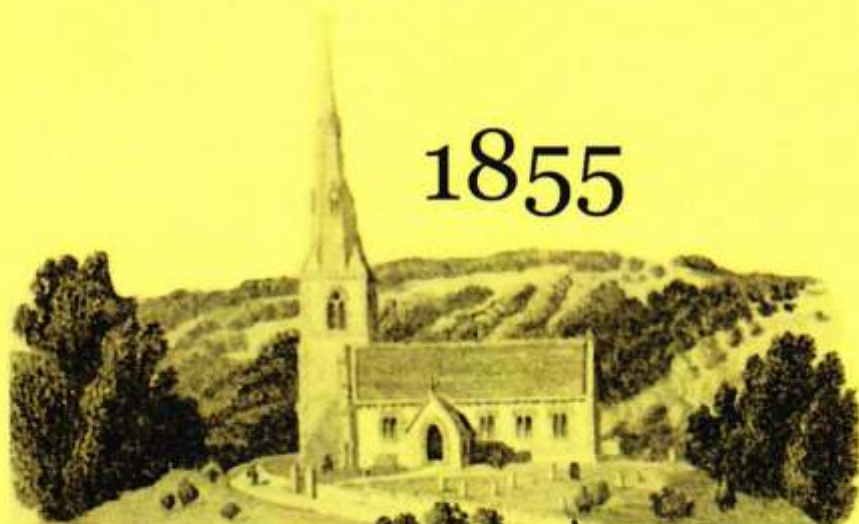


**CHRIST CHURCH
MONTPELIER
WESTON-SUPER-MARE**

1855



150th
Commemorative
Booklet

2005



INTRODUCTION

*'Enter into his gates with thanksgiving,
and into his courts with praise:
be thankful unto him, and bless his name.'*
Psalm 100: 4

'IT IS JANUARY 30TH, 1854. The mid-morning skies are leaden, and frequent squalls of heavy rain are falling as a gathering of a considerable number of townsfolk assembles in a field called Montpelier, near the outskirts of Weston super Mare. At about 12 O'clock the ceremony begins: the hymn, 'From all that dwell below the skies', is sung by the children of the National School, and prayer is offered by the Incumbent of Emmanuel Church. Then, assisted by Henry Davies, Esq., to whom the field had belonged, the Rector, Archdeacon Henry Law, lays the first stone of Christ Church, Weston-super-Mare. The ceremony is soon concluded: the doxology, prayer, and the 100th Psalm: and as the storm clouds gather, the Archdeacon prays with much earnestness for God's blessing on the work which is just begun.'

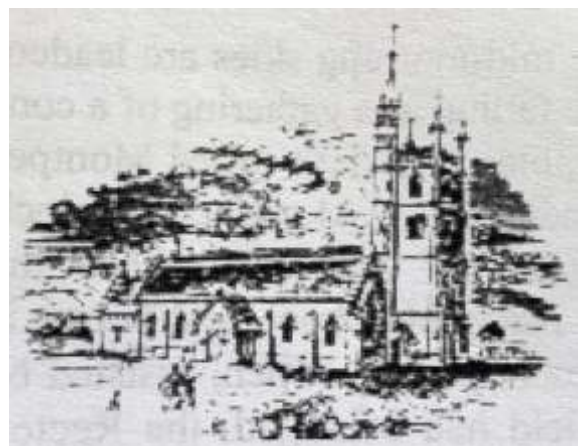
That was the opening paragraph from the Centenary Booklet One Hundred Years - Glimpses of Christ Church, Weston-super-Mare 1855-1955 published fifty years ago.

This new booklet celebrates the past fifty years of the spiritual life of Christ Church and its contributions to the wider community, but this Introduction will briefly set out a little of the earlier history of the church and its people and its achievements up until 1955.

Two hundred years ago the inhabitants of Weston-super-Mare, then little more than a hamlet, numbered a mere 163. The areas of Ashcombe and Milton were 'a pretty walk'. In 1837 two events took place which would change the character, and size, of Weston-super-Mare, for good. Dr Fox of Brislington opened up the town as a health resort, and the Bristol and Exeter Railway was completed to the town. By 1851 there were 4034 inhabitants and the Rector Archdeacon Law, saw his parish extending daily far beyond the facilities of his church and staff. Archdeacon Law was described as a Rector 'of outstanding godliness and liberality, deeply concerned to provide for the spiritual well-being of his people'. He demonstrated this by building the National Schools in 1845, financing their construction mainly from his own pocket, and by providing a new church for the growing population to the south of the town; this was Emmanuel which was consecrated in October 1847.

Emmanuel Church

But Archdeacon Law soon recognised the need for another church, this time to the then east of the growing town, 'the Weston Meads'. He was aware that soon Ashcombe would merge with the town and in 1853 he wrote a circular letter to his parishioners, calling upon them to face their solemn duty to provide another church. 'But I feel it to be needless to do more than urge you to reflect upon the supreme importance.' he wrote, 'of securing to the present and future generations of this town the inestimable blessing of a place of worship in which the hallowed services of our revered church will be duly performed, and the pure truths of the Word of God faithfully proclaimed'. He emphasised that much self-denial would be required. The estimated cost of the new church was £4000.



Emmanuel Church

A pamphlet relating to the 90th Anniversary Celebration of Christ Church informs us the chosen location was part of an area known as 'The Lynch', upon which were remains of mining operations where it had been believed that a 'treasure of lead, calamine, and other metals were embedded here in abundance.'

There was evidence of an opening to these workings in the bank opposite the north door of the church, together with an underground passage, which could once be traced to a garden in nearby Hill Road.

By the end of 1854 the total had reached £3303, enough to begin building the church but not enough to build it to the projected plan, although the tower and spire were completed by the end of 1854. The church was formally consecrated on 19th September, 1855, and it is from this date that the formal history of Christ Church begins. Sadly there are no surviving records of details of the consecration but we can imagine it would have been on similar lines to the foundation stone ceremony of January 1854.



So it was, that the Handbook to Weston-super-Mare of 1858 described Christ Church as being 'in early decorated style(1) but plain in character... The present building as it meets the eye, has a defective appearance, for the want of an external chancel'. At that time, however, the church stood overlooking open fields and trees; the bottom end of Montpelier was yet to be built and there was no housing to the east. The new Cemetery, opened in 1856, then some way outside the town limits, was planted with over a hundred varieties of trees and it had two chapels, one for Anglicans, the other for Non-Conformists. No burials were ever permitted in the churchyard.

The first Vicar was the Rev. W.F. Lanfear, M.A. who was the incumbent from 1855-1875. When he first took services, it was to a small congregation, for the obvious reason that until the new houses and villas were erected, there were no parishioners to attend their church-in-waiting. There was no lighting and hence Evening Prayer then commenced at 3.30 p.m. in the afternoon. There was no organ therefore hymns were sung unaccompanied; no lectern and so Rev. Lanfear read from the service from a desk. The congregation sat on simple pine pews with no central aisle, the children on tiered seats in the tower behind.

14th APRIL 1865

President Lincoln is assassinated. Seven days earlier the American Civil War had come to an end and Slavery, the issue over which it had been fought, was abolished on 18th October under the Thirteenth Amendment of the American Constitution.

Over the next twenty years Montpelier and the surrounding area was extensively and intensively developed so that when the new Vicar, the Rev. H.T.N. Chase, M.A., led the church from 1875-1880 it was recognised that the church must be enlarged, or at least completed as a structure without any further delay. The leading Weston-super-Mare architect, Hans Price, also a past Churchwarden, prepared plans for the building of a chancel. The cost was estimated at £1000 and most of the required money was raised 'in an incredibly short time'.

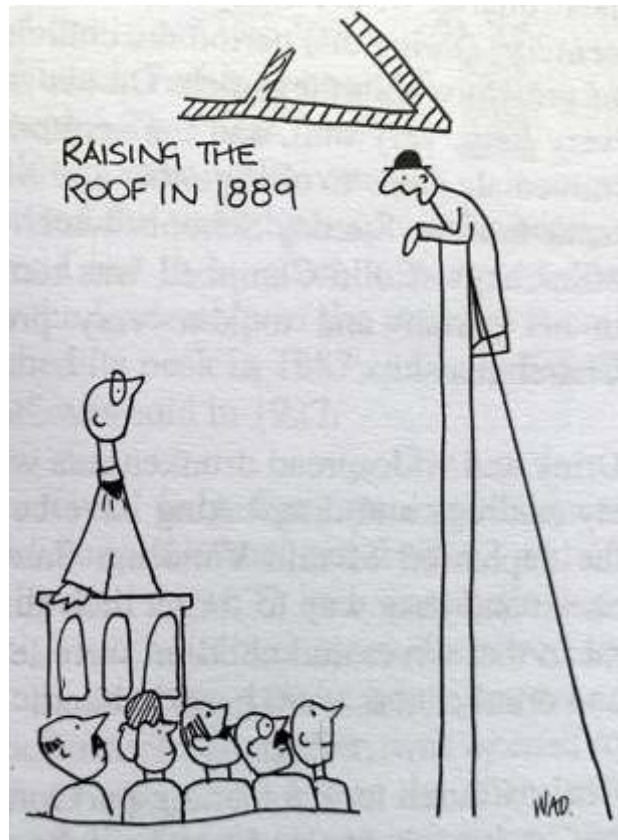
The changes were very extensive and a chancel with choir stalls was erected, a large organ chamber provided and a new five-light window with plain glass was inserted in the east wall. The Old east nave window was built into the west wall of the tower. North and south aisles were added to the nave, with transept gables at the east end of the nave. Above the Holy Table the wall was covered with rich carvings of diaper work (2), on each side of which the Ten Commandments were painted. Also the pulpit was lowered.

The church building had been transformed for both spiritual and practical purposes, and the enlargement resulted in an additional 188 seats, giving a total of 681, the church being furnished with new pews now re-arranged with a central aisle that stayed in place until relatively recent times. The Rev. Chase was able to write in the parish magazine, 'Well nigh every appropriated seat is let', the new sittings being allotted first to parishioners, and then to non-parishioners 'in order of seniority'. The parish then numbered 4000 inhabitants; by 1955 it would be nearly 10,000.

One other major building work took place, following a complaint from a parishioner lodged at the Easter Vestry meeting, 1877, requesting that prompt steps be taken to improve the ventilation in the church as the atmosphere was 'slowly poisoning him'. Those 'prompt steps' took place in August 1889 when it was decided to raise the nave roof seven feet and to insert a ventilator in the tower. This huge engineering task was accomplished without removing the roof, by raising it bodily on jacks and building in ten small windows to form a clerestory above the nave arches. The work cost a mere £225 and the church was closed for only three Sundays during which time the whole church was decorated inside, the pews re-stained and varnished, new heating apparatus installed, and texts painted over each of the lower windows. Hans Price was again responsible for the designs and the work was carried out by another Churchwarden, Mr. Theo Palmer.

Certainly, the need for a church as a building and a place of worship, had been firmly established by 1875; and the same was true of 'the church', as its people. Also, any possible criticism of the exclusivity of the Montpelier area, and its church and congregation, had been overcome when the Toll Cottage at the top of the hill was closed, and the Toll gate removed in the late 1870's. Montpelier therefore ceased to be a private road.

From the outset it had always been intended that Christ Church be in the Evangelical tradition(3). The church, since its foundation in 1855, had steadily grown under the leadership of the Reverends Lanfear and Chase. However, in 1880, the Rev. Colin Campbell, M.A. arrived, who would oversee the work of the church for the next quarter of a century and into the early years of the twentieth century. During this period the church would experience a huge time of growth within the parish. On his arrival, the services had become 'very long, very dull, and the sermons of terrible length.' He took immediate steps to change this and Mrs. Campbell became Superintendent of the Sunday Schools 'which were brought to a high state of efficiency'. Colin Campbell was remembered as 'a beacon of light in his parish' and took a 'very prominent place in Evangelical Churchmanship.'



Drink and widespread drunkenness was as much a problem for society as drugs and drug-taking have become today. To the poor and the depressed of mid-Victorian times the Public House offered a cheap and easy way to forget their difficulties, even though it might mean that wives and children were left starving and in rags; poverty and drunkenness went hand in hand.

Christ Church took a leading part in the battle against drink in Weston. A branch of the Church of England Temperance society was formed in the parish in 1876 and monthly meetings were held in the Mission Room and Town Hall. Other churches followed suit with great annual gatherings taking place, at which the Gospel preached and men and women invited to give up drink. In February 1876 the 'British Workman', a 'dry' pub without beer, was opened in Orchard Street and for three and a half years it carried out excellent work in keeping men out of public houses, supported by gifts from the congregation. The premises proved to be limited in scope and the Church bought another property in Meadow Street. 'The Star House and Christ Church Parish Institute' was formally opened in November 1879, a striking bright red house. Tea and coffee were sold at 1½d a pint with milk and sugar, and cocoa at 1d.

In addition, for a 3d weekly subscription a man could join the 'Men's Club' and play bagatelle, draughts and other games and read the daily papers or one of a library of 360 books. In the summer a cricket club was formed. There

was accommodation for young men lodgers and the 'Star' was 'free and open to all whether in the Church Parish or not, whether dissenters or church people'. The 'Star' was self-supporting, and by 1888 takings were well over £1000. The congregation supported the work by means of subscription which enabled the 'down-and out' to be given a meal or a bed for the night. This work, under the leadership of the untiring Secretary, Admiral Ranscombe, reached its peak in 1887 and only ceased forty years later when 'The Star' was sold in 1927.

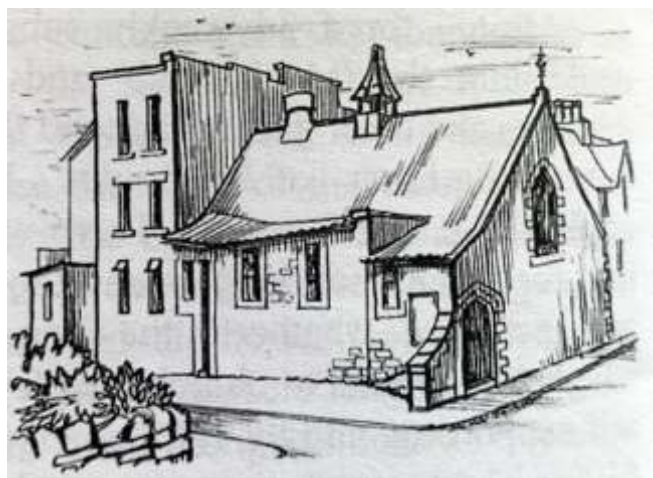
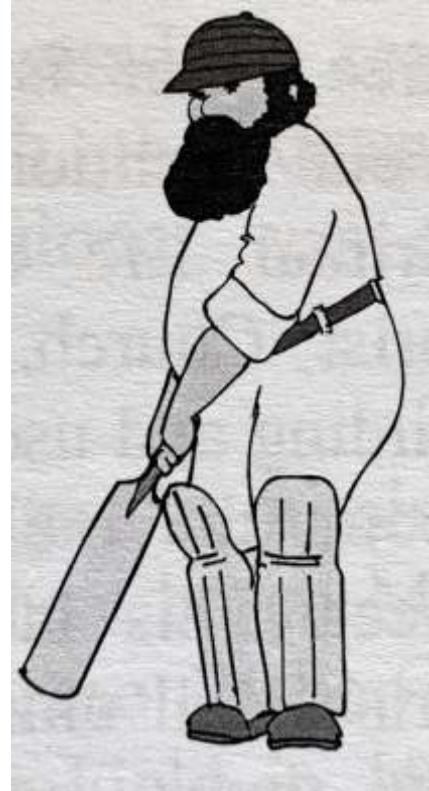
The poor and destitute also received help from an establishment called 'The Parochial Room and Soup Kitchen' run from 62 and 63 Orchard Street. This kitchen opened in 1877 and was again supported by private subscription; the buildings were destroyed by bombs in the Second World War. In about 1880 a house known as 'Chubb Cottage', opposite the bottom of Montpelier, was opened to care for the needs of poor women who were able to live there rent free, the income in the form of charities and subscriptions. The work continued into the 1930's.

Under the leadership of the Rev. Colin Campbell a band of lay workers had been recruited and each given charge of a part of the parish. In 1831, 131 of them met at the Vicarage to talk over their work and give each other encouragement and help. This meeting became an annual event and the duties of these 'Parish Visitors' were to seek out the poor and the needy and to bring relief to them by means of various clubs, such as the 'Blanket Club' and the 'Coal Club'. But above all, their primary task was the finding of men and women for Christ. And so the Parish flourished with a spirit-led band of active parishioners.

Three other issues remain of special mention in the earlier spiritual life and history of Christ Church. One was the building and use of the Mission Room, the building in Alfred Street. This later became the Parish Hall until its sale in recent times, and is now the Scooter Museum. Meetings were reported as first taking place in the Mission Hall in October 1877 and the purpose of the building was 'to bring the Gospel nearer the people, many of whom, because of class differences or sheer apathy, would never go near the church. The services were of a distinctly evangelistic character...'

By the 1880's an evangelistic service was held every Thursday evening, after which open air meetings took place in the summer months. There was a Sunday service, with the congregation still numbering over a hundred in the 1920's. Christ Church was a thriving and busy parish and on a typical Sunday in the 1880's there were sixteen meetings taking place throughout the day, making use of the church, the Mission Room and the school Room. Eight Bible Classes were run from various locations, including people's own homes, in addition to the standard services and Sunday School.

The week was busy too, with six meetings on a Monday, a further six on a Tuesday and so on. As the growth of the town expanded towards Milton, a further Mission Room was built at the top of Ashcombe Park Road, still used today by an independent Evangelical fellowship. 'So in social work, open-air meetings, Bible Classes and Mission Halls, every effort was made to reach men and women with the Gospel. Every converted parishioner was expected to play his part.'

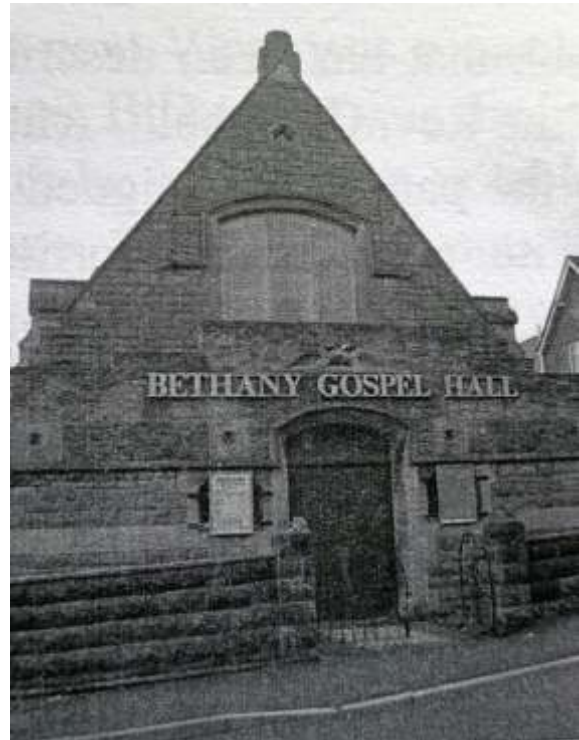


Christ Church Parish Hall

Some played their part by being called to serve the Lord in missionary work overseas, usually under the auspices of the Church Missionary Society. A former curate, Mr. Poole, became Bishop of Osaka in Japan, and his departure for the Mission Field in 1881 quickened interest in others. Miss. M. J. Price left for India in 1899, and worked for 36 years in Punjab and Sindh. In 1912 a Dr. Vosper served in India for 33 years and others served abroad in various ways. Miss. Price herself recorded in 1955 that 'today the congregation supports Dr Ronnie Holland at Quetta'.

22ND JANUARY 1901

The death of Queen Victoria, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, 1837 - 1901. Her reign was the longest of a monarch in British history, and during which time Britain became a powerful and prosperous imperial nation.



Bethany Gospel Hall

"Then missionaries coming from faraway places with strange sounding names - no television then - but they drew pictures in our minds which thrilled us. Stories of the North West Frontier and Peshawar and Srinagar where Sir Henry Holland and then his son, Ronnie, performed thousands of cataract operations with money sent from this parish..."

Mary Armstrong

Much of the work and Christian outreach that has been described had its origins during the incumbency of the Rev. Campbell. After a quarter of a century of devoted work to the parish, he resigned the Living in 1906, having long fought with considerable fortitude against ill-health. He died in June of that year and was laid to rest only the day before his successor, the Rev. H.B. Worthington, M A was inducted. Forty years or later, the spiritual influence of the Rev. Campbell was still felt.

The Rev. Worthington served the parish from 1906-1917 and was gifted with the same inspiration as his predecessor. He was described as 'a worker...always...in the thick of it.' He 'brought worship down from the chancel to the church' and in the 1945 church history celebrations it was credited to him that 'we owe to him much of the spirit of true worship which has ever since been a feature in the services of Christ Church.' The tenure of his living also covered the greater part of the First World War and his ministry was remembered with much gratitude during that disturbing time.

The Rev. W. Nicholson-Watson was the incumbent from 1917-1924. He is chiefly remembered, having had a young family himself, as being the Young People's Vicar. For many of the congregation, their first introduction to worship at Christ Church was through his Young People's Fellowship. sadly, he was always a very sick man and he died in 1924 of a serious lung infection and was much missed and mourned by the church.

3RD MAY 1926

The General Strike began, and lasted for nine days; the miners, however, held out until the end of the summer until hunger forced them back into the pits, when their pay was cut and many of the poorer mines closed.

The next Vicar was a much older man, the Rev. Canon J.G. Hemmings, B.D., who was the incumbent from 1924-1928. Of advanced years he had been a notable preacher, and although of a scholarly nature, he had much success, and was well-liked by the children, whom he addressed from the Chancel step, rather than the pulpit. After less than four years, the popular Canon retired into private life during 1928. He died in January 1931.

The Rev. T.E. Roberts was the vicar of Christ Church from 1928-1944, which included most of the Second World War. In 1927 the Churchwardens wrote to the Trustees concerning their choice of a new Vicar drawing their attention to note 'the overwhelming Protestant and Evangelical sympathies of the congregation and the supporters of the church...' The church certainly seemed to receive the right man to lead them through the difficult war years.

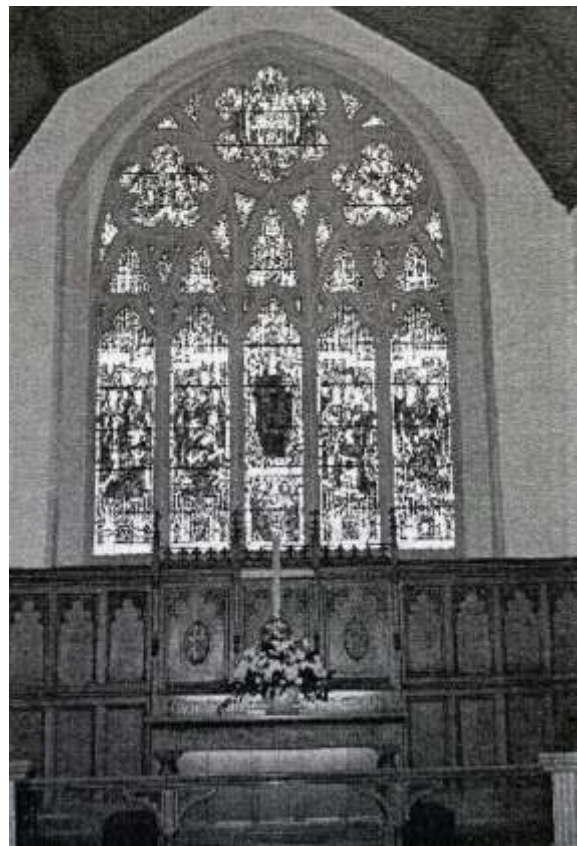
"The sermon preached by Rev. Roberts the Sunday after Weston was bombed was 'I will lift mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help? My help cometh from the Lord.' These were the comforting words as we sat that night when the bombing resumed."

Mary Armstrong

Of Irish background, the Rev. Roberts had been an architect of repute before taking orders. He oversaw many improvements in the building and fabric of the church during his tenure, including a roomy new Choir Vestry, the erection of the fine East Window, a complete overhaul of the heating system and the provision of electric light in 1931, which had been gas-powered since 1872! In 1942, year of 'blitz', a few bullet holes were made in the roof of the church but the then Vicarage suffered severely from a bomb blast, and the Rev. Roberts felt the effects of this until his death.

As mentioned by Mary Armstrong, he is chiefly remembered for his calming influence during the war, stressing the need for public and private prayer, in those difficult times. 'In war and Peace' his ministry 'left behind a fragrant memory.' After some years of struggling against pain and ill-health, he died on 26th July 1944, 'mourned and regretted by his people and his town.'

During the 1930's he had been supported in his ministry by a curate, Frank Morgan. He is remembered for being excellent with children and for having a sense of humour which the children loved, in contrast to the more serious nature of the Rev. Roberts. The Rev. Morgan later became a Canon.



East Window

In February 1945, after a seven month interregnum, the Rev. C.K.W. Warren, came to Christ Church and it was he who oversaw the Commemoration of the 90th Anniversary of the Consecration of the Church. Before his arrival he wrote for the Parish Magazine in January 1945 that 'another thing I am so glad to find about Christ Church is that it is so missionary-hearted. My father and grandfather were C.M.S. missionaries in Japan, and my heart has always been in the mission field. (We) are also keenly interested in "home missions" and in the whole matter of evangelization at home as well as abroad.' In other letters he outlined bold spiritual plans for the parish.

8TH MAY 1945

V.E. Day.

The end of World War II against Germany. The Royal Family were bathed in cheers when they appeared on the balcony of Buckingham Palace, but the biggest cheers were reserved for the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill.

The Rev. Kenneth Warren came with his wife, Joan, and their three children, John, Rachel and David. They soon made tremendous changes to Branton House and set up a Youth Group ... Joan was a vivacious organiser... they were both committed to mission. They brought life into the parish and we were all sad when Kenneth's health failed and they moved to Westbury-on-Trym.

Mary Armstrong

Following the Rev. Warren's move to Westbury-on-Trym just before Christmas 1951, the Rev. Richard Coates became the new incumbent at Christ Church in 1952. He had a wife and four children, and came from an Irish Protestant background.

Richard Coates was an eloquent 'prince of preachers'. A man of love, especially for children and spiritually lost souls. He was a father figure, never more so than on church camps, under canvas, which he instigated. He was theologically very serious yet also had a great sense of humour. Richard believed in and loved God's word, the Bible.

Mike Hurst

Early in his ministry, a long-standing church member, Miss Florence Nicholl, generously gave 18 Montpelier, the present vicarage to the north of the Church. Miss Nicholl ended her days at Tower House, a Nursing Home in Montpelier, just a few yards from her home.

2ND JUNE 1953

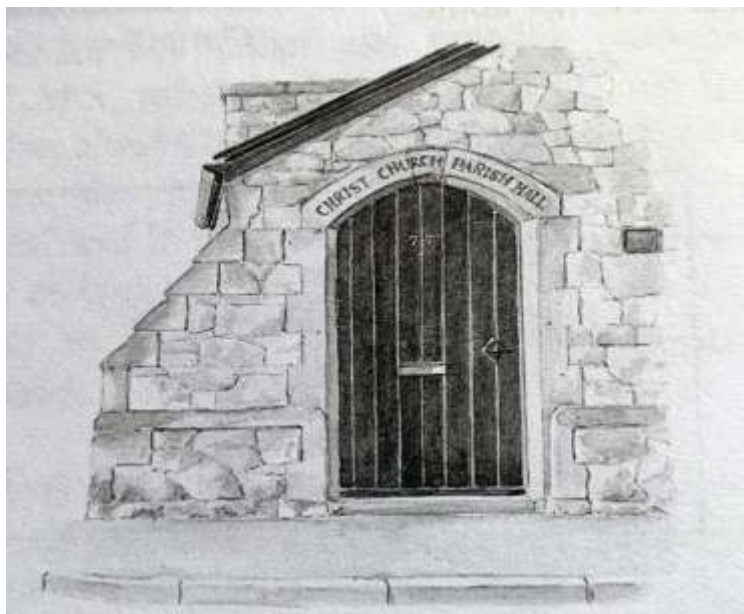
The coronation of H.M. Queen Elizabeth II in Westminster Abbey. The event is televised and the television age begins.

In 1955 the Rev. Coates oversaw the centenary celebrations at Christ Church and the pages of the Centenary Booklet included these observations:

'With more and more scientific barriers broken down the world of everyday life has been changed beyond all recognition. In such a world, the Church, standing on the hill as it has done for a hundred years, unchanged, undisturbed, is something of a parable... the deepest human needs have never changed, and scientific progress can never touch them. Faster travel, television, even better education and medical science, can never make the heart of man any less sinful. It remains as deceitful and as desperately sick as ever it was in the days of Jeremiah. There remains one Medicine and one Physician only, 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and for ever' and sin-sick souls who seek His healing will as surely find salvation in Him today as ever in the past.'

As we now move on to look over all that has affected and changed Christ Church over the past fifty years, let us ponder and reflect too on those wise and unchanging words and eternal promises of Scripture.





Doorway of Christ Church Parish Hall, as it still looks today, but now a Scooter Museum

POST WAR TO POST MODERN

1955 - 1986

In 1955, the Rev. R.J. Coates was the Vicar of Christ Church and it was he who oversaw the Centenary celebrations in the parish. As the Introduction has made clear, much work had been accomplished in a time of considerable growth and for which the church had been specifically planted one Century before. There had been great change over that period - two world wars had seen to that, the second one still in recent memory for many parishioners. The British Empire was in its twilight years; a new modern atomic and scientific age was dawning but no-one could have foretold the massive changes in society that were still to come.

The Rev. Coates would continue to serve Christ Church until 1960 and during that period he was ably supported by his first Curate, Keith Weston. He complimented the Vicar's ministry and was well-loved during his tenure at Christ Church. He went on to become a renowned convention speaker, a Canon and latterly, a trainer of Ordinands. He also wrote the Centenary Booklet and returned to preach for the 150th Anniversary Celebration Service in 2005.

Dorothy Player was a Parish Worker under the Rev. Coates who, Mike Hurst recalls, 'lived Jesus'. She had boundless energy and was a wonderful confidant to young people. Bill and Hilda Bull were long-standing church members and Bill served as a Churchwarden. All are remembered with great affection by those who knew them. In early 1960, the Rev. Coates announced his intention of moving to Oxford to become a Warden of a new centre of research, to think and write on the major issues confronting the church at that time, his resignation taking effect from 31st August that year. Before the arrival of the new incumbent in December, the sad news was received that the Rev. C.K.W. Warren, Vicar of Christ Church from 1945 to 1951 had died on 17th October. But this difficult year ended on a happier note with the Institution of the Rev. Charles Peter M.A., on Thursday 15th December, as the new Vicar of Christ Church. He had come from the ancient church of St. John the baptist in Bedford which John Bunyan had attended long ago in the 1660's.

Peter Searle was a true pastor and a 'Barnabas', a real encourager. He was particularly well known for sayings such as 'when you point a finger at someone, you are pointing four back at yourself.'

Mike Hurst

This sense of humour would serve the Rev. Searle well on his arrival in Weston-super-Mare. He was invited to meet the Jackson-Barstows at The Lodge, an imposing house on their estate on Upper Bristol Road. This was his introduction to Weston-super-Mare and to Christ Church parish. He spent the night in the house and in the morning it was grandly announced to him by one of the ladies that "Oh, we've cleaned your car and washed it down; we'll bring it down to you when you're ready."

He was less than amused, however, to discover that the old practice of pew renting was still taking place in the church and he quickly brought this 'tradition' to an end; visitors were then free to sit anywhere in the pews without fear of sitting in 'someone's seat'.

He established a Good Neighbour scheme of Parish Visitation to reach out to unchurched parishioners.

The Rev. Searle also ran and encouraged missions and was particularly pleased with the positive results of the Major Batt Mission which took place towards the close of his ministry at Christ Church in 1970, and in which our present Vicar and his wife were also involved as young members of the church. On his arrival in 1960, the church was still actively supporting the missionary work of Dr. Ronnie Holland in Quetta Hospital. A contemporary report referred to 'the great work which he, and his courageous wife, and other helpers, are doing for the souls and bodies of multitudes in Pakistan.'



But the clear high point of the ministry of Rev. Searle related to another event that took place in 1968.

We have fond memories of ten of the happiest years of our ministry. I was Area Chairman for the Overseas Missionary Fellowship and it was a thrill to see Rosemary Aldis, who was on our Church Council and a physics teacher at the local grammar school, going out from Christ Church, commissioned for her work in the mission field.

Rev. Peter Searle

Rosemary Aldis's father was the Director of the Overseas Missionary Fellowship (O.M.F.). She felt called to serve the O.M.F. herself and made that public commitment in 1968, and after thirty-five years devoted service, during which time she became the first woman Director of O.M.F. and also became an ordained Presbyterian minister, she retired from her missionary work in Indonesia in August 2005. She remains actively working with the Church in Wales, after ordination.

4TH APRIL 1968

The civil rights leader and American Baptist minister, Martin Luther King, was assassinated. In 1963 he had delivered his celebrated speech, "I have a dream..." and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964.

One conversation with a young church member that the Rev. Searle recalled would later have a profound effect on the life of Christ Church.

I think there was a conversation I had sometime with Geoff Hobden when I felt he should consider leaving the Halifax Building Society and consider the ministry of the church and go forward to ordination.

Rev Peter Searle



Rosemary Aldis

Three curates served under the Rev. Searle during his ministry. The Rev. John (Dan) Dyer is remembered as a quiet, intelligent, thoughtful man. John Dyer did, however, also hold a Black Belt in Judo!

Edgar "Tim" Hyde was a popular curate of nervous disposition and with a slight stammer, which he overcame in his ever improving sermons with a well-judged sense of humour. His replacement was Gerald Swinn, who served the parish as a curate for three years. Sister Molly Elton came from serving at St. Andrew's, Cullompton, and continued at Christ Church until her retirement in the 1980's. Of various lay readers, the Rev. Searle recalls John Blanchard, a licensed Reader, who later became Director of Youth for Christ, and a writer of Christian books. John Ball went forward to ordination and ministry in Kenya with B.C.M.S (now Crosslinks) and became Canon Ball and then a Bishop in Tanzania. Towards the close of the Rev. Searle's ministry, the then well-known Richard Wurmbrand came to speak to Christ Church in May 1970. With his wife, Sabrina, he was touring the country to raise funds for the Christian Mission to the Communist World. In a hard-hitting talk he said the wider church was worrying about a cricket tour instead of worrying about Christian martyrs in Communist countries. However, he added positively that "the Russian Church has to be an underground church, but it is the fastest growing church in Europe."

Soon after, the Rev. Searle's ministry drew to an end, and a new Vicar was inducted in 1970. This was the Rev. George H. Williams, who would serve the church until 1985.

A new curate, the Rev. Colin Reed, his wife and family came to serve under both the Reverends Searle and Williams, arriving in the late 1960's. In 1972 they left and later went to Australia and Kenya. Another popular couple, Raymond Jewell and his wife, were assigned to Christ Church by the Church Army in 1971-72.

were the best possible helpers. There were the Sea Cadets, the Youth Club, the Sunday School, the Choir (with later, Greta Plank and Peter Croft), the School (Alan Dale and Miss Bonner, later Bob Rylands and Brenda Ebbs) ... the old Hospital was in our parish and we visited on Fridays and took Communion at 7 a.m. on some Saturdays. Visiting Ashcombe House Maternity Hospital on Mondays gave a chance to meet new parishioners at the start! The church services were ably assisted by Harry Button who remained an indefatigable Reader for many years and at that time he also ran the Men's Circle. Later we appreciated the invaluable services of several other Readers, including Joan Staines, who worked tirelessly to get Weston Hospicecare established.

George and Isabel Williams

George Williams also has many other memories of his time as the Vicar of Christ Church. He remembers the very successful Women's Fellowship, led ably for many years by Mrs. Winifred Williams, which took place in the former Parish Hall. The church, however, recognised a need for accommodation closer to the church for Sunday School, the Playgroup, the Prayer Fellowship and other weekday activities. A suitable pre-fabricated building was purchased from a school in Long Ashton which cost £2000; but after the cost of transport, laying foundations, its erection, plumbing and electrics the final cost for the centre was £20,000! It was dedicated to the memory of Patrick Christian, who took an active part in the erection of the building, but sadly died soon after. It was also around this time that the church itself was completely re-roofed.

Josie Surgenor arrived as a new Curate and did much good work, especially with the young people, and she was a great blessing to many. She moved on in 1982 to continue her ministry in Norway and in other areas.

Miss. Vera Jackson-Barstow served on the P.C.C. for many years and was a constant source of spiritual strength and support. When she and her sisters moved to the Old Rectory at Christon, the church conducted an annual carol service there for the village, which was much enjoyed by all. After the death of Sybil, the last survivor, their very generous bequests covered the cost of a new wing at Weston Hospital and much of the new Hospice at Uphill.



Christ Church Sunday School Centre

Joan Dudt has fond memories of Winnie Clarke and remembers this hard-working Christian lady's devoted work with the Sunday School, and her tireless work with activities as diverse as heading the cleaning team to organising coffee mornings; and her willingness to drive her car for outings and myriads of other selfless tasks. Another lady Parish Worker who contributed to the life of the church was Cynthia Brown. Her mother, May Rosalie Newall was christened at Christ Church in 1889. Cynthia was also christened at Christ Church, along with her four brothers. As a member of the youth fellowship she also taught in Sunday School and has memories of a cycling outing where Jack Mullins disappeared through a hole in the hedge after careering down an hill and suddenly encountering a herd of cows!

After some years away from Christ Church, she returned as a licensed Parish Worker and sometimes preached at family services and on Christmas Day, as well as teaching Pathfinders in the vestry. Bernard Brown, the brother of Cynthia, together with his wife, Renee, and their family, brought a wealth of Church Army experience to share with the church.

Jack Mullins was a long-standing tenor member of the choir. An outfitter at Couch's he was born and raised at Clara's Cottage in Burlington Street (now part of the North Somerset Museum), Clara being his mother. It is fondly recalled that he would knock on the doors of nearby neighbours to invite them to come to Christ Church.

Mr. Alfred (Alf) Gundry was a woodcraftsman who constructed and carved the communion table and the screen in the Chancel. The Holy Table was made in memory of Mr. Barry E. B. Draper, a long-serving Churchwarden and baker, who died aged 93 on 2nd July 1954. His daughters, Eva and Christine, gave the table in his memory and this is commemorated with a small plaque in the chancel.

The final words of this chapter rest with the Rev. George Williams;

Other distinguished members included Geoff and Hazel Hobden - our Youth Leader and later Churchwarden - missed greatly when they moved to Maidstone, but to my delight returned when I retired in 1985, and you know the rest!



Clara's Cottage

THE CHALLENGE TO STAY RELEVANT

THE 1980's ONWARDS

1980 brought one of the most radical and controversial changes to the order of Anglican services since the provision of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. Although changes had been gradually introduced with the Series 1, 11 and 111 Service Books over the period 1960-1980, the Alternative Service Book became the prayer book of choice at Christ Church from 1980 onwards. This was itself superseded by the Common Worship Book of 2000 designed to lead the Church into the 21st Century. However, the mid-week morning Communion service still followed the 1662 Book of Common Prayer for many years, so the needs of those who wished to observe the old traditions were still accommodated at Christ Church. Over this same period the old Anglican Hymn Book has gradually given way to Mission Praise, but this new version still contains many of the well-loved and favourite older hymns as well as modern worship songs.

In matters of church finance one great change has taken place. In 1986 the parish quota to the Diocese was £8000; this was not sufficient to support the local ministry and every church was subsidized by the Diocese. After a change in the system, by 2004 the parish share has now increased to a substantial £57,000 which means that through the Diocese we now help to support other churches.

These are not the only ways in which Christ Church has had to adapt in rapidly changing times. Changing social conditions have led to many changes in the use of residential property in the parish over the last quarter of a century. No longer are the houses in the occupation of individual families or in single occupation; uses vary from multiple occupation flats and bed-sits to senior citizens homes, or homes for people with learning difficulties, drug rehabilitation centres and hostels for abused women. Other properties have converted to business use and health care use, including doctors and dentists.

The other major change was the relocation of the General Hospital in 1989 from within the parish to its current location in the modern complex at Uphill; the old hospital buildings were sensitively converted to a high quality residential development.

It is a sad but undeniable fact that the general community makes far less use of the church than in previous generations. With the wide choices now available to couples to marry in alternative locations to the church, there has been a marked decline in its use for weddings. Infant baptisms are also of far less frequency than in the past. There are far fewer church-based funerals; most take place at the crematorium. The Youth Church now primarily draws the children of Christian families; since the onset of Sunday trading and Sunday sports activities geared to families, other children have been attracted elsewhere.

Such apparently negative connotations has not led Christ Church, as a fellowship, to cease fighting the good fight. On the contrary, over the last quarter of a century, the church has been at the forefront of mission, continuing in the evangelical tradition established by previous generations since the founding of the Church in 1855.

In September, 1980, the Rev. Jack Marden, the Diocesan Missioner, together with a team of students from Trinity Theological College, which included Geoff Hobden, led a successful Parish Mission.

Our current incumbent, involved with both the aforementioned 1970 and 1980 missions, organised the 1990 mission, led by Geoff Willis and a team from Lee Abbey in Devon. The fruit of this latter mission was that members of the congregation then joined with Lee Abbey, to conduct missions in Torquay and Bournemouth. Then throughout 2000 and 2001, a Prayer Visiting Programme was carried out to the whole parish and proved to be a great success and much spiritual comfort was offered and received by individuals facing personal difficulties and dilemmas. In 2000, Millennium Gospels of St. Luke, were then delivered to every house in the parish.

Another important decision was taken by Christ Church in 2000 to link informally with Emmanuel, a long-

established church in a prime position in the town centre. The Rev. Geoff Hobden became Priest in Charge, aided by the Rev. Geoff Eales, who worked half-time at Emmanuel and half time as Hospital Chaplain: Geoff Eales was later Instituted as the Vicar of St. Peters, Milton in April 2005. Over recent years a growing vision, still to be realised, is that Emmanuel church be opened up midweek as a ministry to those working and shopping in the town centre area. It is likely that Christ Church and Emmanuel will be formally joined as a Joint Benefice in the near future.

Outreach to young people has always been of prime importance and the Holiday Club, which takes place each August, has reached hundreds of children who might not otherwise have heard the gospel. Christ Church imported the idea with Richard Chewter of Scripture Union, who led it for many years. The Holiday Club was held at the Alfred Street Hall from 1988-92, then in a marquee on the vicarage lawn for the next five years, before transferring to the

church itself where it has continued to take place to the present.



Emmanuel Church



'The Greatest Show on Earth' Holiday Club

Another major historical link with children and young people is with Christ Church School; our support has always been strong. There are regular (usually weekly) visits by the Vicar for assembly, who is also on the Governing Body as one of the three Foundation Governors appointed by the P.C.C. Voluntary help takes place in the classroom and in the after school clubs.

Mention must also be made of the involvement of Christ Church in education and primarily the provision of day schools for children. When the church was built, all education was the churches responsibility, apart from private schools for the wealthy. In Weston, the first church school had been built by Archdeacon Law in 1945, the National Schools, later St. John's and on the present site of Weston College. By 1860, the population had increased to such a level that a new school in the parish was urgently required as the majority of children, many poor, could not read or write. Through the vision of Rev. Lanfear, who acted on his own initiative, and relied on the support of the congregation to raise the necessary £1180, a new school building was built and opened on 28th September 1863, on what is now Baker Street, the school being surrounded by fields and allotments at that time. 68 children were admitted but only 8 could read. The school could accommodate 200 children but conditions were cramped and there were sanitation problems not resolved until 1926. The school was a mixed one and the first headmistress was Miss. Susannah Allen. It seemed the school was generally a happy one and received good reports from the Inspectors; but there were deaths among the children from whooping cough or outbreaks of small-pox. By 1879, the school was full to overflowing with a staggering attendance of 506 children, but Inspector's reports revealed an excellent teaching standard. Great emphasis was placed on teaching the central tenets of the Christian faith.



Christ Church School

One headmistress was an exemplar in ensuring Christian teaching took place. She was Miss. Laura Darch who served as Headmistress of the Girl's School from 1880 to 1920. She was a thorough believer in the inspiration of the Bible and her favourite lesson was Scripture. She sent a Curate packing when he told her class that the Book of Jonah was 'only a story or parable'. He did not return! She died in 1945, aged 90.

On her retirement in 1920, the schools were reorganised and became Junior Schools, taking children up to the

At the service of Reordering in 1992 overseen by Bishop Jim Thompson, the then Bishop of Bath & Wells, a delightful ceremony took place. A church member, Sandra Crocker, had lost a sixpence in the grating when she had been a small child. When the grating was lifted at the time of the removal of the old pews, Andy Page and Hazel Hobden found the very sixpence. Bishop Jim was pleased to present this to Sandra, together with threepence interest in the form of a three penny bit which had been found at the same time!

Andy Page also wrote the Christ Church hymn for the 1992 Reordering Service. This chapter ends with the first verse and refrain of the hymn:



Christ Church after the re-ordering

*Let us go to the house of the Lord
to praise His holy name,
whose righteous judgement and sovereign awe
behold us like a flame
We offer our gifts with one accord
His wonders to proclaim!*

*May the glory of the Lord be praised
in his dwelling place
Watchmen call for anthems raised
Sound the trumpets! Jesus reigns!*

CHRIST CHURCH PAST VICARS

W.F. LANFEAR	1855 - 1875
H.T.N. CHASE	1875 - 1880
C. CAMPBELL	1880 - 1906
H.B. WORTHINGTON	1906 - 1917
W. NICHOLSON-WATSON	1917 - 1924
G.E. HEMMING	1924 - 1928
T.E. ROBERTS	1928 - 1944
C.K.W. WARREN	1945 - 1951
J. COATES	1952 - 1960
C.P. SEARLE	1960 - 1970
G.W. WILLIAMS	1970 - 1985
G.W. HOBDEN	1986 - present

age of eleven. In the same year, Mr. Lovell, the Headmaster of the Boys School, also retired after 43 years service at the school and he also contributed greatly to the standards the school had attained. By 1955 the schools had become Voluntary Controlled under the State Education system.

In 2004, after a statutory period of consultation, the church link was further strengthened with a change of status from V.C. (Voluntary Controlled) to V.A. (Voluntary Aided). This increased the Foundation Governors from 3 to 7 and strengthens the link with the Diocese, giving the Church more influence over some areas of school life such as the finance, admissions policy and staff employment. It also protects and strengthens the Christian ethos for the future. The whole school continues to come into Christ Church for the major Christian festivals.

Small groups meeting to study the Bible have always been a feature at Christ Church but in 1986, renamed Home Groups, with a different approach, they were enlarged to include many more people.

9TH NOVEMBER 1989

On this night East Germans flocked to the crossing points of the Berlin Wall, the Communist concrete curtain that had divided East Germany and West Germany since 1961. It was demolished in 1990.

All the groups are led by lay people and Christ Church has consistently offered a choice of approximately ten groups reflecting a membership of about one hundred plus. These groups have been an important factor in establishing a wider Church Family, offering spiritual and practical support to those who attend the Home Groups.

Building on a recent tradition of occasional Houseparties, a pattern has become established of having a church weekend away every two to three years, usually at Lee Abbey or Brunel Manor. These have been great occasions of learning and growing together. In this 150th anniversary year the church is going to Lee Abbey and will be led by Rosemary Aldis.

For many years, the Womens Fellowship has played an important role in the life of the church. The group have excellent speakers and enjoyable social events and support each other, and the church, in a spirit of prayer and friendship. The more recently formed Mens Group operates on very similar principles and objectives. Another popular form of social activity within the church are the Coffee Mornings, held on a Saturday once a month throughout most of the year, for the purposes of both fellowship and fund-raising for mission opportunities.



House Party at Brunel Manor

In the late 1980's the decision was taken to reorder the interior of the church, primarily by the removal of the old pews and the provision of modern seating with all the advantages of their easy mobility and removal to make effective use of the nave area for both spiritual and community purposes. A coffee bar (subsequently replaced in early 2004 with a fully fitted kitchen) was erected at the west end and the choir stalls were also removed from the chancel as the traditional robed choir had been previously disbanded in 1987. Carpeting was also provided throughout the main body of the church. A modern audio system, incorporating a sound desk was introduced together with sodium lights. All the builders and site workers who helped with all the works and alterations were each given a Presentation Bible. During the period of reordering, we were able to worship at Branton House for a number of weeks. The sale of the Alfred Street Mission Hall also took place in 1992 to pay for the reordering.

DEVELOPING MINISTRY

When Geoff and Hazel Hobden arrived at Christ Church in 1986 the organist and choirmaster was Peter Croft who had loyally served in this capacity for many years. Shortly thereafter he retired and a need arose for a new musical director.

Andy Page was invited to prayerfully consider replacing Peter Croft as our organist. Andy accepted the position and soon found himself at the centre of the music ministry in which there have been many highlights. Of these, two hold a particular resonance for Andy. One occasion was a concert that featured music composed and played by Christ Church people - Andrew Williams, Hannah Johns, Bruce Dale and Andy himself. Another was the visit of the Wood Green Gospel Choir, a black gospel choir, inspirational as both evangelical Christians and performers. In recent years, both Andy and Andrew Williams have produced C.D.s of inspirational music.

Bruce Dale and his family moved to Weston-super-Mare in August 1988 and attended Christ Church the first week. Bruce became firm friends with Andy Page and they both put together the first 'Christmas Choir' in November 1988 which continues to play a part in our church services.

By 1990 Bruce was also playing in the services, and he and Andy were later joined on the rota by John Lawrence. Bruce and Andy have also put on musicals at Christ Church, such as 'Pharoah to Freedom' by Roger Jones; more recently he joined forces with Pam Bytheway to rehearse 'Greater than Gold'. Another Roger Jones musical will be staged in 2006.

Another person who has contributed to the musical life of Christ Church is John Lawrence. John has had an interest in playing the piano and keyboards since he was eight or nine years old. During the period 1967-72 John was playing the organ in the popular local gospel rock band, the Four Kingsmen. Then for many years he played the organ at Bristol Road Baptist Church.

In the late 1980's, John and his wife, Jan, came to Christ Church; after a service one Sunday, John asked if he might try playing the grand piano. The answer was an enthusiastic "yes", John did not know that it had been a matter of prayer that someone with musical ability might help Andy Page at worship times. Soon, John was a part of the music team and playing both piano and organ in services, a role to which he is still happily contributing.

He remembers one occasion, however, when he had switched off the noisy electric motor in the vestry, which powers the fan that sends air into the organ pipes - he forgot to switch it on again and there was silence when he pressed the keys and pedals to begin the first hymn. He pressed an override switch, but this took a moment to act, during which, the organ let out a tortured groan that could be heard throughout the church!

The Rev. Christine Waudby, was a well-loved Curate and is still much missed after a four year curacy and her move to the Black Country. When returning to preach at Christ Church in February 2005, she fondly recalled her four years at the Church and being Ordained as one of the first women priests, at Wells in 1994. She remembered the beginning of Weston Hospicecare and worship at Branton House - and a concern expressed by Geoff Hobden at the time of reordering and the removal of the old pews - "What have we done!"

The Rev. Steve Lamond served a curacy for two years and is now a Chaplain in the army.



Christ Church Organ

In recent years four active lay readers have been trained and appointed to assist in the ministry; Chris Cole, Pam Smith, Dr John Birkett and his wife, Julie Birkett, all having contributed their own particular gifts to the wider fellowship at Christ Church. This team was subsequently joined by Jeff Morgan, who moved to Weston and who was already Licensed.

In 1994, John Truscott of Administry - its purpose, the 're-discovering gifts of administration in the Church' - was formally requested by the P.C.C. in May of that year, "to help the P.C.C. and Vicar identify possible areas of change or development with regard to organisational structures, personnel, or facilities which will enable the church to continue to grow through their outreach programme."

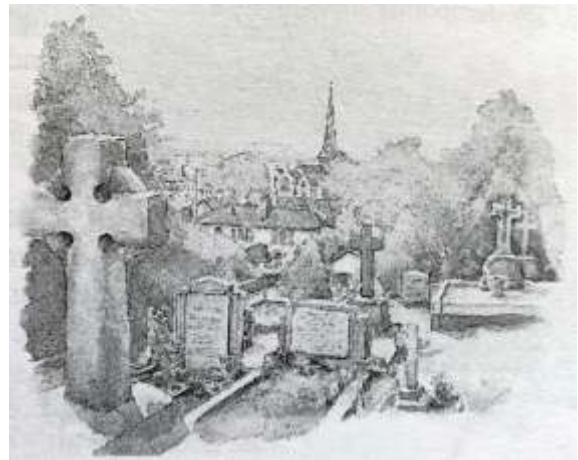
In the eight years since the Rev. Geoff Hobden had arrived, the main Sunday morning service now attracted more than 160 adults plus children (compared with little over 80 eight years previously), with the monthly Family Service numbers towards 300. Many had been attracted by the vibrant young people's work and men accounted for virtually half the numbers. In the subsequent reports, these positive developments were praised, but it was recognised that such growth presented practical problems that needed addressing.

These focused on the urgent need for a permanent facility into which to expand for church and community activities; the existing Sunday School Centre was inadequate - a new 'complex' should be built alongside the church building. Needs also identified, were to increase staffing, including the setting up of a church office, and to identify and mobilise the gifts and skills of church members to develop leadership roles - both pastoral and administrative. In short, the Vicar to have an effective and much enlarged support team to sustain and further develop the evangelical mission of the church.

In this 150th anniversary year, it can be seen that those recommendations have largely been fulfilled - the Vicar, and the church, are supported both pastorally and administratively - from active retired Clergy and Readers, to lay leaders of the Youth Church and Home Groups and many other thriving organisations within the church, and an efficiently run Church Office. Also currently under construction, is the 'complex' that the report so strongly recommended in 1994.

26TH DECEMBER 2004

A tsunami in the Indian Ocean devastates Sumatra, Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka and South India. Over 230,000 people are killed by the 30 metre (100 feet) high tidal waves and the coastal areas are laid waste. Worldwide aid is sent to the disaster zone.



*Christ Church Spire viewed
from the Cemetery*

THE SPIRE CENTRE

*'For every house is built by someone,
but God is the builder of everything'*

Hebrews 34

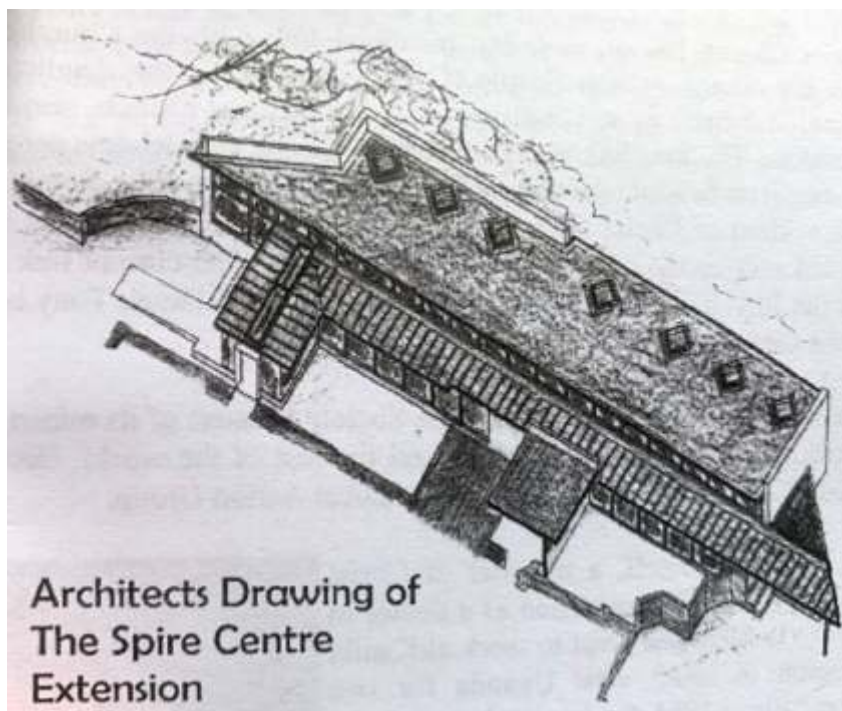
At the time of re-ordering a need was recognised for a major extension to the church, to meet both the expanding church organisations and community needs. It took many years of planning and frustration to achieve a design that was affordable and that would go some way towards providing resources and facilities for ministry to the community. The temporary classrooms (called the Sunday School Centre) were brought on site in the early 1980's, under temporary planning permission, but access was always difficult for the elderly and disabled. The pressure increased with a need for more space and a permanent building in order to reach out to the community and provide all kinds of facilities, together with new legislation applying pressure to provide access for all.

The vision was eventually realised when a Prayer Meeting for the Spire Centre Building Project took place on 5th June 2004. 200 members later attended a Presentation and Harvest Lunch on Sunday, 3rd October 2004, where the plans were displayed. A Prayer and Gift Day took place on 13th November 2004 raising gifts and pledges of £225,000 in that weekend. As a confirmation of intent, the Sunday School Centre was demolished in November 2004 by a team of people from the congregation, readying the site for development.



Demolition of Sunday School Centre

The final decision to build came in January 2005 at a cost of £600,000. Funds in hand (and promised) totalled £480,000 with various forms of fund raising planned for the months ahead. Building work commenced on Monday 14th March 2005 with a planned completion date for December 2005.



Architects Drawing of
The Spire Centre
Extension

MISSION

Other than its previously mentioned links with Rosemary Aldis and O.M.F., Christ Church continues in its long evangelical tradition of support for various forms of mission and for missionaries, both in this country and throughout the world.

Christ Church has an enduring historical link with the Churches Ministry among Jewish People (C.M.J.), supporting the Anglican School in Jerusalem and in more recent years Christ Church, also in Jerusalem. The first link was with John Chorlton, the Headmaster of the Anglican School, the second gave support for the Rev. Ray and Jill Lockhart at Christ Church in Jerusalem. After many years of devoted service they have now retired to Bath. The current link is with the Rev. Tony and Patricia Higton, working in Israel, Tony being the General Director of C.M.J.

Another lasting link is with the Bible Society because of its ministry of making Bibles for this country and the rest of the world. Geoff Hobden is the current Chairman of the Local Action Group.

Dr. Felicity Mussell, a member of Christ Church since 1974, qualified as a doctor in 1976. In 1978 she went to work at Kisiiki Hospital in south west Uganda for two years. Since 1998 she has worked with the organisation Interserve as an obstetrician at Lamb Hospital in northern Bangladesh. Both in her past and in her current vocation Felicity has been deeply moved and humbled by the faithful commitment, prayer and practical support of the church.

Christ Church has a splendid tradition of sending and supporting missionaries down through the years - I trust this will always continue as we seek to spread the light and love of Jesus in a dark world.

Felicity Mussell

One of the products of our prayers to be a 'sending church' was the recognition of Andy and Labby Skyrme and Trevor and Helen Sworn. The Skyrmes served at YWAM headquarters for a number of years before moving on to the staff at a church in London. The Sworns, with the help of WEC, were led to Cambodia and are still there, having gone independent from WEC but serving the community in a variety of ways. As a church we were able to support both families while they served with YWAM and WEC respectively.



Felicity Mussell

MINISTRY TO YOUNG PEOPLE

Throughout the 1950's - 1970's, the Sunday School used teaching materials provided by the Church Pastoral Aid Society (CPAS). In the late 1980's, the Sunday School became the Covenanters, and in the mid-1990's, began using Scripture Union material and teaching aids.

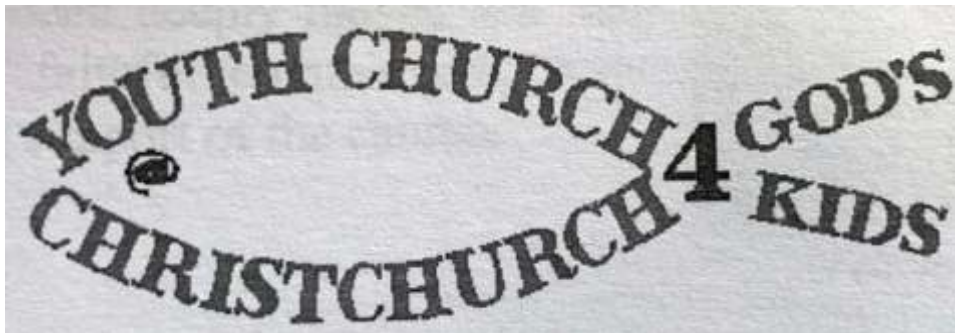
In the early 1990's the Twenties Group spent time renovating the coffee bar at the YMCA, as part of a national project.

In 2003, the Sunday School became the Youth Church, to encourage a new sense of identity, more in tune with the twenty-first Century, and a senior 13+ youth group was formed.

The Church has recognised and commissioned Andrew Williams in his role as Youth and Children's Ministry Team Leader.

In April 2005, Youth Church Weekly commenced, an after school mid-week meeting, for the children of Christ Church School, who would not normally attend Church on a Sunday. A Youth Ministry Prayer Group is also being proposed to support the activities already taking place, and to seek the Lord's will for the future youth ministry of the church, which include plans for a weekly Youth Home Group.

Two thriving Toddler Groups also take place - one on Tuesday mornings and one on Thursday afternoons. The long established Playgroup remains a very popular church-based activity.



WESTON HOSPIECARE

'A VISION FULFILLED'

It was in 1988 that a small prayer group, comprising Geoff and Hazel Hobden and Pam Pembro, met seeking guidance as to how the Church could reach out to the community. The prayer group was led to find out if the town needed a Hospice movement. Geoff was visiting the Verger, George Wilson, who was a patient in Weston General Hospital, and who had terminal cancer. The group felt led to undertake research, to see if Weston-super-Mare could sustain a Hospice movement.



Pam wrote to St. Christopher's Hospice, London, for guidance, and Geoff contacted Exeter, where he had experienced Hospicecare as a curate. A steering group was formed, comprising Les and Joyce Fake, Pat Branton, Maureen Whitfield, Mary Armstrong and Chris Adeney, a Christian G.P. from Worle. It was soon evident that serious funds would have to be raised, initially £50,000.

A Fund Raising Chairman was required and in answer to prayer, the right man was found in Jeff Griffiths, a partner in Palmer Snell Estate Agents, who had a fund of knowledge about the people who might support the movement. Within ten days, he had found the group an office in his Boulevard premises - it had a desk, two chairs and a phone! An empty shop became available at a peppercorn rent, in Baker Street and fund raising began in earnest.

Helped by a launch week, the £50,000 target was raised in record time. During that week, such diverse activities as a magic lantern show and an all night badminton match took place, as well as a balloon race at the Italian Gardens and a performance by a folk group, despite amplification problems.

Dr. Chris Adeney moved away at this time and the new Chairman was Dr. John Dixon, who ran the pain clinic at the hospital. As £70,000 had been raised in October 1990, a nurse was advertised for, but some problems arose over the appointment, which were later amicably resolved and which resulted in the appointment of two nurses. After receiving training from St. Peter's Hospice, Bristol, the nurses commenced their duties in March 1991.

Mary Armstrong, who was to act as Medical Secretary, visited one of the early patients with one of the St. Peter's nurses. She had the opportunity to talk about the aims of Hospicecare to the patient. When he died he left money to his carer, some of which was used to buy the Whitecross Road shop and the offices were moved there. At this time Dr Ian Capstick, a committed Christian, retired from St Peter's Hospice and offered to join Weston Hospicecare. The nurses trained a group of volunteers to work in Day Care; when training was completed Milton Methodist Church offered a room - it was a great success with the patients.

By this time Weston Hospicecare, was looking for a house to buy and 21 Montpelier, which had once been the Christ Church vicarage, came on the market. Initially it was too expensive but in answer to much prayer, the price dropped. Although the purchase would still take up all the reserves, Branton House the property seemed ideally suited and the purchase went ahead. It was named Branton House, after Pat Branton, who had been an early inspiration for the movement.



The Rev. Dr John Searle, the then Chairman of Exeter

Branton House

Hospice care, came to preach at the Thanksgiving Service and looked over the house. When he saw the computer room he remarked "This is big enough for an In Patient Unit - let us pray..."

The Administrator applied to the Lottery Board for a grant and Weston Hospicecare was awarded a large enough sum to open a unit which was an immediate success. Over those years many members of the Christ Church fellowship worked in the shops, in Day Care or Reception and acted as sitters and drivers. The shops, which Joan Staines managed for many years, have been the backbone for continued fund-raising. Joan had the vision and was the instigator of this vital aspect of the Weston Hospice movement.

The latest significant chapter in the life of Weston Hospicecare was the legacy from the Jackson Barstow estate which provided the funds to buy Jackson Barstow House, formerly Russell House, in Uphill. The legacy covered the necessary alterations and the rebuild.

The Jackson Barstow family had attended Christ Church and when the elderly ladies moved out to Christon members used to go out each Christmas to sing carols. In that spirit of goodwill the legacy from the ladies, has ensured the growth and development of Weston Hospicecare now and into the foreseeable future.

Weston Hospicecare is indebted to the vision, hard work and devotion which Mary Armstrong has contributed to the movement since its outset. Mary provided much of the information for the above history of Weston Hospicecare for which we record our gratitude.



Joan Staines



Mary Armstrong

A PERSONAL REFLECTION

REV GEOFF HOBDEN

Since coming to worship at Christ Church in 1968 with my brand new wife Hazel, the Lord has seen fit to involve us with its life over the years, even though we had moved on with my secular career. Our involvement with all three major parish missions is, to say the least, unusual, and had happened at three different phases of our lives i.e. as parishioners (1970 Major Batt), as theological student (1980 Trinity College), and finally as Vicar (1990 Lee Abbey). Our return to Weston, when invited, was certainly not sought for, and is nothing short of God's intervention that resulted in my appointment here. We continue to serve with the strength God gives, seeking to preach and live by the Gospel in a world which has changed so considerably from the time Christ Church was founded. When this church was proposed in 1853, the then Archdeacon wrote of the benefits "of a place of worship in which hallowed services will be performed, and the pure truths of the Word of God faithfully proclaimed".



As we have reminisced through the pages, of people, places, events, I hope and pray that the overriding impression will be of a church which has been true to the original aspiration. It has been a place where many have found Christ through its evangelical fervour to remain true to Scripture in every aspect of its ministry. Many things have changed, but the relevance and authority of the Bible is the same, and continues to be reflected in its services and in the faithful proclamation of the Word of God. When it comes to the Bicentennial in 2055, when none but the youngest of us will be around, my prayer is that that will still be the emphasis, the Gospel of God's love revealed in His Son, Jesus Christ.

NOTES

1. 'early decorated style' - when the Victorians built their new parish churches they looked back to the Gothic styles of architecture of the medieval period, regarding this as the high point of English architecture. After the Norman or Romanesque period of architecture (1060 - 1190) (characterised by semi-circular arches and heavy, massive round pillars), the 'pointed' Gothic architecture appeared, first the early English style (1190-1270) which was usually loftier than the Norman and had pointed, lancet windows and slender columns. Broach spires became a feature - spires without surrounding parapets. Then came the Decorated style (1270-1370) the windows having Geometric or Flowing tracery, the vaulting more elaborately carved, and more ornate ball-flower ornament adorning the church. Christ Church, therefore, being 'early decorated' is transitional in style. The tower and broach spire seem Early English in form but the main body of the church is in the Decorated style, particularly the fine east window.

2. 'diaper work' - a floral or decorative pattern in low relief in architecture - often a square or diamond pattern.

3. 'Evangelical tradition' - the Evangelical revival of the mid-nineteenth Century was a necessary reaction to the Tractarian or Oxford Movement, a High Church form of Anglicanism that adopted the Ritualistic tendencies of Catholicism. Many disenchanted Anglican worshippers turned to Nonconformity, and the Evangelical movement within the Church of England sought to offer an alternative, as well as having the intention of evangelising the unsaved masses.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This update of the history of Christ Church could not have been achieved without the help and co-operation of past and present leaders and members of the Church.

I am grateful for the assistance (and memories and recollections) of the two previous vicars, the Rev. Peter Searle and the Rev. George Williams, and to Mary Armstrong, Cynthia Brown, Bruce Dale, Joan Dudt, Mike Hurst, John Lawrence, Felicity Mussell, Andy Page and Andrew Williams.

This work could not have been completed without the help of the editorial team comprising Geoff and Hazel Hobden, Christine Cole, Jane Milsom, Shirley West and Sandra Wilkes, and also Gordon Waddington who created the cartoons. Our grateful thanks also go to Rosie and Howard Smith for the kind use of illustrations from their book 'Weston-super-Mare in Water-colours' on pages 14, 21 and 33.

Finally, fifty years on, we would like to offer a belated 'thank you' to the work of Canon Keith Weston who wrote the Centenary Booklet from which much information was gleaned for the introductory chapter of this history.

LAURENCE PRICE