

Prayer and Pastoral Care at St Andrews/All Saints

Looking back in living memory to Ken Gardiner's time at Andrew's, prayer and pastoral care have been two important ministries shared by the fellowship with the clergy. In the sixties, a formidable group of ladies – The Ladies Guild – integrated newcomers into the social life of the church. This included harvest suppers, Shrove Tuesday Events, socials with dancing and the mysteries of the Whitsun and Sermons Sunday walks. Prayer was important and sometimes church prayer meetings were organised for special purposes as one offs. There was a time of 24hour prayer when a young person was diagnosed with cancer. Pastoral care was shared through word of mouth at the church services and group meetings.

In 1980, a Thanksgiving and Pastoral Link programme was introduced for St Andrew's and St Michael's through John Claydon at St Andrew's and Frank Haslam at St Michael's. The basis of this was teaching about our Christian responsibilities financially and pastorally to the church and community. A church visitor would visit five families from the church five times a year with a Pastoral Link letter as means of keeping in touch and sharing news. The letters contained three contributions from church members and they were very interesting and could form a topic for discussion. New members to the

churches were added to the visitors rota. This eventually involved all of the 'Team' churches to include St Peter's, Christ Church, St Michael's in Tytherington and St Barnabas. It had great value in uniting the team aspect of the churches through five joint meetings of visitors through the year together with picnics in the summer. In November 2006, as part of the 'New Vision and Strategy' for the Team the scheme was discontinued leaving the individual churches to organise pastoral care themselves.

And so to the present:- Pastoral Care at All Saints' has always relied on communication from all church members of peoples' needs absences , illness or concerns. There are no formal meetings but Pastoral Care needs arise through sharing at the Prayer Group, Church Services and whenever people meet together in all our various church groups. COVID restrictions over the past two years have made visiting difficult and Andy organised a 'keeping in touch' where mainly PCC members were given a list of church members to contact by 'phone or e-mail. Chris Gleaves again visits & takes Home Communion to some of our more elderly members.

Earlier it was mentioned about prayer, some years ago during a long interregnum, a prayer group was formed to pray for the needs of the church. As a result, a permanent Prayer Group was started which meets on the

second and fourth Mondays of the month at 7.00 pm in the church to pray for the needs of the world, our country, our town and those in need.

Mark and Andrea Hotchkin

[Baptist Medical Missionaries]

Mark and Andrea met the first week at university. They both were on the medical course at Leeds University. Training at the famous Jimmy's Hospital, both were committed to mission work . they both felt Gods plan for them was to work overseas and this became their purpose in life.

Six years after graduating they set off to Africa working in Mancenta Guinea for the Leprosy Mission /Baptist Mission jointly. Mark was an orthopaedic surgeon for 10 years. Helping people and Andrea an obstetrician and gynaecologist. They were there in total ten years. Helping people with Leprosy. Mark did hand and foot surgery and eyelid surgery to save his patient's sight. In 2,000 they sadly had to leave there because of fighting. It took them ten days to drive across the country. A local Dr who was escaping with his family died in crossfire. They returned for work in Guinea but after two years decided to return to England.

Then followed a period at home in Wakefield. Mark spent his time training to be an A and E surgeon. Andrea finished her Obstetrics and Gynaecology training. Their two girls Ruth and Rebecca continued their education in local schools.

Returning to Africa with the Baptist Mission they worked in a hospital owned by an American Mission. It was in the Capital of Chad N'djamena. The hospital needed a lot of work doing before opening. Its equipment was in containers. Having got the hospital set up, Mark caught Typhoid and was the first patient in hospital with Andrea looking after him. They ran the hospital for five years covering the medical needs of the community they served. Then the Baptist Mission had a Fund Raiser to expand the Maternity Unit Andrea was very busy.

Sometime later Mark and Andreas vision for the Mission and the management of the hospital was different from the American Charity they worked with. So there was a parting of the ways, aided by the fact that their girls were now studying in England.

This led to them moving to the Government Hospital at Bardai, in the far north of Chad, near the border with Libya , which is a hard place to get to either over the Sahara desert in a 4by 4 or a small aeroplane. Bardai is in a kind of mountain fortress in the middle of the Sahara populated by a semi nomadic tribe who've endured war, disconnection from the rest of Chad and more recently the lawlessness of a gold rush in the Tibetsi Mountains. The Muslim majority Teda are fiercely independent.

Mark and Andrea live in a two-room mud and stone house with a reed roof, no windows and no running water in their home. They sleep on the floor under a mosquito net to guard against mosquitos and scorpions.

“It is a dangerous and remote corner of the desert. Our God is a God of justice “says Mark “and one of the great inequalities in the world is access to healthcare. It’s important, that in mission we seek to address these inequalities. To Show through that, the Love of our God, who loves all people wherever they are.

They do that by treating gunshot wounds and torture burns from bandits. Operating on young miners like the one from whose chest they drained two litres of pus, undoubtedly saving his life.

They are even offering dental help to try to build local people’s confidence in the Hospital in which they are called to serve. They achieve miracles through God’s power, human skill and the trust that only comes from living as friends among a community in .All these factors combine to change the story of the District Hospital in Bardai. It’s possible because Mark and Andrea are there.

Mark was a member of St Andrews and attended the church and Sunday School with his family.

Memories of St Andrew's Church, Sunday School and Beyond

I was born in 1942 at 70 Cambridge Road Macclesfield built in the 1930's. In spite of the new housing, finished around 1950, St. Andrews was still very much at the edge of town. I recall that the area which now forms Stevenage Close was known as Canada, because to the local youngsters it was very much an exciting wilderness – as a well brought -up young girl I never went there!

Back to my story. I am told that I was wheeled in my pram to St. Michaels to be christened, since baptisms were not performed at St. Andrews in those days. However, I started to attend St. Andrews Sunday School at an early age. We youngsters left the church service to go to our classes just before the sermon and returned later to our parents. Classes were held in the corner of the snooker room(!) and one in each of the day school classrooms and we had stickers to identify where we belonged. We were encouraged to ask questions in our classes!!! I think that the girls and boys were divided into separate classes after the infants class.

I remember, as teachers, Mr. Malcolm Braddock, who became Superintendent, Mrs. Bethell's daughter, Vera, and her friend Mrs. Baker, Mrs. Anderton and Mrs. Steele. Mr. Steele taught the older boys along with Mr.

Braddock and another gentleman teacher who was tragically drowned swimming in Rudyard Lake – a suitable reminder to us not to go swimming in open water. I believe Mrs. Steele served as a Sunday School teacher for almost thirty years. I well remember Barbara and John Smith were involved with all the activities of the church and Sunday School and I am sure I could name many others.

Services were very set affairs with books used religiously(!). The Vicars from the Parish Church were given much respect, but usually the Curates were much younger and less formal. They often helped organise outings for the youngsters. When we were a bit older (7 or 8?) Sunday School classes were in the afternoons. The collection plate was passed around church and most of the youngsters put in a silver sixpence, but I remember one boy putting in a shilling and taking out a sixpence for change, perhaps instructed by his parents.

We had Sunday School treats once a year, often in a field in Bosley where sixpences were hidden around to be found by us children, games were organised and we had a super tea. We travelled there and back by coach. In addition to the teachers, Mrs. Bethell, the caretaker's wife, was a tireless worker and knew how everything should be run and where everything was. We also "walked the Bounds" of the part of the parish closest to

the church once a year going up Crompton Road, across Park Lane, straight into Torrs Field and singing hymns there with the church choir in their gowns.

However, particularly for us children, the biggest events were the Whit Walks and the Flower Sermons where we processed to St. Michael's Church. The procession was headed by the large banners, one for the Church and one for the Sunday School and preceded by the Scout Band. The banners were very heavy and were carried by the strongest men while the bigger boys carried guide ropes to try to control the banners if it was windy. Each procession went down Crompton Road and Chester Road to the junction with Chestergate where we waited for Parish Church members and possibly St. Peter's as well to join us, all with help from a policeman to hold up the traffic. For the Flower Sermons ladies and children carried bunches or baskets of flowers which were collected when we reached the Parish Church and put inside spaces in a very tall wooden cross with the flowers facing the congregation. The flowers were later distributed to the sick along with baskets of fruit carried by some of the boys who refused to carry flowers. We sang hymns in the Market Place before going into church.

We also had hot-pot suppers, the hot-pot coming in enamelled washing-up bowls from every household

accompanied by home-made pickled cabbage with home-made entertainments as well on the stage in the hall where the school's Headmaster, Mr. Horton, put on entertainment with his pupils, all local fun. On at least one occasion the choir boys (!) and girls dressed up as ballet dancers and we had McNamara's Band. Whenever we had tea it was always with condensed milk! The choir were often conducted by Mr. Leslie Riseley who lived on Crompton Road and played the organ, particularly with good effect including the Hallelujah Chorus. We also had Nativity plays and these are best remembered by the occasional disasters!

The Church Army visited the church a couple of times in the school holidays. A huge tent was erected on The Boys Club field on Oxford Road. These missions were very well attended and the children all received and wore badges.

I was confirmed by the Bishop of Stockport and started to attend the Youth Club though we met at "the tin tabernacle" which stood on what is now the junction of Churchill Way and Cumberland Street opposite the Alms Houses. Before going to the Youth Club attendance at Church Evensong was compulsory. There was also a Friday night session with table tennis and darts and (I think) dancing. Not content with this I also attended Beech Lane Methodist Youth Club and Scripture Union

when I went to the High School. I also remember with great affection Annie Dobson's Chip Shop in Crompton Road.

My Husband, Peter, came to 3 Cambridge Avenue when he was eighteen months old. I cannot remember knowing him well until

He offered me a lift to work at Morgan's Chemist Shop in Park Lane in his works van one wet morning. The rest is history. We married in 1960, not at the Parish Church (too expensive) but at St. Georges Baptist Church. Our Son, Richard, was born in 1961 followed by Katherine in 1963. They were entered on St. Georges Cradle Roll but started to attend St. Andrew's Sunday School and, eventually, wished to be confirmed with their friends. They needed to be baptised as adults and this was done at a private service at St. Andrew's before the Confirmation Service.

Barbara Lomas

(We believe Barbara's connection with St. Andrew's/All Saints goes back further than anyone else in our church family. Rival claimants please let us know!)

Sunday School Memories

We were pleased to receive a visit at one of our Welcome Cafes by Malcolm Braddock and Keith Gorton.

Malcolm and his brother, Derek, were brought up in the Beech Lane area where their father owned a corner grocers which also sold crockery and decorative ornaments. Derek became a lay reader and Sunday School teacher at St. Andrews and was joined by Malcolm as a teacher around 1950. Fred Steele was the Sunday School Superintendent. Malcolm remembers about a hundred plus children in the Sunday School and activities described by Barbara Lomas (nee Lockett) as well as outings to Trentham Gardens, Southport, Pooles Cavern and the Pavilion Gardens, Buxton. On a less happy note he remembers another lay reader and teacher, Charles Maddocks drowned while swimming in Rudyard Lake.

Derek moved on to ordination and a ministry in the Bolton area. Malcolm moved to Christ Church as a Pathfinder leader and married Heather and moved to Woodford.

Keith Gorton was born in Ryburn Road in March 1940. His father, Alan, operated a monumental masons with his partner, Mr. Kellett in Barton Street, off Bond Street, His

mother, Edna, and Alan were both members of St. Andrews/All Saints Church and we remember Edna with great affection.

Keith was a member of the Sunday School and Choir. In addition to those mentioned by Malcolm he also has memories of Graham Bennett, a seventeen year old choir member, who died in a motorcycle accident. Keith married Joyce and they set up home in Sutton where they still live.

Memories of Choir and Brownies

I was born in 1944 at Macclesfield West Park Hospital. My parents, Harry and Marjorie Robinson were members of St. Johns church in Statham Street, but in 1956 we started to attend St. Andrews as a family. We were then living in Bedford Road. In May 1959 I joined the Choir. The Choirmaster was Leslie Riseley and we had rehearsals on Monday nights after singing at Morning and Evening Services on Sundays. Brian MacDonald, our Cross Bearer, was an imposing figure, particularly when we processed to St. Michaels for the Flower Service.

When Leslie retired as Choirmaster, Dorothy Bradshaw, a Choir member, took over as Choir Mistress and Organist. Mr. Houghton, the Headmaster of St. Andrews School, was also a Choir member. St. Andrews had a strong musical tradition for a small church with anthems at Harvest and performing on alternating Palm Sundays Stainer's Crucifixion and Maunders Olivet to Calvary.

On 5th June 1976 I married Reg Flower, a local Solicitor. Since St. Andrews was not licenced for marriages, we married by special licence and it pleased Reg and me to make history as the first wedding to take place at St. Andrews.

In 1972 I became a leader (Brown Owl) of St. Andrews Brownie Pack for fourteen years, along with my friend, Janet Tyler, (now Stanesby) as Tawny Owl and Diane Jones as Snowy Owl. Diane was succeeded by Margaret Cox and then Sheila West.

I spent twenty-three very happy years in the Choir until it was disbanded to be succeeded by an informal Singing Group in 1982. It was then I left St. Andrews and became a member of St. Pauls Church which still had a rich musical tradition, where I still worship today along with regular attendance at Birtles Church.

Valerie Flower

Recollections – collected by Maureen Sutton in 1995

Ladies Guild to Living Room

One of the groups at the present day All Saints is 'The Ladies Guild' and I spent a very happy afternoon with them a few weeks ago as they reminisced about 'the old days'. Although each lady was quick to say "it was before my time" it is thought that the 'Ladies Guild' was started by Mrs Credence Bann and she was followed by Mrs Margaret Wood.

Mrs Wood was an excellent organiser and had the members at work during these meetings which were held in the Vestry. Fingers were busy with knitting and sewing as news of each other and friends was passed around, and of course there was the very important cup of tea and a biscuit. On one occasion one of the shyer members spilt her tea over herself and such was her mortification that she never came again! The members remembered how the Revd Sholto Douglas, the curate, came each week and was taught how to knit! Once he thought he had mastered the art he began to knit dishcloths, but his enthusiasm was greater than his skill and the ladies had to take turns of picking up his dropped stitches and setting him on his way again.

Sholto Douglas always kept his affection for St Andrew's and always attended the St Andrew's Day Service bringing a coach full of members from Siddington Church

– his new parish. He was usually seen to be wearing wellington boots under his cassock and would sit down as the collection was being taken and write out a cheque! The visit of Siddington people to St Andrew's was a return visit, as St Andrew's people used to travel by coach to Siddington for their Thursday evening Harvest Festival. The church was usually beautifully decorated in true 'country style' and as Mr Douglas was a great animal lover the procession of the choir into the Church was usually accompanied by someone carrying a hen or goose and sometimes a donkey would join in!

But back to the Ladies Guild. The first weekend in May was a special time in the life of St Andrew's Church. It began on the Saturday with a Sale of Work. This was largely organised by the members of the Ladies Guild under the leadership of Mrs Wood. The knitting and sewing worked during the rest of the year was for the stalls but were supplemented by towels, sheets etc bought on a 'sale or return' basis. Mrs Wood, accompanied by others, would visit warehouses in Manchester and also the local Coop Stores for the best bargains. Some readers may remember the Irish Linen Shop situated in Roe Street and this was another source of supply. To enable the Sale customers to afford these large items 'Thrift tickets' were sold by the Ladies Guild members throughout the year. On the 'big day' these were exchanged for goods and this arrangement suited

everyone. A special Opener was chosen to open the Sale – usually chosen with hopes that he or she would also give a good donation. A tea-room was set up in one of the back classrooms and this did a good trade with sandwiches, scones and home-made cakes made by the Ladies Guild of course!

The day was not over yet because in the evening there was a Bar Dance sometimes with a Fancy Dress competition. The dance used to draw many people from outside the Church and was a witness to the fact that Christians like fun as much as anyone.

The next day was the walk round the district though many ladies were seen to wear shoes for comfort rather than elegance after the previous busy day.

Throughout all the years the Ladies Guild still existed in 1996 and bears witness to the friendship and loving support they gave each other in good times and bad.

The Living Room

In 1967, the curate of St Andrew's was Revd Ken Gardiner and in September of that year his wife Sheila organised a Coffee Morning with the purpose of starting a new Ladies Group in the church. The Ladies Guild was held in great respect by everyone but the new group was

to encourage non-churchgoing women to meet to hear the Gospel in a relaxed and non-threatening atmosphere.

The group was called 'The Living Room' having two aspects, that is to meet in a living-room and also to be living and lively occasions. The group met once a month and began each time with coffee and a cake. The cake was home-made by one of the group and the recipe was typed out and each member was given a copy. These recipes were later put into a book and sold to members of the congregation.

When Sheila left Macclesfield two years later, I took on the leadership, followed for a short while by Jenny Snook (the wife of the next curate) then I took it on again until Chris Gleaves became the leader when I too left Macclesfield.

It was a lively and well attended group, usually there was a speaker with an interesting story to tell of his or her Christian experience and attracted women who for one reason or another were not able to regularly attend Church. Later a monthly Bible Study Group was added to the Group's activities and this was attended by almost every member of the main group showing that there was a desire for learning about the Scriptures and how they could be related to everyday living. I remember that these meetings were not at all sombre but full of fun, and

on one occasion some members of the group were laughing so much as they left our house that a passing policeman asked them if they had been 'drinking' and were they planning to drive home? One of the group perplexed him by explaining that they were 'drunk by the Spirit'. It is good to see some in the Church of today who were members of The Living Room and who are still worshipping in and serving the Church and also to hear of others who left the area who joined and, in some cases, started and led similar groups.

Maureen Sutton

The Rossendale Trust

In the late sixties there was very little provision for handicapped children (now called “children with learning difficulties”) and therefore a special play group was started using the large schoolroom of St Andrew’s Church.

Two families who were regular worshippers at St Andrews, became closely involved:- Ernie and Barbara Hyde who had four children, Janet, Shirley, Andrea and Graham, and a constant supply of foster children, and lived in an extended bungalow on Park Mount, and Alan and Mary Chapman with two children, Robert and Richard (who was brain damaged but later diagnosed as autistic and partially sighted), who lived in a large house in Brooklands Avenue.

Ernie worked at ICI and was always full of bright ideas as well as a Samaritan, (he organised a scheme at St Andrews whereby women who contacted the Samaritans and were too frightened to go home, could stay overnight at St Andrews and women, from the congregation, would sleep over and look after them. This went on for some time before women’s refuges were set up in Macclesfield).

Alan and Mary with their experience with Richard together with Ernie and Barbara working with the playgroup realised that more was needed to help parents have a break from caring at night and especially weekends.

The search for a suitable place had already started when in 1972 Rossendale Hall, a large house with 4 acres of land just outside Sutton, came on the market. They realised it was a desirable residence and they needed to act quickly so an offer was made, which was accepted and immediately both families put their homes up for sale. They moved into the Hall in the spring of 1973 and organised two flats within the hall for their families.

There was a lot of local support for the construction of a self-contained building in 1976 offering short stay accommodation. It was mainly staffed for day and overnight duties by volunteers from St Andrews and the local Sutton community. (A rota for this period shows St Andrew's volunteers highlighted in green). The volunteers gave a complete service including providing all meals, washing and ironing bedding as well as looking after the people who stayed there for varying periods.

Over 800 families benefitted from this short-term help, but it soon became obvious that permanent residential care was needed. The Hyde and Chapman families

moved away into Sutton village and eventually the short stay unit was demolished as the site was developed. Today the Trust provides care and support for over 70 people living at 9 sites in Macclesfield and Buxton, a far cry from the early pioneering days.

Chris & Brian Gleaves

Music at All Saints'

As long as I can remember, Music has played an important role in our Worship at All Saints.

When I first attended St Andrew's, about forty-five years ago, I remember Brenda Collister leading the small choir, which at that time sat in the choir stalls at the front of church. She had an excellent singing voice and was gifted in sharing her musical expertise with others. The children also played an important role in music making. Once a month there would be "Parade Sunday", when the scout band would proudly head the cubs, scouts, brownies and guides down Crompton Road from West Bond Street HQ. Many members of the congregation would proudly line the route and march behind them on their return. The standard was good, believe me! There was always a real effort made to make the children feel part of the service, so as well as one or two hymns being chosen that were used in schools, the children would take part in prayer time and there would often be a dramatized reading. People remained proud and influenced by the fact that they had, until recently, housed a primary school on their site. Maybe here lies God's little secret as to why All Saints has always been so loving and outgoing?

This gift of wanting to be all-inclusive and accepting of new ideas has always been strong in our church. When Christ Church was closed and joined with St Andrew's to be reconsecrated as All Saints Church, new parishioners were welcomed, new friendships made and new forms of worship introduced. Christ Church was very traditional and had a very good choir, some of whom joined us and suddenly we were able to sing in 4 parts, opening up new opportunities, not just leading the worship on a Sunday. Amazingly one of the singing group's strengths was being prepared to try out new forms of worship, even though many much preferred the traditional style. As I see it, there were two main reasons for this – firstly we were gifted with some splendid pianists -Jackie Fitzgerald, Chris Campbell Kelly, Shirley Hill and latterly Liz Varney, who brought ideas with them and secondly there has always been a determination to ensure words are understood and chosen carefully, in order to speak clearly of God's love for us. When the poetry of traditional hymns is not understood, new choruses take their place, maintaining a good balance so that everyone remains content, but also challenged.

I can remember Living Room being a very special evening in the month for us mums, most of whom stayed at home in those days. Under Maureen Sutton's guidance and Jackie Fitzgerald's piano playing I was introduced to lots of worship songs from "Living Waters

and Fresh Sounds”, which Jackie would also use in Holy Communion Services. Improvising came naturally to her and her playing was very special. When Jackie moved away, Chris, and later Shirley were there to take over and so the Singing Group continued to help teach new songs and lead the worship. Cry Hosannah and Mission Praise were being used in All Saints way ahead of other Anglican Churches!

But that was not all! Sometime in the 1980s a very important Mission took place which challenged our church to look at outreach in new ways and we were fortunate in having the Rev John Staley at the helm, who was very happy to support any initiatives he felt were right for us all.

With the introduction of Good Companions, as well as leading singing at Christmas, we started an annual Summer Concert called “Nuts in May” to entertain the over 60’s. I’m not sure whether the Good Companions or the Singing Group enjoyed this more?! Many of you reading this will remember fondly “We’re a couple of swells” sung by John and Barbara Smith, duets and solos sung by Hazel Barker and dear Trefor Hughes, whose voice was so beautiful we instantly forgave any wrong notes! There were also solos beautifully performed by Dot Graham, who also used to bring her madrigal group to give separate charity concerts at

Church. This was a very happy time for all those involved and the camaraderie was so special. We were involved in celebrating a number of weddings, which included our dear Joyce and Norman, Trefor and Jessie and Sally and Mark.

People loved making up nonsense songs based on a popular tune for a special occasion. Do you remember the poem Chris made up on one of John Staley's final events sung to the tune of Match of the Day? We teased him mercilessly about his staunch support of Nottingham Forest! They were really in the doldrums then!

“He's taught us all theology (Father Abraham has many sons)

Aerobics too of course (Allelu, allelu, allelu, allelujah – Praise ye the Lord)

Our sailor-friend and vicar

He's helped us steer our course.

We never will forget him

But life it must move on

Though there are some things that never change

Yes Forest lost again!”

Now it just so happens that Forest has made it into the premiership for next season!! Congratulations John!!

When the Singing group disbanded, Good Companions was not forgotten since my Reception class at Parkroyal used to come across to sing for them, which the Good Companions adored! Also, as some of our number moved into nursing homes, Shirley Hill organised our visiting twice a year to lead a sing along of favourite ditties and also lead Christmas Services. Thank you Shirley! That was so valuable for those concerned. We visited Trefor and Jessie's nursing home in Poynton quite a few times, which went down very well with their new-found friends, and also Muriel in Prestbury Care Home.

The Singing Group, along with Chris Campbell Kelly, took an important role in Team worship events when we would join together with St Michaels, St Peter's and St Barnabas. We would lead the singing, along with St Michael's Choir. When Michael Gear retired we put on an amazing performance of "Captain Noah and his Floating Zoo", involving lots of children and even had a children's orchestra. We mustn't forget another role with children as I write this. Julia had a brainwave to put on Captain Noah with her Brownies and Guides and we supplied the harmony!! In the early 2000's the Rhema Theatre group would lead us through our annual Holiday Club. Music and art played an enormous role and the final evening would be a live performance of a well known Bible story, with costumes and scenery highlighted by the children's art work and dialogue and

songs lifting the rafters. It was truly amazing what could be achieved in just four days!!

There was also a performance of “Saints Alive” by Roger Jones, put on by the combined choirs at St Michael’s. A gifted curate who had previously been on stage, took the part of Jesus, which was very memorable. A partnership with Wendy Moss saw an annual production of a Roger Jones musical rehearsed at All Saints and then put on at the URC. Quite a few of us from All Saints were in this ecumenical choir – it was very special working with friends from other churches to produce a musical to raise money for the Hope Centre. Covid should not be allowed to put an end to this!

As part of the Millennium initiatives, churches of different denominations were encouraged to worship and work together – we had a very happy liaison with St Alban’s and held some beautiful Taizé services together.

Twice a month, on Thursdays, a group called Bel Canto meet here to sing together in stress-free conditions, meaning that there are no concerts to work towards; we simply sing for pleasure! The range of the songs is quite varied and you don’t have to know how to read music.

Everyone is welcome! It is treated as a therapy by many. It is true to say that many arrive looking down-hearted but leave smiling, even with a spring in their

step! Come along for a taster. It only costs £2 a session to cover the hire of the hall.

I hope this at least gives a general idea of the importance of singing in our church over the last half a century. Thank you to all those with better memories than I who have helped me compile this!!

Dot Phillips.

Good Companions

The Good Companions continue to meet at 2.30 pm on the second Monday in each month. We have enjoyed a very happy year with approximately 45 ladies and gentlemen at each meeting.

In April we had a return visit from The Macclesfield Youth Orchestra, which was greatly appreciated by all. May (our birthday month) was indeed special, as our very loyal helper John Staley preached at our Birthday Service, this having been preceded by a fun-packed Saturday evening of entertainment by the Music Group - our thanks to everyone.

Our summer outing was a visit to Pott Shrigley Church to admire the work of a small group of ladies who transform their memories and ideas, through tapestry, into kneelers: this visit was followed by tea at The Cheshire Hunt. September provided us with a slide show on West Park by the Park Ranger which provoked plenty of comment, especially when he confidently showed a slide of the first Silk Queen (1930 something!) - well, we (some of us) knew he had got it wrong! Mr Brandon Brandon - The Walking Stick Man - was a treat. He carves sticks, the handles of which are incredible -such craftsmanship - he kept us on the edge of our seats with his amusing commentary.

We went to Sheffield's Meadowhall Centre to shop for Christmas -it took us TV° hours each way - one of our members even wrote a poem about the day!!

Interspersed during the year we have played bingo; we have re-lived our youth through our old photographs, swooning over young men and lasses; marvelled at our vicar in his first merchant seaman's uniform, and celebrated Christmas with a true Victorian Party - Prince Albert would have been impressed with THREE Christmas trees.

In January John Staley, as usual, took us into the New Year with a quiet time held in the church, which really was appreciated. February saw us taking a cruise from Venice to Barcelona without spending a penny - Joyce Clarke regaled us with the excitement of first choosing the holiday, and then the sight of Dorothy Bradshaw writing a cheque for the largest amount she had ever written to pay for the cruise!! Joyce and Dorothy did wonder if they had missed something when during a service on the ship they all sang 'Eternal Father, strong to save ...'!

Jean and John Burns (ACROSS TRUST) were welcomed back in March to show a film on Jumbulance holidays for the very sick and disabled -this made us all realise how fortunate we are to be able to enjoy our own

homes and friends. We had an 'open' plate for donations and £30 was given to the ACROSS TRUST.

This year has been a happy and sad year as we have welcomed new members and have mourned the loss of others. Our thanks as always to Chris Campbell-Kelly who provides us with the opportunity to open each and every meeting with hymns, prayers and readings, and a time of quiet. At Christmas we thanked Elizabeth Harrison for all her help over the past years as she is no longer able to come on the second Mondays. We are grateful for the assistance we receive from Helen Preston and would welcome more help with behind-the-scene activities, ie tea making, washing up, or transport. Please do consider prayerfully whether you have an hour or so to give in this very worthwhile mission to the local community.

Joyce Adams, Margaret Saxon, Barbara & John Smith,
Margaret Williamson & Sheila Williams