of Arizona, so search committee named to seek a new Rector for St. Philip's.

### JUNE 5, 1977

Rev. Roger Owen Douglas, of Wilton, Connecticut, installed as Rector by Bishop Harte.

### OCT., 1977

First Blessing of the Animals service held.

### DEC., 1977

John Murphey died.

### FEB. 16, 1982

Warren Jones, Mary Rose Duffield and Richard Underwood asked to develop complete landscape plans for Church grounds.

### APRIL 20, 1982

In a compromise between the County Transportation Director and St. Philip's it was agreed that River Road would only be expanded to four lanes and thus the Church would lose only 30 feet of the Plaza.

### DEC. 19, 1982

North garden in Church dedicated to honor Rev. William Perry for 25 years of service to St. Philip's.



The Kress collection is located in the Chapel of the Nativity. "That is really a beautiful little chapel," Hunter adds. "The collection that's in there — the bishop's chair, the altar hangings, the artwork on the walls — is all medieval. It's really, really old, and just beautiful."

Kress also donated part of his family's collection to the University of Arizona Museum of Art and dozens of other museums, but St. Philip's may be the only church in the country with Kress collection materials. "We just really lucked out," says Hunter.

The Old Pueblo lucked out, too, with a facility that is not only one of the largest Episcopal churches in the country, it's regularly visited by people from all over the community for events ranging from concerts to an art fair. It also played a major role in how the city looks today. "I think Joesler set the architectural style," Hunter, a Tucson native says. "When I was growing up the dominant architectural style that I recall was Arizona territorial. Then St. Philip's was built, and Joesler and Murphey built Broadway Village. You began to see a lot of Spanish Colonial style. Now as you drive around Tucson, you see more of that than territorial." **TL**



Scenes through the years. St. Philip's archival photos.

Plaza Fountain dedicated to the memory of Dorothy Cooper.

### JAN., 1986

50th Anniversary celebrated with public presentations, parties, art exhibit, time capsule, a parish history, concerts, expanding the building and a new organ in choir loft.

### MARCH, 1986

Rev. Rebecca Holmes became St. Philip's 1st female priest.

### DEC., 1990

First Annual "A Women's Festival of Lights: Lessons and Carols for Advent," hosted by the Episcopal Church Women.

### APRIL, 1993

First Annual Outdoor Fine Art Show and Sale.

### MARCH, 2001

Rev. Roger Douglas retired from

St. Philip's after 23 years as Rector.

### SEPT., 2001

Rev. John Kitagawa welcomed as new Rector.

### SEPT. 13, 2001

In partnership with community schools, St. Philip's started an After School Arts Enrichment program for neighborhood children.

### 2002

Against vigorous opposition, Pima County widened River Road. St. Philip's lost 15 feet of River Road frontage but gained a new wall, a handicap accessible area between the church and the plaza, a wider interior driveway, and two new entrances.

### APRIL, 2005

St. Philip's added to the National Register of Historic Places.

### JAN. 14, 2007

The library, formerly in La Parroquia, moved to what was the Vestry Room and officially named the Renouf-Nels Library.

### SEPT., 2008

New "After School Music and Homework" Program started students in nearby schools.

# ST. PHILIP'S: *The Wedding Album*

SINCE OPENING ITS DOORS IN 1936, ST. PHILIP'S IN THE HILLS EPISCOPAL CHURCH HAS BEEN THE SITE FOR MANY WEDDINGS. HERE ARE SOME OF THE HAPPY COUPLES WHO HAVE TAKEN A WALK DOWN THE AISLE.



CLARKE DUNCAN AND SHIRLEY GROUNDS — 1951



PAULETTE SUKEY AND JOHN BREMOND — 1969  
Photo by Ray Manley



GEORGENE WATRING AND DAVID FOUST — 1963  
Photo by Jack Shaeffer

ST. PHILIP'S: *The Wedding Album*



MICHAEL HORNISHER AND MARY JORDAN — 1972



LAURA FISHER AND PETER MOSIER — 1982  
Photo by John Ritter



BARBARA HALL AND HANK PECK — 1983  
Photo by Chris Mooney

ST. PHILIP'S: *The Wedding Album*



LYNNE DENIZ AND JEFF CHRISENBERRY — 1993  
Photo by Heart to Heart Photography



MICHAEL ARRIAGA AND KRISTIN BREMOND — 2007  
Photo by Eric Hinote



JUDY ANN LINNANE AND CHRIS WESTIN — 1994  
Photo by Heart to Heart Photography



NINA BELL ALLEN AND JOHN LANGLEY — 2008