

INTRODUCTION

This is a story of visions, hopes, a lot of hard work and eventual fulfilment; of the generosity of a lot of people who made the transformation from a wooden building to a beautiful Church possible. Of the many incidents that occurred over the many years that passed in the meanwhile. I am sure that without the help of Mrs. Mary Boote in painstakingly reading, editing, and giving suggestions to make this article more interesting, I would never have had the nerve to put my story into print.

I must, however, include my wife, Eva, who has shared a lot of my experience (and created a lot of her own), joining St. Cadoc's before I did, long before the name "St. Peter's" was even thought of; she is still in (1988), an active member of the Church.

I therefore have no hesitation in dedicating these notes to both of them with the hope that they will be able for many more years to share the fellowship of our lovely Church.

1. In the period before the Reformation, ecclesiastical control of all land was vested in the Abbeys and Monasteries; the area to the South and South-west of Birmingham was "tied" to the Abbey of Pershore whilst to the East and North-east it was the Abbey of Polesworth which held control.

After the dissolution of the Monasteries by Henry VIII the larger of the Parishes came into their own and Kings Norton was responsible for the South and South-west of Birmingham, and Yardley for North-east, East and South-east. Where the dividing line between the two lay is not now very clear but as a boy I well remember seeing a lamp post on the corner of Highgate Road and Stoney Lane bearing the Kings Norton Coat of Arms and wondering what that was doing in Birmingham.

However, the area we are now concerned with, i.e. Hall Green, Yardley Wood, Billesley, etc, came under the control of Yardley. With the urban spread of the rapidly growing town of Birmingham eating into the surrounding countryside parts of the parish of Yardley were continually being eroded to form new municipal parishes. This urban spread followed road and river valleys but it also led to the intensification of local farming and dairy industries to meet the needs of the new population, for they had to be fed. There was no local place of worship and, to meet this need, it was decided to build a church and create a new parish called Yardley Wood. This was to fill a vital need as all the neighbourhood churches were a long way off, Shirley, Kings Heath, Kings Norton, Moseley or the Marston Chapel in Hall Green (not a parish church until 1907), and the only transport was equestrian or horse drawn cart. Unlike the procedure in our own parish, Yardley Wood parish was created first (1847), and the church followed, being consecrated to Christ on 28th March 1849.

2. There is little in the history of Christ Church to interest us until more modern times. In the years after the First World War the "urban spread" was intensified; Birmingham had become a large and wealthy city and was highly industrialised. The workers had to be housed and a great amount of municipal building took place, particularly southward. Parallel with this, private building was developed particularly in the area between the River Cole and the Stratford Road and by the commencement of the Second World War there was practically no land left for the further development except for that bordering the river and known as The Dingles. There were, of course, the recreation or park areas of Swanshurst, Chinn Brook, and Trittiford but the rest of the land was built up.

The railway to Stratford-upon-Avon came in 1912 but this only tended to split up the areas East and West of the railway line even more than the different types of dwellings involved. There was another problem this being the lack of an Anglican Church in an area containing over 4,000 houses and a population of over 12,000.

3. The incumbent at Christ Church during this expansion period was the Reverend Isa Llewellyn Rees-Jones. He was very well aware of the religious problem affecting all these people for, although Christ Church was officially the Parish Church (the East-ward boundary of the Yardley Wood Parish being the Stratford Road), the percentage of the people actually attending was small. Over the years places of worship had been built by the Methodists, the Baptists, the Roman Catholics and even the Society of Friends, but none of these lay between the River Cole and the Stratford Road.

There were others who were aware of this problem one of them being Colonel John Ellis Purefoy Jervoise, owner of a considerable amount of the land now being built upon. On the corner of Webb Lane and Highfield Road there were a blacksmith's forge and some old cottages which would, ultimately, have to be pulled down and Col. Jervoise, in 1922, generously offered the site to the Rev. Rees-Jones on which to build a Chapel of Ease; this was, however, turned down on the grounds that it would be too noisy and too small. Meanwhile building was proceeding apace along Webb Lane, Highfield Road and Paradise Lane leaving, in the centre, a field entirely surrounded by houses but with access to both of the two latter roads. Fortunately Col. Jervoise again thought of Christ Church and its need for a local chapel and this time his offer of land was accepted. This was in 1923.

I have been unable to find out much about the acquisition of the Army Hut(s) that were obtained to form the chapel except that they (it) cost £80 and the building was licensed for worship on September 24th 1923. It was dedicated to St. Cadoc. There are very few churches which bear this name, mostly they are in Wales, and one of these is in Caerleon. The Rev. Rees-Jones came from Caerleon so the inference is obvious.

4. The fortunes of St. Cadoc's over the next 30 years were varied but willing helpers managed to keep services going particularly during the war when the Chapel Warden, Mr Edwin Paul, frequently took the Sunday Evening Service on his own and with only a handful of congregation.

When peace returned matters improved so much so that by 1952/3 the then Vicar, the Rev. David Paton (Rev. Rees-Jones had by then retired), felt that it was time some planning was done for the future. He discussed this with Bishop Leonard Wilson, who was just starting his "Circles without Centres" campaign, the result being that a Curate was added on October 4th, 1953 to the Christ Church staff, his special duty being to investigate the possibility of a new parish being created with its own new church, presumably on the site of the existing Chapel of Ease; the Curate was the Rev. Joseph L.C. Adlam.

He first of all lodged at the Christ Church Vicarage and, to begin with, took his turn of duty with the other clergy there but quickly settled down to his "Raison d'etre" also moving his lodgings to 14 Morris Field Croft to be among the people he was to be mainly concerned with.

He received every encouragement from the Community he was to serve who became enthusiastic over the possibility of having their own parish and church. Within a very short time he was able to report back to David Paton that his dream could be turned into reality. Events then moved swiftly, meetings were held and the principle established; permission was given by the Diocese to go ahead and on the cover of the November 1953 issue of the Christ Church magazine a map was printed showing the proposed split-up. This was rather presumptuous but was an indication how fast matters were progressing.

An entry in my 1954 diary records that on February 14th a meeting after Evensong was held at St. Cadoc's to decide on a new name for the church. Three names were chosen after much debating, St. George, St. Michael and St. Peter, the latter being the favourite. These were passed to the Christ Church P.C.C. for their consideration and then to the Bishop. It was not long before we learnt that Bishop Wilson officially approved the name "St. Peter".

By March 1954 the Sub-Committee that had been set up in the previous year was confirmed as the Chapel Committee (later to become the St. Peter's Parochial Church Council), with its own Secretary and Treasurer. The April and subsequent combined Christ Church magazines also bore the name St. Peter (optimistically), but the records show that the Diocesan agreement was for the name to become official on St. Peter's Day, June 29th, 1954.

The St. Cadoc's building was drab, the interior decor was brown varnish which was dark with age, the stone pulpit and font were most unappealing, the robing rooms were mere cupboards on either side of the Sanctuary whilst the seating consisted of hard wooden chairs which were most uncomfortable. Where all of this had come from is not known so something had to be done about it. The new committee was soon hard at work; the font and the pulpit were thrown out and broken up, the robing cupboards removed, the porch, which was half way down the side of the church, was closed off and made into a "Priest's Vestry". To give a clearer picture, the St. Cadoc's building consisted of, probably, two ex W.D. huts cleverly joined together to make an L shaped structure. The long section of the L was the church and the smaller section was used as a hall. There were high folding doors which could be pulled either across the church - to make the hall larger - or across the hall to make the church larger - this was the most usual position. Two entrances were left after the closure of the porch, one at the back of the church and the other at the front of the hall. There were toilets and a kitchen in the hall on either side of the latter entrance.

The brain and working force behind the alterations was Mr Edwin Paul who was Maintenance Manager of Birmingham's largest store. The amount of material that his firm gave was phenomenal and it was quite a usual event to see a van bearing a famous name outside the church. He was ably backed by the men and ladies of St. Peter's who burnt off all the old varnish from walls and roof, then after sanding down, painted it all in white. The difference was amazing. There is an old photograph in existence which shows the ladies and men hard at work on top of ladders and scaffolding. Mr Paul had had a new wooden pulpit made also a small portable font.

Joseph Adlam, although still officially a Curate at Christ Church, was by now completely responsible for all the services at St. Peter's and matters looked well set for the Dedication Service. The organ did not have to be renovated as it was in very good condition; it was not a large instrument but was adequate for our purposes. The motor and fan which provided the wind was outside under cover from the elements and rarely gave any trouble. The organist when Joseph Adlam first came was a Mr Finch and his assistant from 1951 was a young lad of twelve years old named Michael David Roberts. The latter was appointed official organist at the age of 13 on September 13, 1952 and was destined to remain so for another 18 years.

To help further in the transformation the ladies in the Women's Fellowship had made a long backcloth for the Sanctuary and some Altar Cloths for the Altar table which was rather crude but very strong and quite adequate in spite of it looking as if it had been made from railway sleepers. Again a photograph is in existence which clearly shows the details.

At last the great day came. On November 7th 1954, before a very full congregation, Bishop Leonard Wilson dedicated the Church to St. Peter, Instituted the Reverend Joseph Adlam as Priest-in-Charge and licensed him to conduct marriages in the Church. The Bishop of Aston, Michael Parker, was also present and he took the Communion Service which followed. He also donated a Chalice and Paten which came from St. Anne's, Duddeston and a Ciborium which came from St. Stephen's, Newtown Row, both Churches having been bombed during the war.

Financially we had barely sufficient funds to pay our way but an attempt was to be made to remedy this by means of a street collection round the parish. Police permission had been given to erect two huts one near the Baldwin Public House and the other near Yardley Wood railway station.

It was like a flag day without flags and raised £289. This sum was added to by a welcome gift from the "Mother Church" and together they made a good start for the newly created Building Fund.

John Reeves was Treasurer at the time but he had just been appointed as our Lay Reader and had to give up the financial side. That was when I officially became an Officer of the Church (being appointed Hon. Treasurer on December 13th, 1954. - also a member of the P.C.C.), with a total of £610 in all funds of which nearly £300 was sacrosanct. It was clearly a case of "great trees from little acorns grow".

We now had all the responsibilities of running our own church firmly on our own shoulders. Our strength, however, lay in having Joseph Adlam as our priest ably backed by Vicar's Warden Edwin Paul and People's Warden Eric Ford and P.C.C. Secretary Ian Barrell, these latter three having had years of experience at Christ Church. The members of the P.C.C. were also very enthusiastic, many of them being Christ Church veterans. The choir, although being a bit thin at first grew in strength and ability under the able leadership of Choirmaster Frank Hunter.

I have gone to some length to show how the new Church came into being, how the old temporary building was adapted to the needs of the new regime and how the enthusiasm which had been generated was there to carry us through immaturity to the fine building which is now our heritage.

On reading my notes to see what I had left out one interesting fact emerges, the hall portion of the wooden building was used five days a week by a Mr & Mrs Richards as a preparatory school called Yarwood High School. We tried several times to peacefully get them to move and finally did so in July 1954. They moved to the top of Trittiford Road at first but finally took over a hut at the top of Smirrells Road.

Henceforth the whole story is about St. Peter's.

6. One of the official blessings of the Dedication was that St. Peter's Hall Green was made a "Conventional District" as from November 1st 1954, the first stage towards becoming a Parish in its own right. At the same time the Marston Chapel in School Road, Hall Green, which had been made a Parish Church in 1907, was now renamed "The Church of the Ascension" and the boundary between the two Hall Green parishes clearly defined. It was the Stratford Road from the Birmingham boundary to Cole Bank Road and down this latter road to the River Cole. From 1907 the other church had been known as "Hall Green Parish Church" and it took a long time for it to be accepted that Hall Green now had two Anglican Churches.

We also had a "Vicarage"; I have put the word in inverted commas as it was only a semi-detached house (no.10 Paradise Lane), but was the only vacant dwelling reasonably near the church. It had actually been bought by the Diocese in August 1954 but had to be completely renovated and re-decorated and was only completed about a week before the Dedication. Little did we know that it would have to serve us for over 14 years.

Life at the Church quickly settled down to what could be called normal. Services were held regularly and consisted of 8 a.m. Said Communion, 9 a.m. Sung Eucharist and 6.30 p.m. Evensong. Sunday School was at 3 p.m. and baptisms were on the first Sunday of the month at 4.15 p.m. This programme was followed for a considerable time.

We had inherited a "Free will offering Scheme" from Christ Church, in fact, those people whose allegiance had changed to St. Peter's kept to the same envelope numbers as they had held previously. Gordon Alford, another old stalwart whom we meet up with from time to time but who now lives on the other side of Birmingham, was Free Will Offering Secretary and the amounts given now look ridiculously small. There were under 30 in the scheme and the amount given in 1955 (my first year as Treasurer), was only £145; the cash collections for the same period were £303. There is no record of Covenants and Tax Refunds from those far off days.

The Sunday School was the most surprising side of our worship and teaching, attendances just soared and in quick time we had over 100 children attending. The problem was where to put them all and lessons were held in the kitchen, the cloak room and even the small entrance hall.

Our main task, however, was ultimately to have a new church but, to accomplish that, we needed money. Various ideas for Fund Raising were considered one of them being to get collecting boxes into homes; these boxes were in the form of a church and were obtainable from a firm in Norwich; more about these later.

Social events, with which we are still very familiar, were held and our first fete, held in a rough field at the back of the then church (on which our Parish Hall now stands), made a profit of £58.13.0. In the autumn of 1955 we held a Bazaar and were agreeably surprised to make a profit of £124.8.6. Both sums went into the Building Fund.

Attendances were about the same as they are now for, while communicants were fewer (about 60 all told), numbers at Evensong were anything from 80 to "capacity", 130. On rare occasions there would even be an overflow outside or into the hall. Christmas communicants for 1955 were 191 and for Easter 1956, 298.

In 1956 we were battling for both space and money. For space it was decided to buy a Nissen Hut specifically for the Sunday School and the Scout Group (which had just been started by Eric Marsden). Planning permission for this was initially turned down by the authorities but we appealed to the Minister of Town and Country Planning and he overruled the Corporation. This was eventually erected during the Summer and the Autumn, then painted by willing helpers led, as might be expected by Edwin Paul. 50 folding Ex-army chairs were purchased (cheaply), also especially small stacking chairs for the tiny tots.

To assist in the fund-raising a large number of the "Church" collecting boxes were purchased and the ladies; led by Mrs Eva Roberts worked hard to get these into as many homes as possible. Altogether, over the years, more than 1,500 of these were distributed and well over £5,000 was obtained by this means before the scheme was dropped.

The Chalice which had been given to us by the Bishop of Aston was now found to be too small for our increasing congregation (it is still our smallest Chalice and is now only used for midweek Communion Services), and a silversmith friend of Joseph Adlam, a Mr Harris, offered to enlarge the bowl for us using odd bits of silver given by parishioners.

We had to borrow a chalice for a week or two whilst this was being done but were glad we had had the work done as we found the enlargement a great improvement. It seems strange, being used to our present large Chalices, to recall how we managed in our formative years.

In 1956 our Summer Fete was held in the garden of Hildercroft, Mr & Mrs J H Fardon's delightful home, the first of many such occasions. Profit was £73 but my records show that the weather was poor and kept people away.

Meanwhile there was serious talk about obtaining a Curate, but this was just as difficult then as it is now. On September 12th, 1955 the Bishop of Aston talked to the P.C.C. about our future plans. He gave official permission to go ahead and draw up plans for a new church. We were also told that our chances of having a new Curate were virtually nil.

To show how we were growing a "count" made at the end of June 1957 revealed that an average of 85 communicants attended the 8 and 9 a.m. Sunday Services while the average attendance at Evensong was 65. Sunday School was a strong 150 but this was eased by opening up an overflow Sunday School at Chilcote Council School.

In other ways there was progress. The Vicar and a local architect, Norman Rider of Paradise Lane, had been working hard on plans for the new church and these had been sent to the Diocese for their comments. The Choir had also been working hard at the musical side of the services and had joined the Royal School of Church Music (to which they are still attached). For the first time we were invited to send representatives to the Diocesan and Ruri-decanal Conferences, two and four respectively; these were elected at the A.G.M. At the same meeting Edwin Paul stood down from the office of Vicar's Warden and I took over for one year maximum, (other pressures prevented me from taking over this office for longer).

We were also endeavouring to increase the Building Fund and held a very large Bazaar in Highfield Hall as our own small hall could not possibly have accommodated what we had in mind. This was justified as we made about £400 profit. For the opener we had Miss Leila Williams, currently Miss Great Britain (a relatively local girl - Walsall). With money from other sources the Building Fund by the end of 1957 had increased by over £600.

The following year was also progressive. Two new Church-wardens were elected (Ron Cocking and Bill Smart), as Eric Ford (my fellow warden), had died during the winter and I preferred to continue as Treasurer.

We had an Organ Fund, entirely unofficial but later to be of extreme value to the church. The Bishop of Aston had advised us that the Organ in the Catholic Apostolic Church in the Sands Pits area had been reserved for our ultimate use, which was information we were delighted to hear. The difficulty was that the Archdeacon of Birmingham, the Venerable Harvie Clark said that all our finances were to be centred on the cost of the building and that we were not to have funds sponsored by St. Peter's for anything that would detract from this prime purpose. In view of this a private fund was started by Mrs Eva Roberts, and our son, Michael helped it along by putting any monies he received for his organ playing straight into the fund, including an honorarium of £10 given to him by a grateful church. This fund was made up from the sale of scrap materials that were collected, such as old rags, woollens, metal, etc; the sale of Jams and Marmalade and such like (one year my wife made over a quarter of a ton of Marmalade for sale for this fund), and in the end the total achieved was over £1,700.

The plans that Mr Rider had sent to the Diocesan Authorities for the new building had been accepted in principle but there were several suggestions and modifications they wanted incorporated. For instance one, I recall, was a 30ft high statue of St. Peter over the West Door which they refused even to consider, but, otherwise, his detailed working drawings were proceeding satisfactorily.

I see from my records that the Parochial Apportionment (the amount that a Church has to pay annually to the Diocese), had risen from £25 in 1955 to £30 in 1958. This year, 1988, we have to pay £19,930. No comment.

We were fully aware that a lot of people said that St. Peter's was only concerned with money. This was perhaps true at the time but those closely concerned with the church finances were only too aware of the formidable task we were facing. We now had all 1,500 of the "Church" collecting boxes out and also several large wooden boxes in shops around the parish. Our cash collections in Church, were, however, too small and the Free Will Offering scheme was not particularly well supported.

Stewardship was coming to the fore at this time so a meeting was arranged in December 1958 between the St. Peter's Finance Committee and the "Wells Organisation" a concern specialising in organising and running Stewardship Schemes. We gained much knowledge from this meeting but, generally speaking, were not very impressed. Basing their estimate on a parish population of 10-12,000 the Wells representative said that we should reckon on getting at least 400-500 into the scheme; he could not work it on less than 400.

There would have to be two inaugural Dinners held in the parish (or very near if this was not possible), and he suggested the Robin Hood Hotel. He also said that initial setting up costs were immaterial, it was the end product which mattered. Wells, it appeared, would run their scheme for us for the first three years - and charge for it, and their estimate for the net product was £2,000 per annum. There were to be no special fund-raising functions such as Fetes and Bazaars as these, we were told, would detract from the main fund-raising in the church. Our gross annual income at the time was a little in excess of £2,700 and we also felt that Fetes, Bazaars, etc; were necessary social events as well as money makers, so we turned down the idea as unacceptable and of no special value to us. We did not seriously consider Stewardship again until after the Reverend Royston Brookstein became Vicar of St. Peter's Church in 1975.

We only had two basic funds at this stage, the Building Fund and the Development Fund and by the end of 1958 these jointly stood at over £5,000 an increase during the year of £1,803 (even after taking care of small deficits on the Church, Hall and Magazine accounts. In view of this we felt quite justified in turning down the Wells Scheme, except that, in 1960 we did ask another concern to advise us but their scheme was so similar to the Wells that we did not even consider it.

7. F I R E !!! Beyond anything else which happened in 1959, this was the never to be forgotten event of the year; I can even quote the date from memory after all the intervening years, April 18th 1959.

It was a Saturday and we had held a Jumble Sale in the afternoon and in the evening we were to have held our weekly Whist Drive. There were the usual piles of unsold clothing at the back of the Hall and these, ordinarily, would have been collected by Mrs Roberts to be sold for her Organ Fund. However, they had been dumped into a corner but, unfortunately, too near one of the heaters (which had been left burning because of the following Whist Drive). When the ladies who ran the Whist Drive came to open up they found a blazing inferno. The Fire Brigade was soon on the scene but the Hall portion of the building was completely gutted whilst the Church was badly charred and blackened. By the time I arrived it was virtually over; Joseph Adlam was very upset as might well be imagined with all his hopes seemingly shattered. Edwin Paul and most of the Church officials were already there. Although the roof was dangerous the church could be entered so we were able to see the extent of the damage.

It was useless to consider any portion of it being usable but, as Mr Paul pointed out, the Nissen hut was still available.

The Hymn and Prayer Books had escaped being burnt but were blackened by smoke. Just a few chairs were usable but we had the folding chairs and, with the small Sunday School chairs, about 80 in all. The Vicar's robes were intact, not even stained, and the Communion vessels, having been in the safe, were unaffected so we had all that was necessary to hold a Service the following day.

The Church organ was completely destroyed but there was a small Harmonium (actually an American Organ), already in the Nissen hut so music could be played. I am happy to say that there was a good attendance at all services the following day, 104 communicants and 90 at Evensong. In the full year up to Easter Day, April 17th 1960, attendances averaged 83 communicants and 62 at Evensong, all services being held in the Nissen hut.

By the end of April (1959), we had been able to take stock of our position which was not nearly so bad as it had seemed on that fateful Saturday night. The Bishop of Aston, who was a personal friend of Joseph Adlam, visited St. Peter's before the end of the month and met senior church members to discuss the future, recommending that we consider the purchase of a R.E.M.A. building: this was of pre-cast concrete construction and could be erected relatively cheaply. The Bishop described the many variations that were possible to meet the needs of the purchaser and suggested we should go and visit the one that had been recently completed at St. Germain's in City Road, Edgbaston. A visit was arranged for early in May and those who went, Messrs Adlam, Paul, W. Smart and myself were very impressed and felt that such a building would suit us admirably.

Later, there were many difficulties to resolve. (1) The basic size of the R.E.M.A. building was now known, also that there should be a 10ft space between this and the Church, the exact size of which had already been agreed upon, and there was insufficient room. (2) There was talk at this time of altering the Parish boundaries to include the Glen Rise area at the expense of land between Baldwin's Lane and Scriber's Lane and the City Boundary. (3) Doubt as to whether our present site was best to suit all possibilities.

It took the Diocese a long time to decide and we lost about six months, that we could ill afford, before they told us we could go ahead and finalise the plans based on our present site.

As the Nissen hut was our sole usable building, use was made of Etwall Road Church Hall for Socials, Whist Drives etc, also a Dance was held in the Beacon Insurance Canteen/Social Hall. Local committees were very helpful at the time.

In October 1959 Miss Eve Kerley, one of our staunch Church supporters, died. As a memorial in her memory our beautiful silver salver was developed from old watch cases and other bits of silver which had been collected by Joseph Adlam. Again the Vicar's friend did the work at a cost of £150, (its present day value is over £2,000). It was later consecrated by the Bishop of Aston.

By this time the Diocese was pressing Mr Rider for the detailed working drawings of the church but he complained that delay in settling the R.E.M.A. plans was holding him up. For instance, the sewers and mains had still to be worked out and these had to serve the two buildings. Neither building could be started until these were arranged. There were actually so many points to be settled with R.E.M.A. that on December 4th 1959 Joseph Adlam and I went to their headquarters in Salisbury to get things sorted out. It was a most fruitful visit and the many problems were all satisfactorily dealt with leaving only the question of sewers and mains to be resolved. One thing that we dealt with on this visit was the 10ft clear space all around the building that the City Planners were insisting upon; this could be overcome by filling the wall panels with "Isocrete" which had a "fire resistant quality" of 6 hours against the normal 2 hours of untreated panels.

This would reduce the 10ft gap to 4ft and would therefore ensure that the plans for the hall did not interfere with the Church plans. Work on the hall commenced in late December 1959 with the laying of the concrete platform on which the building would be erected. It was hoped that we might be able to hold the Easter Services in the new Hall although it might, by then, only be wind and rain proof.

The accumulation of finance for new buildings was, more than ever in our minds and in January 1960 a meeting was held to discuss Planned Giving as a form of Christian Stewardship.

Income from envelopes in 1959 was only £394 of which as little as £69 was covenanted and, somehow, this had to be improved; cash collections for the same period were only £327, the bulk of our income came from special events. So again we called upon an outside organisation for advice namely, Planned Giving Ltd; but their proposals were so similar to those of the Wells Organisation that again our net income would be less than we were already achieving. They, too, were basing their calculations on 400 people weekly a number that we rarely manage today. Covenanting was not readily accepted by the congregation and in 1959, was, as mentioned above, only £69; we did, however, get a few more to join the Envelope Scheme (but not many).

As the R.E.M.A. building began to develop plans were being formulated to turn it into a temporary Church. The platform on which the Altar stood in the ruined church was salvaged and transferred to the new Hall before the walls were finally completed. The old Altar Rail was cleaned and re-polished so as to be used round a new Altar which was being presented by Miss Gladys Kendall, (it is now in the Lady Chapel). Maurice Smart, I see, resigned as Hon. Secretary (March 1957 - March 1960), and was replaced by Miss Thelma Statham who also served for three years.

8. Easter 1960. All Easter Day Services were held in the new Hall; without heat or light, but who cared. It was a joy to know that matters had progressed so far but - back to the Nissen hut the following Sunday. While the Hall was being erected the old building was pulled down and such timber as could be salvaged was put on one side. A small firm of carpenters had been given the job, (through the good offices of Mr. Paul), of making a useful building with this material, and the large hut, officially called the "Annexe" but more usually referred to as the "Scouts' Hut", resulted. It was intended that this should be available for all youth work and a plaque is on the Annexe wall to this effect.

The cost of all this was - Hall £8,264, Annexe £1,458 and Services and Sewers £2,796, a total of £12,518. The reason the sewers and services cost so much was that these had to cater for the needs of the new church as well as the Hall and Annexe.

We had over £6,750 in the Building/Development Fund by the end of 1959 plus £5,000 insurance payment for the burnt building.

We had also received £1,250 from the insurers for the furniture and fittings that had been destroyed, but this was put into a special fund for which we coined the term "Churchwardens' Trust Fund" so that it could be used for any purpose other than the actual building (at the Churchwardens discretion). To have paid all the costs listed above would have exhausted our finances but we were helped by an allowance from the Diocese of £3,700 out of the £49,000 they had earmarked for the new church.

In June 1960 Joseph Adlam and Norman Rider went to France to see M. Tristan Ruhlmann, the French artist in "Glass in Concrete" to discuss the possibility of his designing a stained glass East Window, and the cost. We had been told by the Archdeacon of Birmingham not to consider stained glass as the Diocese would not pay for it but the Bishop of Birmingham told Joseph Adlam to see what could be arranged on the basis that its cost might be donated. They returned enthusiastic but tight lipped and, for the time being, only they and the Bishop knew the outcome of their visit.

In the summer of 1960 the Hall was finally completed and ready for use. On 22nd July, Bishop Wilson consecrated the building for religious use, also all its contents. After the service the Bishop blessed the ground upon which the new church was to be built.

The Archdeacon of Birmingham, the Venerable Harvie Clarke, met the Finance Committee on November 20th 1960 to discuss the cost of the proposed church and the Church's own finances. He then dropped a bombshell by pointing out that the available money was going to be about £2,000 short of the total cost and that in no way could the Diocese increase the allowance it was proposing (as below):-

Church and Fees	56,812
Hall, Annexe and Services	<u>12,560</u>
	69,372
Less Diocesan Allowances	<u>49,000</u>
	20,372
Already paid by St.Peter's Plus	
Church Funds	<u>18,400</u>
Debit Balance	<u>1,972</u>

These figures were only the building costs and did not include the bell or any of the furnishings.

The Archdeacon wanted to put his views to the P.C.C. and a meeting was arranged for November 24th, when he explained the position with regard to the Bishops' Appeal Fund and the calls upon it, and that the new St.Peter's was only one of the many commitments within the Birmingham Diocese. It was most probable that if we could not help ourselves in this matter the Diocese would withdraw the money allocated to our purpose. It was at this stage that the Architect, Norman Rider, said that he had the promise of a short term loan of £2,000, interest free and this should cover the deficiency and remove the threat. The Archdeacon expressed his pleasure on hearing this and said he would get the Diocesan Finance Board to act quickly so that the contract would be signed by 1st December, the date on which the tender for the building of the Church became invalid. Thus ended the long preliminary period of our endeavours to obtain a new Church but left us with two other problems to be solved; the actual building of the Church and the drive to get all the other monies required. One stipulation the Archdeacon made was that we should not start any official funds to cover the Windows, or the Organ, until after 1/7th (£7,000) of our allotment from the Diocese had been repaid.

It was really too early to consider the cost of the Window although some promises had been made of private support but the organ was another matter entirely. Its removal from the Catholic Apostolic Church was now urgent as the Greek Orthodox Group, who were using that church, wanted the organ removed (they did not use music). It would have to be entirely rebuilt with a completely new console, and altered in almost every aspect so that it could be accommodated in the plans for the new church. In view of the ban on an official fund for this it was decided by Mrs Eva Roberts (with, perhaps, the hint of some prompting by the vicar), to start her own private organ fund; this was eventually to reach over £1,700. All possible ways of adding to the fund were adopted, such as collection and sale of -- old rags and woollens, scrap metal etc, also the making and sale of cakes and marmalade. As mentioned earlier, one year she made over a 1/4 of a ton of the latter; the house smelt of oranges for months afterwards.

9. During the early part of 1961 speculation was rife as to when a start would actually be made on the new church. The months passed without any real sign, then, in June, a pit was dug that very soon became half full of water. We were told that it was to house the heating equipment but it had to be reduced in depth by 4 ft .to accommodate the natural water level.

Some wag had said that it was to be a swimming pool but the reduction in depth seemed to be satisfactory for, writing this over 25 years afterwards, I am happy to say that we have never had any water in the heating chamber in all that time.

By mid-summer the site had been completely cleared and fenced round. Levelling pegs appeared all over the area involved and the Nissen hut, which has been taken over by the builders, was full of bags of cement, sand and gravel, also the concrete mixers had started to arrive. Not only had a date, May 5th, 1962 been fixed for the laying of the foundation stone but Mrs Wilson, wife of the Bishop of Birmingham, had been chosen to perform the ceremony. This was too optimistic, however, and the actual date had to be postponed for over 2 months.

All this encouraging progress was made full use of in our drive for funds. The big appeal was for £25,000 and, to support it, in September 1961 over 4,000 illustrated brochures were printed and delivered to every house in the parish. The monetary result was disappointing.

Meanwhile the date for the stonelaying had finally been fixed for July 14th 1962, the ceremony still to be performed by Mrs Wilson with her husband, the Bishop of Birmingham, in attendance.

Joseph Adlam was also very pleased that summer, not because his previous church, St. Stephen's of Southsea, had been declared redundant and closed, but for what it brought to St. Peter's. He had been extremely popular there and the parishioners knew that he was building up another parish in Birmingham; they showed their appreciation for what he had done for them by giving him many of their now unwanted possessions. These included a large Chalice and Paten, Communion vessels and an E.P.N.S. tray (still used every Wednesday), a Crib set with fairly large figures, a figure of our Lord, Linen Vestments, choir, hymn and prayer books and a hymn board, a tall Paschal candle-stick and snuffer, a deed box, and a large Bible. Later on the Ladies of Southsea made the large cope with gold weave and ornate trimmings as a special gift for Joseph. Bishop Wilson once said that it was better than any of the Copes that he himself had. We have much to thank St. Stephen's of Southsea for and are extremely grateful to them for their thoughtfulness and help.

Another very important and progressive decision was made in 1962 which pleased all of us but particularly Joseph. This was the cessation of all Diocesan ideas of altering the boundaries of our parish. On January 25th we were officially made a "Statutory District" and on May 6th the Reverend Joseph Adlam was Instituted as Minister-in-Charge. (He could not be made a Vicar until the Queen had given her assent to the creation of a new Parish: this is done annually when all new parishes are dealt with together).

After the Church Appeal Brochures had been distributed around the parish, we hopefully waited for the cash to come in. In 1962 we received £627, and in 1963 £463, a total of £1,080-and our target had been £25,000. We were very disappointed and despondent but to offset this, by the end of 1963 we had received donations towards the East Window (£700), The Organ (£332), and furnishings etc. (£111).

Bishop Wilson had now seen a drawing of the proposed design of the East Window and liked it very much. So much so that, if we could raise its cost (estimated £1,780), privately, he said he would overrule what the Archdeacon had previously said about "no stained glass". With this assurance and having already got £700 towards the cost, we were quickly in touch with Tristan Ruhlmann with a request that he proceed with the windows as soon as possible.

10. The great day of the Stone Laying Ceremony, July 14th 1962, was wet and miserable, but hopes of a memorable occasion were not dashed in spite of the weather. The P.C.C. had given much thought to this event and it had been decided that a canister should be inserted into a hollow under the Foundation Stone containing copies of St. Peter's magazines in which appeared notes on the early history of the Church, a copy of the Birmingham Post for 14th July 1962 and some newly minted coins. There was a very good crowd in spite of the weather and I recall seeing the choir, servers, church officials and the clergy marching in procession preceded by the Moseley Grammar School Brass Band. Mrs Wilson performed the ceremony without any problems arising, and I suppose we all felt that the building of the new St. Peter's Church was now really on its way.

Tristan Ruhlmann informed the Architect and the Revd Joseph that he was proceeding apace with the East Window and that we should consider how it was to be transhipped, and also to make arrangements with the Customs authorities for its import into this country. This latter was, indeed, something that we had not considered, so contact was made with Customs and Excise early in 1963; then our troubles started.

Customs officials were not at all co-operative and were proposing to charge a fabulous sum as duty on a "Foreign Art Production". The Hall Green Member of Parliament at the time was Mr Aubrey Jones, and Edwin Paul, who knew him, got in touch with Mr Jones to see if he could help in any way; he agreed to do so. As a result the decision was reversed and the Window was to be allowed to enter this country duty free. We were extremely grateful to Mr Jones for his help.

It was about this time that we had to hand over the Deeds of the St. Peter's land area to the Diocese as part of the legal formalities in making us a Parish. We really felt we were progressing.

Considerable discussion was riot taking place with regard to the Organ we had been promised from the Catholic Apostolic Church. The question was whether we should accept it and place another burden on our very sparse finances or buy a second hand piano relatively cheaply. It would be years before the money in the Organ Fund would be sufficient to cover the cost of removal, rebuilding and installation of the organ, so, inevitably some of the money would have to be found by the Church.

We were using an old American Organ (which was in the Nissen hut at the time of the fire), in the R.E.M.A. building but this was old and gave a lot of trouble apart from the sound not being very good, so there was no possibility of using this in the new church. Edwin Paul found a way out of our difficulty as the large store for which he worked had a full size Grand Piano which was becoming redundant to their needs and he was able to arrange for its transfer to us on a permanent loan basis. It is still in our Hall and much used for the various events we hold in there. This solved the problem of music in Church for the foreseeable future but we were very much against losing the chance of having what had once been a very fine organ. Matters came to a head when the Diocesan Committee for Redundant Churches and Equipment decided to examine the Apostolic instrument to see if it was still in a re-workable condition and, if so, whether we still wished to have it, and when. We stalled for as long as we could but eventually said that we would have it. The next problem was that the Greek Orthodox Church, who had taken over the building and also did not have musical services was pressing for the removal of the Organ as soon as possible.

We were aware that the chairs we were using were uncomfortable and fire damaged, although they had all been stripped and revarnished and that, ideally, we should start with a set of new chairs in our new church. A scheme was therefore started whereby parishioners should give a donation of £3 which was supposed to be sufficient to buy a chair, a hymn book and a prayer book. We had so many schemes actually in being or envisaged that this one was delayed, which was fortunate as you will see below.

In 1964, not long before the church was completed, the Revd. L.G. Harding, Vicar of St. Albans, offered to give us 300 chairs from the disused church of St. Patrick in Balsall Heath. This was a glorious opportunity to save money so Edwin Paul and I went to see them and although they were covered in dust and dirt, we saw possibilities of making good use of them. We were not strictly ready for them but Mr Paul arranged for a lorry to pick them up and the big store in town that I have mentioned before, took them in and cleaned and polished them. By the time they were finished we were ready to have them. There was only one drawback, they were all over 60 years old and in the cold and somewhat damp atmosphere of St. Patrick's had warped badly so that very few stood steady and "Four Square" on the floor. They were to last us for some years, thank you St Patrick's.

Other basic items such as the Font, Altar and Altar Rails, Clergy and Choir Stalls, and the two "Ambos" (Pulpit and Lectern), were also being considered and tenders were being sought. Quotations for the Font at £85 and the Altar Rail at £42 had already been accepted; others would follow. The Organ in the Apostolic Church had already been seen by a Mr Granville Jones, a professional Organ Builder and Repairer, and he was going to quote for the work of removing it, completely reconstructing it and installing it in St. Peter's. The East Window had been safely conveyed from Alsace Lorraine and was in crates in the church shell and awaited installation by Tristan Ruhlmann and his workmen.

Messrs Deeley's of Harborne, the builders of the church, were very much behind schedule and by August 1963 were still unable to give a firm date for the completion of the work. They blamed the weather but this was not the only problem and Mr Rider, the Architect, said that the "Penalty Clause" in the Church Building Contract - which we were prepared to waive in reasonable circumstances - would be rigidly applied if Deeley's continued to procrastinate.

Furthermore, we were not prepared even to consider a wages award that had been given to building workers as from 1st January 1964, as the Church should have been finished months before that date.

By October 1963 two estimated completion dates from Deeley's had passed. The next estimate was the end of Spring 1964. Meanwhile the East Window had been installed and its effect was sensational. Bishop Wilson was so impressed that he said all the windows should be filled with stained glass while it was so cheap. Nevertheless the cost was prohibitive at the time. The Bishop said "Be courageous. God will provide".

Taking the Bishop's comments seriously we thought that suitable designs in "glass in concrete" incorporating the Twelve Apostles might be obtained for the Twelve Upper Octagon windows for about £100 each. With this in mind Joseph Adlam and Norman Rider made another trip to France to discuss the matter with Tristan Ruhlmann. They were told the cost would exceed the figure we had quoted so M. Ruhlmann suggested as an alternative, prayer carpet designs some examples of which he had just completed in the windows of a local church, which they went to see. They seemed very acceptable and, as the matter was urgent, the order was given so that they could be made and installed before the consecration of the church.

At the end of 1963 quotations up to £1,600 were received for tarmacing the drive up to Highfield Road but any decision regarding this had to be postponed through lack of finance and other commitments. The furnishing of the church was entirely St. Peter's responsibility and, as the list of items grew so did the cost, to the consternation of us all. One of these items was a legal imperative, a Bell in the tower. The cost of this was £720 and why a religious necessity could not be provided by the Diocese with the rest of the building was puzzling to us so we were faced with this unwanted expense; it became a problem of deciding between "Desirable" and "Necessary".

Some parts of the church building such as the Vestries and the Heating Chamber were naturally completed before others. The steps down to the heating chamber were covered with a sloping roof; Joseph Adlam had the idea of building an additional structure over this sloping roof which could be used as a storeroom but Norman Rider was not enthusiastic about this late alteration of his plans, but agreed to see what could be done. In the end it was built but was never used to its full potential, except later when we collected newspapers for salvage.

It held over a ton of newsprint, with careful packing, but to facilitate this we had to take off the door and reverse it so that it swung outward instead of inwards; this is why the lock is now upside down.

With the commencement of 1964 it became clear that the impetus that had been generated after the fire in 1959 was losing its momentum, for Fund Raising was lower, the money from "the boxes in homes" was less, and attendance at "Appeals" meetings was poor. There was again talk of the need for a properly organised Stewardship Campaign but nothing conclusive was agreed. In 1963 the "Free Will" envelopes brought in only £249, the house boxes £355 and the Fete and Bazaar £485, which did not auger very well for our future plans. There was absolutely no chance of tarmacing the drive and church surrounds which, with the constant transit of heavy lorries, had now become extremely muddy. We had made an arrangement with Deeley's that they should only use the grass right-of-way from Paradise Lane (they had put tons of rubble on this path for this purpose), so as to spare the drive to Highfield Road which now, incidentally, sported a slabbed foot path under which ran the mains and the sewers. It was not until some years later that we were able to have the whole area and drives Tarmaced.

We now had the problem of arranging for all furnishings and other items to be in the church by the date of the Consecration, also the seating arrangements had to be settled. We knew a large crowd would attend although a measure of control would be possible by the issue of invitations. We could not, however, prevent our own people from coming, particularly as so many had contributed so generously towards the cost of the windows, the organ and the furnishings, etc. We had 300 chairs stored in the workshop of the large store in Corporation Street, about 100 ex St. Cadoc's Chairs - now in the Hall, and 50 folding chairs a total of 450.

11. The Consecration Service. At last the great day is upon us. We are to have our proper church at last. Everything is as ready as it can be and we all had a feeling of excitement and anticipation. We expected a congregation of at least 500 but could we squeeze them all in? I recently came across the list that was prepared at the time and there are just about 500 names on it; but we had only 450 chairs! Fortunately, we were offered the loan of 50 more chairs from a local school so all was well. In fact 550 attended the Consecration Service on October 24th 1964. Amongst those present were two Bishops, two Archdeacons, several senior Diocesan Officials, the Moseley Rural Dean and many of the local Clergy of all denominations, the local M.P. and several municipal officials.

We felt quite honoured that this event, probably the most important day of our history, should have brought in so many eminent people.

The following day, the first Communion in the new church was celebrated, The Bishop of Aston officiating. One week later, on October 31st, the first wedding was carried out, Michael Roberts (the Organist and Choir-master) to Margaret Hunter, daughter of Kath Hunter, Hall Green Guides Commissioner, and of Frank Hunter (ex Choirmaster), who had died only a few months previously.

On 13th November 1964, we received the very welcome gift of a large Chalice and Paten from St. Albans Church to celebrate the opening of the new St. Peter's Church. These are now among our treasured possessions and are regularly used every Sunday.

Now that we had our new Church the question of our liabilities to the Diocese was our main problem. These consisted of, primarily, the repayment of the 1/7th of the loan of £49,000 but also the "debt of honour" of £2,000 (which had been lent to us when, as previously mentioned, the Archdeacon was "forcing our hands" over the total estimated cost being that much more than the Diocese was prepared to spend). In addition we had not paid off all of the Organ Builder's bill, in fact we were in dispute with him over several aspects of this work. The Organ Fund, thanks to the efforts of Mrs Eva Roberts, was constantly growing and had already produced over £750 for the Church so we were not too worried on that score. One thing which did a lot to bolster our flagging spirits was the change of title from the Building and Development Fund to the Debt Redemption Fund with its implication of what our future Fund Raising was really for. It was also felt that we should do better by our own efforts than had been promised by either of the two outside Stewardship consultants who had talked to the P.C.C. (Stewardship on a D.I.Y. basis was unheard of in those days).

The Parochial Apportionment for 1965 had risen to £197 (from £30 in 1955), but our big effort for that year had to be the repayment of the £2,000 to the donor (who still wishes to remain anonymous), and which, as related above, was the one thing that helped to get the church started at the end of 1960.

The suggestion that the church should have a Standing Committee had been put forward several times over the years but at last, on June 16th, 1965 it became an actual fact.

Even in those days there were some who felt dubious about transferring any power away from the P.C.C., but on the whole I think that we would all agree that the Standing Committee has not abused its position and has acted with responsibility and common sense in all matters.

The Archdeacon of Birmingham asked in July 1965 for a meeting with the Church officials and then dropped his "bombshell". The Diocesan Finance Committee had been working on the costs of building the church and after deducting the £49,000 allowance from the Bishop's Appeal Fund, said that there was an overspending of £5,956 which we would have to repay to the Diocese after the £7,000 previously mentioned. He also said that we must not engage in any more capital expenditure until the whole of the two amounts had been paid. To say that we were devastated is putting it mildly.

We pointed out that we had already repaid a loan of £3,700 in 1961, a loan, incidentally that we did not really need. It was intended to help us pay for the hall but we had found all the money for that ourselves. The Archdeacon wanted it at first to come out of the £49,000 for the new church. We also pointed out that the bad state of the church surrounds was keeping people away in bad weather and without people we were financially "broke"; but he was obdurate. I refer to the sequel to this later.

In 1965 the P.C.C. was told of a steady decline in the numbers attending Sunday School whereas, in the 1954-64 decade we had so many that we had to start an overflow Sunday School at Chilcote. Now the number was down to about 50. It was also suggested at the same meeting that our two Lay Readers (Donald Cameron and Ray Smith), should assist with the Chalice at Communion Services and that the "Elements" should be taken from the back of the Church to the Sanctuary in an Offertory Procession. The first of these suggestions did not find favour with the P.C.C. whilst the second, although agreed to, did not actually take place until some time afterwards. The idea of using the Lay Readers to deliver the wine had to wait until 1967 after the coming of the Rev'd George Fletcher. We also learnt at the same meeting that, in view of our heavy financial liabilities the Diocese had reduced our "Apportionment" from £197 to £56.

One other important event occurred in 1965; I gave up the Treasurer's job at the A.G.M. (I found it too much to do both this and be Churchwarden just as I had in 1957-I was still away from home a lot), and Howard Powell took over. He also was to hold the post for ten years. In 1965 the Envelope Scheme brought in only £350 of which £130 was covenanted.

The Tax Refund was about £70. In those days we thought in hundreds of pounds whereas now we tend to think in thousands.

A suggestion was made in 1986 that we should alter the seating arrangement in Church from its present square shape to fan shape. We had actually tried this out in 1966 also fanning out the choir stalls. Very few people liked the scheme and after a few weeks everything reverted back to normal (almost); we took advantage of the movement of the choir stalls to reposition them further away from the altar rail so that communicants would have more room. Possibly the most important result of all this was that the Vicar, Joseph Adlam, adopted the "Westward" position at the Altar and this continued until his death later that year.

Another problem, that is still with us, became evident from the Accounts of March 1966; the Magazine was losing money. Investigation showed that no money had been collected for advertisements for months. Then the Advert Secretary resigned when this came to light and was replaced by Mrs Eva Roberts who quickly got to work on the problem.

In March the Diocesan Players put on a Passion Play in the Church. Tickets were 1/- each (5p) and expenses 10/- (50p) and in the brief record I have of this it says it was very successful.

With the growth of the Church we were very proud of our position in Hall Green, but unfortunately, a dispute arose over the term "Hall Green Parish Church". When it was consecrated in 1907 what we know now as the Church of the Ascension was not given a name, as such, but was called The Hall Green Parish Church; it was officially given its title of Church of the Ascension when the name St. Cadoc's was changed to St. Peter's. On the cover of their Church Magazine was printed a map of the whole of Hall Green showing their church prominently but with no sign of St. Peter's. It was even called the Hall Green Parish Church Magazine. The Vicar of the Ascension was first approached but, eventually, we had to refer the matter to the Archdeacon of Birmingham, shortly after the map and the title disappeared. We were then very grateful that our status as an official Parish and Parish Church had so been confirmed.

During the summer of 1966 Joseph Adlam took his newly acquired car to the Holy Land and, on the return journey, left the ship at Athens and drove all the way home from there. It would be quite a journey nowadays but in the 1960's the roads in South East Europe were far from good. However, he succeeded with only minor troubles even managing to call on Tristan Ruhlmann, and arrived home jubilant but very tired - "a marvellous holiday", he said.

Meanwhile, at St. Peter's, we were still concerned with the deficiencies of the Organ and had been in touch with the firm of Rushworth and Dreaper Ltd of Liverpool for a maintenance contract and, also, the re-voicing of the instrument. The latter work was to cost £130 and was due to start in November. The whole of the conversion and the transfer of the Organ from the Apostolic Church by Mr Granville Jones had cost £2,700 of which £1,750 came from the now defunct Organ Fund. Rushworth and Dreaper said it was too cheap to be a really good conversion and that in years to come we should have trouble with it. How right they were, but it did at least last us for 20 years, thanks to the care and attention given to it by this firm.

12. In the early evening of Friday 4th November 1966, a telephone call brought me the sad news that Joseph Adlam had been found dead in his chair at the Vicarage. That we were shocked and concerned is to put it mildly but apart from the necessary personal arrangements that were put in hand right away, services had to be arranged for the Sunday, only two days away. The Rural Dean (The Rev'd. Robert May, Vicar of All Saints, King's Heath), had of course, to be told and he came over immediately with one of his curates and asked him to take all the Services for that one day. The Bishop was also told and he outlined the legalities that must be initiated but also said that the Rural Dean would guide us on these.

The responsibility for running the Church until a new Vicar was instituted was to be in the hands of three Sequestrators as appointed by the Bishop who called a special meeting to explain matters. The Sequestrators were to be the Rural Dean and the two St. Peter's Churchwardens (Edwin Paul and myself). They would be responsible for the continued holding of Services in the Church and for all Ecclesiastical functions and financial matters appertaining thereto. All monies received from the Diocese, principally the Stipend that would normally have been paid to the Vicar, and all outgoings relative to visiting Clergy, etc; were to go into a special Sequestration Account which the two Churchwardens must themselves keep.

At this meeting Bishop Wilson said that his brother, Canon Leslie Wilson (who had returned from Australia where he had been a Bishop but was now waiting for an appointment somewhere in the English Church Ministry), would be taking over in time for the Christmas Services and would remain as "Temporary Priest in Charge" until Easter. After Easter, an Australian Priest, The Reverend James Cranswick, then in further training at Queen's College, would take over until the end of July by which time it was hoped our new Vicar would have been appointed.

The Doctor's report showed that Joseph Adlam had died of heart failure brought on, no doubt by his long motoring trip two months earlier. The funeral was on November 8th and was essentially a family affair; the church people were able to mourn their Vicar at the Requiem Mass held on November 15th. The Bishop of Aston took the Service and said in his Address, "Your New Church is the finest memorial that Joseph Adlam could possibly have. It epitomises what he lived for, hoped for and slaved for, and if ever a man could die happy in the knowledge of a task fulfilled, it was he".

The next P.C.C. meeting was on December 9th and was a very solemn one. The basic theme was "carry on" but there was considerable speculation as to what form of churchmanship Canon Wilson would favour and whether he would stay at the Vicarage. In the event we were asked, just before Christmas, to find accommodation for him, which we did in Tixall Road.

We need have had no fears as Canon Wilson's short stay with us brought no surprises (except that we changed back to the former "Eastward" position at the Altar). Attendances remained constant and there were 247 Christmas Communicants.

After Easter the Reverend Canon Wilson moved on to Stanley, in Co. Durham. (Which was the part of the country from where the Wilsons came from). When the Reverend "Jimmie" Cranswick arrived life settled down once more. Neither of these two priests was able to take the Thursday 10.00 a.m. Communion Service so it became a weekly task to find substitutes.

Edwin Paul was a sick man and found it increasingly difficult to act as Churchwarden and Sequestrator so, at the A.G.M. in March, Geoffrey Page joined me in his place. Edwin died early in 1971 after a long illness and the church lost one of its most ardent supporters. It is certain that but for his efforts St. Cadoc's could have died during the war years and his help in setting up St. Peter's, and subsequently, is worthy of the highest praise.

Mention must also be made of the help given over the years by a certain large store in Corporation Street. We are still glad to have many of the things that came our way, through Edwin, particularly the Grand Piano in the Hall.

The Hall was now a general purpose building and used by many organisations but it did lack a stage. Three platforms that we had acquired helped considerably, but what was wanted was something permanent. We also needed curtains and proper stage runners so that they could be drawn easily; these latter were obtained from a firm specialising in theatrical supplies. Meanwhile Mr Vernon Aldridge supplied us with a lot of strong packing cases (that held steel sheets), and a working party soon had a strong stage built. The ladies of the church made some heavy curtains complete with "Draw Cords" to fill the gap in the proscenium arch. Although nowadays the curtains have been changed, the rail, runners and cord equipment are still working satisfactorily.

I have over-run my story a little: in February 1967 the Bishop of Birmingham advised the Sequestrators that he had someone in mind to fill the vacant incumbency. Shortly afterwards it was arranged for Edwin Paul and I to meet the gentleman concerned, separately, in our homes. The Rev'd George Henry Yorke Fletcher was very pleasant with an engaging personality, and, as he could be considered a local man, having been curate at Christ Church, Yardley Wood, on entering the Ministry, we accepted his nomination. Furthermore, the other Sequestrator, the Rev'd. Robert May, knew him well from his previous Curacy, and added his recommendation. This was a decision we never had cause to regret.

We showed George Fletcher and his charming wife, Joy, the semi detached house No. 10 Paradise Lane that was to serve as a temporary Vicarage until a more suitable house could be found. They were not particularly impressed but, having been assured by the Bishop that it was intended to provide a larger and better Vicarage in the foreseeable future, the Fletchers agreed to take on the incumbency. There was, however, one difficulty; George Fletcher was Chaplain at Winchester Prison and his contract did not expire until the end of July 1967. He also had to give three months notice of his giving up the benefice of Hursley, near Winchester, of which he was the Vicar.

The members of the Parochial Church Council also had to accept the proposed new Minister so a meeting was arranged for them to meet the Fletchers.

At this meeting all kinds of matters were discussed with Mr Fletcher. These included his type of Churchmanship; he agreed that our "Middle of the Road" type of worship would not be changed. The alterations they would require at No.10 was a Diocesan responsibility and he would contact them. Our financial position, he said surprised him; the Bishop had told him that we were in the process of paying back the £7,000 but had said nothing about the additional debt of over £5,900; but he expressed appreciation of our Fund Raising efforts. All in all a satisfactory meeting which ended with a mutual agreement that Mr Fletcher should be the next Vicar of St. Peter's.

We learnt later that Mr Fletcher's inability to commence his new duties before the end of July might cause serious complications, for if the Parish was without a Minister for over six months the Patronage would be taken over by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and if the delay extended more than a year the Patronage would revert to the Queen. The Bishop did not want either of the possibilities to happen so, as time was short, he arranged for the two Churchwardens, Geoff Page and myself, with our wives, to go to Bishop's Croft on June 4th; this was for a Service of Institution in the Bishop's Private Chapel. The other part of the Ceremony, the Induction, took place in St. Peter's on August 2nd 1967. The first of these two ceremonies was actually seven months to the day after Joseph Adlam died. But how the Bishop covered that only he knew.

Just before the Fletchers came, the P.C.C. had to discuss a scheme that was to affect the whole of the Church of England. This was the proposed Synodical Government Measure; before it could be put into operation it had to be discussed at all levels and in every place of Anglican Worship. A Commission had been set up in 1962 by the Archbishop of York to draw up plans whereby the Laity and the Clergy became jointly concerned in the running of the Church of England. The Synod (which means Council or Government), was to be set up in three stages, Deanery, Diocesan and General, plus a Bishops' council, which was essentially advisory. We all know now, many years later, that the scheme was very successfully started and is running smoothly even if not always with agreement on both sides.

13. Before the end of 1967 a decision was made to plan a Memorial to Joseph Adlam. Money had been building up in the Adlam Memorial Fund and thought had to be given to the form it would take. All agreed there should be a plaque in the Church and that it should be near the East Window with which he had had so much to do.

In addition, after considerable discussion, it was unanimously agreed by the P.C.C that a Memorial Entrance to the drive from Highfield Road would be appropriate. Breakwells of Monkspath were approached and they produced a design which was acceptable at a cost of £390. This together with the cost of the plaque, £32.50, and the faculty charge of £5.25 cleared the Memorials Fund all but 48p; which was put into the Charity Box.

At this time certain changes and developments indicated that the Church was widening its appeal. An 11.15 a.m. Sunday Family Service was started appropriately, on Harvest Festival Sunday. It was decided, that Baptisms should take place at this Service instead of at 4.15 p.m. and that the Sunday School would come in for the first part of the Service and then go into the Hall for further lessons and worship.

By the end of the year an attempt had been made to start a Men's Fellowship, but not too successfully, and it was not until August 1968 that it finally took shape as part of the Church of England Men's fellowship group. Another thing which beset us in 1967 (entirely unconnected), was dry rot in the Annexe. It was not too severe and £250 was the cost for it to be dealt with professionally (another setback to our savings).

Early in 1968 it was decided by the P.C.C. that its members should be elected to serve for three years; this was to be achieved by one third retiring each year so that by 1970 the change would have been effected. One third of the P.C.C. would then be re-elected annually. It was quite a bit later that the one year Sabbatical rule was introduced.

Another early 1968 innovation was the suggestion that the Series 2 Communion Service should be used. Copies of the Series 2 Booklet were purchased for perusal by the P.C.C. Shortly afterwards Series 2 was adopted officially by St. Peter's except for the Thursday 10.00 a.m. Service. This was the first breakaway from the traditional Book of Common Prayer and was both liked and disliked about equally at first; but we persevered and after a short spell of alternating Series 2 one Sunday with the Prayer Book the next, agreement was soon reached to use the new service permanently.

Life in the Church progressed under the able Ministry of George Fletcher. The numbers in the Choir increased - all men and boys; there were also two additional organists who could assist Michael Roberts.

The Men's Group was, however, a qualified success but the Women's Fellowship with Joy Fletcher as its President, was very strong. We had regularly paid back £1,400 to the Diocese, the fourth instalment in 1968.

In 1969 the wet weather turned the Church surrounds into a sea of mud. With £1,400 to find to pay off the £7,000 owing to the Diocese and with another £5,956 to pay back on a follow up basis, we just could not afford any money for site works. The Archdeacon, the Venerable Harvie Clarke, had by this time retired; his replacement was the Venerable Vernon S Nicholls. At the time of the Annual "Visitation" for Churchwardens the latter said that should any Churchwarden have any financial problems that could not be resolved within his own circle they should contact him by letter; or even now should time permit. I took advantage of this offer to explain our financial plight and our feeling that we ought not to have to pay all of, or for that matter, any of the extra amount which had been sprung on us. I also invited him to come and see for himself the condition of the Church grounds ~ and suggested that he should bring his "Gum Boots".

A meeting was arranged between the Archdeacon, George Fletcher and myself. The Archdeacon had seen the Church before but in more favourable weather and was now very concerned with the bad conditions around the Church. He asked if I would obtain an estimate for tarmacing the whole of the Church area and both drives as quickly as possible. He also recommended a firm in Moseley that had previously done such work for the Diocese. I contacted this firm and they quoted £1,500 to £1,600. For comparison I obtained another estimate but this was over £2,000 dearer so I sent the first one to the Archdeacon.

Eventually he persuaded the Board of Finance to forego the payment of £5,956 and also to declare a moratorium on the last payment of £1,400 off the basic debt for one year. To say that we were delighted is an understatement. Within a month everything had been completed at a cost of £1,573 which, we were told was a real bargain price for what had been done. Needless to say, the Archdeacon came to see the transformation and was very pleased with the result. We thanked him sincerely for the help he had given and promised him faithfully to honour the moratorium and did, in fact, make our last payment of £1,400 in the Summer of 1970.

At last we were free of the great millstone of debt and could live a normal church life without so much concentration on financial matters. At least we thought so but little did we realise the tremendous changes that were going to take place in the Church of England. As an example, the Parochial Apportionment, the money the Diocese requires from each Church so that it can pay its way, was to rise rapidly particularly when it was decided to pay the Clergy a reasonable stipend. The increased Stipends could not be met exclusively from the Church Commissioners' Funds, in fact there would be no increase in the amount they could contribute; so the balance must be found by the Churches themselves. To show how this affected St. Peter's, in 1969 our Apportionment was £88; four years later, in 1973, it was £554; in another four years it had jumped to £1,817. The Apportionment this year, 1988, is the colossal sum of £19,930. During its formative years St. Peter's earned the unenviable reputation of always appealing for money. However true, although unjust this may have been, I simply say that the congregation have always fulfilled their obligations, as I have been at pains to point out all through this narrative. Even today, with our Annual Stewardship Campaign our people give of "Time, Talent and Money" most generously and ungrudgingly.

The acoustics of our Church had always given trouble and many of the elderly members of the congregation found difficulty in hearing and the spoken word. One of the older ladies was so concerned about this that she left some money in her will to cover the cost of installing audio equipment in the church. I do not recall how we came to choose Standard Telephones Ltd to do this work. They quoted £187 for a "neck" microphone, an amplifier, two loud speakers and the installation thereof. The quotation was accepted by the firm of solicitors executing the will and just before the end of 1969, installation was completed. The results were very successful but there were still troubles. One of them concerned the lanyard of the neck microphone and, after one visiting preacher retired from the pulpit without first discarding the microphone, thus breaking the cable, we decided that a different system would have to be adopted.

As this problem was handed to me I wrote to a number of microphone manufacturers for catalogues. One maker refused to send a catalogue but arranged instead for their local representative (Coventry), to visit the church, and give his professional help. This resulted in some alteration to the system and fixed microphones in the pulpit, the lectern and the two clergy desks. This cost us another £124 so the total cost was just over £300 and was to last us many years without alteration.

In 1969 another gentleman (Mr Jeeves), left the Church £750 towards the cost of a stained glass window (glass in concrete), in the Lady Chapel in memory of his wife Elsie Jeeves, for whom prayers had been said in church for many years.

At that time we were still involved in various debts and could not see our way clear to take advantage of his offer so the £750 was put into a special Fund. When the last payment to the Diocese had been made it was felt that the time was appropriate to find out actually how much the Lady Chapel window would cost. It was also agreed that Tristan Ruhlmann should design and make it and, to this end, the Vicar, George Fletcher made his first visit to Alsace Lorraine, together with the Architect to show him how to get there.

They returned with a design featuring the Nativity and a quotation of "about £1,200" plus expenses. This was put to the P.C.C. who agreed that we should go ahead, subject to an endeavour being made to get further donations to make up the balance. It was not long before Mr Wilfrid Harris, a well-known church member, said that he would give £525 towards the cost in memory of this wife, who had died a little while before. With the cost thus covered the order was placed and in a very short time twelve crates, each containing a window panel, were flown to this country (without any further trouble from Customs this time). Tristan Ruhlmann came over with the crates, especially to install them. Meanwhile the necessary faculty had been obtained from the Diocese, so everything was now ready for the installation of the window.

A number of well-known church members turned up to help M. Ruhlmann with the work but those who became most involved were Arthur Massey, Ron Harrison and Howard Powell. The Press had been informed and the resultant photograph appeared in the Solihull News.

The Church Seating Fund had been kept open for many years and in 1971 stood at £487. The original St. Cadoc's chairs that had survived the fire in 1959 were put in the Hall when the new Church opened and were now very dilapidated; it was thought that these could be replaced by the ex St. Patrick chairs if we had new ones in the Church. Accordingly a Sub-committee was formed, with Vernon Aldridge as Chairman, to decide on a suitable design and the cost of 300; this was £1,647 and the frontals, which it was felt we ought to purchase so as to finish off the Church interior, would be another £150. To meet this expense all the income in 1971 from major social events was added to the Seating Fund, and the new chairs were ordered. Mrs Mary Boote met the cost of the frontals in memory of her husband.

270 kneelers to go with the chairs were also purchased, but those for the 30 chairs in the Lady Chapel were hand embroidered by Mrs Andrews, one of the ladies in the choir.

Another milestone in the history of the Church occurred in 1971; at last a Curate was appointed, the Reverend Anthony Chambers. For some time the local Leprosy Mission organiser, The Reverend Harry Kelly, had acted as Honorary Curate and had taken many of the Services. Although he lived out of the Parish he attended St. Peter's whenever he could and, being licensed by the Bishop of Birmingham to take Communion Services, he proved very helpful. However, in February 1971 he had to move elsewhere so the advent of Tony Chambers was of real benefit to us. He was ordained Deacon in Birmingham Cathedral on September 26th, 1971 and came to St. Peter's in the evening of that day to preach the sermon. Naturally we had to find somewhere for he and his wife to live and, after some searching, No.15 Etwall Road was purchased for £5,300 with the help of a loan of £5,000 from a Building Society.

One more item in the financial expenditure in 1971 was the cost of the Hall Heating. When the Hall was built in 1960 thermostatically controlled gas fires were fitted by Harris Engineering, the firm supplying the Church heating. There were seven of them in the Hall and one in the Committee Room and, when they were new worked very well but, eventually they wore out and gave us a lot of trouble. It was felt that an entirely new approach was needed and, in consultation with the Gas Authority a new system was installed at a cost of £1,037 which, on the whole, has proved very satisfactory.

There is just one more recollection I will mention before bringing these notes to an end. Michael Roberts became organist in 1952 at the age of thirteen, and also took over as Choir Master in 1963. These positions he gave up in 1971 after 19 years (in a purely honorary capacity), as his employment was such that it interfered with his spare time, and he felt that it was not fair to Church or Choir to try and continue. David Strong and David Hill, his two assistants took over but not for long as David Strong went to University and the Hills left Birmingham. It was then that Ray Atkins was engaged as a paid Organist and Choirmaster; he was to serve the Church faithfully for another 10 years.

To complete the History of St. Peter's up to this point I have been gathering together all kinds of information. I have read the minutes of P.C.C. and Annual General Meetings for at least 15 years; I also have a complete set of Church Accounts going back to 1955 and a complete set of Church Magazines going back to 1966 (when I took over as Editor following the death of Joseph Adlam). I started thinking that some of these events were worth writing about in 1971 when I wrote the "Brief History of St. Peter's" for the financial drive that we undertook round the parish in that year; to this end I spent some time at Christ Church Vicarage going through old papers, books, etc.

The next 17 years to continue this story will have to form the basis of a second instalment.... when I have had a chance to do more research that may activate my more recent memories.

W ROBERTS.