

As We Are Now

St Alban's Church 1956 - 2006



Contents

Foreword	The Editors	2
Pastoral Plan	Trish Hurd	6
Welcome	Pat Orrell	9
Children's Liturgy	Peter Batley	11
Baptism Preparation	Clare Beech	14
First Communion	Anne Kearney	16
Our Story	Tom, Derek and Loreta, Jane and Emilio	18
Young People	Sally Parlato	29
Confirmation	Tim Brown, Sophie Grey	31
Oakwood Covenant	Sandra Endsor	35
Homeless Forum	Robert Fairbrother	40
As We Are Now	Fr Gerry Murphy	43
Acknowledgements		47

Foreword

The Editors

Welcome. This publication has been produced to mark 50 years of parish life at St Alban's Church and the Church on Oakwood. At the time of our Silver Jubilee a booklet was produced that described how the church came to be built in the 1950s and how the parish developed in the early years. Here we focus on the people of the parish. We present articles about the ways in which we are continuing to build our church community alongside more personal stories from people who have made St Alban's their home over the years.

The design of this publication reflects St Alban's Parish Pastoral Plan. In the first article Trish Hurd introduces the Pastoral Plan and explains how it came to be written. The articles that follow introduce the specific ways in which we, the parish, are putting our plan into action. From a quick look at the contents page you'll see that we have included contributions covering many aspects of parish life. We were constrained here by time and space and so haven't been able to cover everything that is going on in the parish but hopefully what you see here will encourage you to find out more.

One of the aims of the Pastoral Plan is to organise better channels of communication within the parish and wider community. In addition to this publication the Parish Council have commissioned a website that will provide information about the parish in Chaddesden and Oakwood. A version of this publication will be available on our website along with that produced to mark the Silver Jubilee in 1981.

It is interesting to note the similarities between our plan and the ways in which the community worked together in the early years at Roe Farm Lane. The Pastoral Plan is designed to prepare us for a situation where there is no resident priest at St Alban's and Oakwood, as was the situation before 1955. In the 1940s and 50s a committee of local residents was formed to plan for the future and organise fund raising activities with a view to establishing a church in Chaddesden. Mr Len Lewis was Chairman and Mrs Margaret Walmsley, Secretary of this original committee. The community of the time worked together to establish a mass centre, 'The Hut' on Roe Farm Lane, served from St Mary's Church. When St Alban's Church

opened, families donated money for altar cloths, a crucifix, candlesticks, altar bells, statues etc. More importantly, though a happy, homely community had been formed, and many friendships made. Jean Harvey points out the irony that when the first parish priest was appointed the committee was disbanded, as it was thought to be no longer needed.

In many ways the world is a very different place from that of 50 years ago. The current parish priest, Fr Gerry Murphy, writes here of his gratitude for the work of the Parish Council, who like their predecessors on the committee organise much of the work of the parish. In his article Fr Gerry writes about the not-altogether-easy experience of reordering the church building, completed in 2006. He writes "*it was not just a question of bricks and mortar but of their faith and hard work over many years being re-shaped*".

In the early years men and women joined separate groups like the Knights of St Columba and the Union of Catholic Mothers. These groups were active in social

care and fundraising with the members faithfully serving the needs of the parish over many years. The U.C.M. was formed in 1951 with Mrs Lewis as president. The group at first met in members' homes then later in The Hut. They organised retreats, outings and coffee mornings as well as giving help to new mothers. This was one of the main aims of the U.C.M. and it addressed a real need as Social Services had not yet been established.

St Alban's has changed along with the world at large and it is important that we seek to address the needs of today. The new Parish Centre is primarily a social space - initially used by many of the groups who will use the Healthy Living Centre, our new neighbour on Roe Farm Lane. Today men and women take more equal shares in childcare and today's Church seeks to support the family in initiatives like the Children's Liturgy. Preparation for sacraments of Baptism and First Communion now involve the whole family. Anne Kearney writes "*the sacraments are made as a family with the emphasis on the child.*"

Provision for young people was hardly considered in the early days of the parish. Most children went to school until they were fourteen years old when they left and went to work and so joined in adult events. Teenagers, as a separate group, didn't exist until the late 1950s. Until then, St Alban's young people went to the club in The Hut, talked and sat together and, as Walter Stone remembers, Fr Feeney bought them 'pop'.

In the 1950s and 60s the Girl Guides used to meet in The Hut, led by Joan Prince and later Teresa Turner. St Alban's Scout Troop was started and led by Ken Barker and Gordon Smith with Martin Murphy looking after the Cubs.

In the 1970s the Knights of St Columba started to lend a hand and things became more organised. Neil Richardson, Brian Hemsworth and Steve Beech, who became the Knights' Provincial Youth Officer, were among those helping.

Today's Youth Group, led by Sally and Jim Parlato, Mary Rigby, Jo Orrell and Jane Webster Sanches, provides a social space for teenagers, introduces issues of social

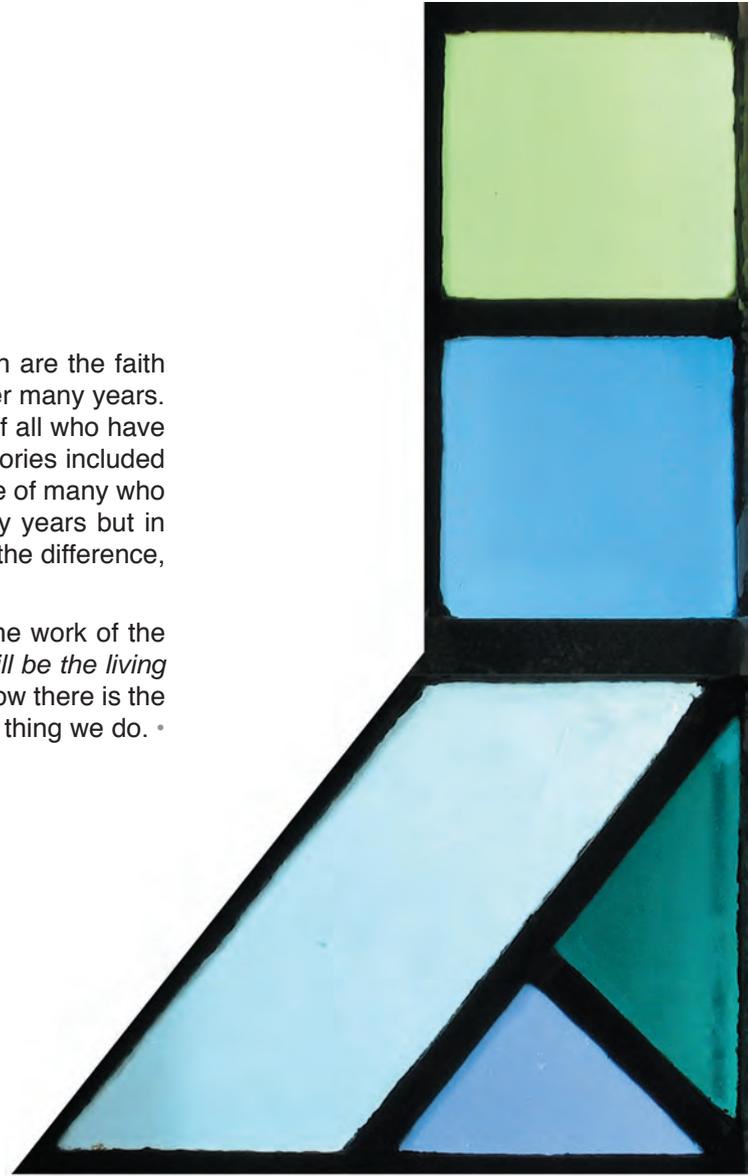
justice and encourages our young people to deepen their faith through praying together and preparing liturgies. The Youth Group and Confirmation programme both aim to give our young people a positive experience of faith and encourages them to see that their contribution is valuable.

The Church on Oakwood, commissioned in 1993, is an ecumenical church within our parish of St Alban's. As a joint project between the Anglican, Methodist, United Reformed and Catholic traditions, The Church on Oakwood is helping to make real our aim to develop relationships with and understanding of other Christians. Sandra Endsor's article gives an insight into the Oakwood Covenant. This, in a similar way to the St Alban's Pastoral Plan, outlines the specific aims of the community at Oakwood.

As well as reaching out to Christians and people of other faiths, the Pastoral Plan encourages us to find ways to reach out to our neighbours in Derby. As Christians we are called to try to meet the needs of our neighbours. Robert Fairbrother writes about the contribution that a group of our parishioners make to Derby Homeless Forum.

At the heart of the parish and so at the centre of this publication are the faith stories of parishioners who have made St Alban's their home over many years. In a publication of this size it is impossible to record the stories of all who have worshipped and contributed to the life of the parish. The three stories included here, Tom, Derek and Loreta, Jane and Emilio, are representative of many who have made St Alban's their home. The stories span almost forty years but in each case it was a personal word or act of hospitality that made the difference, making people feel a real part of the community.

Pat Orrell introduces one of the main themes in her article on the work of the Welcome group. She writes. "*Hopefully we, the congregation, will be the living sign of God's love and welcome*". In many of the articles that follow there is the suggestion that making welcome is, perhaps, the most important thing we do. •



Pastoral Plan

Trish Hurd

The hardest part was getting started. An open invitation was given to all parishioners to attend a meeting run by our fellow parishioner, Paula Bailey, who works for the diocese. She outlined how to get started with a parish pastoral plan, gave us some tools to help with the planning and we had a go at that initial meeting.

Another meeting followed with lots of notice given to enable as many people as possible to attend and we did get some different people. At this second meeting we got into groups according to where we saw our interests to be and started to audit both the current position of the parish and our hopes for the future. Remember that at this time we were not worshipping in St Alban's. The church alterations were taking place with part of it being knocked down and there was a lot of uncertainty, so our future hopes were really important.

We started by trying to compose a vision for the parish; we wrestled with this. I say wrestle because we really did struggle. There were so many different people, all with their own ideas and it was important that those ideas were heard.

We got into smaller groups and each of the small groups came up with their own mission statement. In the large group we then examined each statement, sharing ideas. It was quite exciting to hear everybody's hopes for the future of the parish. As you can imagine we had many varied ideas but when we looked closely the ideas and hopes for the future were quite similar, just worded differently. Andrew Goff and I took all of these ideas away and merged them into a mission statement that we then presented at our next parish meeting.

That's what we did but needless to say, the mission statement that we brought back to the large meeting was completely changed yet again. It's amazing how different people have different perceptions of words but it was important to get the right words that expressed our vision in the best way. Here are the words that we agreed.

“We the people of St Alban’s worshipping in Chaddesden and Oakwood strive to answer the call of Christ by fostering unity and celebrating diversity whilst reaching out to our neighbours in the spirit of love.”

This is our vision for the parish and the Pastoral Plan focuses on the ways in which we hope to realise this vision. We seek to achieve our mission statement by...

*becoming a **welcoming** parish that promotes a sense of belonging and has effective lines of communication;*

*by exploring ways in which the whole community can be involved in **creating liturgy** that appeals to a wide variety of people;*

*by responding to the needs of the **sick, housebound and elderly** and valuing the contribution that they make to our parish;*

*by identifying effective ways of **listening to our young people** that will contribute to their formation and recognise their specific role in proclaiming the gospel;*

*by identifying teams responsible for parish **finance, buildings and social events** and by organising better channels of communication throughout the parish to ensure a wide distribution of information;*

*by enabling parishioners to search for truth, develop sound **understanding of our faith** and further our education on the teachings of the church;*

*by developing our relationships with other **Christians and people of other faiths**;*

*by investigating ways in which we can review, extend and deepen our **partnership with our neighbours**. •*



Welcome

Pat Orrell

“Hopefully we, the congregation, will be the living sign of God’s love and welcome”.

I have been a parishioner of St. Alban’s for 41 years and during this time I have seen many families and young people moving in and out of the parish. In earlier years, with a packed church it was not easy to get to know people on a personal level or even notice if there were new faces at Mass. Now with reduced numbers and since the reordering of the church, we are far more aware of the people attending Mass; visitors, single people and families coming from many places, to live and work in the area. We are also aware of people returning to church who may not have attended Mass for many years.

In 2005, St. Alban’s developed a Parish Pastoral Plan, setting out how we planned to develop and build our community. Each parishioner was invited to tick a box indicating where we felt most able to help. I ticked the Welcome group as I have always had a strong belief that each individual in the Parish should feel they are included and valued, whether they can attend Mass regularly or not, particularly our sick, elderly and housebound.

Since October 2006 a small group have met regularly to consider how we welcome people at Oakwood and St. Alban's. We began by setting up a rota of 'Welcomers' to greet people and talk to people moving into the parish about facilities we can offer, both at church and St. Alban's School. Three families recently said they were not aware we had a Catholic School, Nursery and a Parent and Toddler Group. Now we try to advertise all the good aspects of the school on a notice board in the entrance of the church.

There is a need to reach out to several different groups of people: people who are returning, people who have separated, people who have struggled. Our group are looking at various training programmes available which help explore the issues around returning to church.

We have had single people and families coming into the parish who are asylum seekers, migrant workers, or who have left their country of origin behind. For those of us who have grown up in the area it is hard to imagine leaving your homeland and the people you love to travel to a new country to be safe or for employment. By offering people a warm welcome we hope they will feel part of our community and take up the invitation to play an active part in parish life.

The colourful Welcome banner, that was designed and made by Jo Batley, is the first visual sign of welcome as visitors come through our door.

Hopefully we, the congregation, will be the living sign of God's love and welcome at St. Alban's Church and the Church on Oakwood. *

Children's Liturgy

Peter Batley

“Some of the activities ... did get us into a little trouble with parents sometimes, but they soon learnt not to dress their children in their ‘Sunday Best’!”

It was 1988. My wife Jo and I were bringing three young children to church at the time when a small group of us met in the presbytery to discuss what we could do on a Sunday morning to enhance the children's experience of Mass. We were hoping also to make things easier for Mums and Dads to enjoy a less frantic Liturgy of the Word on their own!

In September of that year, St Alban's Children's Liturgy of the Word Group became a tentative reality. Why tentative? Well this was a completely new venture and none of the helpers had done anything like it before. Lots of questions and doubts filled our heads: Would we be successful? What on earth would we do? Would parents support it? Would children like it?

We began our children's liturgies at the Sunday morning Mass. The children were split into two groups; those of primary school age (5 -11) and those, whose attention presents more of a challenge, under 5. With Children's Liturgy it is important that there is regular form and structure.

Our Children's Liturgy needed to contain a structure that mirrored The Liturgy of The Word celebrated in the Mass where the Gospel is read and forms the central focus. We made it interesting for the children with lots of different activities from colouring in a picture of the Gospel story to things like: Finger and foot painting; Planting seeds; Making gardens; Making masks; Acting out the gospel. Some of the activities (like the foot printing) did get us into a little trouble with parents sometimes, but they soon learnt not to dress their children in their 'Sunday Best'!

All this takes much effort in planning and even more effort in coming up with ideas. As well as the church documents offering advice, we found lots of helpful books written by lay people who had been running their own Children's Liturgy for many years before us. A number of the helpers have attended one or two day courses on preparation and running of children's liturgies. The group still has lots of these resources available to it, but constantly looks for new resources and ideas. Do you have any? Don't be shy, share them!

As we got more relaxed and better at what we were doing, numbers grew. It was great to see that after a few years we had up to a hundred children playing a part in their own liturgy on a Sunday morning. The liturgy is now prepared and run by four groups of helpers, numbering around twenty in total, and the pleasing thing is that many

of the children who came to the Children's Liturgy when at primary school, stay on or return to become valued members of the team running it.

The Children's Liturgy gives children more of an active participation in the Liturgy of the Word while parents enjoy a peaceful and reflective Liturgy of the Word at mass. It has also helped to create a richness within the parish community. The Children's Liturgy has become a place for new parents in the parish to make friends and for non-Catholics to bring their Catholic children and so begin to appreciate the Mass in a more relaxed way. It has become a way back in to church for many lapsed Catholics, who bring their own family.

Many thanks to all the helpers past and present, who have given and continue to give so much to keep this valuable opportunity alive. •



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Baptism Preparation

Clare Beech

September 1985. I was pregnant with our fourth child. Steve, my husband, and I were asked if we'd like to go to a course on Baptism that was being run at Highfields Adult Education Centre by Sister Ellen McGrath and Fr Ken O'Riordan. Prior to this, our understanding had been that Baptism was all about 'Original Sin' and 'Limbo' but the course emphasised, and helped us to recognise, the importance of the community into which a child is baptised.

Some years later when I was helping in the preparation of children for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion, it was evident that there were a number of children each year who, for many reasons, had not been baptised as babies. In my work, at St. Alban's School Nursery, I was also becoming aware of children with Catholic parents as well as some not baptised in the Catholic tradition, who wanted to become more involved in the community. They related stories of their children at home lining up their teddies, attempting to

make the sign of the cross and then singing the Nursery Prayer to them. These seemingly insignificant episodes made a strong impact on some parents and they began to ask about the Church. This is when I was struck again by the importance of a welcoming community.

We were given the opportunity to invite these families to Church where we met them and introduced them to our wonderful Children's Liturgy group. The people at the Children's Liturgy welcomed the whole family and instantly involved them as they listened to the scripture stories and worked together on a task related to the message in the days readings. These events led to groups of families requesting Baptism for their older children. I am happy to say that this is now a regular feature of St Alban's parish life - quite a change from 50 years ago when the church was first built.

The families are invited to attend four sessions so that we can talk about the meaning of Baptism and the symbols used. The children can range from 3 years old to young

teenagers. I've had lots of fun growing seeds with the children when talking about the importance of water, or taking them behind the stage area in the old Parish Hall where it was very dark and quite scary before switching on a torch to demonstrate the importance of light. One child stands out in my memory: English was his second language and so, at the age of 4, his English was very basic. The aim of the session was to help him to understand the importance of water and link this to its use in the Sacrament of Baptism. I tried different ways to get through to him – words, gestures, drawings. Eventually I brought in a cup of water which he pushed back to me saying, 'No. Pop!'

I hope that in the years to come we will continue to be a welcoming parish where our young families can feel encouraged and supported so that we as a parish can benefit from their presence amongst us. •





For the last couple of years I have been the coordinator of the First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion programme. I suppose the most “controversial” decision I made, obviously with the support of Fr Gerry, was to take the instruction of the children out of School and into the hands of the Parish. The school is fully supportive of the programme that we have now where the parents have to be more involved with the preparation of their children. After all parents are their children’s first teachers.

The new approach is for the parents and children to work together with my team of wonderful catechists. This involves a lot of commitment as we begin the preparation early in the new year and continue through to May. We have found that this has lots of benefits. Most importantly that the parents are involved with the instruction of their children. The parents have quality time with their children where they spend half an hour solely with the child who is being prepared for these sacraments. The programme aims to support the parents and as they grow familiar with the team we encourage them to share their thoughts, fears and problems with us. There is also a social side as parents meet together and friendships are formed.

First Communion

Anne Kearney

My own First Holy Communion was quite different from today. Our parents had no input except to get us dressed and to the church. All of the preparation was done at St Alban's School. We were marched down from school, on the Friday before we made our First Communion, to make our First Confession. It was quite a scary experience as none of us was really sure what was ahead of us.

Now at St Alban's First Reconciliation and Holy Communion are very much family based. We try to get every family involved in one way or another in both liturgies. Both of the Sacraments are made as a family with the emphasis on the child. We involve the parish by inviting them to join us in praying for the children and by putting up displays in church. The school supports the programme by holding the sessions in school with teachers being involved as part of the catechist team. The Here I Am scheme that is followed reinforces the teaching of these sacraments and we have assemblies where we celebrate their experiences.

As a team we enjoy the sessions and we feel that it is working successfully. We review the programme each year making changes based on the parents comments. Every year we look for new volunteers to join our catechist team so if anybody reading this feels they would like to join us please do let us know. •

“First Reconciliation and Holy Communion are very much family based.”

Our Story

At the heart of the parish, and so at the centre of this publication, are the faith stories of parishioners who have made St Alban's their home over many years.

In a publication of this size it is impossible to record the stories of all who've worshipped and contributed to the life of the parish. We are indebted to Jean Harvey for the work she has done in interviewing and transcribing some of these stories. There are three stories included here. **Tom, Derek and Loreta, Jane and Emilio**, are all familiar faces in the parish but these accounts remind us that they were all, at one time or another, new faces needing to be made welcome.

The stories span almost forty years but in each case it was a personal word or act of hospitality that made the difference in making people feel a real part of the community.

*“I felt that this is my home now,
and the people of St Alban’s my
kind of people.”*

Carmel and I, like many before us, made our way to Derby in 1969. We settled in St Alban’s parish area due to the encouragement of relatives who were living in Carol Crescent at the time. We arrived in time for St Patrick’s Day Mass to find the church crowded with people of all nationalities, mostly wearing shamrocks, and joining enthusiastically in singing “Hail Glorious St Patrick“. As we had come from London shortly before we had no time to get the national emblem, but after Mass Dr Barry gladly shared a piece of his shamrock with us. Dr Barry and many of the community made us very welcome when they found we were newly arrived.

Tommy Byrne and Peter Regan signed us up fairly quickly as Social Club members. When we settled down and took stock of the area around us we found that the community we lived in was not very different from where we had left, except that there were plenty of jobs for anyone who wanted to work. As time passed we settled into a life centered around our home and St Alban’s where we were made welcome and became part of a very successful, worshipping church community.



In those years Canon McLean and his assistant priest ran the church with minimum levels of lay support, but as the influence of Vatican II permeated down to the local level, lay people began to take a more active role in their church as Readers and Eucharistic Ministers and Catechists. I can remember the stir that accompanied the appointment of the first Eucharistic Ministers and the fact that two of them were ladies. Many of the community found this development a revolutionary step having being brought up in churches where women were barred from entering the sanctuary.

In those early years we were regulars at church every Sunday and Holy Day but apart from serving on the altar for Benediction and joining the St Vincent De Paul Society no one, until Fr Michael O'Donoghue came as assistant priest, ever invited me to play a more active role in the parish. The perception was that because of the huge congregation you had to serve your time before you were given a greater role in the church community. Fr Michael cast the net wider and invited me to become a lay Reader, and afterwards more and more younger people became involved as Catechists helping with parish Confirmation Programme as well as Readers and Eucharistic Ministers.

As the years rolled by we shared highs and lows with the people of the parish. In the early years in Derby, Carmel and I would go to the Social Club one night each week and enjoy

the "craic". Geoff Skeritt would play the piano with songs sung by volunteers in those pre karaoke days. Tommy Byrne could on occasion be persuaded to get his fiddle out to liven up the evening with some traditional tunes.

We experienced some of the lows points of life when our first two children died at birth or shortly afterwards. Fr Younger and Fr Brownbill were great in supporting us through the nightmare, and helped us to survive and indeed grow stronger in the faith. We rejoiced together when William arrived safely in 1973.

When I was ordained to the Diaconate in 2001 the support from Parishioners was truly amazing. I felt overcome when, I and my family members, who came for the occasion from Ireland, were welcomed back to St Alban's on the first Sunday after ordination. This support was felt again during Carmel's long illness, and when we felt low, Fr Gerry and St Alban's people buoyed us up with their kindness and prayers. When Carmel died, I thought life would be unbearable in the old familiar surroundings, and my family in Ireland invited me to return there. When I thought about the kindness, and the support and help given by so many people in St Alban's, I felt that this is my home now, and the people of St Alban's my kind of people.

I hope that the people of the parish will continue to pray for me as, with God's help and your prayers, I hope to persevere to ordination to the priesthood. •

Derek Hay and Loreta Hay

Derek and Loreta came to live in Derby in 1974. Loreta attended St Alban's by herself as Derek was not yet a Catholic. At first, it was a lonely experience. People were talking in groups after Mass, but no-one spoke to her and she missed her friendly parish at home in South Africa. But Fr O'Donoghue was friendly and soon he organised an open parish meeting for people new to the parish. They were introduced to other young couples, including Walter and Winnie Stone, Andy and Eileen Jinks and Robert and Angela Fairbrother who became friends, and still are.

At this time, Derek was manager of a travel firm in Derby and came to know Sister Alphonsus of the Presentation Sisters from the Convent on Morley Road. Derek made the travel arrangements for the Sisters when they went to work in their Order's missions around the world and their visits to Canada. He mentioned to Sister Alphonsus that his wife Loreta was a Catholic and she invited them to tea at the Convent. Presently, Derek told Sister Alphonsus that he needed to talk to her about the faith and this led to him coming into the church in 1975.





Meanwhile, the Presentation Sisters had become interested in the Charismatic Renewal Movement that was growing throughout the church, This movement placed emphasis on a personal experience of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Sprit in our lives. The Sisters started a prayer group in 1976 to which St Albans' parishioners were invited.

Mgr McClean also went, at first to ensure his parishioners were not going astray but he soon wholeheartedly became involved. Although Mgr McClean's encouragement was important, this was essentially a people-led movement in response to the Holy Spirit and a thirst for a more personal spirituality in their lives. The group grew and moved into St Alban's Hall to be more central to parish life. Speakers were invited for Renewal Days and Catholics and non-Catholics came to take part, with 70 to 100 people in the hall. Derek and Loreta became part of a core group, guiding prayer and instruction, at Life in the Spirit Seminars. They gave these seminars in parishes all over Derby and in Ilkeston and Nottingham encouraging many, in turn, to form their own prayer groups.

At one of the Renewal Days in Birmingham, Derek and Loreta heard about Marriage Encounter, this movement which originated in Spain aimed to be a source of enrichment for Christian couples in a stable relationship. Derek and Loreta decided to invite other couples from the parish to their home for an 'Information Evening' given by a couple from Leicester. As a result of this many couples in St Alban's and surrounding parishes took part in Marriage Encounter weekend retreats. This experience enabled the couples to grow in relationship with one another and in their faith. The effect and influence of these movements shows in the continued commitment and faith of people like Derek and Loreta. •

Charismatic Renewal

Walter Stone's experience was typical of many. He had heard about the prayer group but, although curious, he didn't go to the first meeting as someone had said to him "*Oh, it's not for you - they raise their arms and clap and pray out loud!*" But by the second week something made him go and he thoroughly enjoyed the experience. It was life-changing. Previously, he often sat in church with an empty feeling in the pit of his stomach, wondering "*What am I doing here?*" But his up-bringing prevented him from saying "*I'm not going anymore*". "*We just never questioned*", he says. After becoming part of the prayer group Walter puts it "*God came alive in my life*".

Jane Webster Sanches and Emilio Sanches Tavares

Jane and Emilio (Miliki) met in Portugal where Jane, a language specialist, was working and where Miliki was living after leaving his home country of Mozambique. In 2002, having moved back to Jane's home community of Chaddesen with their two young children Che and Lili, Miliki began searching for a church that he could feel a part of. Miliki had been brought up as a Catholic in Mozambique but had been going through what he called a 'rebellious phase'. Whilst living in places such as Morocco and Portugal, Miliki had become very open minded about his religion and so he visited non-Catholic churches in Derby but found that they were not quite what he was looking for.

Despite her local knowledge Jane was unable to help find a church, she knew few Catholics in Derby. The churches themselves looked closed and it certainly looked that way to Miliki who, in Mozambique, was used to churches with open doors where people could pop in to pray at any time. Eventually Miliki was given Fr Gerry's telephone number and this led him to come to St Alban's. The parishioners were friendly and welcoming, even if a bit

curious. When Fr Gerry said to him "*Welcome Home*". Miliki immediately felt that he had come back home, spiritually speaking, he realised he'd found his base and could grow. He says "*I felt like the Prodigal Son!*"

The couple hadn't known about St Alban's School and so their daughter Lili was attending Derwent Community School but now she joined the First Communion Programme. Emilio and Jane attended the parents' sessions together. Emilio knew the importance of a Catholic upbringing and wanted it for his children. Jane was a bit nervous at first - her image of Catholicism came mainly from Dave Allen's Comedy Show! She was amazed to find this image echoed by the other parent's recollections of their own Catholic childhoods. Happily for everyone involved the First Communion and Reconciliation programme presented a much more positive image of what it meant to be a Catholic.

Che, their little boy, was now attending St Alban's Nursery and Jane became involved as a helper there. On Sundays both children joined the Children's Liturgy Group





and their parents went with them. Jane says she felt very accepted and part of the community.

When, sadly, Mya their new baby died, the support that St Alban's community gave the family was tremendously important to them. Fr Gerry encouraged Jane and Miliki to make the service personally meaningful; African and English church culture joined in producing a moving service which had an openness and spirituality that many of those who had never been in a church appreciated. Later Jane felt she wanted to become even closer to the Catholic community and so she joined the RCIA enquiry group and was received into the church at Easter 2006 becoming the first member of the community to be so welcomed in the reordered church. •

A Friend to Newcomers

As a friend to many other newcomers, including people seeking asylum, Miliki is appreciative of how important St Alban's parish has been in looking after their welfare and offering them practical support. Asylum Seekers, who are Catholic, are able to find support in the continued presence of the church in their lives. Through the sacraments and the prayer of the mass the parish community provides a place for worship and drawing strength. Anita and Elvira, Barbara and many others who have come and gone have a sense of gratitude to Fr Gerry and the people of St Alban's.

Young People

Sally Parlato

“... putting something in place for our young people”

Jim, my husband and I went along to a meeting about the Parish Pastoral Plan. We were aware that the numbers of teenagers attending our church was very small and neither of us could see what our parish provided for young people. The meeting spurred us on to take action by putting something in place for our young people. At this point we had no idea what form this was going to take.

To kick off we invited those young people that we knew and saw at mass regularly to meet with Jane Webster Sanches, Jo Orrell, Mary Rigby and ourselves. This turned out to be a good session and the young people seemed keen to be part of 'St Alban's Youth'. Jane, Mary, Jo, Jim and I were inspired by them and we arranged our first session - a social event. This took place at the bowling alley followed by supper at McDonalds in order to help everyone get to know one another better (I find food always helps). Eighteen people came along.

When the church reopened in September 2005 Jo, Jim and I began meeting with the young people in the

Parish Centre once a fortnight. During the last 12 months we have had some really successful evenings. A few of the most memorable were: 'Fairtrade Football Evening' where we played human Subbuteo and made a video to raise awareness of unfair working conditions in the developing world; A treasure hunt where we all trooped around Chaddesden looking for obscure items (some of which I'm sure the other team removed before we got there, only joking it was all fair play) and a Bible reading interpretation acted out in Big Brother style, with voice-overs by Tim and Luke.

During the time we've spent together we have talked with the young people about the Mass and they expressed that they didn't enjoy it and found it difficult to relate it to their own lives. With the support of Fr Gerry Jane, Mary and I offered to provide a Youth Liturgy once a month where we could look at the readings of the day and discuss how they relate to our lives today. We had our taster session in July 2006 and since then have been meeting monthly. Writing this has made me more aware of how far we have come but all of us feel we still have a long way to go and are looking forward to the challenges ahead. Please pray for us. *

Confirmation

Sally Parlato

“The programme was really lively and involved everybody in the group.”

At the end of 2005 a number of our youth leaders got together with Fr Gerry and Angela Gillespie, the Derby Deanery Youth Worker, to invite our young people at school in Year 10 and above to take part in a Confirmation Programme. Eighteen young people responded and we began our sessions in January 2006. Sophie Grey, Tim Brown and Rachel Charles went to the Briars for a Peer Ministry training weekend. They then worked alongside Jim, Mary, Jane and myself, helping to support and guide the candidates as they prepared for their Confirmation. Tim and Sophie write here about their experience.

Tim Brown

I'm Tim and I was one of the three Peer Ministers in the 2006 Confirmation Programme. I really enjoyed being a Peer Minister, I have learnt a lot from the candidates and it has been a really fulfilling experience. A Peer Minister is a young helper to the Catechists. There were three groups with one Catechist and one Peer Minister per group. We had to get the groups involved in games and start conversations on the subjects that we had been given to talk about.

I cannot remember my confirmation very well because I was only 10 years old - so I can't compare it very well. I feel that it was appropriate to choose an older age group as they were able to process the information better and therefore it was their own choice to make their confirmation.

We all had a very enjoyable weekend at the Briars, myself and Sophie actually had two weekends, which I thought was the highlight of the program. Everyone was very relaxed and at ease. I believe that it was very successful and well organised and I had a lot of fun helping out and learned things for myself while doing it.

Sophie Grey

When I spent a weekend at The Briars in December 2005, I could only imagine how the Confirmation Programme would come together. I was worried that only a few candidates would come forward to be confirmed or that nobody would turn up at all, but after weeks of anxiously waiting, unlike I had imagined the candidates were eager to start.

Each week we met in the Parish Centre and discussed different aspects of Confirmation, from learning the Fruits of the Spirit to learning how to be a good Catholic. The programme was really lively and involved everybody in the group. The programme allowed each individual to talk about what Confirmation means to them, whereas when I made my Confirmation the group was so big and varied in age groups that at times it didn't seem appropriate to ask questions. Over the six months that the programme ran the group became really good friends and our weekend at The Briars in May 2006 really showed how much the young people had changed - they were more eager and willing to learn.

I was really proud of the group of young people when they made their Confirmation. The Catechists and Peer Ministers have seen them grow more confident and on the night of the Confirmation service all of the young people were really positive and it was really touching as they all received the sacrament. •





Oakwood Covenant

Sandra Endsor

“...the people of the church and its leaders promised to commit to Christ and to work towards a better understanding of each other’s faith.”

The Church on Oakwood is an ecumenical church within our parish of St Alban’s shared by Anglican, Methodist, United Reformed and Catholic traditions. The church was first commissioned in 1993 to serve the huge new housing development at Oakwood. In the Oakwood Covenant, written at that time, the people of the church and its leaders promised to commit to Christ and to work towards a better understanding of each other’s faith. It pledged us to pray and work together to be witnesses to the people of Oakwood of the “*saving power of Christ*”. Unfortunately this valuable document was not brought to the people of the church but signed only by the hierarchy and placed in the church safe.

The original covenant was only discovered during preparations for the 10th anniversary of the church. A representative group of parishioners had already begun work on producing a covenant, one that would come alive in the hearts and minds of our present day congregations. We decided that it should be written in everyday language, which could be understood by all, and it would be presented to our joint congregation at

our anniversary celebration. Although formal in tone the original covenant gave us a good base on which to build.

So, what did we want as a new covenant? Our first task was to define the areas we wanted to cover. These were: Learning, Worship, Prayer, Social, Practical, Witness. In effect this was our pastoral plan for the ecumenical future of the Church on Oakwood.

Learning: This covers learning about our fellow Christians and their faith and learning about ourselves in the process. We have come together to listen to speakers from different denominations and different World faiths and we have discussed openly, and at times passionately, our thoughts, fears and hopes for the future. We have explored the Holy Scriptures during Advent and Lent, this again has led to much debate and a little more understanding of our different attitudes.

For **Worship** and **Prayer** we meet as an ecumenical congregation for Christian Unity Week, Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, Pentecost and Christmas Carols. All these services are planned by members of our joint congregations, and we also arrange different opportunities for praying together, such as the one organised in the autumn, when we met to experience three different types of prayer – the Quaker Way, the Jesus Prayer and the Ignation Way. All these sessions were led by invited guests who explained the basis of the method of prayer and then helped us to participate. As Catholics we have

“So, what did we want as a new covenant?”



also invited our fellow Christians to join us at Mass on various occasions, as a way of trying to teach others about our love of the Mass and why it is so important to us.

The **Social** side is developing a little more slowly. However we do have an annual Harvest Festival Bash, which is planned jointly. We also come together after our Ash Wednesday service for a frugal supper of soup and bread. More often than not we finish our joint services with coffee and biscuits, in an effort to get to know each other that bit better.

The **Practical** element has two quite distinct branches: looking after the fabric of the building and looking after the well-being of the people. The church building is managed by our property committee. This is a joint effort that covers maintenance, cleaning, gardening, in fact, whatever is needed. Our fellow Christians together with our own Eucharistic Ministers visit the sick and housebound of our parish. We have a youth group that is open to any young person wishing to join. We have volunteers who run a monthly lunch club and a regular coffee morning at the

church, which attracts not only parishioners but also weary shoppers from the precinct nearby.

Which leads us neatly onto the final section **Witness**. This is a difficult one, as it means different things to different people. Some, like the Methodists for example, are much more hands-on and regularly meet for house groups and private bible study. To others it is just a case of making witness to our faith by our way of living and dealing with those around us.

We worked hard in producing and making known the Oakwood Covenant, and when we presented it to the congregation at our anniversary service most were happy to sign the book, committing themselves to living it out - which is what we have been trying to do ever since. To ensure that we don't get too complacent we have also agreed to review its progress every five years. Our opening declaration sums up everything that the Oakwood Covenant represents. •

“We believe that God is One and that there is One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism and that He calls us to be One in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that Jesus Christ revealed to us, on the cross and through His Resurrection, God’s love and the mystery of reconciliation.

We believe that the unity of Christ’s followers is both a gift to be enjoyed and a task to be pursued.

We covenant together to serve our Lord, our church and our area, with the intention of making visible the unity of Christ’s people in Oakwood.”

Derby Homeless Forum

Robert Fairbrother

In July 2005 Robert Fairbrother, volunteer coordinator for the Derby Homeless Forum, came to talk about a new project called Saturday Night FreeB. Whilst the project needed funds, he spoke of the more urgent need of a team of volunteers who would commit to providing a cooked meal for people who were homeless in Derby.

Angela Fairbrother offered to coordinate the team and was quickly joined by Clare Beech, Walter and Winifred Stone, Derek and Loreta Hay, Paula Bailey, Trish Hurd and Max Butcher, who later volunteered to be treasurer of Derby Homeless Forum.

The St. Alban's team, Team 3, say about themselves: *"Basically we all muck in together with the buying, cooking, washing up, serving, clearing up and socializing with people in Derby who are homeless. We do this once a month on Saturday evening and it takes about three hours of our time 6-9pm, plus preparation time".*

Whilst reflecting on the first year of the project we talked to one of the people we cook for and he spoke of the effects of what we do, we decided to let his words speak for us.

"You do a very good job which is much appreciated by all (the 'customers') of us. We look forward to the Saturday evenings not only because of the food that is provided - excellent not only in quality but also the quantity. Over the weeks and months a very pleasant and homely atmosphere has developed with a trusting and caring understanding going both ways. For some of us who are 'on the edge' and have issues to cope with, a friendly, caring person offering a cheering hot drink and a compassionate ear means an awful lot. So thank you all very much from the needy and not the greedy."

Several parishioners contribute to FreeB financially, through a regular standing order payment and others have given donations. The team feel supported in this and recognise that whilst not everyone is able, or wants

to be directly involved, helping provide financial security makes the project sustainable.

Over the Christmas period several parishioners helped put together parcels of toiletries and clothing which were distributed to people who were homeless.

There are open meetings held for all those involved in the project and anyone is free to come along and learn more about the work of Derby Homeless Forum. Please talk to any of us if you would like to know more or get involved in FreeB in any way. •

“...whilst not everyone is able, or wants to be directly involved, helping provide financial security makes the project sustainable.”



As We Are Now

Fr Gerry Murphy

“Would it be a question of changing buildings and not people?”

“I never thought the church would look half as good as it does”, one parishioner said as she came out of church after the first Sunday back, on August 21, 2005. She continued...“to think that I never really believed what you had promised us about it.”

Over the past year most parishioners have made friends with our new buildings and grown fond of them. Like the couple in the gospel we’ve forgotten the pains of birth and are delighting in the new child we’ve brought into the world.

I never realised what a painful experience I was coming into when I came to St. Alban’s in October 2000. The Bishop had told me to demolish the extension (only built in 1964) and I innocently imagined it was just a matter of bricks and mortar. It felt to me as though the extension was weighing very heavily on us and I wondered whether the parish was willing to let go of it in order to be reborn fifty years on.

I realised that our unused land was a buried treasure that might rescue us but who would want an acre of land

on Roe Farm Lane? We went fishing... I remember meeting so many representatives from Housing Associations, Social Services, Derby City Council and so on, I wondered if we would ever get a buyer. Eventually Derwent Delivers expressed a firm interest and then I realised we needed to change much more than the Church extension. I remember asking the Architect if it was possible to convert the old Social Club into a presbytery, "*Completely unsuitable*" was the response. "*What about upgrading the Church Hall?*" I then asked. "*Cheaper to knock it down and build another.*" He replied. "*What have I got myself into?*" I wondered.

The 'stickability' of most parishioners got me through it all. We partitioned off the extension for two years and people generally got a notion that change wasn't just necessary but even desirable. We took two coaches of people to Grimsby to see St Pius X church and people began to see the possibilities. I remember being very touched by one elderly parishioner who told me "*I may not like the experiment with the partition and the shape of the church but I will always be faithful to St Alban's*". That kept me going! I had faith that if people hung in with the process they would like the end result.

Another very important support system for me has been the Parish Council. I've worked with two groups of fourteen parishioners now and want to thank them for daring to believe that St. Alban's could be reborn. They made me realise the personal pain of change. They helped me to

"Would people sense a rebirth of their own faith and of their willingness to serve both the parish and our neighbour?"



see that it wasn't just a question of bricks and mortar but of their faith and hard work over many years being re-shaped. I became aware that so many of their children and grandchildren rarely came to church but they had the willingness to hope about the young people of the present and the future. Could we hand on something worthwhile and believable to them?

I was intrigued to see how the new buildings would influence our parish commitment. Would it be a question of changing buildings and not people? Would people sense a rebirth of their own faith and of their willingness to serve both the parish and our neighbour? Would they think that the work was all over, rather than just beginning, when we came back to our re-ordered church in August 2005?

The experience of celebrating mass at St Alban's School for a year did us a lot of good. People pulled together! We gave thanks for one another in new ways. We all realised it was up to each one of us and not just the Parish Priest or Parish Council. God's presence and support seemed to nourish us more intimately during that year when we were more obviously a 'pilgrim people'.

The diocese has been taking important initiatives over the past few years that have really influenced and inspired us. It made us realise that all parish communities were facing painful challenges. The picture of change is there in the gospels – *"stepping out of the boat"*; *"walking on the water"*;

"dying to the old ways and being reborn to newness" – this helped us see our situation from a new perspective. Twelve of our parishioners attended a two-year Diocesan course on "Sharing Faith Today". Six parishioners took part in the Diocesan Assembly in 2003 at Loughborough. These weren't one-off events for the few but involved preparation and follow up by a larger group of parishioners. The Diocese encouraged us to launch our Parish Plan in June 2005.

It is our challenge to think about and plan for a church where the participation of lay people is the norm and where every parish does not have a residential priest. People were invited to sign up, to help deliver our Parish Plan. They responded generously. I have the sense there is generally a greater openness and willingness to be involved, whatever the issue. Previously we only had one team of church cleaners – now we have abundance! The Welcome group, the Youth group and the Social group have been particularly lively in this first year. We have new neighbours too with The Healthy Living Centre that opened in March 2007. We have new opportunities to renew our faith community and test our resolve to both share with and learn from others. •

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all who have helped with this publication:

Trish Hurd, Pat Orrell, Peter Batley, Clare Beech, Anne Kearney, Tom Breslin, Derek Hay, Loreta Hay, Jane Webster Sanches, Emilio Sanches Tavares, Sally Parlato, Tim Brown, Sophie Grey, Sandra Endsor, Robert Fairbrother, Cecilia Lewis, Joan Eastwood, Margaret Barry, Kathleen Leech, Walter Stone, Winnie Stone, Tommy Byrne, Audrey White, Dorothy Smith, Steve Beech, Brian Hemsworth, Jim Parlato, Simon Baldwin, Mark Booton and anyone that we may have missed.

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