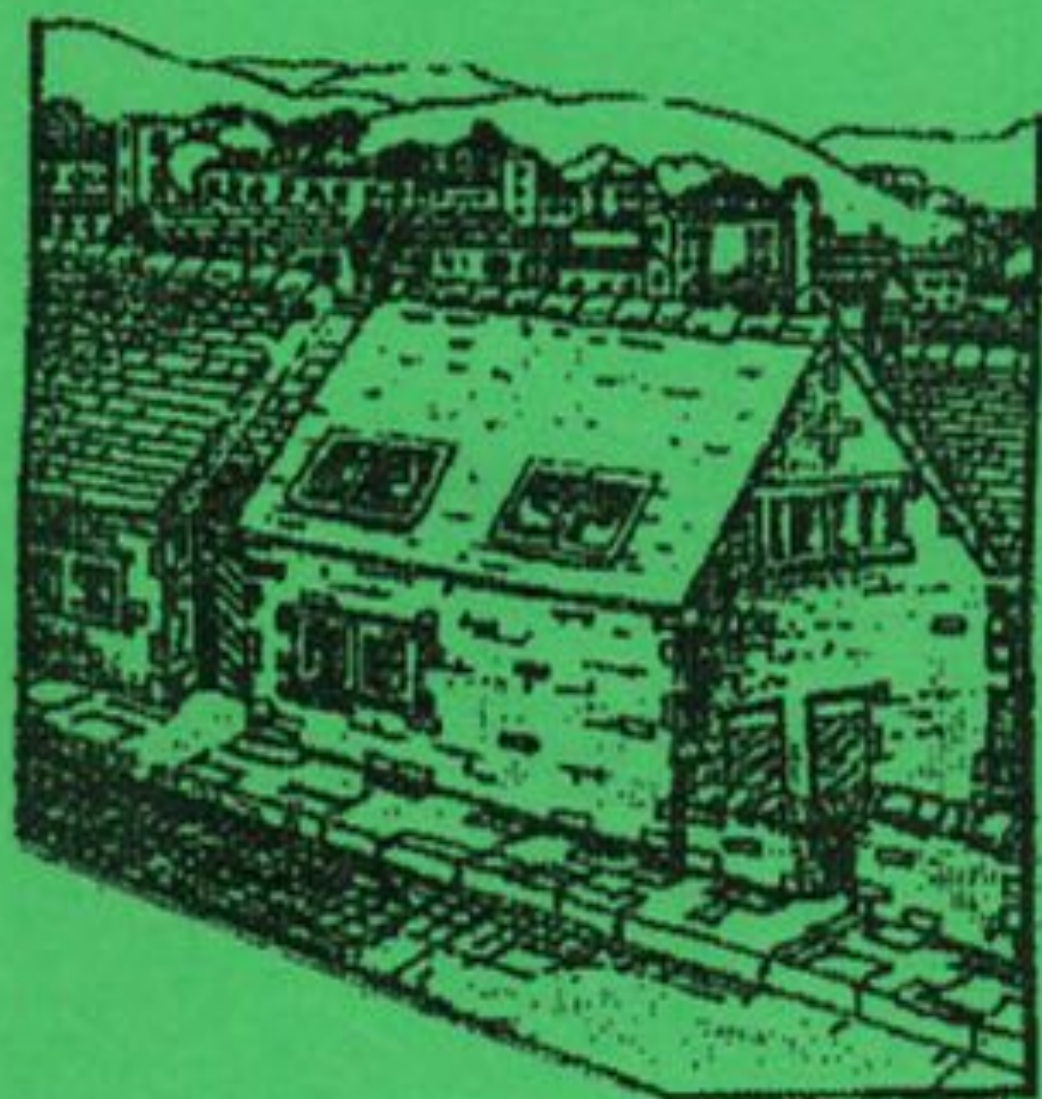


# I Remember when.....



Compiled by M A Sutton



TO YOU ALONE O LORD, TO YOU ALONE, AND NOT TO US,  
MUST GLORY BE GIVEN BECAUSE OF YOUR CONSTANT  
LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS.

Psalm 115:1 (GNB)

November 6th 1994 was a very important date for All Saints' Church, Macclesfield for on this day the Church gained Parish Church status for the first time in its history. The date passed almost unnoticed, but five months later on Palm Sunday, 9th April, it was consecrated by the Right Reverend Geoffrey Turner, the Bishop of Stockport. The service was one of great celebration and contained drama and musical items. The packed Church sang the hymns with great fervour and a real sense of joy was felt by everyone. Bishop Geoffrey reminded the congregation that although it was a time of consecration of the church building, much more important was a consecration of lives, not to the Church alone, but most importantly to Jesus Christ. Later on in the service the congregation stood and pledged themselves to God in the following words:-

"Fill us again with your Spirit, Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ, we give ourselves to you and to you alone.

Breathe on us now and send us out in the power of your Spirit,  
to live and work to your praise and glory."

The words were heard not only by each one present but by God himself and we pray that the years to come will prove the sincerity and dedication behind the words.

Following the service there was a buffet supper and one lady commented the following week, "It is years since I saw such a banquet."

It would be fairly easy, if painstaking, to write the history of a church from records, but the following pages of this book are not

about dates but about people, and most of all an account of how the Lord has blessed and guided his people through the years.

I am very grateful to all those who have been willing to share their thoughts and experiences both those whose names are mentioned and also those who have not been. Memories are strange things and we all remember events differently, but I hope that as the words are read they will "trigger off" other memories in the mind of the reader.

Memories are stored in many different ways but Kath Bradley's way is through writing poems. After the Dedication Service she was moved to write the following words.

On Sunday the 9th of April 1995  
Our Church was very much alive  
The Bishop of Stockport arrived in state  
our hatched building to consecrate  
Margaret Owens and her young actors  
made us aware of one or two factors  
The scenes gave us hints in abundance  
The Bishop said he felt quite redundant  
And yet we heard from his preaching  
like stars our faith should be far reaching.  
The act of Consecration came  
When the chief Registrar did proclaim  
and along with others signed his name  
Two documents were completed  
While the congregation was still seated.  
Our singing group did us proud  
Then all the people sang out loud.  
Hymns of Praise they were indeed  
It was as if we all knew  
There were many things to do  
Helping others along life's way  
And coming to our church to pray.

Now in the schoolroom there was food a-plenty  
No-one need go away empty  
To the cooks and those who made tea  
On this special day in our church's history  
We say thank you right out loud  
For catering so ably for such a crowd.  
And now our evening is ending  
Each to our homes we are wending  
Not one of us will forget  
How we all met  
To give our praise and dedication  
On the eve of All Saints' consecration.

Catherine Bradley

All stories have to begin somewhere and usually start in someone's mind. This story has its roots in Christ Church, Macclesfield and the year was 1849. The Vicar of Christ Church at that time was the Revd John Steele, a very saintly man, but because of ill health three curates were appointed to carry on the ministry of the Church until sadly he died in 1876.

The second of these curates was the Revd Charles O'Neil Pratt, who was eager to assist in the education of his charges. He began by renting a room in Crown Street, just off Crompton Road, but this proved so popular that it was decided to open a school for 250 children in the Crompton Road area. Much prayer and faith resulted in the money being quickly raised and the school opened in 1849. Five years later the flourishing school was handed over into the charge of the Revd C J A Smith, the Curate from St Michael's, to be a Religious and Educational Centre and Foundation.

Although there are no personal records of this time we can recapture the atmosphere of this school through knowledge gained from books, films and television.

We are reminded in the Book of Proverbs Chapter 1 verse 7 that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of all knowledge" (NIV) and throughout the years this precept was very much to the fore as Church and School held very dear the responsibility of not only giving the children a good education but also teaching them the ways of God.

The Church was dedicated to St Andrew, - a very fitting saint to be chosen as he was one who readily responded to the call of Jesus to follow him. St Andrew's was known as a Mission Church and drawing people to new life in Jesus has always been high on the agenda.

MY HEART IS SET ON KEEPING YOUR DECREES TO THE VERY END.

Psalm 119:112 (NIV)

To find out about 'the old days' the obvious place to start was a visit to Mrs Lily Bethell of Crompton Road. Mrs Bethell has very clear memories of her long association with the Church which began when she was enrolled at the day school at the age of three years. She well remembers the heavy wood and iron desks in what we now know as the Church, but in Lily's early days it was also the schoolroom for the infants and younger children.

Each week before the school closed on Friday, the desk tops were lifted and turned forwards, making backs for the seats in front, to give more comfort for the congregation on Sunday, who sat on the long school forms. After the Sunday Evening Service, the process was reversed and the backs of the seats became, once more, the desks for the children to work on.

Lily Bethell left school at the age of ten to attend Athey Street School which is now Parkroyal School.

Although she left the school, Lily never left the Church and now her love for it, rooted in her deep love for the Lord, remains as clear and constant as ever more than eighty years since she was first taken there as a toddler.

Those of us who know Lily also know of her happy marriage to Jim and together their Christian faith was anchored in their care of the church building. Jim was a farm worker and when the Second World War started in 1939, because of his knowledge and experience, he was allocated to farm as his important and vital contribution to the war effort. About the same time he was offered the job of Caretaker at St Andrew's and this with Lily's help he was able to fit in with his working hours.

Like many churches then, and now, the task of keeping the church warm on Sunday was not an easy one. The system at All Saints was with a coke-fired boiler and Lily remembers how Jim and she had to climb down a 12 foot ladder fastened to the wall into the murky depths to shovel coke to keep the boiler fire burning. Thank goodness conditions are better now.

Another more congenial task for Mrs Bethell was to prepare the altar for Communion on Sunday mornings. This was always done on Saturday evening giving plenty of time so that nothing would be forgotten.

The church in the early days was lit by gas light and attendance to seeing that the lights were working efficiently was another job that Lily remembers. Replacing the gas mantles was part of this so that the church would be a blaze of light - or as much as possible. Improvements were made when electricity was installed. The gas lights were replaced in 1949 by fluorescent lighting and an electric organ was installed. Up to then the organ was situated in the gallery and on Sundays Jim would work hard at pumping the bellows, but Lily took over for mid-week services and for funerals. The old organ was housed in the gallery but the new one was given pride of place at the front of the church.

For many years the Flower rota was organised by Mrs Wood, but eventually this was taken over by Lily. Mrs Bethell knew exactly how and when the church had to be decorated for the festivals of Christmas, Easter, Whit Sunday and Harvest. Those of us who volunteered to help were carefully instructed as to how it should be done, including the colours of the altar frontals, pulpit falls and bookmarks according to the season. I remember what happy times we spent on the Saturday before a big festival and how, sooner or later, Lily would bring us a cup of tea and a biscuit. Often finding the time to go to church to decorate during what was for all of us a very busy time, seemed a hard thing to do, but for me and I think



for all of us, they were times when we were glad to have been part of it all.

Sadly Jim Bethell died in 1975 and his death was genuinely mourned by all the congregation. Lily carried on alone until 1984 when she finished, having lovingly worked as Caretaker for 42 years.

Although now unable to attend many services she still remains part of the congregation and takes a lively interest in all that is happening and who knows what help the present members gain from Lily's faithful prayer for us all.

Lily's proudest moment was when she was asked to reopen the church after some alterations had been made to enlarge the church in 1983. She, as the oldest member, together with one of the youngest cut the ribbons, made a speech and was presented with a bouquet. A truly fitting honour to a great lady.

## YOU BLESS THOSE WHO OBEY YOU, LORD; YOUR LOVE PROTECTS THEM LIKE A SHIELD

Psalm 5:12 (GNB)

Another source I turned to for "living memories" was Mrs Fanny Steel, now in her mid-eighties and still a weekly attender at the morning services. Fanny's faith in God, her love of the Lord Jesus and her ability to reach out to all the Lord wants to give her, has been a wonderful witness to many people throughout the years. She puts daily prayer and the study of the Bible high on her agenda and this has been the source of her strength through all her years.

She joined St Andrew's Church in 1931 when she married her husband Fred. An important time that she remembers was in 1939 when a Mission was held in all the churches in Macclesfield directed by the Bishop of Chester - Bishop Fisher. Each church was given a team to lead meetings and discussion groups, and in each church a little girl was chosen to be "Little Sunshine" for the duration of the Mission. This was of special interest to Fred and Fanny Steel as their daughter, Myra, was chosen to be "Little Sunshine" for St Andrew's Church.

Discussion groups were quite a new idea for most Anglicans in those days. The one started at St Andrew's continued long after the Mission and the one at St John's Statham Street has eight members who still meet together regularly.

On the last Saturday of the Mission, the team serving St Andrew's were praying that their work would continue when they left, and during the prayer for the discussion group, several members felt God was bringing to their minds the name of Fred Steel as the new group leader. This was quite a remarkable answer to prayer as some of the members didn't know Fred at all. Consequently Fred was approached and although apprehensive at this new venture for

him, he accepted the challenge and became a very good and dedicated leader, a ministry which lasted for over 25 years.

Meanwhile Fanny's life was taken up with the care of her two children. Myra and Howard. Her faith that had grown since childhood was quiet and unassuming nevertheless it didn't go unnoticed by those around her.

St Andrew's tradition still held the work among children as a high priority. The top-class of girls was led by Mrs Baker, but the time came when she felt she could no longer do this work. For several weeks there seemed to be no-one who could or would lead the girls' class and Fanny began to be very disturbed about this, often saying at home, what a disgrace it was and how "someone" should be willing to take it on. As so often happens with God, He gets us agitated about something so that when the right time comes we can no longer ignore his call. This was very true for Fanny, after being distressed and quite angry about the situation, the day came when she was asked to fill in the gap. As her own children were very small she couldn't see how she could do it but the Lord has a solution for every problem and Mrs Heathcote, a hairdresser from Crompton Road said she would do alternate weeks if Fanny would do the same. This arrangement carried on for some time until Mrs Heathcote left and Fanny carried on by herself. Realising the responsibility of teaching teenage girls in the ways of God, Fanny took the work very seriously and started attending classes at St Michael's Church solely to learn how to be a good teacher. Miss Cockroft was the teacher and Fanny learnt many valuable lessons from her. The Sunday School Superintendent at St Andrew's at this time was Miss Butcher who was a lady from Manchester who had been evacuated to Macclesfield. She ably filled in the gap as Superintendent until she returned to Manchester.

Mrs Steel taught the older girls for the best part of thirty years - a perfect illustration of commitment and dedication not only to the Church, but also to Jesus her Lord and Saviour.

In her latter years as teacher Fanny used to invite the older girls to her home to train them as teachers and so planning not only for the present but also for the future.

Two important days in St Andrew's calendar were those of the annual walks. The first, held in May, took place around the various streets surrounding the church. A good procession of children and adults would, taking a different route each year, be a living witness to the life and faith of the people of the Church.

The second walk was held on the Sunday of the annual Flower Sermons of the parish, and included the congregations and Sunday Schools of St Michael's and St Andrew's and the Sunday Schools of Beech Lane and Duke Street. Later on St Peter's Church and Sunday School also joined. Each congregation would leave their own building and walk, following a band to the junction of Chester Road with Chestergate, and the very fine procession would walk up Chestergate to the Parish Church where following a hymn in the Market Place a service would take place. Many a foot-weary parishioner would sink thankfully onto a pew to rest before starting the long walk back.

Everyone in the procession carried flowers and these were collected at St Michael's and attached to a huge cross making a very colourful display. The flowers were later distributed to the sick. As well as flowers being carried, the huge Church and Sunday School banners were carried. This was the task of the men and what a task it was, as they were very heavy and the slightest breeze would catch the banner and carry it along Chestergate like a ship in full sail! I think there were many stiff arms and legs the following day!

The morning of the Flower Sermons was a busy time for Fanny Steel and the band of helpers that she gathered round her. There were a dozen "shepherds crooks" to be decorated with ribbons and flowers, also a crown to be made from flower heads and a canopy decorated in the same fashion.

The girls of the Sunday School began to look forward to the Flower Sermons several weeks beforehand, the younger ones hoping to be chosen to carry one of the crooks and the older ones wondering who would have the honour of carrying the crown or canopy. As the crown and canopy were carried on poles and were very heavy it was not a privilege to be undertaken without care.

Nativity plays had a place in the Sunday School activities and as with most Nativity plays there was usually some hitch. Fanny remembers the time when the "Star" should have glided gracefully across the platform but somehow the strings got angled and it refused to move until with a great tug from Fanny, it shot across the sky like a shooting star. Fanny also remembers producing another play when the main characters were the Archangels Gabriel and Michael as well as the Devil and Passion - a most unique performance. Another memorable Nativity play was when Joseph and Mary had a row which ended with Joseph pushing Mary off the stage and Mary giving vent to her anger with howls of rage. I wonder if the two actors identify themselves as they read this account?

Many young girls had cause to be grateful for the teaching Mrs Steel gave them in their early years and maybe now they are older they are able to pass on not only the knowledge they gained but also the example of faith and trust that is still very evident in Fanny's life. She still teaches those around her in a quiet and unassuming way, as she shares the truths that she has found reliable in her daily Christian walk.

IF THE LORD DOES NOT BUILD THE HOUSE, THE WORK OF THE BUILDER IS IN VAIN.

Psalm 127:1

When thinking of the past of All Saints' Church, it must never be forgotten that it was conceived in the hearts of faith of the people of Christ Church many years ago. Although St Andrew's was eventually put under the patronage of St Michael's, God knew what His future plans were and how important the worshippers of Christ Church were going to be in the future of All Saints' Church. At the time of the merging of the two churches many came from Christ Church bringing their memories of the past and weaving them into the tapestry of the future. One of the people from Christ Church is Mrs Margaret Williamson and she has written for us her earliest memories of her days at the Church.

"When you were a small child, did you ever wonder where vicars lived? The logical address seemed to me for 'ours' to live was in Christ Church tower. I must have been five years old when my big sister took me to the Vicarage to hand over the Sunday School Missionary money and to my grave disappointment I found out that the Vicar lived in a perfectly normal house in Chester Road! No need to climb among the bells, and what an opportunity missed for finding out the size of the clock, for the old folks told us it was so big that a horse and cart could be driven through it. Many other mystifying questions filled my infantile brain and so landed me with an interest for life in Church History and Architecture.

The Missionary money mentioned above was collected in Sunday School and arranged in neat columns (12 pence = 1 shilling), on the secretary's table. The teacher told us that it was to build schools and houses for little African children and I had a mental picture of pennies being transferred to Africa and somehow being converted into house and school walls. No rushing in and banging doors or the building might collapse!

Sunday School was the place where we received sound teaching in scripture and moral ethics. Each Sunday morning we met at 9.30am and read, or learnt by heart the Collect and the Gospel and Epistle would be read and explained. Once a month we processed to Church behind the Scout Band and these were "red-letter" days. As we entered Church we went up to the gallery - boys to the left, girls to the right, with our teachers seated at the door ends of the pews making escape before the sermon impossible. The seats were wooden and hard so there was no danger of falling asleep. Miss Wheelton the Senior Girls' Teacher now transferred her allegiance to the boys and kept them in good order by the odd clip on the ear or simply pointing an accusing finger at the miscreant, and that was enough. After dinner we were back at Sunday School where we would be given a coloured picture to stick in our album. The lesson would then be based on the picture.

On the Festival Days of Easter, Harvest, Day and Sunday School Sermons we had a Children's Afternoon Service in Church. If you answered the Vicar's questions correctly you would be summoned to the Vestry and given a silver sixpence. Of course the Sunday School Sermons in May and the Day School Sermons in November were the highlights, for on these Sundays the girls formed a choir to sing along with our brothers who sang every week as choristers. Wearing our best frocks and a special hair band (white muslin edged with two rosettes) we proudly took our places in the middle aisle.

The Sunday School Sermons and Festival Day Sermons began at 7am for those of us who lived within the sound of the bells when Mr Kenny, an elderly gentleman played hymns on the bells, a special treat for the day. Before the morning service we processed round the Parish behind the Scout Band, but the afternoon procession was the real highlight as this was the Flower Sermons when the scholars carried bunches or baskets of flowers which were later distributed to the sick and elderly of the Parish. The procession grew in length as the children were joined by the Ladies Bible Class and the Young

Men's Institute and Bible Class. Two hefty men were cajoled to carry the huge banner as we wound round the streets of the Parish finishing at the gates of the Church in Bridge Street. To the suitable words of the first hymn, the children walked down the middle aisle to the chancel where the flowers were received and placed into receptacles.

"Those eternal bowers man hath never trod,  
Those unfading flowers round the Throne of God,  
Who may hope to gain them after weary fight?  
Who at length attain them clad in robes of white?"

The social highlight of our Sunday School years were the Field Treat, New Year Party, Concerts, Missionary Sale and Exhibition, and the annual Prize Giving. At the latter occasion the local Mayor in full robes presented us with books for our unflagging attendance, much to the pride of our family.

About 1936 it was discovered that the Church roof was unsafe because of Death Watch Beetle and the congregation had to take refuge in the Large Sunday School in Roe Street. The cost of the repairs was to be £4,000. A Roof Fund was set up and the more well to do members of the Church were asked if they could offer loans to be repaid later. Many of these good people never asked for the return of their money and none expected interest. The rest of us organised many events in aid of the Fund such as Garden Parties, Dances and Coffee Mornings. A friend of mine, now ninety years old reminded me recently how her mother bought up the local fruiterer's supply of damsons and made about 100 lbs of jam. My friend Annie's job was to collect jam jars so that the jam could be sold at the Sale of work.

In 1937 the roof and new lighting were completed and paid for before the Bishop came to rededicate the Church. The Vicar, the Revd Sharples, asked one more effort from us and that was to clean the Church in order to save the cost of hiring a commercial firm.



With buckets, cloths and scrubbing brushes we set to work and within a few days the work was completed. A photograph in the local paper was headed "the Scrubbers of Christ Church".

The Day School was built in 1841 and its reputation reached a climax at the turn of the century under the redoubtable Dr Beach when it was mentioned in the Government's Blue Book and was listed in the top 5% of the nation's schools.

Being a Church School each day began with prayers and scripture. We had to be well taught to answer the Scripture Examiner each year. We could recite the Catechism although we might not have understood "the pomp and vanities of this wicked world" nor "all the sinful lusts of the flesh". Some of the pictures we were shown of the Old Testament were rather frightening - a miserable Adam and Eve leaving the Garden of Eden, Isaac about to be sacrificed, Hagar and Ishmael in the waterless desert all filled us with awe. Nevertheless we always had a good report from the clergyman who examined us and enjoyed the rest of the day as holiday.

I do not remember acting in any concerts at Day School but my brother who was two years older had caused an upheaval when chosen to be in an action song that needed his face to be blackened. His refusal to have this done at the dress rehearsal caused some worry to the Infant Teacher. The family recalls how mother dipped a face-cloth up the sooty chimney then gently wiped it soothingly round his face telling him he would have the cleanest face in the school. My sister was then urged to run quickly with him, not stopping to speak to anyone, and to hand him over to the teacher who was to be quietly warned that he didn't know he had the requisite black face. Years afterwards the same teacher would go into the Building Society where my brother worked and remind him of this incident, - which he said was one reason for emigrating to Northern Rhodesia!

It may not have been Eton or Harrow but Christ Church School has held a special place in the hearts and minds of many who remember their days there with gratitude and affection. I cannot do better than close with the words from the School Log Book of 1927 - Miss A Gaskell's final entry.

"Today is my last day in Christ Church School. I have been connected with it as a teacher since 1886 when I became a monitor at 13. For the last 16 years I have been Head Mistress first of the old Girls' School and then of the newly formed Junior School. I am sorry to sever my connection as I have experienced so much goodwill and kindness from Managers, Teachers, Parents and children."

"Mr Roe has built you a house" was the opening sentence of the first sermon preached in Christ Church on Christmas Day 1775. The preacher was the Revd David Simpson, first minister of the New Church built by Charles Roe, wealthy local industrialist. The building, except for the tower was built in 7 months and cost £8,000. It measured 100 feet by 60 feet and could seat 1,300 people and was described in John Wesley's Journal as 'truly elegant'. It is said that Roe's purpose in building the church was to fulfil a vow as a young man to show his gratitude to God for his success in life. Also he feared the loss to the town of the Christian influence of David Simpson who had been dismissed from his position as Curate at the 'Old Church' because of his forthright preaching about low morals of the gentry and his affinity with the Wesleyans.

Besides preaching the Gospel with zeal and eloquence, David Simpson set a fine example to the town of practical Christianity. He acquired some knowledge of medicine so that the poor could obtain free advice and simple remedies from his clinic. By more study, this time of Law, he was able to advise those too poor to pay a lawyer. He is acknowledged to have opened Sunday Schools before Robert Raikes. Sadly he died from a fever caught when tending a poor family in distressing circumstances.

Thus a ministry of forthright preaching and down to earth Christianity was inaugurated at Christ Church and carried on during its 200 years of existence.

A new vicar was appointed in 1920 and stayed with us for 22 years. I was a "mixed infant" on his arrival and a wife and mother when he left in 1942. So it is that I remember well his ministry and the effect which he had upon the lives of many young people of this time. A former schoolmaster, the Revd S J F Sharples worked with great energy and zeal for he was a tireless organiser and so it seems the Sunday School, which he called "the cradle of the church" and the church itself were full. As children we were never bored for the Vicar seemed to have an inventive mind for keeping us busy and interested. If we were not sowing sunflower seeds we could be using our one shilling Talent money to raise funds for some Missionary Society. I well remember when, as my brothers said, "A dark cloud descended over Jewry", for like King Alfred I had burnt the cakes which I was going to sell in aid of Mission to Jews.

Mr Sharples philosophy was that we young people should make the Church and the Day and Sunday Schools the centre of our lives, receiving not only our Christian guidance and education but finding there also healthy sources of Recreation, hence the active Scout and Guide movements, the Coffee Squashes, the numerous concerts and plays and pantomimes, the Keep Fit classes, the Tennis Tournaments on the Vicarage Lawn at the Annual Garden Party. On Bank Holidays the various Church organisations would go for long walks, Shutingslow, Three Shires Bridge, Dane & Goyt Valleys, but on Good Friday we had time only for a shorter walk as we expected to be back again in Church for 7.30pm to listen to the Choir's rendering of Stainer's Crucifixion or Olivet to Calvary.

## Lent

"Christian dost thou see them,  
On the Holy Ground,  
How the Troops of Midian  
Prowl and prowl around.  
Christian! up and smite them  
Counting gain but loss  
Smite them by the merit  
Of the Holy Cross."

Yes it was once again time for the "little green men" - up in Nicodemus' Corner, peeping at us from round the organ, clambering down from the gallery or so it seemed to the vivid imagination of the small girl when the ponderous notes of the good old Lentern hymn rang out and the prowling Midianites were about once more. Unfortunately some of the boys took the "smiting" line too literally and Miss Wheelton had to reduce them to order. But how the Choir men enjoyed it! Not to mention the elderly gentlemen of the Congregation who also produced a stentorian effort sufficient to rid us, as it seemed to me, of prowling goblins or Midianites.

FOR THOSE WHO KNOW THE LORD HIS LOVE LASTS FOR EVER, AND HIS GOODNESS ENDURES FOR ALL GENERATIONS.

Psalm 103:17

As well as the continuity of a Church it is always good to see the continuity of families within the Church. With many families moving away from their family home this is becoming rarer. Barbara Smith is a regular member of All Saints and is a member of one of the 'old families' of St Andrew's Church. The following is an account of how she fits into such a family.

My earliest memory of St Andrew's Church is of the first time I was taken to Sunday School there, as a very small child by my Aunt, (my mother's sister) who was also my Godmother. Our family attended Christ Church, and had a pew there, but my aunt, Mrs Margaret Wood became a member of St Andrew's Church when she married Albert Wood, a long serving worshipper there. She later became President of the Ladies Guild, and Albert was appointed the Church Treasurer and gave life-long service to the Church. Two memorial plates given by the congregation in their memory, can be found on the right-hand side of the leader's chair.

Albert Wood's sister Mrs Credence Bann, (Aunty Cissy) also a very active member of the Church, had two sons, Eric and Maurice. Eric was a Fighter Pilot in the RAF during the War, and was sadly killed in the Battle of Britain, and the stained glass window on the left behind the altar was donated in memory of his life and sacrifice.

Sunday School brings happy memories of friendships, fun, caring and learning. We sat in groups in various parts of the Church, and school, and we were all fond of the teachers who taught us. I especially remember the late Miss Louise Baker, a well-known local music teacher. Each year we had a Sunday School Sermons, (apart from the Flower Sermons at St Michael's) when we had a

procession of the Sunday School children, Uniform Groups, and Church members, led by St Andrew's Scout band, round the streets in the neighbourhood, returning to Church for the Service. It was one of the most important services of the year, in which the Sunday School children participated, and one of the most enjoyable. Mr Leslie Risely was the Choirmaster, and throughout the year there were only boys and men in the Choir, but for the Sunday School Sermons girls were allowed to sing with them. This delighted the girls, and they sat on small chairs in front of the Choir Stalls, and had to wear white dresses, and white head squares. The Church was always packed for this service, and the panels in the screens at the back of the Church were removed, so that people could sit in the vestibule, and join in the service.

The Organ was an old pipe organ situated on the balcony, and Mr Bethell the Caretaker, used to oversee some of the older boys who hand operated the bellows to work the organ - very exhausting. The balcony wasn't very safe in those days, and so it was "out of bounds", so you can imagine how delighted I was when allowed to watch them pumping the bellows. Later it was replaced by a Hammond Organ. It was sad to see the old organ go. In summertime the Sunday School always had a Field-treat in a field on Torr's Farm, where we had sports, games and a picnic tea, it was good fun, and a day never to be forgotten.

I believe that babies weren't christened in St Andrew's until about 1947/8. The family said that Karen (my niece) was the first, but I'm not absolutely sure about that.

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In the 1960s many new houses were being built in the Ivy Lane area and new roads appeared with the names:- Valley Road, Amberley Road and Chiltern Avenue. Ken Gardiner, the Curate, used to visit the occupants of these new houses almost as soon as they moved in

and many were encouraged to try the worship at St Andrew's Church. Those who came found a warm welcome and were made to feel wanted and so almost weekly the congregation was increased. These 'new' people can still be found worshipping at All Saints.

One of these new families to take up Ken's invitation was Anne and Mike Smithers and their children, and Anne reminds us of some of the happy occasions during the years since they first arrived at the Church.

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In the thirty years of happily being shepherded within the fold of St Andrew's Church, later to become All Saints there have been so many memories and incidents to record, that it becomes only a series of random reminiscences dredged from our collective experience.

Newly returned from America, with a two and a half year-old son and another child well on the way, we virtually stumbled over 'our spiritual home', where in accordance with the times, there was a fairly rigid format of worship, fully Bishop-approved and rather 1660s. It wasn't until the ministry of Ken Gardiner that the guy ropes were loosened, and especially remembered is the time that he ate a bowl of cornflakes in the (then) pulpit, during a family service, and subsequently cut out one of the hymns from the morning worship - causing a restrained uproar.

After moving to our newly built house on the 'Amberley Road' estate we experienced a unique phenomenon of seeing about 6 or 7 cars on 6 or 7 drives simultaneously revving up and driving off with assorted parents and children towards the same destination of our communal church. A common band of immediate kinship formed, bloomed and flourished, and many of those young friendships made

through Sunday School, youth groups and movements have lasted up to the present time.

Our children were very fortunate in their early integration, and learned not only of 'the Way, the Truth and the Life', but many social graces along the way.

Harvest Suppers and Barn Dances were highlights, the former bringing to mind vivid pictures of Cartledges meat and potato pies, baked in massive bowls, kindly lent by St Andrew's school kitchen - and surprise pieces of cow cheek were often to be discovered lurking in the depths of the gravy - to be hastily disguised by the pickled red cabbage accompaniment. High spirits and lively conversation was paramount.

The Barn Dance provided the girls some anguished moment of decision, as to whether long or short skirts should be worn, and the boys whether ties had to be worn. It was the one evening when the children were allowed to stay up until 9.30pm (even on a school night), and thus created great excitement. Older members danced with youngsters standing on their feet in order to learn the steps; the Ladies Guild taught us all the 'March of the Mods' and the 'Palais Glide', and I really think it was these 'family' occasions that we all learned to converse across the barriers of age, social and varied backgrounds.

The annual 'Flower service', where we joined together with St Michael's Church in their hallowed halls, was another landmark in our clerical calendar, and an opportunity to learn the way that 'things had always been done'. We needed to be shown the intricacies of weaving and placing flowers in the various adornments, as directed by Fanny Steele, Lily Bethell and the many other loyal ladies whose word was sacred law and whose legends are revered. The younger noviciates were fumble-fingered and slow to catch on, but willing to learn and strong enough to lift those buckets of flowers!



(And we all were told where Fanny kept the all important ribbons on top of her wardrobe, in case anything untoward should befall her!)

It was the pinnacle of achievement when each of the girls was considered tall enough to carry the 'Crown' of flowers atop a pole, with four long ribbon streamers to be held by acolytes in dainty dresses. Fathers photographed the event for the family album, and mothers preened prettily. The whole procession was lovely to see, and was accompanied by a Scout band who made up in enthusiasm whatever they lacked in tunefulness, and it was viewed along the route by many dewy-eyed former school and Sunday school pupils. I remember so well the year that Jim Bethell, our friend and caretaker (he who always had a pocket full of mints to sneak into children's sticky fingers) was recovering from illness, and waved to us all from his bedroom window on Crompton Road. He received a special drum-roll.

The men's role on these occasions was all important, as the Crompton Road Sunday School banner that was to be processed was a mighty weight, and carrying it required strength and stamina. The tallest two men each year donned the leather holsters and heaved the perilously flapping thing aloft - but it required real endurance to control the four guiding ropes and hold them steady to maintain equal tension in gusts of wind and in the delicate task of corner-turning!

On several occasions the services of the children's evangelists Ralph Chambers and Irene Wardle were engaged to conduct the Children's Christian Crusade for the benefit of Sunday School and Church members alike.

In the earlier years a huge tent was erected on the Boys' Club field and nightly meetings were held, when we learned such songs as 'Don't have a face like a Coffee pot' and where many young people learned of the love of the Lord. A rota of stalwart men slept in the

tent at night to guard the canvas cloisters, and I imagine fun was had by all. Later the venue was changed to the Drill Hall, and still a van toured the district daily, exhorting kiddies to make the secret 'CCC' sign whenever they saw it coming.

At some hazy point, and for a period of about three years the Church Hall was opened at night to allow some homeless people to seek shelter under a dry roof, and this also required church members to take turns in being present during the times of occupancy.

There was a period of interregnum between the ministries of Ken Gardiner and Wally Snook, and I truly believe that this potentially difficult time was blessed by the Holy Spirit. It was a time of bonding, when everyone worked together with a concerted and dedicated aim to keep the Body of Christ alive, but also to keep the fabric and workings of the whole church in good order. Could this have been our 'finest hour'?

As families told other families that Sundays were good at St Andrew's, the walls could have benefited from having elastic properties, but the screens at the back of the church were duly removed and stacked when the need arose, extra chairs brought in and kneelers placed between chairs to seat children when space was at a premium

We grew and learned lessons, sometimes the hard way and not without the usual human conflicts, and I personally learned a great deal about the power of prayer when a young member of the youth club was found to have a virulent form of cancer. A twenty four hour prayer support was put into action, making sure that each part of each day was covered in prayer for healing, for comfort, for peace. Mark recovered, and though this cannot always be God's ultimate answer it was a solemn and tangible evidence of the power of such a commitment and the church was uplifted because of it.

When Richard was born brain damaged to Alan and Mary Chapman, we all slowly became aware; some for the first time, of the enormity of the impact of care in one family. It led with many twists and turns along the way, to a toy library, a handicapped children's playgroup in the Hall, and later it led to the Chapman and Hyde families selling their homes and jointly buy and set in motion the Rossendale Trust for the mentally handicapped. Many members of St Andrew's were involved in small ways, and some still continue to support the work.

Much effort and work was put into fund raising for the building of a toilet block, once the playgroup for handicapped children was given permission to go ahead. The old, outside toilet block used for decades by the day school children was considered unfit (even though not one child in the playgroup used a toilet, being in nappies or on potties). The church has benefited greatly up to the present time by these facilities.

From time to time members of St Andrew's met for an 'Agape' - literally, a 'love-feast', during which we shared a meal together, and concluded by giving Communion to one another in a truly family token of love and peace. Lent lunches were held for many years in the home of Ron and Maureen Sutton, and some other venues, when we shared soup, bread and cheese - donating the money saved on our own meal for missionary or church work. The difficulty came when no-one wanted to leave, the food was consumed, the laughter still abundant and we all looked forward to the next one. I think some of the point was lost on this particular participant!!

HOW WONDERFUL IT IS, HOW PLEASANT, FOR GOD'S PEOPLE TO LIVE TOGETHER IN HARMONY.

Psalm 133:1

Groups within Church life have always been popular - some existing for many years, others fulfilling a purpose for a short time before fading away.

Missionary Groups in both Christ Church and St Andrew's were part of the vital work of praying and financing the many missionaries serving God overseas often in great danger to themselves and the families. One only has to read personal accounts of these missionaries to know how often the prayers of the people at home were part of God's miraculous intervention in a very difficult situation of someone hundreds of miles away. I recently read an article by a scientist who said that the waft of butterflies' wings in Africa affected the climate conditions in Britain. Is it small wonder then, that if that can happen in the natural world how much more can the sincere prayers of Christians have in effect in the Spiritual realms?

Church Councils now take a realistic view of giving to Mission Societies as part of their annual budgeting but maybe we have lost something of the personal responsibility we have to those who give up so much to serve the Lord both in this country and overseas.

The Missionary Groups of the two churches have finished but Margaret Williamson gives us an interesting account of the off-shoot of the Missionary Group at Christ Church.

#### MISSIONARY SALE/EXHIBITION

"From little acorns grow big oaks" and so let the tale be told of the now nationally famed Macclesfield Music festival and how it grew into its fullness from a humble beginning in Christ Church Missionary Sale (proceeds for CMS etc). But one year 1925 our

resourceful vicar (Revd S J F Sharples) thought of giving it a facelift and so developed the idea of Competitions and an Exhibition of Cookery, Art, Photography, Essay writing, Calligraphy, Elocution, Singing, Piano and Violin etc. A syllabus was drawn up, a small fee charged to enter the competitions and willing volunteers of all ages became secretaries of the sections. The whole affair was a great success and grew from year to year, especially the Elocution and Music Competitions so that besides filling our own school, rooms had to be rented in the large Sunday School and other places. (Yes one could get a little weary of hearing 'Where the Bee sucks, there lurk I' twenty times or more but it was great to be involved and we were still looking after the little black children - remember!). In 1930s one Act Plays were performed and I am proud to say that Christ Church Players disguised as the Femina players were winners for two years. Eventually during the war years our vicar left and Cyril Robinson the hard-working secretary also and so I suppose that was when a new local committee would be elected. But for many years Mr Sharples remained President and Cyril was a welcome visitor to the Festival.

### THE LADIES GUILD

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 Bann (mentioned by Barbara Smith) and she was followed by Mrs Margaret Wood - an aunt of Barbara Smith.

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 round, and of course there was the very important cup of tea and a biscuit. On one occasion one of the shy 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 Barn 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 exists and bears witness to the friendship and loving support they give 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 (Maureen Sutton) 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 policemen 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 so many 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 have left the area who are doing the same and in some cases starting and leading similar groups.



SING A NEW SONG TO THE LORD; PRAISE HIM IN THE  
ASSEMBLY OF HIS FAITHFUL PEOPLE.

Psalm 149:1

Music always had an important part in the worship at both St Andrew's Church and Christ Church. Both Churches had dedicated choirs and organists who met weekly to rehearse the hymns and pointed Psalms. As in many Churches the choirs, usually augmented by other singers gave very moving renditions of Stainer's "Crucifixion" or "Olivet to Calvary" to packed churches on Palm Sunday or Good Friday. Special music was learnt for the Carol Services and for Easter Sunday and often an anthem would be sung during a morning or evening service. One of the longest serving organists was Dorothy Bradshaw who played for many years only breaking her tradition for holidays or illness.

As the years went by the need for more modern music became apparent and moving with the times St Andrew's began to use "100 Hymns for Today" and "Psalm Praise". These changes were welcomed by some members of the choir and congregation but disliked by others. In the 1960s the Renewal Movement brought with it a lot of new music mostly with words of worship and reflecting a personal relationship with the Lord. Guitars became popular and my husband, Ron, and I bought one each and had the opportunity of using them during the services. I gathered some willing singers together and for several years we sang during the administration of the Communion and it was much appreciated by the congregation and incidentally cut out a lot of the 'chatter' that had gone on previously.

On Saturday evenings once a month we had a 'gathering' in our house. We were never able to put a name to it but around thirty people of all ages would come along. We would sing some of the worship songs, have prayer and a Bible reading and often a speaker.

It always ended with supper and a chance to discuss topical subjects or get help from each other on personal problems.

The worship group still continues and is a good back up for learning new hymns and songs. It is led now by Dot Phillips, one of the original group, and the weekly musical worship is accompanied on the piano by Chris Campbell-Kelly.

The music of a Church is very important and All Saints is very fortunate in having these two ladies who hold their music not as an end in itself, but as an extension of their love of the Lord. The music of All Saints in this present time is a careful blend of old and new holding on to what is good of the old but also being prepared to learn something new. The Bible constantly urges us to "sing a new song", and in the Revelation of John Chapter 5 verse 9 we read that the Elders in heaven "sing a new song" and in Revelation Chapter 5 we read "I heard a voice from heaven that sounded like a roaring waterfall, like a loud peal of thunder. It sounded like the music made by musicians playing their harps. The 144,000 people stood before the throne, the four living creatures, and the elders; they were singing a new song which only they could learn". I reckon that if we want to be able to sing a new song when we get to heaven, we might as well get into practice now!

YOU HAVE PUT US TO THE TEST. GOD; AS SILVER IS PURIFIED BY FIRE, SO YOU HAVE TESTED US.

Psalm 66:10 (GNB)

The time came when keeping Christ Church open became too difficult and expensive. After a lot of discussion it was decided to join Christ Church congregation with St Andrew's. More discussions took place as to what the combined Church was to be called. Should it remain as St Andrew's or should it have a new name? Eventually the name of All Saints was chosen and anew chapter in the history of the Church had begun.

Inevitably it was a painful time for many people. Although we know that "the Church" is not the building, we also know that our Church buildings hold special memories. Family occasions of Marriage, Baptism, Confirmation and Funerals all join to make up part of the tapestry of our lives and to leave them behind is sometimes very difficult. On the face of it, those who left Christ Church had the more difficult task. Added to the pain of leaving there was also the pain of what would happen to the building - would it have another purpose or would it just be pulled down and eventually forgotten.

The people of St Andrew's Church were not without their pain and fears also. They had a very fruitful ministry and were anxious that this would continue. Inevitably changes would have to take place but would these changes be acceptable and would they herald the start of a Church strengthened by the change or would it be a time of the decline of both congregations?

Humanly speaking it was a very disturbing time for both Churches but God was in charge and by his grace and benediction the difficulties were overcome and the merger was accomplished with mutual love and consideration, and a new chapter had begun.

The Revd John Staley, Vicar of Christ Church became Team Vicar of the new All Saints. Many people came with him from Christ Church and the new Church of All Saints was born. In 1983 the building was altered and enlarged to accommodate everyone.

Jim and Pat Magnall give us the following account of the last days at Christ Church.

#### Christ Church to All Saints via St Andrew's

First a little history. For more than 12 months the Christ Church congregation had been without a vicar, following the departure of David Greenman in 1981 for a parish in Gloucester. Services had gone on with visiting clergy from wherever our Wardens, David Warren and Ian Hankinson, could find them.

Our last Christmas Eve Communion in Christ Church was held in a sub zero temperature, about 18 of us huddled in overcoats. The Curate from St Michael's was gently told off by his wife for preaching too long (about five minutes).

However time passed and we ultimately met John Staley for the first time unanimously agreeing that he would be an ideal new vicar! Subsequently we had a visitation from the Bishop of Stockport who put forward the idea of a Team Parish. The Reverend John Bronnert addressed a joint meeting of the PCCs of St Michael's, St Peter's and Christ Church. The Team Parish was formed and in January 1983 Christ Church was closed as a parish church although it was used for Parade Services and the Kings School Founders' Day Service.

We moved as a congregation to St Andrew's, then a daughter church of St Michael's.

How strange it seemed then, from filling a few pews in Christ Church, we now overflowed St Andrew's. We were welcomed to the services and became part of a new enlarged congregation.

There were many changes. We discussed at length and voted upon a new name - All Saints was chosen. Elisabeth Braddock became a warden.

Unfortunately, some members of both congregations chose to worship elsewhere, our bellringers were welcomed at St Michael's.

The increased numbers necessitated some alterations to the church, the new kitchen, Upper Room and vestry were built and the worship area was enlarged and filled.

It is difficult now to remember how long we've been All Saints because we are truly united as members of God's family.

**"I AM THE FIRST AND THE LAST, SAYS THE LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, WHO IS, WHO WAS, AND WHO IS TO COME."**

Revelation 1:8

Although this account of both Churches has been given by the Laity it must not be forgotten that the leadership of the Clergy was very important. Because St Andrew's Church was a "daughter" of St Michael's, a succession of curates served the people well. Although this caused change every two years or so, nevertheless the congregation benefited by the changes as each curate brought new ideas and a different aspect of Church life and worship. Sometimes it took a while to adapt to these new ways but by the time the Curate left both he and the people knew that they had all grown in their Christian walk.

Looking back over the years the thread of witness and worship has been very strong and we of the present Church have a big responsibility to see it carries on. Hopefully someone looking back to us from the years ahead will recognise that we too have kept the faith and kept the promise we made at the Consecration on 9th April 1995. I hope these pages show that it will not be because of great momentous events but in the depth of devotion in the hearts of everyone to a living faithful Lord and Saviour.

In the Communion Service we say the words "The Lord is here, His Spirit is with us". One lady I spoke to said she knew for certain that this was true because she once saw a vision of Jesus standing in the Church gallery with his arms outstretched to bless. This was a privilege given to very few and though it happened many years ago the memory is as clear today as it was when it happened. Though we may not see Him with our eyes may we always be aware of His Presence and may we make sure that what we do in the Church will give Him glory and honour so that He may always be glad to be with us.

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