

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

God's in charge.

Scratch a line in some empty soil, sprinkle some seeds and God can make whole plants spring up, flourish and fruit in season. Some seeds in God's creation, like the poppy, can lay dormant in the soil for 50 years awaiting the command to grow and flourish.

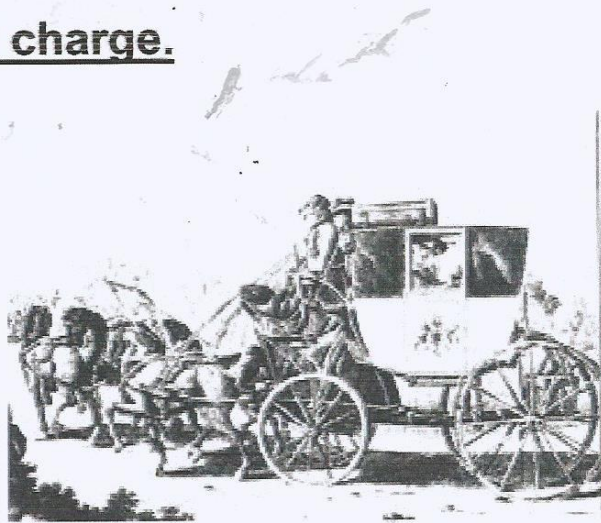
Perhaps that was how it was when God chose to create a hamlet, turn it into a village, plant a church, and bring together a church family at St. John's, Polegate, who follow Jesus Christ, and who can witness to you from over 100 years of history, of the power and joy of a relationship with the living God

Have you ever built a church? We might dismiss it as just another building project of a more commercial size compared to domestic houses. But there are needs for motivated people of a like mind, and enough money to meet the cost. Then, once decided, there is a gigantic task of paperwork, legalities, materials, labour, time, and weather. And before you have even started, just where are you going to put your church?

Residents of Polegate, if they have thought about the history of their town, might conclude that the arrival of the railway and the employment it brought about, is the obvious cause of the town's existence. Certainly the railway can account for its growth, but perhaps we can argue that the birth of the town is from something else.

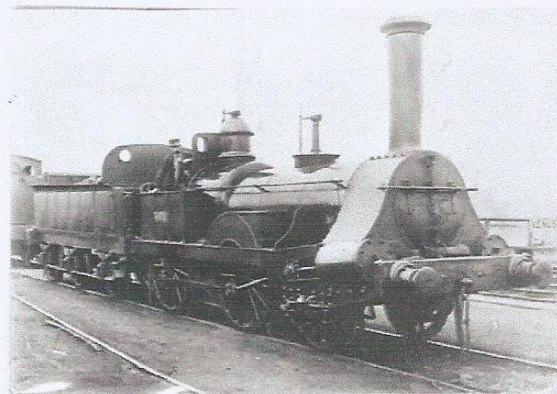
Up to the 1700's there is a lack, and little need, for effective roadways between Lewes and Hastings. Then, during that century, there were Acts of Parliament creating two Turnpike Trusts, which both failed to be commercially viable, and ceased to operate.

In 1819, however, a new Turnpike Trust obtains advice and surveys from a man called John Loudon McAdam (who is historically cemented in the product 'tar macadam') and he is employed under the patronage of Thomas Pelham, Earl of Chichester, of Stanmer Park. Trained by McAdam, Mr J Campbell, is to set about constructing what is today the A27 between Lewes and Polegate Toll roads have toll houses, which have turnpike gates, which may be the source of the name "Pole-gate". The 1819 tollhouse is built near what is today the "Horse and Groom", and replaced the one



from the 1700's at Swines Hill, at the top of what is now the High Street in Polegate. A tollgate might claim to have given birth to the new village.

Public transport before the railways, for those who could afford it, is by coach and horses. For example, in **1835** the Brighton to London turnpike road is served by 21 coaches daily, carrying 117,000 passengers that year, and with the new Lewes turnpike open in 1819, there will be other coach services travelling from Brighton to Hastings.



*London and North Western
1848*

Monday 27th June 1846 sees the opening, amid much fanfare, of the London, Brighton, and South Coast Railway with trains starting to run from Brighton, through Lewes, stopping at a new station called "Polegate". Railways are now to be a society-changing influence, providing a new supply of employment, and revolution in travel, a need for marketing and commercial skills to ensure profitability. What will it do to a little hamlet called Polegate. What is God intending?

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Growth begins.

1846 continued - at the same time that trains start to run to Polegate, there is a new minister at St. Mary's Hailsham, whose living is under the patronage of Thomas Sheppard of Folkington Place. The new minister is his son-in-law, the Rev'd. George G Harvey, aged 44 who is now responsible for all the souls in Hailsham, Polegate and Pevensey.

As he arrives from Winster (possibly the Derbyshire one), he has seven children and the youngest, Francis, aged just one, is cared for by his wife Frances. This is the son that will take holy orders and will succeed his retiring father in 1872. The Rev'd Harvey and his wife will be blessed with a further three children as they minister to the parish.

1850 Down in Polegate, in the Hailsham Road, a church school has just been built "by public subscription", taken to mean that the public have put up the money, not St. Mary's Hailsham. The Rev'd Harvey has had a significant part in this project since he arrived. In the absence of a Polegate church, this is where he is arriving on a Sunday to lead a weekly service for his Polegate parishioners.



(The school today is used by the Seventh Day Adventists for their worship on Saturdays).

1851 The National Religious Census gives the school congregation as 52 (the same number as the village population), whilst the National Census records the hamlet as having just 10 dwellings. The school's headmaster is George Loads and he is assisted by Harriet Gayler. It is a mixed school for children from the age of 5 and they leave at 13 to start work.

1861 sees Polegate with 19 dwellings (an increase of 9) and 103 people, a virtual doubling of the population in ten years. It is a young population, with 58% aged 20 or younger. But trains run, people work hard, and all seems peaceful.

1866 There is a town development plan, and it shows the intended site for a church. The Rev'd Harvey has been working on this and will hand the intention on to his son.

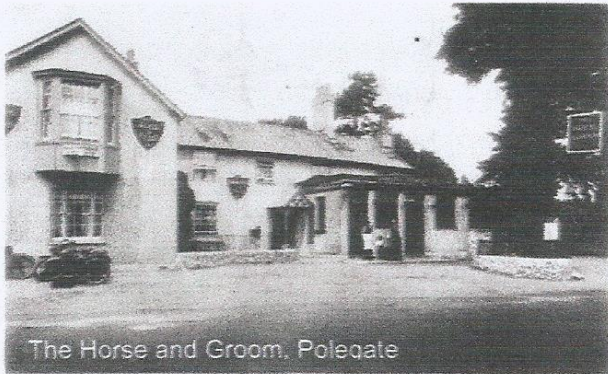
1871 - more growth in Polegate village which now has 42 dwellings occupied by 208 people, and only 33% were born here. The railway is having an effect on where people move to live, work, get married, have children and die. But there's a problem - did you see it? All of the village population can no longer attend the Sunday Service in the village school. There's too many of them. The Rev'd Harvey has been discussing this for some time. He has Pevensey as well as Polegate to serve and he can't do any more. What can be done? God knows.

Friday 14 June 1872 The Rev'd Francis Clyde Harvey inherits the living as his father retires at Hailsham under the patronage of Folkington Manor. He brings fresh thoughts, new energy, with a faithful heart schooled by his father, but not a stranger to the parish and parishioners. He will marry in 1881, Ellen Frances Heine-Mann, some 12 years his junior, and a citizen of New York, but "a *British subject by Marriage*". She will be a strong support to him over the 50 years he will serve the people of his flock.



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The start.



The Horse and Groom, Polegate

8th April 1873 This is it! There's a meeting been called, upstairs in the public house, the Horse and Groom, built about 1819 just to the west of Old Drive today, (*demolished after the Second World War*). In tune with the era, all those present are some 20 men, whose surnames we have been given in a booklet printed by St John's in 1953 for its 75th anniversary. But, with other sources we can be reasonably sure just who some of these executive movers are who are taking the first step to building a church.

The 'outsider' is Mr William Raper who is a solicitor whose father is both a solicitor and the mayor of Chichester. Therefore, he must be there to represent the Diocese.

Also there is Caleb Diplock of Southdown Hall, Polegate (*long since demolished but it was probably where the flats are alongside the junction of the A27 Lewes Road, and the Eastbourne Road*). He is described (ten years later) as a farmer of 150 acres, employing 10 men. He is married, has an adult son of the same name and a daughter; the Diplock family are of significance to the church.

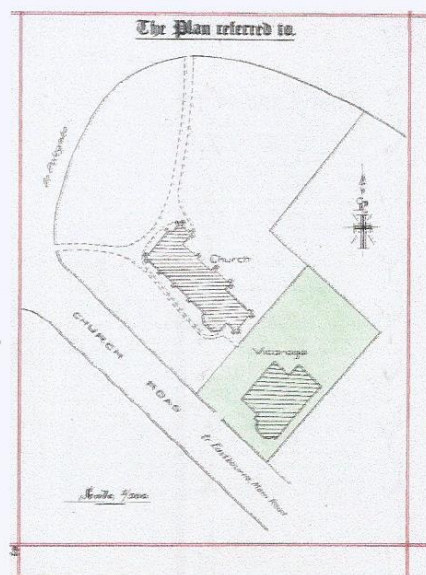
The men we can identify are Daniel Catt aged 59, the turnpike man; William Drewett, aged 36, the local brick-maker; Rev'd Edward Ellman, aged 57, Rector of Berwick parish and also a landowner; William Gladwin, aged 51, Polegates station master and his son; Edward Mewett, aged 78, who is the landlord to some cottages; Robert Simmonds, aged 30, the blacksmith; and local farmers, John Breton, 56 of Sayerlands, Thomas Tolhurst, 69, Stephen Waters, 24, Alexander Wright, 78, of Wilmington, and Blessley an Eastbourne architect who will design our church.

Also there are Messrs Hurst, Pound, Bradford, Kirkland, Larkin, Hartfield, Tolhurst who we have not yet identified. With such a gathering, the atmosphere is charged with energy, drive and expectation.

The advertised purpose of the meeting is to agree and co-ordinate the planning and fund-raising of a 'chapel of ease' In Polegate. The meaning of that term might be to express the convenience of being able to worship in your own village without the need for travel. Brought about because of the growth of the village.

Agreement is reached; to obtain sketches, working drawings, specifications and tracings, all to be delivered to the "Church Committee" who are not those in the meeting today. The elected committee are the Reverends Lowe of Willington, Foley of Jevington, Ellman of Berwick, and of course, Clyde Harvey of Hailsham. In addition are Messrs Swift (a J P) of Eastbourne, Roper, & Hurst both of Eastbourne, and Wright of Gardner Street, plus Caleb Diplock of Polegate.

We saw earlier, that the 1866 town development plan showed the intended plot for the church. The owner of this plot of land is Owen John A Fuller-Meyrick, a landowner who lives in Anglesey. His benevolence is one of jig-saw of people who God moves to make all this possible.



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A Benefactor.



1873 Who is this man, Owen John A Fuller-Meyrick, living in Bodrigan Hall in Llangadwaladr near Bangor in Anglesea, who we now discover is a great benefactor to us in Polegate?

He was born in Marylebone, London, and in 1873, aged 67 is in his great mansion with 16 servants and with yet more employees living on his estate. Yet he has never married, and has few family and does little, if any entertaining. But he is a committed Christian, studying scripture and following eminent preachers.

If we turn the pages of history, we find that he will die in 1876 just as St John's Church is being built. His estate will be proved by Sir John Gervis, baronet, eventually being classed as "under £80,000", (which the Bank of England Inflation calculator says, in 2021 would be worth about £6,400,000). It would be interesting to know where his will directed his legacies, because he plainly was an active benefactor.

Why was he in Polegate? A 1915 press report states that he is "of Battle" and it is true that he has a agent acting for him from that town. But the National Census returns record him as described as living above. There is a reference to him owning the Brightling Estate showing he was financially active in this area. But God moved him, and with his immense support, and the church committee, so that St John's Church is underway.

September 1873 an advert is placed in the magazine "Builder" inviting the submission of tenders. On application from a hopeful builder the Committee will send a set of ten plans and a 14-page hand-written document entitled "Condition and Specification of Work required to

be done in the erection of a Church at Polegate Sussex".

Notice that the "Conditions" document is hand-written by (a clerk?) In the office of Robert Knott Blessley, the architect of Eastbourne. He had already produced plans for the Grand Hotel, Eastbourne. His design for St John's church is in the Gothic style made of materials that they can afford.

Already Mr Fuller-Meyrick (perhaps through his agent Messrs Raper & Ellman of Battle) has given £500 to start the building fund, (a sum worth about £38,000 today.)

February 1874 There is a copy of a bill from F W Ticehurst, stationer and bookseller of Battle, to the "Committee of Polegate Church" for printing 3,000 large circulars costing £3.10/- (which in 2021 would be just over £276). Then, they must have all gone, because in April another 2,000 are printed. And, because it all takes time to gather the many things when starting up such a project, Rapers do not settle the £6 until January 1875

November 1874 Things are hotting up - Farncombe and Co bill Mr Raper for six adverts printing "a list of subscriptions for the proposed church in Polegate", in the East Sussex News, Hastings Independent, and the Eastbourne Chronicle" costing £2.10/-. In 1874 there is no sensitivity to disclosing names and the amounts of their gifts, as we shall see much more later.

18 December 1874 This is the date that James Peerless, builder of Eastbourne, and the Building Committee have signed the "Conditions" document. It gives the architect control of the works; lays down the consequences of default and bankruptcy; details the work of the "Excavator", "Bricklayer", "Carpenter", "Tiler", "Mason", "Smith", "Plumber", "Stainer and Painter", "Glazier", and even instructs the builder to employ a "competent" foreman who must "clean, sweep up and remove from the building ...all rubbish and dirt occasioned by the works." This is going to be businesslike.

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Starts and stops.

December 1874 continued.... James Peerless having won the tender, means that his costs for constructing the church are an essential part of the Agreement; £2,144 to build the church, and £235 to build the tower and spire, a total of £2,379 with a clause stating that *"no charge of any kind shall arise or become due to the said (builder) beyond (that amount) unless...."* with many cautionary clauses. (Just for interest, the Bank of England Inflation Calculator says that total cost in today's prices would be £191,661, but to actually build it today would set you back over £4.5 million.)

You can tell that this hand-written document is very carefully written to protect both the builder and the Building Committee.

BUT, isn't there always a but? The Agreement goes on to say that *"As the Committee has not the whole of the money in hand necessary for carrying out the building in its entirety he will undertake to complete the different portions of work mentioned for £2,144 as and when he shall receive written notice from the Committee to finish the same, and will also erect and build the tower and spire....."*. In other words, they are short of cash, but can't wait to go ahead in full confidence that God will give them the rest. Build the church but leave the tower hoping for money later. Faith in action?

This is the moment of extreme tension - we're legally committed to go ahead, what can go wrong? It's never easy, is it? All these documents, plans and papers, now have had to go up to London to be approved by the Commissioners. The Chichester Diocesan Council and Registrar have been supportive since 15th March 1869 and now there are more legal hoops to jump through.

February 1875, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and/or the Incorporated Church Building Society (both have impressed their rubber stamps on the Agreement) now receive the plans and papers, taking until 22nd June to approve them - with a condition - that the church walls are to be constructed an extra three inches thicker than the architects measurements. A minor irritation or a great upset?

An account for fees by Messrs Raper and Ellman of Battle, details monthly correspondence with Rev'd Harvey, the Diocesan bishop, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, the Building Committee preparing a multitude of papers including copies of the Agreement.

The Agreement, executed last December says

"The works are to be commenced immediately after signing the contract and the whole to be completed under a penalty of £1 per day for every day exceeding the 1st day of January 1876." If that is the case we would expect the church by June to be half-built and adding an extra three inches to the wall thickness would be a real challenge. The date the building started has yet to be discovered.

Thursday 7th October 1875 This date is certain and is when the Architect has already visited the church site, inspected the work to date, written a valuation report to the Building Committee and authorising them to pay what is called a "stage payment"; standard practice in large projects. As per the Agreement, the £500 is only 75% of the value the builder has put in and, as the clause agrees, the balance is due 2 months after this date. Can we guess from this that the building work started in August, after the June directive from London?



Another date of which we also can be certain - the laying of the Foundation Stone in October. This event is not a surprise to anyone and does not just slip by. Is it a Saturday, and the builders must be there ?

The actual placing of the stone, with the cement laid by a Silver Trowel (engraved, costing 17/6d bought of R Walker, a shop @ 6 Terminus Rd., Eastbourne) is accompanied by a service of blessing with printed service sheets, clergy, hymns, prayers, perhaps an afternoon with tea and cakes somewhere but there's no vicarage, nor church hall yet. Maybe in the garden of Southdown Hall courtesy of the Diplock family? Then, perhaps Monday, the builders get to work again after everyone has had the chance to see just how significant this church for them is going to be. But God is at work, as usual.

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Brick by brick, stone by stone.



October 1875 continued..... What would it be like to watch a church grow from out of the ground - a church you might have made a donation towards in the hope that it will all come to pass? (Of course, there are no photographs from the 1870's but the above is for our encouragement)

The Building Agreement refers to the plans for the depth of the footings, but says "fill up under the nave aisle and chancel and properly ram the earth before laying the concrete bottom." And goes on to detail the drains running out to Station Road (now called St John's Road).

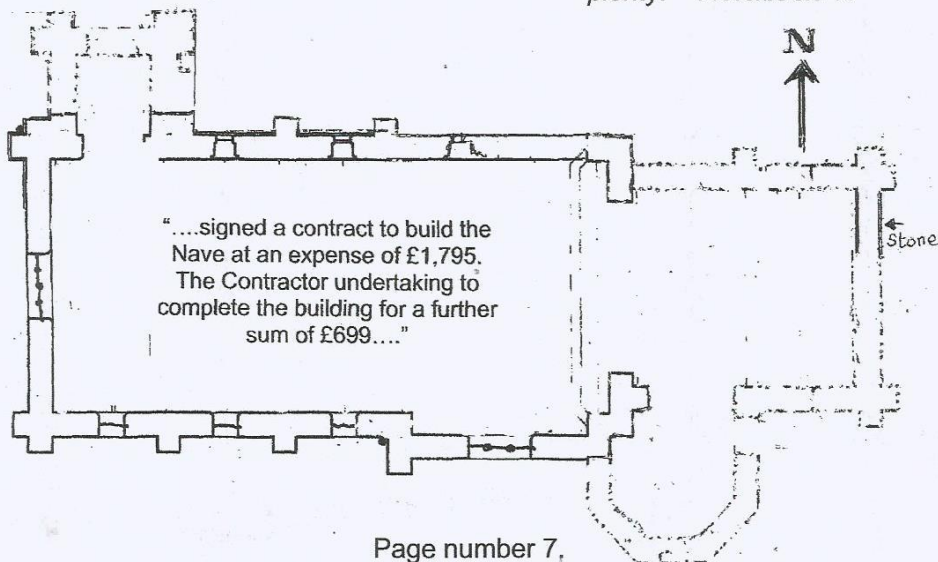
"The walls to be faced externally with Kentish Ragstone in random work well-bonded into brickwork ...neatly jointed in Smith Ash mortar ...the stone can be obtained of Messrs Bensted & Son, Iquanodon Quarries, Maidstone at 6/- per ton and 6/3d Railway Carriage to Polegate Station which is close to the church. A ton will cover about 4 ½ yards."

15th February 1876 A further Agreement is now signed, amending the previous Agreement of December 1874. There are two 'corrections'; the first, because the church walls are to be an extra three inches thick, which adds £18.6/- to the overall cost; secondly, it is now discovered that Peerless, the builder, did not include the cost of 643 cubic feet of timber and has had to beg the architect to agree to add a further £97 to the bill.

Within days, a second stage payment of £500 is made to Peerless, and then a two-page foolscap Bulletin is issued by the Building Committee reporting on page one, the progress and new costs, stating the nave at £1,795, leaving just £699 to finish "if the funds can be obtained".

The second page is filled with 112 names and the amounts given - "His Grace the Duke of Devonshire £500, The Lord Bishop of Chichester £10, the Harvey family several amounts totalling £64.2/-, FCS Roper, hide and tallow broker and landowner of Eastbourne £530" to name but a few. (The value of £10 then but in 2021 would be worth £895 and £500 would be £40,281.)

"Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty." Proverbs 3:9-10



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A roof will keep the rain out.



After the February 1876 stage payment to the builder, work has progressed, and the walls are growing up by the day. Window spaces are in and some of the carved stone work to support the roof uprights in place now. Then the roof construction starts using the timber whose cost had been omitted from the Agreement.

Tuesday 30 May 1876 a third stage payment of £500 (*worth £40,281 in 2021*) is made and the building is going well. When the big appeal was made earlier, the Committee had

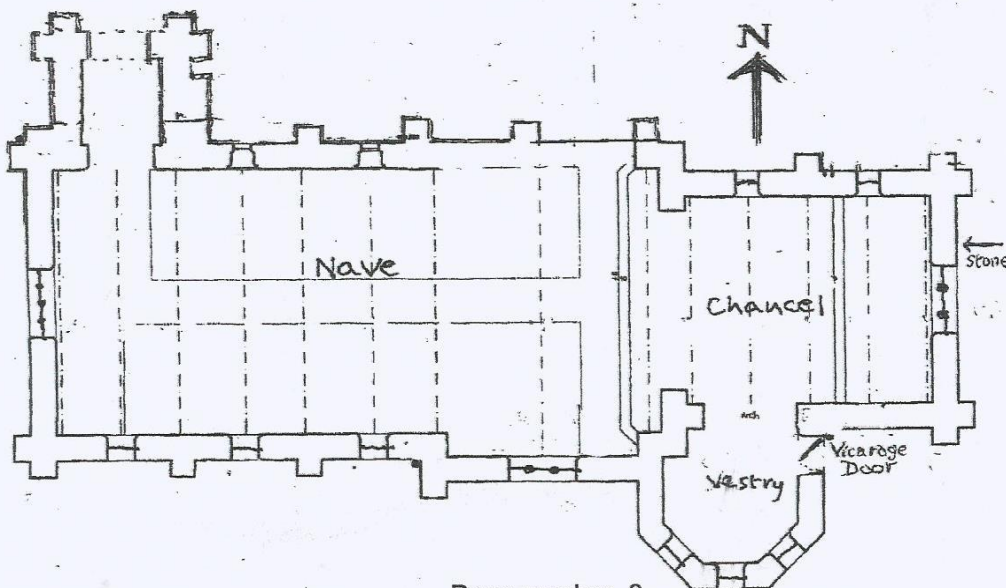
received donations of £1,864 against the expected cost of £2,494 and were therefore prepared to delay the construction of the Chancel and the Tower until the balance of £699 came in. How fast now can people afford to give to meet the difference?

Monday 3rd July 1876 Money must be getting easier for the Building Committee because they now settle the bill from the architects (Blessley & Spurrell) for the working drawings, specifications, adverts and all the paperwork.

Tuesday 19th September 1876 The architect authorises the final stage payment to Peerless; £400 making the total paid to date £1,900 and a balance due in two months of £650.

The church construction is finished, but what finishing touches are there still to do? Seats? Pulpit? Font? an 'altar' and altar rail? They are all in the Agreement. The windows all have leaded glass but with a pattern (*as today*) plain with cathedral green borders, and no stained glass yet.

And here at some date the Reverend S F Akroyd arrives to take up the duties of curate under the watchful eye of Revd' Francis Clyde Harvey, vicar of Hailsham. Was his first service on Sunday 1st October 1876? No! We've got to wait.



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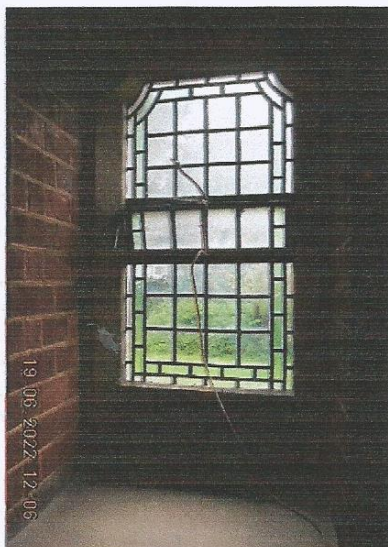
We are to worship habitually.

Saturday, 4th November 1876 . The vicar is today in his vestry in Hailsham signing an undertaking. With carefully chosen wording, "I the undersigned, Francis Clyde Harvey, Vicar of Hailsham, Sussex, hereby undertake that the new church of Saint John's at Polegate in my Parish shall be consecrated within three years from the first of January one thousand eight hundred and seventy seven on condition that the Lord Bishop of Chichester now grant a licence to such church." Who is the undertaking to? It has to be to the new church family, who will be worshipping under the leadership of their curate, the Rev'd Akroyd. What a happy announcement that would have been from the pulpit, but the church is not open yet.

A few days later, an impressive document arrives, without which acts of worship would be illegal. The document is impressively sealed with a wax seal, bearing an impression by the Right Reverend Richard, Bishop of Chichester.

By it, he authorises acts of Divine Worship, preaching, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. (*Note; weddings and funerals are not yet authorised.*)

Friday 10th November 1876 The Archdeacon of Pevensey, the Venerable Robert Sutton M.A. arrives to conduct the Opening Service. He is no less than a Prebendary of Chichester, and Proctor in Convocation for the Diocese. Such importance of titles!



There is a host of people here - of course the curate and Vicar of Hailsham, and so many from the village that can get here, but there must be some of the clergy from adjacent parishes and who have been such a vital form of support and encouragement. Someone from Chichester, but probably not the Bishop?

It's a bitterly cold and rainy afternoon with no lighting yet from the promised oil lamps, and no heating, but, no lack of enthusiasm by those present who sing with all the gusto that they can manage. And at the end of the hymn and after the prayers of dedication, the Archdeacon begins his sermon.

"The occasion that has brought us together, bretheren, is a very solemn and interesting one to all; but, especially to those in this congregation who are to worship here habitually and for those whose benefit this Building has been erected."

And he continues with great energy "We give this Building up today, unreservedly to the Lord's disposal; begging Him to receive our offering - not indeed for any worthiness in ourselves, or for any merit in the gift - for that was our simple duty - but only and altogether for His mercy's sake in Christ, and in compassion for men's souls."



His sermon rightly includes words used by Jesus in the Temple, "It is written, 'My House shall be called the House of Prayer.' You see, God does not call His House, a House of Preaching though it is certainly that." Generations at St John's have since centred on prayer.

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And next.....

The elation of the Opening Service in November 1876 brought a welcome relief to all those present. The great tension over at least three years, was over. So many people had worked together to make possible the building and installation of such a large structure for a village of 42 dwellings and just over 200 people. Such was the moment at that service a collection was made on that day of £49.12/8d. (*which the Bank of England Inflation Calculator says would be worth £3,998 in 2021*)

We get another little insight into these early days by a note of the collection from the first Sunday service afterwards which offered up £4.5/2d. (*which the Bank of England Inflation Calculator says would be worth £342 in 2021*). This is from a small congregation being paid low manual wages.

The papers and records are silent for the year of 1877. We can imagine that every Sunday is a new experience with the Rev'd Akroyd arranging a service and coming together to worship with members of the church family offering to help; *"I will also praise you with the harp for your faithfulness, O my God; I will sing praises to you with the lyre, O Holy One of Israel."* (Psalm 71:22) As week follows week, group confidence is growing that this priceless gift cannot be snatched away.

Possibly **June 1877** a new 3-page foolscap Bulletin is issued by the Building Committee whose work is not ended by the opening of St John's. It says that *"the Committee appointed in 1873, having now nearly completed the settlement of all outstanding accounts for the erection the accounts (on the third page) show that there is but a trifling balance at the Bankers, whilst the sum of £50 is still due to Mr J Peerless... and £20 has been borrowed from the Treasurer (unnamed) in order to settle the law expenses for conveying the Church Site."* This is evidence that things have continued to be very tight. The previous Bulletin, about a year ago, showed £1864 in hand and asking for another £699 before the Chancel and tower could be added to the nave. This report shows the total given by donations is now £2386 with a further £88 from a Bazaar, which, after other expenses and the money owing leaves a balance of £5.19/4d. The 1873 Committee members remain the same with two new members and the Rev'd Akroyd elected as Honorary Secretary in place of Mr W A Raper of Battle, who was the agent for Mr Fuller-Meyrick who died just over a year ago.



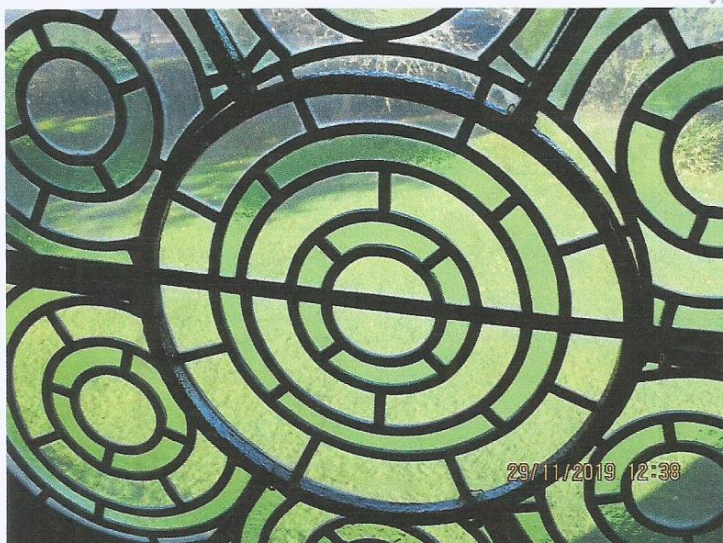
This Bulletin goes on to say that *"the curate in charge for want of any suitable accommodation at Polegate is compelled to reside either at Willingdon or Wannock, at a considerable distance from the Church and Hamlet."* It reports that the late Mr Fuller-Meyrick has provided a site adjoining the Church with a frontage of 75 feet and a depth of 145 feet, for the erection of a parsonage House. So, what is the challenge?

They've got plans, and it can be built for up to £1,500 (*which the Bank of England Inflation Calculator says would be a cost of £122,092 in 2021*). The appeal for donations expresses the hope of help *"from those who have already done so much towards providing spiritual comfort and instruction for the Railway Officials, Labourers and Mechanicsof Polegate"*



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Consecration - the journey begins



Tuesday 6th August 1878 More than a year has passed, with many people busy working in support of the Revd' Akroyd who ministers to them with the support of the Hailsham vicar, the Revd' Harvey. Perhaps the congregation has grown with people from Wannock or Wilingdon.

But today is the great day promised by the Rev'd Harvey two years ago, as the Bishop of Chichester arrives to consecrate St John's Polegate. Services have been already regularly held because the bishop authorised them at the time. Now, amongst prayers and hymns and Bible-based

teaching, the bishop launches the congregation firmly on its spiritual journey. Sadly, there is no copy of the service survived from this special moment, but being summertime, doors and windows will be open to let out the joyful sound of worship. The visitation by the bishop will be an added encouragement for the Building Committee, currently working on plans for what they are calling "the Parsonage" to be built on the plot next to the church.

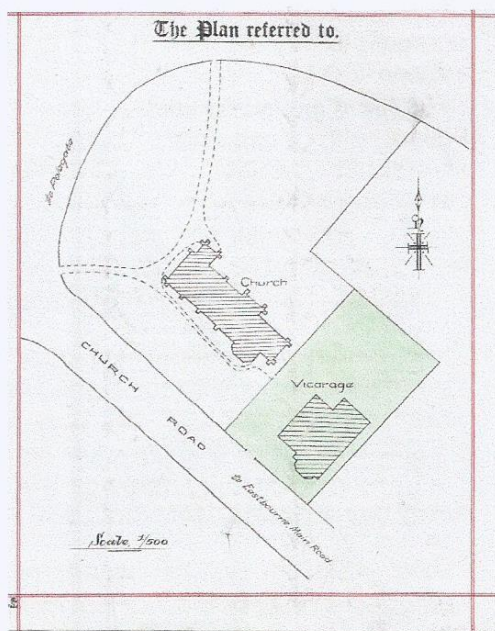
Sunday 19th January 1879 Not summer weather today as little Alice Naomi Waters is brought by her parents to be baptised by Rev'd Akroyd giving hope and joy to those at worship this Sunday. The sermon must have reflected the addition of this youngest member to the church family, perhaps with the words "*suffer the little children to come unto me*".

Wednesday 26th March 1879 A feeling of "we've been here before" as those representing the Diocese sign the Agreement with James Peerless, builder of Eastbourne to construct "a Parsonage" on the plot of ground donated by the late Mr Fuller-Meyrick.

Once again, it is a document of careful legal complexity agreeing to pay the sum of £1,285 (*the Bank of England Inflation Calculator says that amount would be a cost of £111,488 in 2021*). As before, there is a deadline for the builder - 30th September 1879 but, if he overruns, a charge of £1 per day. We are building a house for our clergy on land that we do not yet own. Interesting. Next month, the Diocese solicitor, Mr W Raper, says that the land must revert to the late Mr Fuller-Meyrick unless it is transferred to the Church Commissioners by 1889.

Then, in May 1879, there is a letter from the Bishops Fund in Chichester with some good news - "here's £150 towards the Parsonage" *the Bank of England Inflation Calculator says that amount would be a gift of £13,014 in 2021*). More than that, they say that when the church family has raised as much as £1,000 there may be more!

"By awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness, O God of our salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth, and of the farthest seas;....." (Psalm 65:5)



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Marry? - yes you can.

19th March 1879 An Eastbourne business, A J Simmons and Son, of 112 Terminus Road, who are "Furnishing and General Ironmongers" has been to St John's and somehow climbed up the new tower, and fixed a lightning conductor, which is "fixed complete" and at a cost of £10. All we need now is a good thunderstorm to test it out.

June 1879 Nearly a year after the bishop came to consecrate the church, he now authorises marriages to be performed. Is there a queue? Well, actually, yes. On the 24th August Frederick William Crowhurst will marry Sarah Elizabeth Standen amongst all the splendour that the families can manage. What an historic moment, what a happy day that will be.

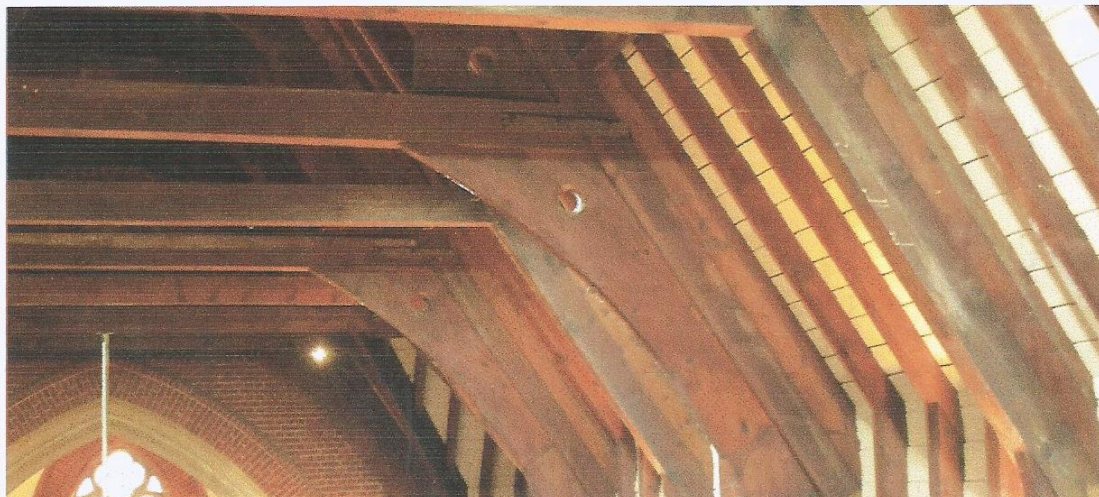
In the meantime, building is well under way on the Parsonage site. Mr Peerless and his team are hard at work; so much so that the architect has authorised the first stage payment of £350 (*the Bank of England inflation Calculator says that cost today would be about £30,370*).

10th October 1879 The Committee issue a third foolscap Bulletin, (and at last this one is dated). All the members of the Committee are the same as listed two years ago; except the Rev'd. Lowe of Willingdon who has since 1877 been made a Canon of Chichester Cathedral.

This circular gives the final statement of accounts, "*begging to return their most sincere thanks for the liberality shown by the Donors to the Fund.*" It gives special thanks "*to those Visitors to Eastbourne and others, who without any special claim, have so kindly assisted in promoting the work...*". It reports that all expenses have been paid for the erection of the church and the small balance appropriated towards the Parsonage House.

It considers that Polegate is 'isolated' with the words "*the need of a Resident Incumbent...is now more than ever apparent to any who are acquainted with the isolated situation of the Hamlet of Polegate.*" Repeating that the late Mr Fuller-Meyrick had provided a site, it reports the cost of the Parsonage will be £1,285 exclusive of Architect's Fees. Then, an odd statement; "*the Committee....have, on their own behalf, entered into a contract to the extent of £600, leaving, with Fees, about £800 to be raised....*" And, "*As the Parsonage is now approaching completion, and funds are urgently required; the Committee again earnestly appeal....*"

"*On their own behalf*"? Does that mean they have acted without authority, at their own risk and guarantee? Well, they say they've received £543 and are urgently looking for £650 of which they've been offered £300 if a similar sum is subscribed before 7th February 1880 (*the Bank of England inflation Calculator says a gift of £300 then would be about £26,000 today*).

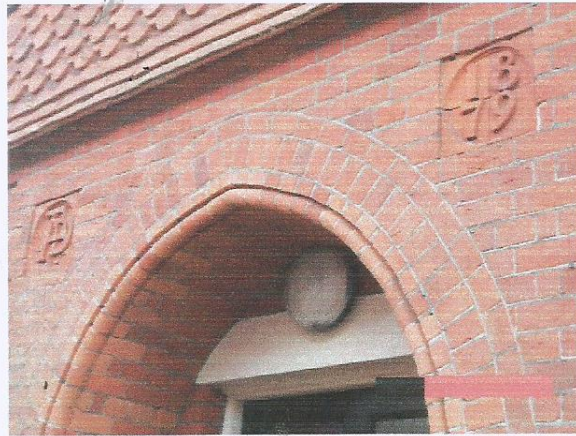


St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

The Parsonage for the curate

1880 The building of the Parsonage continues with yet a third payment of £300 to the builder (*which the Bank of England Inflation Calculator would say to be a cost of just over £25,000 in 2021*).

Monday, 12th April 1880 A body called 'The Guardians of the Poor' issue a certificate stating that they are the Sanitary Authority for Polegate, and, as a consequence of which they certify that the Parsonage building was completed on 25th March this year, 1880.



The Parsonage front door.

The purpose of the certificate is perhaps to declare that this new building, the Parsonage, "has a nearby source of wholesome water". This determination might be their statutory duty, but it fails to reveal this source of the wholesome water. (The remains of a well have been found just to the rear of the house.)



Tuesday 8th June 1880 With the building of the Parsonage completed, the architects, Blessley and Spurrell are paid £66.7/- (*equivalent to a cost of £5,543 in 2021*) by the Building Committee for their incidental work over the period of 1878 to 1880.

But the architects reduce the bill to £1,100 for the Parsonage (*equivalent to a cost of £92,381 in 2021*) by restoring the original design, from the £1,285 expected. What a gift to the church. The legal Agreement of March 1879 gave a deadline for the builder to complete by 30th September 1879 but here we are some nine months late. We have not traced why or whether everyone was happy with the original design, but over the years it served its purpose. (*Sold by the Diocese in about 2012 as no longer economic to maintain.*)

Easter Day 1881 The Curate, now in residence in the Parsonage, conducts the Easter Services. This is the third Easter since the bishop consecrated the church and the Revd' S F Ackroyd is fondly accepted by his congregation. Until now, there has been no source of music in the church and the folk-lore handed down of that time, says that "Mr A Pierce used to start the tunes. If the first did not go, then he struck up another." "*Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth, sing praise to the Lord, to him who rides the ancient skies above, who thunders with mighty voice.*" (*Psalm 68 32-33*)

But now, there is an organ as good as a whole orchestra, given so generously by the father of the Curate. And music now fills the church with every hymn and reaches up to the rafters. What a wonderful step for this church in a hamlet.

About this time, on the 3rd April 1881, the National Census (every ten years) is taken. It gives us an accurate picture of the village - even the name of every resident in each house if we wanted. The hamlet now has 83 dwellings, in which 492 people reside. It is still a young community with 230 of them aged 20 or younger. Despite the fact that we've seen generous financial provision for the church and Parsonage, this is not a wealthy hamlet.

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

A significant death.



Saturday 26 July 1884 Word goes round the hamlet, sometimes at lightning speed, at other times it takes days to hear that Caleb Diplock has died. He has been a widower since January 1881 when Sarah, his wife died. But he might be thought at this time by some to be the most significant figure in the population of Polegate.

The recent National Census shows him living at Southdown Hall, Polegate, described as a farmer of 150 acres employing 10 men, and now he dies, aged about 65. He and his family, are solidly linked to St John's.

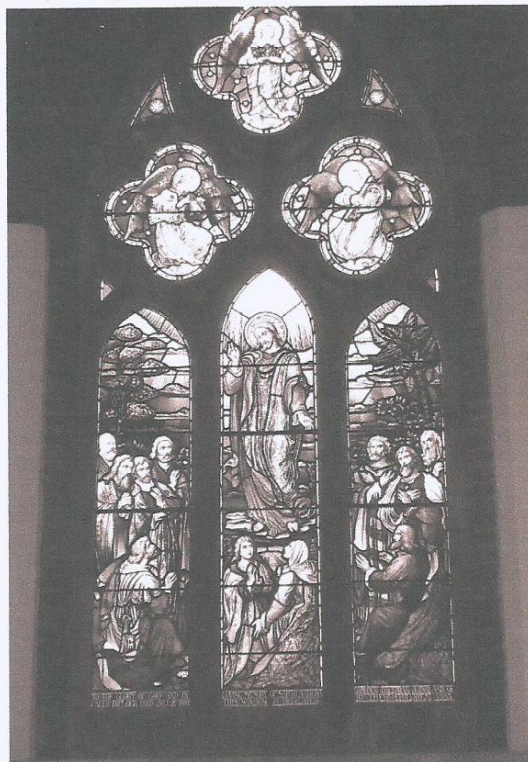
1885 So soon after his death, the three children of Caleb Diplock make a big donation to St John's that can be seen today. The children, living at Southdown Hall are Caleb (named after his father), unmarried aged 42, a brewer and wine merchant, Sarah unmarried and aged 40, and lastly Frederick, also unmarried, aged 26, a farmer.

Their donation this year is the Reredos (the wall ornamentation on the East Wall) as well as the big stained glass window above the Reredos depicting the Ascension.

Much is owed to the generosity and personal interest of this family, and these are significant and personal gifts. It would be interesting to know what discussions took place between the church or the church authorities and the Diplock family. Did the family let the church have a detailed or graphic description of what was offered and today remains installed?

The stained-glass window with the apostles standing in awe as the risen Christ ascends to heaven, includes a figure on the extreme left carrying a portrait of Caleb Diplock. It might be that the church Diocesan Advisory Committee might today refuse such a design if offered today. But at least it allows us to see just what Caleb Diplock looked like. A close-up view of part of the East Window is above.

At the foot of the window, their dedication reads "In loving memory of Sarah Matilda Diplock, died Jan. 4 1881 and of Caleb Diplock died July 26 1884."



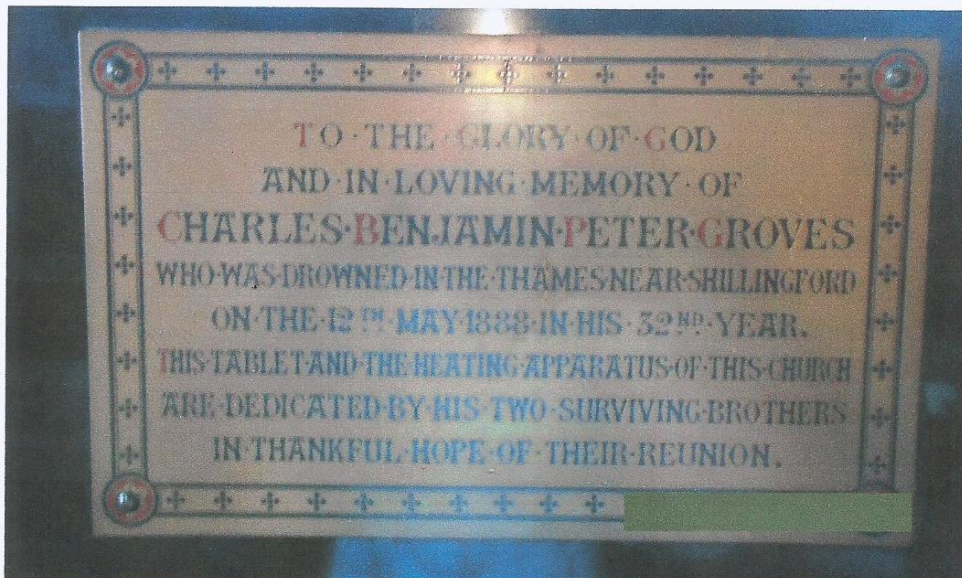
St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

Tragic stories

1886 and 1887 The Sundays pass smoothly but not without money worries as they try to give as much as is needed to keep the church going. The kind people of St Mary's, Hailsham, help out with some of the costs and will do so for years to come. But their hearts are good and they determinedly support St John's Polegate.

The Rev'd S F Akroyd, who arrived in 1876 and has served them manfully, is now leaving in 1887 after 11 years. Did the Rev'd W L Groves arrive immediately or was there a gap during which services had to be led by the Rev'd Harvey from Hailsham? We don't know.

It was back in 1876 that the sealed document by the Bishop of Chichester authorised Divine Worship, preaching, baptism and the Lord's Supper. Yet, here we are in January 1888 when the first communion service takes place. Perhaps, the previous curate was not fully ordained, and now the new clergyman has been and can today offer his confirmed congregation consecrated bread and wine. *"Our heavenly Father, who of Thy tender mercy dist give Thine only Son Jesus Christ to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption...."*



1888 Here's a sad story. A young man aged 31 is drowned and his passing is such that his *"two surviving brothers"* have donated long-awaited *"heating apparatus"* to the comfort of the congregation and established a memorial to him and for the record. Of course, this heating apparatus is replaced many times over the coming 130 or so years.

But is he married and has his widow been left with the upbringing of children on her own? How did the drowning occur? Did he live at Shillingford or was he there for the day on a picnic? We have not discovered. *"May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us, that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations."* (Psalm 67:1-2)

1889 Another change as the Rev'd Groves leaves after two years and the Rev'd G Jepson arrives. Each new worship leader inevitably brings change and his flock must support and adapt to the new ways.

Wednesday 1st January 1890 The Hampshire Advertiser, the county newspaper, reports on a sad event that the parish has to come to terms with. Hopefully it does not involve any of the congregation. *"Mary Ann Taylor the widow who cut the throats of three of her daughterson Thursday night, was on Saturday brought up at the Hailsham Petty Sessions, and charged with murder.Funeral at Hailsham cemetery ... service at Polegate church."*

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

"Beautify the place in which you meet your King"

1892 After three years, Jepson leaves, the Rev'd T Phillips arrives and leaves, and the Rev'd W C Ward stays for one year. What is it about this little hamlet that they find difficult to settle in? Perhaps it is not Polegate but perhaps each have personal circumstances that cancel the new calling as it starts? Or are the new clergy unable to work with the Rev'd G Harvey in Hailsham? Next year we have the Rev'd C Aston who will at least stay for two years.

Tuesday 4th October 1892 The Sussex Express, Surrey Standard, Weald of Kent Mail, Hants and County Advertiser, a newspaper of great title and coverage, reports on the Harvest Thanksgiving Services in the hamlet of Polegate. Starting with the Congregational church whose service was conducted by Mr F Allen of Beachy College, Eastbourne, it reports that at St John's, *"the building was tastefully decorated. The service in the morning was conducted by the Rev. Clyde Harvey, vicar of Hailsham, and in the evening by the Rev. A Metcalfe, vicar of Hellingly. The offertory was in aid of the church expenses."* St John's needs all the income it can get.

Friday 3rd February 1893 The H.M. Inspector of Schools visits the Church School in Hailsham Road. With the growth of the hamlet, the school has increased its number of pupils to 139 and now has several classes. All is well to the relief of the Head and the Church Committee. But the Rev'd Harvey, vicar of Hailsham, writes about current proposals for a "Board School" one which will replace this one after some 43 years with capacity for greater numbers in the future.

Tuesday 3rd October 1893 Once again, St John's Harvest Festival reaches the press with the Sussex Express. The preacher in the morning is the Rev. E Crake, vicar of Jevington, and in the evening, the curate, the Rev. Clifton Aston M.A. *"There were crowded congregations. A special service also took place on the Friday evening when the Rev. S F Akroyd, (the first curate in 1876 at St John's) now "vicar of Crowborough, occupied the pulpit."* It continues, *"The offertory at the services were for the church expenses, except that taken on the Sunday evening was in aid of the funds of the Agricultural Benevolent Society."*

Sunday 21st September 1894 The Sussex Express reports on "Church gifts and improvements" saying *"Last Sunday....those present must have been struck by the beauty of the new altar covering,of rich velvet, splendidly embroidered in gold and colours."* It describes the designs on the front and sides with Fleur de Lys and floral designs. The pulpit has a gold band with *"The Lord is in His holy temple"*. And there are alms bags, book markers, kneelers, hassocks, etc by a London firm *"at a cost equally defrayed by"* the Mrs and Miss Diplocks, (a gift). Two others give *"Two new standard lamps"* (lit by oil of course). The Rev Aston reminded his hearers it is good to beautify the place they meet their King.

In this photo from 1894 you see the Reredos on the east wall, behind the altar, the gift of the Diplocks in 1885, made principally of Caen Stone with marble columns and panels. It has five Jeune Fleury marble panels richly inlaid. The central panel (in 2021 still covered since 1997 to better show the brass cross in front) has a Maltese Cross in Blue Piastre inlaid with Irish green marble with jewels of Mexican onyx, Rosso Antico and green marble.



St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

One century ends, another begins.

1894 It is very easy to have a picture in one's mind of everything starting very small and increasing in size over a long period. But in 1894, St John's Sunday School teaches up to 130 children out of a population numbering some 600. We saw in 1881 that 47% of the people living in the hamlet were under 20 years of age. How many adults teach the Gospel to all those children? They must use the school itself or else it is in the church on Sunday afternoons. Amazing. (*Regrettably this historic photo is not of Polegate but somewhere else.*)



With such numbers, considerable organisation has to be in place; about this time the prime responsibility is by the 'Superintendent' of the Sunday School. That sounds so grand and suggests professional qualifications. By 1901, the Superintendent was a layman affectionately known as "Corrie" Taylor (not the curate, Revd. James F Taylor) who worked tirelessly in very many capacities for the church as well as the Sunday School. We shall see him later.

Sunday 20th June 1897 The nation celebrates, with much pageant, the sixty years of Queen Victoria's reign. This Diamond Jubilee, never seen before, has a dazzling imperial character and even hamlets like Polegate hold their own festivals. One special effort is the planting of the oak tree in the 'triangle' near St John's Church. With nearly as much emotion, the nation mourns the loss of the Queen on Tuesday 22nd January 1901.

Sunday 31st March 1901 On this day of the National Census Returns, we see a snapshot of our curate, Rev'd Taylor in the Parsonage. He is aged 51, his wife, Carole, is 48 and they have three children; Herbert who is 13, Jessie who is 10, and Winifred who is 7. They are not alone. As customary in these times, they have a general domestic servant working in residence for them. She is Annie Channon, aged just 19, unmarried and born in Woking, Surrey. Far from home. The National Census, which gives us this picture shows that Polegate has now grown to 180 dwellings (*it was 83 in 1881*), and 921 people of whom 461 are aged 0 to 20.

Friday 3rd May 1901 Another 'first' for St John's. The bishop has visited today and confirmed those who have been taking their confirmation classes very seriously and are today confirming the promises to follow Jesus, that were made when they were babies. It's a special day!

1903 After eight happy years, the Revd. J T Taylor is leaving his ministry at St John's. To quote from the Churches 75th Anniversary publication by the Rev'd. Harry Parsons - "*The frequent changing of curates inevitably meant that much depended upon the lay workers of the Church and there are many good and faithful ones.*" No doubt those loyal members of the congregation gave him and his family a happy send-off. He is moving to be the Chaplain of Paris College in Bath.

Then the Rev'd F L de Carteret arrives. Perhaps he recruited, or maybe there was some spirit that moved Mr William Thorpe who, in 1905, starts his career as the church organist. Anyone attending services during the next 36 years will be surrounded by the swells and melodies of the organ until he will retire in 1941, during the Second World War. Polegate has some eager servants. But the Rev'd F L de Carteret leaves in 1906 to become the Secretary at Doctor Bernardo's Homes. "*Come, ye children, and harken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord.*"

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

More selfless giving

1906 Now the Rev'd. William Hilton Stuart-Fox takes up office. It can't be something in the water, but arriving as a single man, aged about 28, he goes away in the first quarter of 1907 to get married to Margaret at St Saviours, Crouch Hill in the Whitby registration district. As they return from honeymoon on the train, they are met at the station by the Young Crusaders Drum and Fife Band so that he and his bride can be escorted home to the Parsonage. What a show!

He is a real live wire attracting anything between 76 and 164 men to the Men's Services. The Rev'd Harvey in Hailsham writes "*He seems to have all the men with him*". Praise indeed.

1907 At some stage in the year, Mr James Tolhurst, a confectioner, and member of the congregation of St John's, makes an offer to the church which they take very little time to accept.

He tells them that he has a piece of land in Victoria Road and adjacent to Cross Street that he will lease to the church but with conditions; that the church erects a building to be used for Church of England services, a class room for school gatherings, as a meeting place, as a library. If they will bind themselves to these conditions, he says, they can rent the land for one shilling a year for seven years, then £4 for 14 years, and have an option to buy the land (with their building on it!), at the expiry of the 21-year lease he will grant them.



Sadly, we have not found the cost of the building which they have to put together, but it is 27 years since the parish found the impossible sum to build the Parsonage.

22nd November 1907 Plainly the money comes quickly, because, with the building now started, the lease is issued and on Friday, 5th December 1907 the two foundation stones are laid. The first is by the wife of the Hailsham vicar, Mrs Frances Clyde-Harvey, since Polegate remains inside the Hailsham Parish. The second is laid by Mrs Rupert Wynne. They can't celebrate with a tea inside yet, because it's still finishing.

1908 With the church hall building well under way, the Rev'd Stuart Fox is leaving - so soon? He will be missed as he becomes the vicar of St. Saviour's, Tollington Park in London.

The arrival of Rev'd H J Jackson allows some form of consecration of the new church hall as it is completed. He is aged 47, has been married for 17 years and they have two sons, aged 14 and 16 who were both born in Bengal, India. Ordained in 1891, sent out as a missionary in 1893 and on the Christian Missionary Society staff until 1907, he then took a curacy at Old Radford, Nottingham. Now in Polegate and with their own church hall, the parish can celebrate the families arrival with teas and cakes.

Amongst the 'old papers' there is an inventory from about this time, entitled "List of Moveable Articles and Furniture belonging to the Church". The list includes one Silver Chalice, one Silver Paten, one Silver Flagon. But it also records the benevolence of many people; for instance, a Brass Book Rest as a Memorial Gift by Mr Mendel in 1892, Holy Table of Oak given by the Rev'd. T Lowe, Vicar of Wilingdon, two Glastonbury Chairs of Oak given by John Akroyd, and various items over the years given by Miss Diplock, Rev'd. R Holbston, Mr and Mrs B Akroyd (*possibly the parents of our curate of 1881*), Miss Mocksell, and many others.

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

Psalm 73:23 "Yet I am always with you"

1909 The ministry of the Rev'd Jackson continues, and we will see that he maintains the congregation both in numbers, involvement and spiritually. This year sees another great innovation for St John's. Gas lighting is installed in the church replacing the oil lamps given by the Diplocks. There is much upheaval as they run gas pipes under the floorboards and install the stands and brackets for the glass bowls and china filaments.



Several years pass seemingly peacefully but magazines and newspaper articles are recording increasing anxiety about the political situation in Europe. Even Encyclopaedia annual supplements of 1913 report on the deplorable hostilities of the Balkan War. Articles asking "Is there a German peril?" add to public awareness. "Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me; neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause." (Ps:35:19)

February 1914 The 31 year-old daughter, Hilda Clyde Harvey, of the vicar of Hailsham, dies, but not as a result of the looming war. What could it have been? What a tragedy for the vicar, the family and the whole parish, including Polegate, needing much sympathy.

Then on Wednesday 5th August 1914, the United Kingdom declares war. The Rev'd Jackson and his family are in Switzerland. Can they get home? Yes, because war takes time to start.

The effects of countless sons being recruited, and then posted to the trenches in France affects all levels of society, and the members of St John's are not immune. So too, the effects of the war on daily life, including church life, take hold of everyone. "Fret not thyself because of the ungodly; neither be thou envious against the evil doers." (Psalm 37:1)

Friday 3rd September 1915 A half-page article in the Sussex Express, Surrey Standard and Kent Mail, written by an anonymous author, gives a very extensive review of the church. "The church is strictly Evangelical in tone, and the services are frequently of a bright and hearty character. In connection with the church is a flourishing Band of Hope, under Mr. C.P. Taylor, with a membership of 120 - came out top in the Diocesan Competition. There is a branch of the Church of England's Men's Society (Secretary Mr. H. Thorpe), but the war has depleted numbers. The Sunday School, (the curate is Superintendent) has 82 on the books, and the infants Church Day School has 73 on the register. The Church Missionary Society is actively supported. There is an excellent branch of the mothers Union of which Mrs Jackson is the Hon. Secretary. She also conducts a well-attended Mothers Meeting, and a Ladies Working Party as well as a Girls Bible Class. Many of the younger people are attached to the Scripture Union, the local branch of which has Miss Lancaster for its Hon. Secretary."

January 1916 Miss Sarah Diplock has died causing the Rev'd Jackson to write "A great gap has been caused by her departure. Her principal interest, her painstaking thoughtfulness, her profound sympathy in all the work of the Church and in everything affecting the welfare of the the community, were most remarkable."

Saturday 9th September 1916 Another tragedy for the vicar of Hailsham and his wife as they hear that on this day their son, Rollo d'Aubigne Harvey has been killed in the Somme. He too was 31 years old. There are many families in his flock who have suffered similar losses.

Friday 29th September 1916 Sussex Express reports - "Devotional services were conducted at St John's Polegate on Thursday evening, by the Rev'd. A Hume Simpson (Rector of St Mary Magdalen, St Leonards) for communicants and other church workers. The services were in connection with the National Mission of Repentance and Hope."

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

Peace at last, but for how long?

1916 The war drags on and has some effect in bringing the community together with Belgian refugees billeted requiring a community welcome and support for them. Miss Henderson organises the Red Cross for Polegate doing "*valiant work*".

Saturday 9th November 1918 - the war ends at last and the nation carries on, both in shock and relief. The mood of repentance has caused spiritual reviews - "All people, great and small, irrespective of their social class, will stand before God's throne, not crushed or browbeaten, but given this final token of respect for human responsibility, as each gives an account of what he or she has done."

Friday 27th December 1918 The Sussex Express reports - "*The Rev'd. H.J. Jackson, curate-in-charge, led the services at St. John's, Polegate on Christmas Day. At Holy Communion at 8 am. there were 31 communicants, and after morning prayer there were 72 communicants. The choir sang the anthem, "O Zion that bringeth good Tidings" (O Steiner). Mr W Thorpe was at the organ.*"

1919 After eleven years safeguarding his flock, the Rev'd Jackson and his family move on. The vicar of Hailsham, Rev'd Harvey, writes about him - "*he has been a long time in Polegate and has relieved me of much anxiety and work. He was really in sole charge and bore all the burdens of the congregations and district himself without troubling me with them. He has been a faithful preacher and teacher of the old, old story. Once again there is a change at Polegate. I tried very hard to make it a separate Parish and got as far as to obtain a conditional consent from the authorities, but Polegate was dead against it and Mr Jackson could make no headway.*" Everyone must be sad as they go..



Tuesday, 23rd March 1920 The new curate, the Rev'd Clyde Harvey takes the chair in March to hold the Annual General Meeting. (*This is the grandson of the Rev'd George G Harvey who took up the Hailsham living in 1846 and whose son, the current vicar of Hailsham, is the father of this current curate*)

Elections are held; Mr H G White to the General Diocesan Council, Mr J Tolhurst to the Deanery Synod, with 14 (7 men, 7 ladies) to the Church Council, plus 5 'ex officio' making a full complement of 19, and, a Finance Committee is elected.

The AGM hears that the Surplice Fund now stands at £13 - agreed to enquire on the cost of cassocks and surplices for 10 men and 10 boys. The Hymn & Prayer Book Fund needs £4 to be paid out of the General Fund. On the matter of the Infant School repairs, no decision is reached. There is a need to appoint a Church Missionary Fund committee but there are more urgent calls and the matter is dropped. The meeting is disappointed that the Roundabout will not be allowed in the field for the Childrens Sunday School Treat. It is suggested that the Roundabout should be obtained for the Parish Fete in August with payment to come from a sale of work. Agreed to write to the proprietor, Mr David of Bexhill for a date.

The chair asks them to consider holding open air services but the matter is dropped. The meeting gave many thanks and congratulations to the ladies carrying out flower decorations in the church for Easter. Finally they note that a small table is needed for the vestry and a cover for the font. A good evenings work, they agree.

October 1920 The Men's Society is looking for somewhere to meet - the Parsonage?

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

Will he go or will he stay?

Tuesday, 11th January 1921 The Church Council, after hearing that two ladies have resigned, also hears the Freewill Offerings have reached £61.15/4d. (equivalent to giving of £2,111 in 2021) which is splendid. The offerings on 23 January plus a treat will be given to the choir. It is agreed that offerings on the Sunday a week before Easter and Christmas will be used to provide flowers to decorate the church. Congratulations are given to Mr W Thorpe (organist) who has completed the Roll of Honour. Mr C Knight to be Honorary Treasurer of all funds except the Sick and Poor Fund, and the Freewill Offerings Fund.



At the February meeting they agree that the Council will close by 9.15 pm each evening. Then, shock, it is reported that the organist, Mr W Thorpe has resigned. They react by deciding that the position should be advertised in the Eastbourne Chronicle and County Herald.

The March meeting of the church council then agrees that they need Mr H G White to go to interview Mr W Thorpe about his resignation.

Tuesday, 22 March 1921 The church AGM hears that the Electoral Roll totals 220, but then the second shock; Mr H G White, sent to see the resigned organist, has also resigned. The meeting cannot resolve this. Next Month, another meeting hears that Mr W G Thorpe will withdraw his resignation as organist if his points of dispute described in a letter can be resolved -

1. that a payment be made to the choirboys to ensure better discipline
2. that the organ be repaired and principally the bellows blowing apparatus.
3. that an instrument is required for practice.
4. that attention be given to indifferent attendances to practices.
5. that there will be more musical services.

The meeting approved 1. but debated the source and what money could be available; for 2. an estimate should be obtained; for 3. a harmonia which belongs to the church is in the school building.

Emergency Council meeting Wednesday 11 May 1921

1. The cost of repairing the organ will be £65 and this was because little had been done to it since it was built. Carried unanimously. Funding to come from sale of work, an appeal for funds, an invitation to Caleb Diplock, collection of 29 May and, if necessary, an organ recital.
2. Rev Harvey again raises his wish to hold open air services but the meeting is doubtful that the congregation would come. The proposal is not approved.
3. The need for a cover for the font brings an agreement to obtain a scale drawing to be submitted to the Diocesan Advisory Committee.
4. Agreed that confirmation candidates shall be given a book on Preparation for Communion. There is a difficulty for candidates to get to Hailsham for their confirmation; perhaps a confirmation service would be held on the Bishop's visit to Polegate on the 29th.

The dust settles as the church gets back to the usual daily trivia. The date for the Sunday School treat is to be Thursday 28 July in Mr Diplocks field. The bishop has ruled that it is his policy to only hold one confirmation service per parish. Use one Sunday's offerings each year to go to the Bible Society and to put into operation the Freewill Offering Duplex envelopes. Also discussed are the Cottage Services, giving Instruction in the Prayer Book, Social events, a Debating event, and the Boys Club.

The DAC did not approve Mr C P Taylor's design for the Font Cover. The Boys Club will meet Mondays and Wednesdays 7.30 pm. to 10 pm. (when possible); the Girls Club will meet Fridays 7.30pm to 10pm (Mrs Colborne); Childrens Games Wednesdays 5.30pm to 7pm and two socials in November.

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

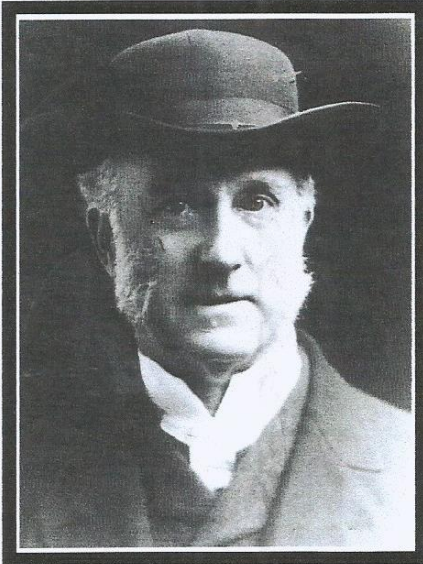
We all face death.

1922 Church life continues as if ordered by diaries and agenda - the church council resolve to limit the numbers of the council to 20; at the AGM they resolve that the choir will wear cassocks only on Good Friday rather than the full robes on every other Sunday to emphasise the contrast between Good Friday and Easter Day; the Electoral Roll totals 215 and the church heating arrangements are unsatisfactory.

Then there are the sudden heights in church life. In the national news, on **Wednesday 14th June**, the Times newspaper reports about a Jubilee. It describes the achievement of 50 years of wholehearted service by Prebendary F G Harvey in one parish, Hailsham. It says that "a public presentation from all denominations in the town to mark the Vicar's Jubilee was to have taken place to-day, but has been cancelled owing to his indisposition. A deputation is, however, to hand him an inscribed album and a substantial cheque."

St John's had already met, agreeing to present an Illuminated Address and a Silver Plate at the public celebration which was to take place on the Hailsham Recreation Ground after a service in Hailsham church attended by the Bishop of Chichester. But the Prebendary Francis Clyde Harvey is poorly. (A Prebendary is a canon of a cathedral without a canon's stipend). The Times continues, *The Vicar will reach his seventy-eighth birthday on July 29, but in spite of his age is still very active.*"

St John's, under his son the Rev'd Clyde Harvey, the curate, follows the ordered passage of church life with a meeting agreeing to hire radiators for the winter on condition the Gas Company can guarantee to maintain a temperature of 60 degrees in the church when the temperature outside is 32 degrees - 9 voted for with 2 against. Next month, against this guarantee, they agree to go ahead. (In the Spring of 1924, they change their mind and in the Summer give notice to the Gas Company to remove the 8 radiators).



Monday, 12th September 1922. The Times reports the death of F G Harvey, to the shock and dismay of everyone, not least the curate of St. John's, the Rev'd Clyde Harvey, his son. "Prebendary Harvey, who, beside Hailsham, had held only one appointment, that of New Radford, Nottingham, from 1868 to 1872, was a well-known figure throughout Sussex. Educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, he distinguished himself on the river and the cricket-field, rowing in the Trial Eights, and being a Quidnunc. Later he played cricket for the Gentlemen of Sussex. Throughout his long connection with Hailsham, he played a prominent part in the public life of the town and county. On the formation of the parish councils in 1894, he became Chairman of the Hailsham Council and held that position until his retirement in 1919. He was also a member of the Hailsham and District group of School Managers, and was one of the original members of the East Sussex County Education Authority, being co-opted in 1903, and retiring from the office last year. He was appointed a

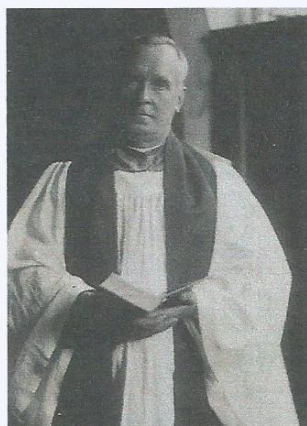
Prebendary of Chichester Cathedral in 1914, and had been a member of the Bishop of Chichester's Finance Board since its establishment.

He had ten children, five sons and five daughters. All his sons served during the war, and two were killed; of those surviving one is Curate-in-charge at Polegate, Major C O Harvey acted as Assistant Military Secretary during the tour of the Prince of Wales in India, & Captain G H Harvey of the 5th Indian Cavalry, is a member of the Viceroy's Bodyguard."

"Let them be glad and rejoice, that favour my righteous dealing: yea, let them say alway, Blessed be the Lord, who hath pleasure in the prosperity of His servant." (Psalm 35:27)

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

A new Case to work with.



Friday, 15th December 1922 The Sussex Express reports "a social gathering at the Hailsham Church Rooms to meet the Rev'd. James Case (the new Vicar) and Mrs Case, The room was crowded. The Chairman said Hailsham was very fortunate in having a man like Mr Case as Vicar. Mr A K Burtenshaw (Vice Chairman of the Parochial Church Council) said that in coming to Hailsham, Mr Case was taking rather a difficult place, for their dear old vicar they had loved very much." He has arrived from St Mary's, Plaistow.

Reporting his response "No man could fill the shoes of Canon Harvey and he asked that they should not draw comparisons with their former Vicar. He hoped to personally visit them all and wished the Vicarage to be the family house of the parish."

January 1923 At St. John's, the curate, the Rev'd Clyde Harvey has left shortly after Christmas, and now the press reports that the new vicar of Hailsham has arranged for the Rev'd R S Eddleston to replace him. Eddleston took his M.A. at Cambridge, & studied at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford. Then 1914 saw him ordained and priested a year later, a Senior Curate at Southborough, a missionary in Central Africa, followed by a curacy at Chisham, Buckinghamshire. His duties will commence on the first Sunday in the month.

Mundane life resumes - Rev R S Eddleston is in the chair at the AGM with 30 members present. The annual report on the accounts was in the Church Magazine of February, so are adopted. Elected was Mr E L Bourcher as the Peoples Warden. The council elected Mr C P Taylor as Diocese Council member, Mr Geo Thorpe as Rural Deanary Council member, Messrs Geo Thorpe, E H Marchant, and E L Bourcher to the Hailsham Parochial Church Council. St. John's is still part of the Hailsham parish with three delegates to the Parish Council.

Then they heard that the balance in hand was £11.15/3 3/4d. There is a payment due to the churchwardens at Hailsham for the Clergy Fund of £17.10/- which in turn gives a position at Easter of an adverse balance £5.14/8d 1/4d. How can they balance the books? (*The debt of £17.10/- would be £739 in 2021*). The Church Council deals with many matters, of course, such as the need for a notice board in the church grounds covering the cost from private subscriptions. The Save the Children Fund is to benefit this year from the Harvest Festival service collection at the beginning of October "*because of the Japanese eathquake*". Agreed to hold the Special Armistice Service again in November, as in 1922.

In these days before the Welfare State, Mr Hastings applies for for charity. The Church Council agrees to offer for his cutting down the surplus trees in and around the churchyard for a payment of £1 estimating 4 days work at 5/- allowing him the use of the wood which he must remove. And there are spiritual challenges - against a national move in London, the Church Council is resolutely opposed to any alteration in the order of Holy Communion and all sign a resolution decrying any permissive alternative or deviation. The opinion of the Council is that 'Reservation' is not reconcilable with the Last Supper recorded in scripture.

June 1924 The close interaction of St John's with St Mary's, Hailsham is shown by this event. They agree to invite Mr A K Burtenshaw (the Hailsham Parish Churchwarden) to a meeting preferably at Polegate to discuss repairs to the fabric and structure of the church before the next Hailsham Church Council meeting. Then, it is necessary to terminate the employment of Mrs Hastings as church cleaner in one month owing to the present unsatisfactory state of affairs. Mr Reeves is appointed as Verger from the same date as Mrs Hastings will retire on 5 July. The annual remuneration will be £10 including church cleaning, lighting of gas lamps and radiators and/or any other heating apparatus brought into use, and attendance at all regular services.

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

Ban the Sunday band?

1925 This is a year full of village-church matters, each of which have hardly any significance in the eternal ways of things, but which all need irritatingly to be dealt with.

The Rev'd R S Eddleston and his small trusty band of 6 or 7 on the Church Council approve an outing for the Sunday School and the choir to Littlington Gardens. They agree to pay the Verger an extra 1/- per week for 36 weeks ending 25 May for lighting the stoves. The churchyard grass needs cutting and three people were listed to be approached. They conclude that it is time to commence the usual open air services on Sunday 31 May at 8pm at the end of St John's Road. They agree a proposal to supply new lamps over the church gates, and also a lamp on the wall beside the church main doors similar to the one hung at the vestry door. Later in the year, the two new gas lamps are purchased at 57/6d each (*total cost £5.15/- = £244 today*) which have ordinary instead of incandescant burners, and wall lamps with double oil burners are to be hung over the main door.

Then, there is the problem of disruption on Sunday mornings. They decide to write to the Secretary of the Hospital Sunday Parade Society to protest in kindly but firm terms against the band playing in the village during the hours of divine service as on the last occasion. In the event this request was not granted the church is to give notice that it will decline to co-operate with any active part in the days proceedings. Against an expected request, they decide that church funds would not permit any payment to Polegate Infant School Authority. The organ blower, Boniface, will be resigning and it was suggested that Mr. Stanley or Reg Tyhurst should be asked to fill the

post. (*This is before electricity is installed, and the organ bellows are pumped by hand.*)



1926 Is it a sign of complacency or apathy that causes the council to be elected en-bloc? Mr C P Taylor is elected to represent St John's in the Hailsham Parochial Church Council. The Parochial Tea takes place with Mrs Eddleston supervising the catering and "organising the crockery".

But there are always new decisions to be taken in a church. The Post Office Telephone Department are laying a cable round the outside of the churchyard and are given consent with the condition that any damage to the paths is to be made good. Then there are those lamps - the lamps over the church gates are to be removed for the Summer for safety and suggestions made how to protect the porch light against the wind which causes it to blow-out.

The Rev Arthur F Bradley has arrived at some stage replacing his predecessor, and leading the Church Council in all it's challenges. They've sent a cheque for £20 to St Marys, Hailsham (a cost of some £853 in 2021) for the 'usual quota'. The organist has said that he needs more choir psalters and a sum of £1 was agreed to be made available but the choir stalls are to be tidied. This makes them aware of their fortune in having an organist and so they increase the organists salary from £20 to £30 per annum forthwith (*a new salary of £1,280 in 2021 money*). The year ends positively with the Sunday School Winter Treat and Prize Giving being paid from the church funds up to £6 and from Special Sunday offerings plus private donations. Miss Barclay has offered to repair the church kneelers.

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

Learning to work together?

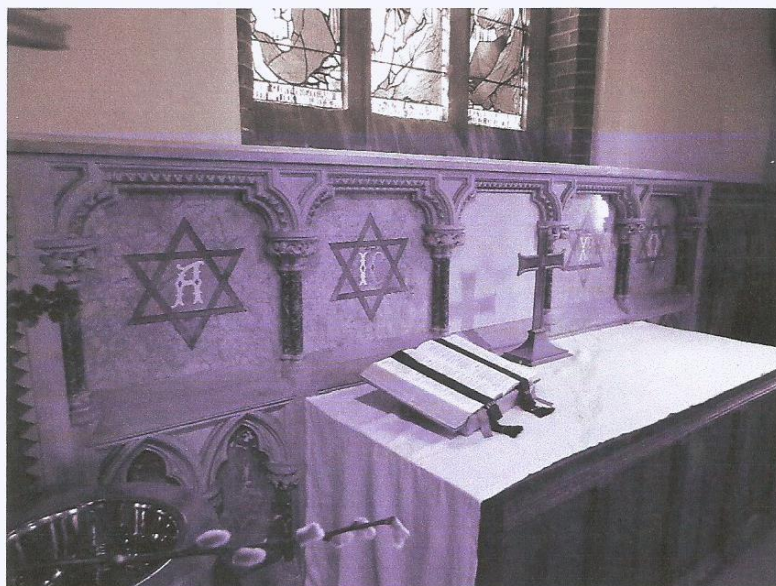
Monday 9 May 1927 A few months ago, back in December, we would have seen the Rev'd A F Bradley in the chair, hearing how the choir outings in September had gone with adults to Folkestone and the boys to Brighton. All seemed normal in December.

Now, here at St John's, is the Annual Vestry and Council Meetings. Two anomalies; first the meeting is being held in the house called "Cranbrook" in Church Road, with thanks to Mr Pithie for allowing the meeting to be held in his home; secondly a new curate, Rev C H Black is in the chair with 10 others. Moreover, the Rev Bradley had written to ask for a grant in respect of fixtures left behind in the Parsonage which the meeting declines. We could conjure up a mischievous story of dispute but must not on the few facts that we have.

Oddly, a month later, in June, the Council minutes record that the parish will now welcome the Rev'd Black on Thursday 30 June at 7.30 pm. in the church room with music (to be arranged).

Change is in the air ? Now welcomed, a month later the Council has an unsettled meeting with the Rev'd Black. After a debate it was agreed to adopt intoning the AMEN's and the grounds are to be tidied, the church to be left open on weekdays in Summer. The church is to pay £5 per annum to the Infant School Fund. In a heated debate an accusation was made that the vicar was withholding money belonging to the poor resulting from the Miss S M Diplock Charity Fund. The allegation was withdrawn.

Perhaps we were too quick to focus on dissent, which might be expected with regular change, because a year later in March 1928, the Rev'd C H Black is in the chair, at the Parsonage, with 8 present. They discuss difficulties with the stove which is smoking badly and the church bell rope needs repair. Apart from that, Rev Black thanks the acting warden, lay reader, sidesmen and all others who had given of their time during the year. We must have established peace again.



1929 is another peaceful year, with St John's being chased by St Mary's, Hailsham over money, the grass needing cutting and the paths attending-to whilst a cost of £4 will cover painting and varnishing the church doors, gates and notice board. Regarding the rubbish left behind, no action was decided against the Post Office or County council authorities for the moment.

Monday 27 January 1930 The rubbish left by previous works consists of telegraph poles by the Post Office and road construction materials with tar barrels left by the County Council. Installing a notice board forbidding such a nuisance was considered, but the church rights only extend 4 foot beyond the hedges. They agree a payment of £5 to the Infant School as last year. Gales have brought down a large tree in the churchyard and it is agreed that two unemployed men be engaged to saw and split the trees for £4.11/6, paid from the Diplock Fund with the wood being given to the village poor. The Rev'd Black and his council are working together.

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

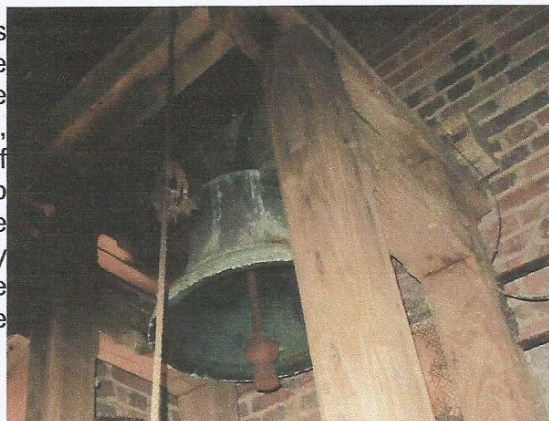
The stirrings of great change.

Wednesday 27 August 1930 A regular meeting of the Church Council is run by the Rev C H Black with 8 others to support. They hear that the church caretaker (*that's a new title that we've not seen before*) is giving up the employment and they send their thanks for his loyal service. Mr Johnson has cut the church hedges for free. It is decided to cut down several trees which have been declared dangerous. Rev Black said that more people were needed for the Freewill Offering scheme to improve the church income. A letter should be composed, printed and sent to all on the Church Roll in which case about 300 will be needed.

Tuesday 18 March 1931 It's the Annual Church Meeting and look how many are here - fifty-seven! What a credit to the Rev'd C H Black. The Rev Macklin Chapman, current vicar of St Mary's Hailsham, is welcomed. Mrs Pithie is re-elected as the Peoples' Warden and Mr H J Thorpe as the Vicars' Warden. The accounts are adopted and the Council elected en-bloc. Mrs Burtenshaw (*from St Mary's Hailsham*) addresses those present on finance, declaring "We stand together in the matter of the maintenance of the clergy." The Hailsham Parish Church Finance Committee is to appropriate the sum of £2.10/- per week from its income looking to St John's to provide £1 weekly to meet what the church calls the cost of clergy. (*They would then together produce annually £182, equivalent to £8,650 in 2021*).

1932 We do not have the 1932 day-to-day narrative to watch, but we do have statistics. The St John's Church building has 280 seats, it elects two churchwardens, and four people are elected to greet and help people as they arrive at church if they are not regulars. In addition to the Rev'd A C H Black, there is a 'lay reader' (*that is a person authorised by the bishop to preach whenever the curate choses not to*). There are eight bell-ringers, which is a little startling because there is only one bell, cast in London, decades before the church was built.

There are 255 people who have put their names down as church members in what is called the Electoral Roll. Whilst every resident in the village may cast a vote in the elections of churchwardens, only those on the Electoral Roll may vote in any of the other church elections. St John's is able to afford to employ an organist, a verger, and 9 in the choir. (*Presumably not with fortunes*). The Sunday School at the end of 1932 has 56 children on the books and enjoys seven unpaid teachers with one paid person to supervise.



Friday, 15th September 1933 Retirement? Do clergy ever retire? A trusty parish recorder called Reginald Jessup reports "*The Rev'd Arthur Clyde Henderson Black, current curate in charge of St John's, will leave for Australia on a short holiday. On his return he will take up residence at Red Croft, St John's Road, Polegate having purchased this property.*" And no doubt be a welcome encouragement and support to his successor.

And this is when the Rev'd John Catterole Salisbury arrives as his successor to help the church family grow to face the world. In his time we will see St. John's become a fully independent parish, and he ends his time as the first vicar of St John's as he enlists to serve in the Second World War. When he goes to war, he might feel that his seven years were well served. But he does not know that yet !

Our first sight of him at work is in April 1935.....

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

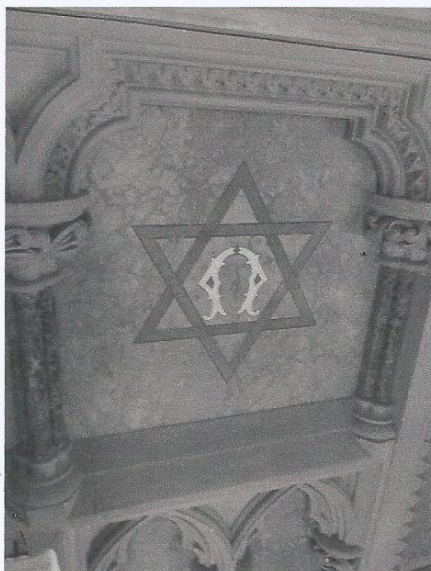
Let there be light.

Tuesday, 9th April 1935 Today, it's that regular event, the Annual Church Meeting and, instead of the curate in the chair, it would have been the Hailsham Vicar, but he cannot be here, and Mr A K Burtenshaw, a Hailsham churchwarden, is in the chair instead. Our curate, the Rev'd Salisbury supports the chair by asking the meeting to agree a temporary Secretary, the past one having "left".

Properly, there are lots of thanks; Miss Barclays and other ladies who decorate the church; George Thorpe for so many years of work, especially during the absences of the curate during his illness; the Mrs Tolhurst, Waghorn, Warren and Hastings for their church work and Mrs Tyhurst for managing the church room; Corrie Taylor for many years as Sunday School Superintendent and his teachers; the organist, choir, organ blower, and bell-ringer.

Douglas Hopkins had been lighting the gas at evening services, but the Rev'd Salisbury says he hopes to install electric lighting to commemorate the Kings' Silver Jubilee. Everyone is delighted. The elected churchwardens, Messrs J Johnson (vicar's warden) and H E Manger (people's warden) should consider electric lighting. *(Within a month, the council have decided*

to go ahead and put out 24 collecting boxes at the same time as starting the Fund. A quote of £45 (about £2,200 today) by "Joys" is rejected).



They hear that the church room had income of £49.1/3d (equal to receipts of £2,436 in 2021) and a balance of £24.15/- At St John's, there are 258 names on the Electoral Roll of whom 29 subscribe in the Freewill Offerings facility; but, the congregation of St Mary's Hailsham paid out in 1934 the sum of £158.10/3d to balance the books - this is a huge sum (equal to £7,900 in 2021). If Polegate is ever to stand on it's own feet it needs more income.

Tuesday, 25th June 1935 Things move fast here when they want to. They've already raised £32.11/2d and given the "go-ahead" to the Eastbourne Electric Corporation who quoted £57.14/6d to include underground supply cables instead of overhead, as well as a flood-lighting system like that at Hailsham.

In a couple of months they have raised almost all the money and are asking St Mary's permission to take £6 out of the Reredos Fund (left to them by the Diplocks when they installed the Reredos) to cover the cost of the Reredos lighting.

September sees severe gales which damage the church roof and chimney stack, and Mr Johnson has again been cutting the hedges and keeping up the churchyard. With the Harvest festival collection paid to the Lighting Fund, at the end of the year they have £63.14/6d. And will pay out £6 for a brass Tablet to go on the church wall to record the installation of electric lighting.



St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

The King's Most Excellent Majesty in Council

1936 Early this year, the church family receives the news of the death of George Thorpe, a long-time organist for St John's and who is commended for some 52 years total service to the church. At the annual meeting, everyone stands in a time of remembrance silence. Later, it is agreed to make some form of memorial for him.

The church is being spring-cleaned by many hands, and there are sales of work. As evidence of increased numbers in the congregation, there are many hands making lighter work instead of what are often 'the few'. *"Shall Thy wondrous works be known in the dark: and Thy righteousness in the land where all things are forgotten?"* For some time there has been a rolling discussion about one aspect of services - should responses in the prayer book be intoned or just said? In 1927 the church council agreed that from then the "Amen's" would be intoned - now should that be extended to other set lines? At least they now ask whether more music should be set during a service? The conclusion is that the existing level of music is sufficient and things should stay as they are. Perhaps the congregation might stand for a Psalm? *"Unto Thee have I cried, O Lord: and early shall my prayer come before Thee."* (Psalm 88:13)

Now the Rev'd Salisbury makes a startling announcement - that negotiations are in the hands of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners after the proposals that St John's might become a full parish.

Thursday, 29th April 1937 There's a breathless hush in the room at the annual meeting as the vicar of Hailsham, the Rev'd Macklin Chapman, reads to the eager ears the letter from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners to the Bishop. Towards the stipend of the incumbent they are prepared to grant the sum of £200 per annum (*equivalent to £9,512 in 2021*) on condition that the church members will hold themselves responsible to contribute some £50 per annum. More generously, they will grant an additional £50 when the seating is increased from the current 240 to 300.

An immediate resolution is laboriously composed, read-out, voted on, and committed to be sent in written form to the Commissioners. But in a few weeks there is a Deed of Inspection for the Church Commissioners which reports that the tower shingles need relaying with copper or zinc nails and this needs to be done along with other works to make the church worthy of becoming a parish. It will cost some £240 (*an eye-watering £11,415 in 2021*) and the Diocese believe they are too eager to delay the parish proposals; will it ever happen?

Tuesday 26th October 1937 marks a significant turning point in this "Consolidated Chapelry", as it is described in the London Gazette published today. The legal statement takes three and two half-columns and almost seems in a different language.

It starts - *"At the Court at Buckingham Palace, the 22nd October 1937 - PRESENT - The King's Most Excellent Majesty in Council. WHEREAS the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England have, in persuance of the Act of the 8th and 9th years of Her late Majesty Queen Victoria, Chapter 70....."* and so on for excessively long legal logic.

"Whereas at certain extremities of the said parish of Hailsham, of the Parish of Willington, of the Parish of Westham, of the Parish of Jevington, of the Parish of Wilmington, and of the Parish of Folkington,which said extremities lie contiguous one to another,....there is collected together a population which is situate at a distance from the several such Parishes."

It continues to say that parts of those parishes should be assigned to St John's having the consent of George, Bishop of Chichester, the Church Association Trust, the patrons of Hailsham, the consent of the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral Church of Chichester... and many others, they *"humbly represent....that it would be expedient that all those portions... should be united and formed into one Consolidated Chapelry..."* **That's it - St John's is now the Parish Church.**

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

Inducted at last.

Wednesday 12th January 1938

The Right Reverend George, Bishop of Chichester is here and, with due ceremony, he 'inducts' the Rev'd J C Salisbury 'to the living' (newly instituted) of St John's, Polegate.

It is not a quiet event which might be overlooked. There are so many from the surrounding parishes which have lost part of their parish domain, but also made it all possible, remembering back to 1873 when they worked so hard to even build the church itself. God has not failed them at all. And this is just the start.



Thursday, 20th January 1938 Perhaps the exhilaration of now being the Parish Church, causes this first meeting of 45 people under the 'new' vicar to be carried away by the power? After electing Mr J Johnson as the vicar's warden and Mr H J Page as the people's warden, the first matter put up for discussion is - "Could church services be made brighter by the singing of the responses?" Yes, they are over-encouraged, and by 19 against 6, they carry the motion. They set the maximum number for the church council at 12.

Real parish life does not change with a King's signature to a document. At the same time of legal work on the deeds of the Parsonage, the cellar has flooded, because of poor drains, and cost £3.18/9d to clear (*a cost of £185 today*) and the legal work a cost of £24.18/- (*equal to a cost of £1,170*) which, mysteriously they feel able to pay since they have some £76 in the bank. And the bank account is now transferred to the Barclays branch in Polegate. The branch has been there since the 1920's but of course it is only now that a bank account can be under St John's control.

Then there are the other vital things of parish life. Yes, let's make flower beds with summer and winter flowers near the church for £2 and a contract to keep the churchyard in order. And birds are getting in the tower causing a nuisance (*in the exact month of November, 84 years later, there is the same problem*). They do not neglect prayer - "O God make speed to save us. O Lord make haste to help us."

Mrs Putlands is taking over the Sunday School and should be paid 22/- per quarter instead of 12/6d, but payable weekly. We need £62 to end 1938 without being in debt, so print a letter and envelopes for a Gift Day in December. The balance remaining to pay for the Parish Quota is £8.10/-, a £15 survey fee for the vicarage, dilapidation's of £23.10/-, £5 for St John's School, and £10 for the church room. In response to the Rural Dean, agree to send £2.2/- to the Princess Alice Hospital in Eastbourne.

1939 We start the year with £10.12.4d (*about £485 today*) as reported to the Finance Meeting at the Vicarage at 7pm, followed by the Annual Parochial Church Council meeting at 7.30pm. We are getting organised; we've agreed nine days in the year to be designated for the collections of that Sunday to go to chosen missionary charities. The tower still needs shingling, the Infants Day School deeds from the Vicar and Churchwardens of Hailsham are under the Chichester Diocesan Fund. The School Managers account is to be taken over into the Church account and kept by the Wardens. The Quota (payable to support the presence of the vicar) for the year is to be £20.

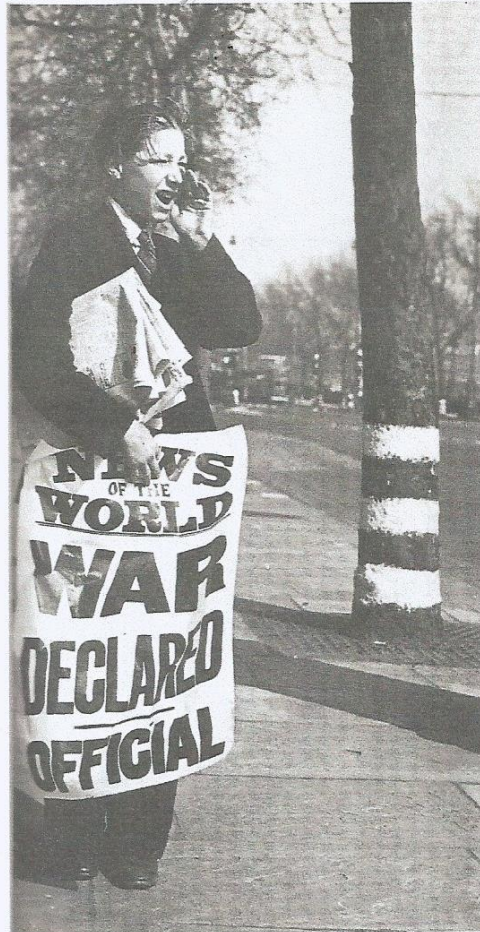
St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

Black-outs - bombs - keep praying

1939, the first year of St John's as the parish church continues. The congregation was commended for paying in 1938 £123 to mission. After the Easter services, the Rev Salisbury, with 40 members present is presented with the Offering of £22.7/7d. It is the tradition that the incumbent's stipend is augmented by the Easter Offerings these days. (*This is the equivalent gift to the vicar of £1,021 in 2021*). The church fabric remains in good repair.

The Vicar reporting a gift of £5, suggests that it be used to erect a notice board on the west side of the churchyard. This eventually costs £5.8/- and the vicar dispenses with the suggested lettering to keep the price down. The Churchwardens have repaired the church books; quite a lot of work, because there are 63 prayer books, 75 hymn books. Must purchase a dustbin for 8/6d because of the rubbish in the churchyard but it was noted that the District Council might not collect rubbish free as the church is not rated.

More good news - the Diocese have promised a grant of £60 for a curate and they now hear that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners will add to that with another £60 if the Diocese go ahead. Who might they get as a curate? There is not a curate in view, but the vicar is given power to appoint one if found. Then they agree to start a presentation fund for Mr and Mrs Taylor who have worked for so many years.



War has been on everyone's lips for so long with the papers headlining the Spanish Civil War and seeming to fan the flames of a war in Europe. Then, 3rd September, Britain and France declare war at 5pm with Germany and in 8 days the British Expeditionary Force is sent to France. The parish council has met 4 days after declaration, and the Rev'd Salisbury tells them all that the spire reshingling and the curate will not happen during the war.

What to do if there is a fire from air raids, they ask. Let's have a talk with the Air Raid Patrol authorities. There will be many other questions. The parish council resolve - In the event of an air raid warning during morning and evening prayer, those on duty or those who felt they must go home, are to leave as soon as possible during the 3 minute pause after the warning, then the service will continue. In the event of an actual raid the congregation is to put their trust in God and obey orders implicitly. It would be helpful to have a churchwarden at the church door to watch for approaching planes and report. If bombing occurs, the congregation is to get under their seats.

If the air raid takes place during Holy Communion, the service will not be interrupted. In the event of a high explosive bomb landing nearby it is likely that glass would be blown outwards. Holy Communion will remain at 8am but evening services will be at 3.15 pm instead of 3.30 pm. because of the black-out for the winter period November to January. Black-outs, how do you black-out a church? Extra services offering people the chance of prayer and worship together might have found Psalm 88 a comfort - "*O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before Thee: O let my prayer enter into Thy presence, incline Thy ear unto my calling....*"

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

Resignation

Friday, 23rd February 1940. The parish council, (ten are able to make the meeting) meet with the vicar, Rev'd Salisbury.

There is some very challenging news - he has received and has accepted an offer to be a Chaplain in the Volunteer Reserve of the Air Force from Tuesday-week, the 5th March. Shock and silence in the room.

Then they congratulate him as he says the bishop has accepted his resignation and he is so grateful for all their support and encouragement to him over the last 6 ½ years. Somehow they cannot press the question - who will look after them now?

Then mundane matters are always there to be faced. The annual accounts for 1939 showed only 16/10d left in Church Fund, and as a consequence the Spire Fund not started yet. It would be good to publish the 1939 accounts in the church magazine. Mr Page will resign at Annual meeting from People's Warden and Treasurer due to pressure of business. They linger as the vicar goes out and discuss a parting gift in his absence. Things are going to speed up now as they pray for God's grace to accompany him in the coming days.

Thursday, 29th February 1940 There's an Emergency Meeting of the Parochial Church Council with Mr Vine, the Vice Chairman leading them to agree to make representations to the bishop under the Benefices Measure 1931 - "please can we have another vicar". On the bank account there will now only be the two churchwardens to sign cheques.

Tuesday, 26th March 1940 Wonderfully the Rev'd Salisbury is back here to chair the Annual Vestry Meeting at 7.30 pm. and the APCM at 7.45 pm in the church room in Victoria Road. There are about 90 people here and the room is packed. Mr Shewington is elected as the People's Warden because of Mr Vine's ill-health. And Mr Page is to continue as warden but in future as the Vicar's Warden.

All the elections, adoptions etc are completed and the vicar gives his farewell speech. Their hearts are warmed by emotions of sadness, wellbeing, anxiety for him, for the parish, and the special nature of the parting moment. As a token of his gratitude for everyone's support during his time with them, he leaves a gift of two Warden's Staves. In return, their gifts to Vicar, are £32.3/9d (*equal to a gift of £1,258 in 2021*), a writing case with self-generating battery torch, an illuminated address, a Bible wallet, a travelling writing case, and a clock. Will that see him through the war?

At the next Emergency Meeting in April, they hear the bishop has offered the living at Polegate to a Rev'd Leonard, but he has not yet accepted the post. He is currently the curate-in-charge at Three Bridges. Will he accept?

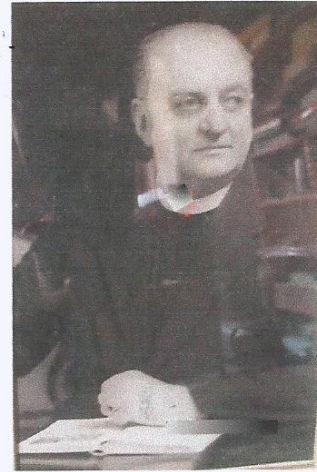


St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

A new vicar

With the March 1940 departure of the Rev'd Salisbury there is a new set of worries - the vicarage. The bathroom (and they seem to think the bath?) need repainting, the doors need varnishing, and the bedroom used as a nursery needs redecorating, then there needs to be some more electric lighting and heating points. We've got a price - 13 lights and 6 heating points £14.12/6d - decorating £13.13.11d with half the cost to the PCC and half to the vicar.

Wednesday, 12th June 1940 The Rev'd R A Leonard has arrived and here he is in the chair with the PCC at the vicarage. They agree to support Holy Trinity running a CMS Garden Party next month. The Rev'd Leonard agrees to repay the parish, out of the quarter's stipend, £42 for the fees paid to the Rev'd Leyland for the March to May services he conducted after Salisbury left.



And the war is always there to be worked around. A summer instead of a winter Gift Day from which the cost of the church black-out curtains will be taken. The Black-out Committee will recruit curtain-makers. They agree to build up funds for repairs (*no reason is recorded but are they thinking of war damage?*), and because of the war, they say, we must pay the Quota before any charitable giving. Next, how to spiritually serve the service men posted nearby? Make the evening service a family service to get the men in and, this winter, find a venue for a canteen for the soldiers. Last month the Army took occupation of the church room, and for the rest of the war there will be no rent income, so add the church room fund to the general church money.

Wednesday 11th September 1940 The vicar is told that the black-out curtains are ready and extra hymn books are to be bought. There have been complaints, and the church committee direct that "sides", the people who are expected to welcome before the start of a service, are to show new-comers to a pew. Will churchwarden Mr Page be called up? In case he is, there is an option to appoint Captain Raymer as his replacement. (*He has obviously recently arrived, and perhaps he is a Salvationist Captain? We are unsure.*) Captain Raymer is missing next month. With sadness they agree to close the Sunday School and Women's Fellowship for the duration of the war. In a few weeks, Mr Page is called up, and they elect Mr King as deputy vicar's warden and with the power to countersign cheques. They pray for all those in action.

Saturday, 4th January 1941 This is an afternoon meeting at the vicarage with just 6 people present and the vicar. Captain Raymer is back helping the parish in place of Mr King whose wife is suffering ill-health. Although Mrs Colbran is cleaning the church fires during the week, the vicar will look after them on Sundays. The bishop writes to thank them for meeting their Quota last year in 1940, and the church grounds are suffering from neglect.

They review a recent sadness. Just before Christmas, Salvation Army children had broken into the church hall damaging the piano and some china. The police were involved and the vicar had gone to court to witness the value of the damage at £9 (*equivalent to £372 in 2021*). The outcome had been that the court ordered the parents to pay; a sad experience during a time of community stress.

Twelve of the church opening windows are unsafe, being held together by wires. The church fabric is in bad condition suggesting the setting up of a Fabric Fund. The vicarage cellar, flooded in the past, now has the window blocked up to prevent the flooding which they agree has been going on for years. It cost £6 from the Dilapidation's Fund.

The first war Christmas Day Communion saw 70 communicants as they recite the Jubilate; "O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands; serve the Lord with gladness, and come before His presence with a song....." A merry prayer to lift to the Lord.

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

The war affects everything in 1941.

Wednesday, 12th March 1941 In spite of war demands, about 18 people have managed to attend the Annual Parochial Church Meeting this evening, a little earlier than in peacetime. The vicar, the Rev'd Leonard, gives out his regular thanks, but especially to Captain Raymer, much experienced in church work, who is officially elected as the Peoples' Warden. All the other elections are managed as far as they can. The Electoral Roll at the end of 1940 is reported as a pleasing figure of 244.

And the year for 1940 saw the church receiving £662.12/2d (*income worth about £25,875 in 2021*) and expenses only came to £535.5/5d (*a cost that would be about £20,911 in 2021*), and they finished the year with a healthy balance of £129.6/9d giving comfort in adversity.

In his report, the vicar says that soldiers stationed in the village area, are coming to church in great numbers and the Army are still in possession of the church room; he dared to hope that they might pay an annual rent of about £35. He ends with a note of optimism saying that after the war he hoped the church family will develop the social side of the church to "bring the people of Polegate into church and make them welcome". Everyone applauded.

The year continues with struggles to manage. The employed churchyard gardener is no longer continuing his job, so they now have to pay 1/- per hour for hedge cutting and weeding. Later, they manage to get the job taken on for just 9d. per hour. Mr Thorpe, organist for over 30 years, has not been able to play for four months - the church cannot afford to pay two people and, with great sadness, they ask him to resign, arranging a farewell gift costing £17.9/6d. (*a gift today of about £615*). The organ is full of dust and needing repairs costing £38.10/-.

On a happier note, Mrs Humphrey's Jumble Sale made enough money to be a real help to the infants Day School, and the church magazine, *The Messenger*, which they thought they would not be able to continue during the war, is successfully continuing. The parish council does not hesitate to take up the government's free insurance scheme for the church structure, but which excludes any furniture, the bell, and the organ. They decide to insure those separately at £4.10/- with £300 cover. There's been a great activity of spring-cleaning in the church including the choir stalls and painting the doors, and they have now marked two pews with the names of the churchwardens so they get a seat when the church is crowded. Whilst the military did pay rent of £35 for last year, the court fines paid over by the parents of the Salvation Army children went to county funds and not the church.

In response to the times, the vicar is reaching out to those who are not regular members of the church and especially seeking apathetic older residents. The war is triggering small acts of generosity. There's a small chalice given by a few friends. But an offer to donate a cross for the 'altar' in memory of Lt. T C S Molyneux, who was killed at Dunkirk last year was put to the vote and carried with the vicar against. It would be subject to a Faculty from the Diocese and subsequently the vicar did not go any further with the offer.

But what has God been doing to support the church family, which He has created and placed in the care of the Rev'd Leonard? We saw above that he has opened the hearts of many, some from anxiety, some from a renewed sensitivity to things eternal, and sent them to hear the preaching of the vicar at services guiding them spiritually. Perhaps a favourite prayer helped,

O God, from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed, grant unto Thy servants that peace which the world cannot give; that both, our hearts may be set to obey Thy commandments, and also that, by Thee, we being defended from the fear of our enemies, may pass our time in rest and quietness; through the merits of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, AMEN

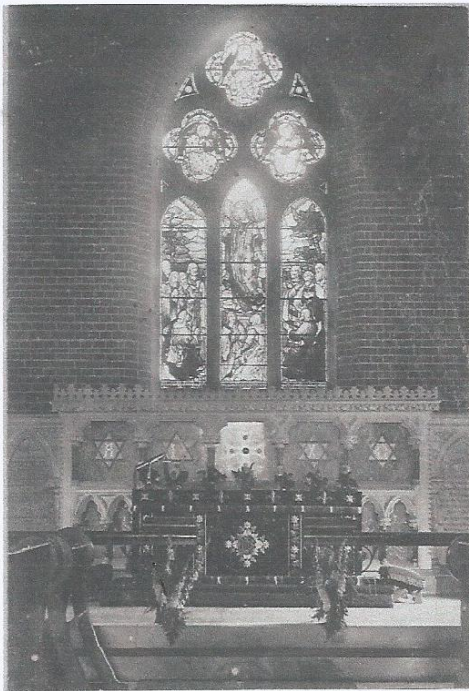
St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

All things bright and beautiful.

1942 sees the parish council agreeing to postpone until after the war the work on the church spire, which has some 500 shingles missing as well as worn boarding. There are smaller things they can manage - like the stove at the back of the church which is wearing out. Can it be repaired or replaced by a second-hand one? *"We will have a new heating system after the war"* says the vicar, the Rev'd Leonard. The path between the vicarage and the vestry have been levelled with gravel.

The Parochial Church Council get incensed and agree to protest against the Member of Parliament who is intending to open cinemas for children on Sundays and promote Youth Organisations activities during worship-time. But their canteen money is well spent and the newspapers bought for troops are much appreciated. *"It's the war."*

Hailsham District Council have earmarked the Church Infants School as a First Aid Post in the event of an emergency. On investigation they find that the insurers will cover this increased risk as well as with the Army using the church rooms.



The annual meetings are well attended this year with about 35 supporting the wardens and vicar who announces *"We are blessed"* meaning with a balance of £179.13/6d and all funds in credit. More than that, he is intending soon to have the full prayer book service of communion after morning service, instead of the abbreviated form. *"Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom, who knowest our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking; we beseech Thee to have compassion upon our infirmities; and those things for which our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask, vouchsafe to give us, for the worthiness of Thy Son, Jesus Christ, Amen."*

The war has brought much kindness; a gift of cassocks and surplices, a chalice, and a carpet. Good news! Captain Raymer has been licenced by the bishop as a Lay Reader, and Miss Pawson has been as a Catechist. They hope that older residents might be attracted to join the congregation.

There has been a response to the PCC's objection to children in cinemas during worship-time on Sundays; the response was that the showings were intended for soldiers

and their families, and the cinema organisers agree that children should not be there on their own, but that they could not be barred.

Everyone is pleased at the new velvet for the altar frontal (*last renewed in 1894*), with the gold from the old frontal transferred over, and something bright, beautiful and new, just when we needed it. But youth activities have been restricted because the army is in the church room, and the Infants School may have to be blacked-out if the war continues. October allows the start of meetings for young people in the Wardens' Post and everyone gives thanks to the Wardens for bringing over chairs on a Sunday when the church is over-crowded.

"O come let us sing unto the Lord: let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation." (Venite)

We cannot repair the broken church stove, and a worn cowl has brought fumes into the vestry. The new stove costs £1.15/4d. The vicar is willing to continue to stoke the fires in the winter. A better investment is needed instead of the ½ % which the bank pays on deposit.

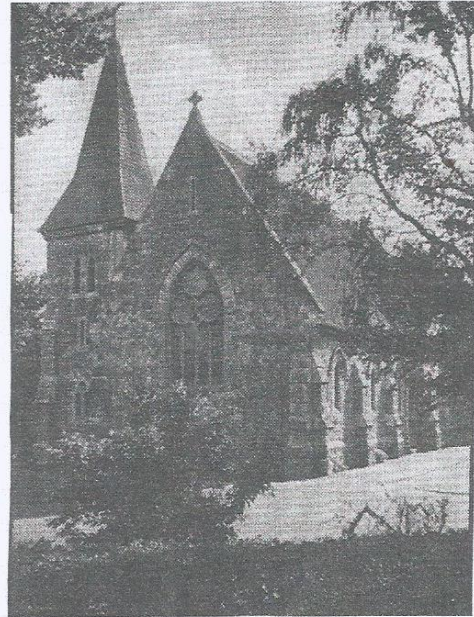
St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

Coming and going; change in 1943

Friday, 22nd January 1943 Here we are at the vicarage with 12 people, just like the apostles, but not quite. It's the start of the year, a year that will see a lot of change. We've fixed the cowl on the top stove. No more suffocating fumes. The maintenance of the grounds last year cost some £12.17/1d. (*That's a cost of £422 in 2021*). The Elm Trees, bordering the High Street are giving concern; more cost? A Standing Committee is needed and after some struggle they elect an appropriate number to make quick decisions when needed.

February there's an Emergency Meeting because Mr Roberts has died. This is resolved at the Annual Vestry and Parochial Church meeting in April, which this year is held at the Air Raid Patrol Wardens Post; perhaps because there are 35 present and it would be too crowded to get them all in the same room in the vicarage. Hearing that there are 248 on the Electoral Roll, the meeting is encouraged. Then emotions are dashed as Captain Raymer reports that he is being moved on and has to resign as church treasurer.

Mr J C Dick is re-appointed as the Vicar's Warden, and Mr H Freakes is elected as the People's Warden. It really is a war meeting reflected in all the annual reports. The vicar has been visiting the sick and those suffering from the war. The Easter Offering collected £34.5/2d for the Rev'd Leonard (*worth £1,090 today*).



"I will give thanks unto the Lord with my whole heart: secretly among the faithful, and in the congregation. The works of the Lord are great: sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." (Psalm 9:1)

Late Spring, the meeting hears that Reginald Frost has died whilst on active service with the Air Force. They stand in a suitable time of silence. He was a sidesman for the church, welcoming all as they came to worship. There is the perennial church congregation problem - "That's where I sit." and they make the usual resolve that sidesmen must show strangers to a seat to prevent unrest. It's time to thoroughly clean the belfry; a team is required.

In the Autumn, comes the news that under some pews, many joists are rotten. There have already been repairs postponed until after the war. How to decide which are urgent and which can be left?

At last there is some resolution to the difficulty of October in 1941 when Mrs Molyneux offered to give a cross for the altar in memory of her son killed at Dunkirk in 1940. Someone will ask her if an alternative gift of some sort would be acceptable. She might be willing to agree to something else.

At the vicarage, just before Christmas, they hear that the cost of the new floor for the church, plus some roof and drain repairs was £108.2/- (*a cost of £3,441 in 2021*). It was amazingly fortunate that, as the Earl of Willingdon's house was demolished, the floor timbers were offered and were sufficient for the church restoration. Mr French of Willingdon is sorting the joists and a damp course inside the wall to safeguard the floors.

Money seems easier with £157.13/1d in the current account and £348.10/- on deposit.

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

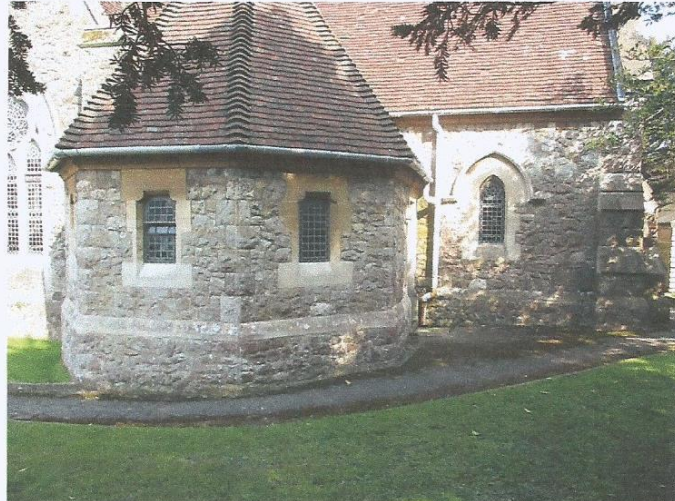
Is there a glimmer of light?

The Spring Meeting in **1944** sees Captain Raymer being welcomed back. This annual meeting has about 50 present. It gets the accounts of 1943; annual receipts were £915.18/5d (*worth about £29,215 today*) and the years expenses were £643.12/9d (*the equivalent cost in 2021 of £20,458.*) Psalm 138 has words that help everyone at this time; *"Though I walk in the midst of trouble, yet Thou wilt revive me: Thou shalt stretch forth Thy hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and Thy right hand shall save me."* (Psalm 138:7)

It's a good start to the year for St John's; the belfry is cleaned, a new flagpole has been bought, and the church fund stands at £134. And the even better news - the Diocese will grant £100 towards the employment of a lay-worker to assist the vicar. He is in need of help. 1943 saw 58 baptisms, 16 weddings, 3,014 communicants and even the Mothers Union number of members is growing. In the traditional way, the church family members have produced £40 in the Easter Offering for the vicar (*as much as £1,238 in 2021*).

The Church Pastoral Aid Society have offered £30 towards the stipend of a Lady Worker, leaving the parish only to find £25 (*a cost of about £770 in 2021*) How does this sit with the Diocese offer? We may find out.

After putting a new cowl on the vestry chimney, they've now resorted to sealing up the chimney, costing £2.5/- because the new cowl did not stop the fumes. The PCC have paid the Diocese just over £25 to *"offset the structural and external repairs of the vicarage for the next 5 years."* There's quite a lot of routine work about the grounds and church to do.



There's a debate about the pressure of numbers at services. "Construct collapsible seats to the pew ends to give extra seating to stop people sitting in the churchwardens seats?" Even the vicar is so crowded out when the church is full, that they must buy a seat to go next to his desk. The monthly Men's Services are attracting as many as 70 each time. But in anxiety about air raids and the destruction of the church, Mrs Tolhurst has taken care of the Roll of Honour from the Great War. The Roll is in three framed displays hung on the church wall, but what if a bomb landed on Mrs Tolhurst's house? It's the war. The Church Room is soon to be released from military use.

June 1944 There is a great sense of optimism amongst most people since the news of the 4th that the Allies have entered Rome, and then on the 6th with the news of D-day as it is slowly released to the public. The words "Post War Plans" are being spoken, encouraged by the news that Mrs Moppett has left the church a piece of land in St John's Road, adjacent to the church. The thought is that they will sell it and use the money to enlarge the vestry. The vestry is currently far too small, and it would be good to be able to seat another 50 in the church somehow.

The vicar is anxious for the population in the Lower Willingdon area who are a long way from St John's, and he wants to put up a board on the piece of land that has been given in 1936 to announce it's future use. The Diocese have written to say it is not to be enclosed or have any notice because it is leased to Eastbourne Corporation. The PCC, remembering that Mr H B Marchant is the donor, have written to him to ask if the gift was to the Diocese, or the parish, or both. His solicitors reply that it was to the Diocese, for a church, school etc and it is in order for a hut be erected for services. Remembrance Day collection is given to the British Legion.

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

Peace at last; thank God.

Monday, 31st December 1944

This afternoon, the Archdeacon of Hastings preaches at St John's to a fine turn-out of army personnel; it is a special service arranged for them.

There has been a very close relationship between the church and the ARP Wardens, and although the church hall is now released by the military, it is felt that, in the long term there is a need for a hall nearer the church instead. Whilst it may be that the existing church hall could not be sold for years ahead, the Horse and Groom site might be a good option when the ARP leave. The owner says he cannot give a price to the church until after the war and the site is cleared. The chairs in the ARP Post are to be repaired and new ones are to be bought from canteens as they sell up after the war.

Thursday, 11th January 1945 Mr Nicholls has produced a detailed plan for a hall on the church site instead. He's charged £3.10/- (*equals £151 in 2021*). The Rev'd Leonard reports that they are very short of coke for the heaters because extra was used in December. The fuel organiser had budgeted some 6 cwt. for the month, but they used more.

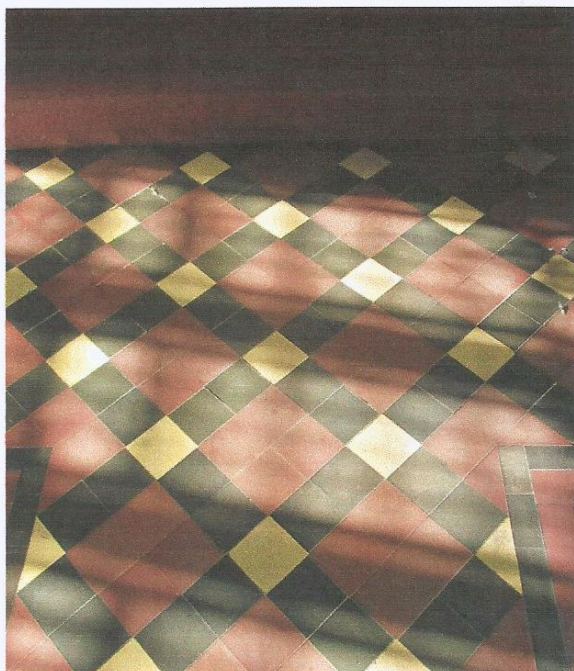
This year's charitable giving will be to Church Pastoral Aid Society, BCMS, the Bible Society, Seamens' Christian Missionary Society, Mission to the Jews, British Legion, and St Luke's Hostel. Such magnificent charitable intentions. Also the PCC decide to pay £9.10/- (*just £286 in 2021*) to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners Scheme "K". The Commissioners will then match their payment with a like amount to augment the benefice income.

Thursday, 15th February 1945 The eternal Annual Parochial Meeting is supported by 30 as well as the vicar and receives all the reports for 1944. There are 244 on the Electoral Roll. The Bishop has launched an appeal for £310,000 (*that would be a fearsome sum of £9,341,700 in 2021*) in support of rural churches over the next 10 years. For next year, Mr Garbett Burbidge has been asked to be the vicar's warden. He has admired the way in which the services are conducted in St John's. Praise indeed.

Wednesday, 2nd May 1945 People wake to the news that the Russians have captured Berlin, and are on tenterhooks until Tuesday 8th when "**GERMANY CAPITULATES**".

Immediately, a date is set for a special "Stand-down" Service of Thanksgiving in five days time. This is intended specifically for the Wardens and Civil Defence organisation personnel. An amplifier, paid for by a donation, will be used if the church is full and people left outside. Perhaps the words of Psalm 104 are used "*I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live; I will praise my God while I have my being. And so shall my words please Him: my joy shall be in the Lord.*"

The chairs in the church hall have been repaired and 12 more folding chairs have been purchased at 8/3d. each, but about 24 more are needed. They are working to get the church hall open by the Autumn when the use will be restricted to the church for the time being. Attempting to get the Army to pay for the dilapidation's, who then pay £200 (*worth a generous £6,027 in 2021*). Messrs T Carey of Plaistow are appointed to re-shingle the spire for £235 (*today, £7,080*). This is the moment when the church, lifted by the end of the war, looks outwards to pray about the land in Broad road although the recreation ground hut is unsuitable for a Sunday School.



St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

Post-war years slip by.

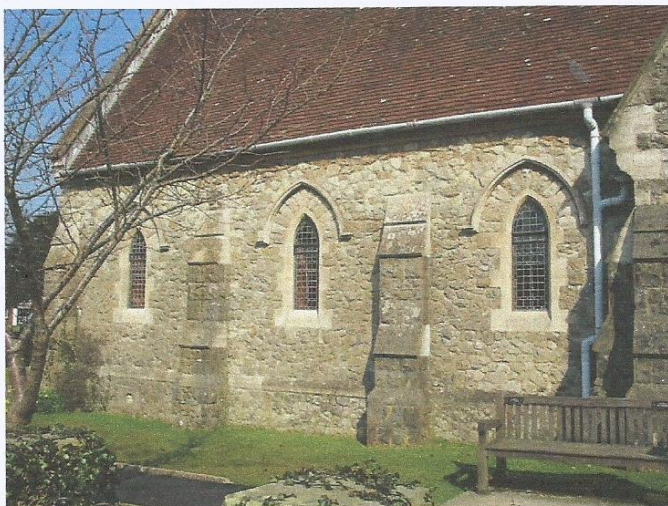
1946 Parish life settles naturally into a "What should we be doing" emotion. The practical things that they can afford are done; the church floor is replaced, emergency exits made, and four gas heaters are installed instead of the laborious coke stoves. And the spire re-shingling, awarded to the Plaistow firm, has been completed to everyone's relief. In all, these renovations have been paid for by social events, drama evenings, plays and sales of work. "All hands to the pumps".

After the wartime debates and restrictions, the hut on the Lower Willingdon ground at Broad road, given to the Diocese in 1938, is rented on a 3-years agreement so that Mrs Walker can run a 'remote' Sunday School there.

And then there's the Youth Group, organised by Miss Connie Tyhurst. They go out on cycle rides, rambles round the local countryside, tennis tournaments and competitions on Folkington Manor courts. Much initiative and leadership is emerging. One more sign for the future - the land, next-door to the church in St John's Road, (a legacy of Mrs Moppett) has been sold. It made £275 (worth £8,040 in 2021) and the money is sent to the Diocese to hold as the ways of extending the vestry are explored.

1947 The Archdeacon visits on a day that is in everyone's diary but only the Rev'd Leonard and the two wardens actually meet up. The visit is to discuss the vestry extension and the possibility of an extension to the church, but no action results.

The vicar replaces the remaining old coke heaters that he has stoked for all the war years, with three gas heaters costing just £55. And the organ may now have an electric blower instead of a hand-pump, a cost of £57.12/- (rather expensive £1,585 today).



1948 This year, some rather strange ecclesiastical happenings, at least to us today. In June, the Parochial Church act to raise the vicar's stipend to £500 by an extra £50 to the new "K" Scheme run by the Diocese who, again, will add £50 to it, like last time. (£500 in 1948 equals £12,690 today). Another strange thing to our ears - the Rev'd Chapman (the current vicar of Hailsham), and the Rev'd Wood of Wilmington parish announce that they renounce their rights to any fees at St John's, Polegate. This is a left-over from the consolidation of parts of all the other parishes that were enacted to become our parish at Polegate. In addition, Mr Dingwall, the Diocesan Secretary, says "the surviving incumbents of old parishes have relinquished their fees", and, "Polegate is an Ecclesiastical district now", termed as a Consolidated Chapelry. As a consequence of others having no rights over us, the church commissioners agree to the setting of a Table of Fees for Polegate. How wonderful. The bishop visits to confirm our candidates.

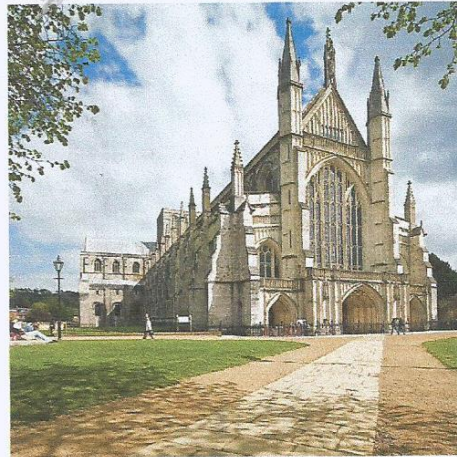
Thursday, 17th February 1949 Getting volunteers for the choir is getting very difficult and bad attendance is also being experienced with those on 'sides' meaning that sometimes there is not a welcoming face at the door before a service starts. There are 264 on the Electoral Roll, so no shortage of people, but that number also includes those who do not live in the parish. More than that, the electric blower for the organ is in place but still without power. Who's pumping instead? A note "apparatus for the bells has been installed and a concert for the maintenance costs" which might refer to the speakers in the tower to play recordings of cathedral chimes.

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

A new era?

Thursday, 10th March 1949 At the Annual Parochial meeting, 31 people have managed to come along out of an Electoral Roll of 264. All the formalities and elections are completed, then the annual reports of replacing the church floor, and installing extra gas heaters. The meeting agrees, after a request by the Village Committee, to grant permission for a War Memorial Tablet to be erected in church. Prior to this, a Faculty had been requested from the Diocese Advisory Committee by the PCC which could hardly be denied. At Easter, the Rev'd Leonard received the Easter Offering of £40.0/7d. (*Something like £1,000*) and then in July there is a Parish Outing to Winchester.

"Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD. This is the gate of the LORD into which the righteous shall enter. I will praise Thee; for Thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation." (Psalm 118:19-21)



Still recovering from the years of stagnation, all the church windows (except the Diplock East windows) are repaired, especially the 'big back window' in the West wall. As an encouragement to cover these costs, people are asked to save half-crowns. And the church room is now refurbished, helped by the young people who somehow raised £200 including the cost of the floor £98.9/10d.

The vicar has spoken to the PCC of the difficulties of ministering to a population of 8,000 without a curate, the acquiring of whom seems out of the question. Polegate Infant School, a constant drain on the parish finances, has now been taken over by the County Authorities. The school itself remains the property of the diocese, but the financial responsibility is now with the County Council; it is a State-aided Primary School, controlled, with the vicar and others as Foundation Managers. A great relief to all in the parish. At the same time, the hut at Lower Willingdon which had a lease which ran out in July 1948, has now had a new lease allowing it to be rented for church purposes (Sunday School was the last report).



1950 The question of dealing with the cramped vestry arises again with another (expected) visit by the Archdeacon. New plans by Mr Scales cost £15.15/- (*about £377 in 2021*) and they've been sent to the Diocese for Advice and response.

All during the war, there have been large anti-tank concrete blocks in the grounds which are at last removed by Hall and Co without leaving damage to the grounds. In the happy wedding photo alongside, you can just see the tank-blocks (*left*), which ran all along the High Street.

A bit of a shock as the Polegate War memorial Committee dissolves itself - there seems to be a lack of interest to erect the plaque already agreed to. And

another shock, as the vicar, the Rev'd Leonard announces that he will be leaving in the New Year. His earlier call to the parish to "*stand up for Christian principles in the fight against Communism*" has caught the spirit of the moment. But now, his message to them is "*forgive my failings, and praise God for all our successes*".

Sunday 12th November 1950 Remembrance Day with a fully British Legion attended service whose collection is given to Earl Haig's Fund, as usual.

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

Out with the 'old', in with the 'new'.

Monday, 28th November 1950

The Rev'd R A Leonard is in the chair at the church council meeting and he says he has now delivered all the Sunday School leaflets around Lower Willingdon. The hut on the plot of land in Broad Road seems to have been in use by the County Library, but is to be returned to Mrs Morris at the end of the year. The leaflet drop in Lower Willingdon is probably in anticipation of the re-start of the Sunday School there. They decide to hold the Annual Parochial Church Meeting on the 18th January, perhaps because the bishop of Chichester is coming to preach on the 28th. Some significant debate ensues as they frame the application under the Benefits Rights Presentation where they can express an opinion for the parish about the person to replace the Rev'd Leonard very soon. Their resolution asks for "an unaided mature married man"; now there's a surprise?



Thursday, 18th January 1951 As planned, here is the APCM with Rev'd Leonard for the last time; 70 come to 'see him off' and present to him a cheque for £73.11/- (worth a magnificent £1,646 in 2021) and there is a heartfelt tribute to him for his ministry since 1940, with well-wishes for his new position at Westfield. Leonard says that he was sorry to have had to close down the Boys Bible classes. There are 250 people listed in the church books. His last service will be on Ash Wednesday. The 1950 parish receipts were £1,175.19.2d and expenditure was £963.18.4d (equal to about £23,050 in 2021).

Sunday, 28th January 1951

As arranged, the bishop of Chichester arrives - no pomp or ceremony, and preaches from the Gospel at the 10.30am service, and, at the evensong he gives a farewell sermon for the Rev'd Leonard. "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace: according to Thy word. For mine eyes have seen: Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared: before the face of all people; to be a light to lighten the Gentiles: and to be the glory of Thy people Israel." (Nunc Dimittis)

Saturday, 24th February 1951

The Rev'd Harry Parsons has already arrived (that would be almost no time without a vicar) and today is the day when the bishop of Lewes performs the induction. There were those afterwards who believed in the tradition that he will be here for as many years as he rang the church bell, but others say that is just superstition.

Harry Parsons might write in his diary that night 'I received the key, I entered alone, I prayed, I touched the sacred things, I tolled the bells'. But the bishop's hand complete's the installation.

It's a very special moment which everyone feels privileged to have been blessed to experience.

Almost certainly the Rev'd Harry Parsons was with us in time to celebrate Easter. He is experiencing his first parish as a vicar having been a curate at St Paul's in Worthing, and before that he was in Nigeria with the Christian Missionary Society. And all is well as he settles in.



The new Vicar of Polegate (left), with the Bishop of Lewes, after his institution.

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

His first year.

Wednesday, 28th March 1951 It's a new start with the Rev'd Harry Parsons and the vicar's warden Mr E G Furneaux, and the people's warden Mr H Vine. Rev'd Leonard missed out with the Easter Offering of £32.15/8d which is given to the Rev'd Parsons. The meeting expresses the thought that we are "going to work happily together".

The Police have stated that the church room must have fire extinguishers and asbestos curtains before a Public Licence can be issued. There is well-meaning concern for the young people of Lower Willingdon who are left untouched by the church. The current hut on the recreation ground is inadequate; "is it possible to erect another on the land left to the Diocese by the late Mr H B Marchant in Broad road,?" The Vicarage - the Diocese has met the £252.10/4d. cost of the dilapidation's (*a hefty £5,569 today*) and St John's has £183.2/7d in the Repair Fund, leaving some £69 short. Then the Diocese has said it will meet 2/3rds of the shortfall leaving St John's to find £23.2/6d.

Monday, 9th April 1951 It's a Finance Committee Meeting and Mr Furneaux is in the chair, and the vicar is wisely keeping out of it. Last year, they had to raise some £400 to meet the running expenses. As a consequence, the wardens idea was to analyse the giving on Sunday evening 8th April. They concluded that the majority of the congregation gave six pence into the plate. (*Today, in 2021, that would be a value of £0.55.*) After much discussion, the Finance Committee agreed that no appeal be made to the congregation for an increase in their contributions. Charges - the vicar wants to be able to conduct funerals without a fee, and the church room needs a table of



charges. Undecided. But they do decide to bar alcohol in the church room. They expect to run to a loss on the Magazine. Shall the money from the collection plate at communion service go a separate fund for the sick and poor at the vicars discretion? Undecided.

Later - the vicar reports that there is legally no charge for the wedding or funeral use of the church, deciding not to charge on those occasions. Church room letting's will be managed by Miss Lewin and go ahead with an application for a public performance licence from the police. The roof needs repairing and the cost of a two-gallon fire extinguisher has been 77/6d (*£3.7/6d in old money*). Not many have signed up for the Parish Outing to Arundel which will cost 13/- per person. After the discussions on how cramped the vestry is, ladies are expressing difficulties when they robe for services. What to do?

There's a Garden Sale, with the Rural Dean's wife performing the opening ceremony. Rot has been discovered in the floor of the vestry just as they fixed the safe into the old fireplace (above which they capped the chimney off a while ago). They've got to remove the rotten wooden floor out to the edge of the Chancel, and replace it with ballast and a concrete surface costing £20 (*equal to £441 today*). And, *Lord have mercy on us* - the church roof needs urgent repairs for woodworm and they get a quote for £800 (*a frightening £17,647 in 2021*) Is that enough for the Rev'd Harry Parsons to be going on with?

Sunday, 30th March 1952 It didn't have to be a Sunday, but at Holy Trinity in Eastbourne, a bishop is visiting and has agreed to a Confirmation Service for many people. There are thirteen from St John's Polegate. A great step in those lives, as they 'confirm' the promises to follow their Saviour Jesus Christ made by others on their behalf, when they were Christened. Well done Harry Parsons!

With some relief, they spread the news that the church roof woodworm treatment has been successful. The actual repairs were completed by Eastbourne-firm Hudsons, and the woodworm treatment by a London firm. Better and better, the cost is 'only' £750 (*a less frightening £15,172 in 2021*) a saving of £50.

Great things He has taught us, great things He has done, and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son; but purer, and higher, and greater will be our wonder, our rapture, when Jesus we see.

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

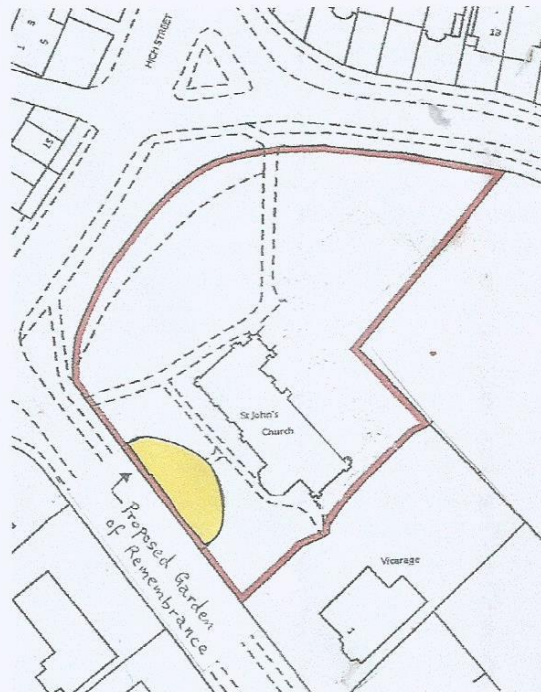
These are going to be a great years!

1952 The year continues with the church family enjoying the spiritual care of the Rev'd Harry Parsons. But this is the moment for the family to consider a major step. There's been a startling proposal to the Parochial Church Council. "Shall we create a plot for cremated remains as a Memorial of the Second World War, 1939 to 1945?" It is a bold project; St John's has no churchyard and the historical connection with St Mary's Hailsham makes Hailsham Graveyard the obvious place for burial plots, but it's three or so miles away. There is an increasing resort to crematoria which creates a need for somewhere to inter ashes and provide a place for family and relatives to visit the person they have lost. How will they decide? What are the procedures? Where will we put it?

As always, such a great step by a parish obliges them to seek the advice of the Diocese. The Diocese maintains an Advisory Committee which includes experts with much church experience. An application for advice must be made. What will they say?

Friday, 13th March 1953 The Garden of Remembrance receives a significant step forward because the solicitors of the Diocese write to tell the parish that the bishop will be glad to consecrate such a plot for ashes. Still glowing with that news, there are mixed thoughts when the parish architects say that a report by pest controllers, suggesting that all load-bearing timbers must be exposed to be inspected, was too costly to instruct anyway.

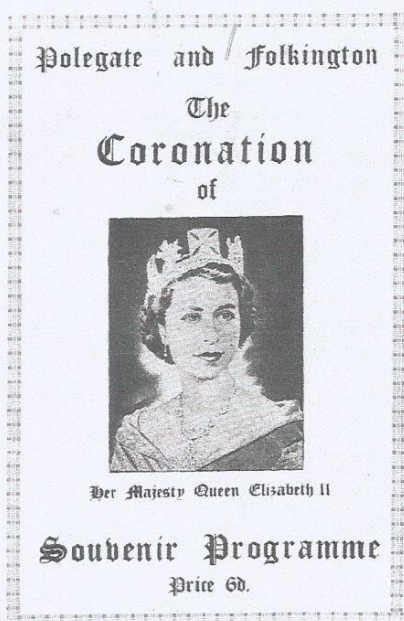
Palm Sunday, the service is an occasion when the Rev'd Harry Parsons takes the opportunity to 'dedicate' the robes purchased for the ladies in the choir. We are going to look rather 'special'. Within days, the Bishop of Lewes attends a service at which some of the congregation are confirmed.



Tuesday, 2nd June 1953 **CORONATION DAY** - although it is a civic event and although it does involve and excite the whole nation, St John's nevertheless has a part to play as the Parish Church.

Last Sunday there was a Special United Service at 11 am. But today, Coronation Day our vicar and the Rev'd Davies from the Free Church are jointly leading a 30 minute service at 2.30pm on the Recreation Ground in Polegate. An hour before, Girls & Boys in Fancy Dress, Decorated Cycles, & Trade Vehicles, processed from the Station led by the Heathfield Band to arrive just before the service. Then there are sports, teas, a magic show, six-a-side football, and, at 8.10 pm. there will be dancing.

Polegate knows how to enjoy itself.



St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

What a busy life they lead.

Wednesday, 10th June 1953 There have obviously been some challenges and debate about making a Garden of Remembrance for ashes to be interred. The vicar writes to the Diocese stating that their concerns are unreasonable, because the Garden will be sited on the "highest part of the church land, and that is overlooked by the Vicarage study, so is supervised." Later on, we can see a letter from the Diocesan solicitors which provides an answer for the vicar, after what might have been a challenge about legality. They say "there is no right of interment of ashes in a parish churchyard equivalent to a parishioner's right to have his body buried there." (Is that the sexist speech of the day, or giving away the sex of the challenger?)

We haven't heard about the Sunday School for some time, but here we see in June that it is having to run in five sections to accommodate 150 children and no one site is large enough, so they are in different locations. Great evangelism "Come, all who hear; now to His temple draw near, praise Him in glad adoration!" (Hymn: Praise to the Lord, the Almighty)

Another challenge. The Diocese Pastoral Re-organisation plan has set in print that Polegate and Jevington parishes should be combined and work as a plurality. They haven't reckoned with the Rev'd Harry Parsons and his opposite number in Jevington. They both resoundingly reject the idea.

August 1953 The vicar has been hard at work. In his 2 ½ years in the parish he must have been talking to many people and researched its history. He has produced a 15-page account about St John's that starts from the beginning. He reports that the village has become a town

75th Anniversary of the Consecration of St. John's Church, Polegate

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19th

3.30 p.m. SERVICE OF PRAYER AND PRAISE IN THE CHURCH
Preacher: REV. J. C. SALISBURY, L.T.H.,
First Vicar of St. John's Church.

4.30 p.m. BIRTHDAY TEA AND SOCIAL
The Church Room. Tickets 1s. 6d. each.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20th

8 a.m. HOLY COMMUNION
Celebrant: THE RT. REV. THE BISHOP OF LEWES

9.15 a.m. BREAKFAST FOR COMMUNICANTS
The Church Room. Tickets 1s. 3d. each.

11 a.m. MATINS.
Preacher: THE RT. REV. THE BISHOP OF LEWES.

6.30 p.m. EVENSONG.
Preacher: REV. R. A. LEONARD,
Second Vicar of St. John's Church.

7.45 p.m. Social gathering to meet the Rev. R. A. Leonard
The Church Room.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23rd

7.30 p.m. SACRED CONCERT IN THE CHURCH
The Choir, St. Paul's Church, Worthing.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24th

3 p.m. WOMEN'S UNITED SERVICE IN THE CHURCH
Preacher: REV. J. G. DOWNWARD, M.A.,
Vicar, All Saint's Church, Eastbourne

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27th — HARVEST FESTIVAL

8 a.m. Holy Communion

11 a.m. MATINS
Preacher: The Ven. E. G. REID, M.A.,
Archdeacon of Hastings.

12 noon Holy Communion

3 p.m. CHILDREN'S SERVICE

6.30 p.m. EVENSONG
Preacher: The Rt. Rev. A. B. L. KARNBY, D.D.

of about "7,000 in an area of about nine square miles and is still growing as new housing estates are erected."

"The spiritual training of the children of this growing parish is naturally the concern of the church." And there is a great deal of activity by church members during the week; the Mens' Society, the Mothers' Union, the Young Wives' Group, the Ladies Working Party, and the Good Companions are all active. The church's evangelical tradition is witnessed by its' support of Missionary Societies overseas.

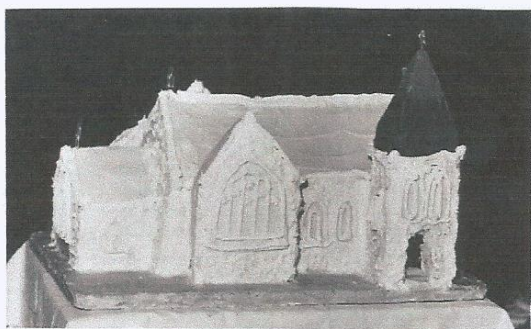
The choir and the ladies now in robes, are led by the Organist and Choir Mistress of fifteen years, Mrs Carter who is still at her post.

The Programme of services and events that he has prepared (*alongside*) is what everyone is looking forward to especially meeting again the Rev'd Salisbury who will visit and preach on the first Anniversary day, and the programme is to finish with the Harvest Festival on the last Sunday 27th September.

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

Historic events

Saturday, 19th September 1953 Everyone was so pleased to hear such good words from the Rev'd Salisbury in the pulpit this afternoon and then afterwards to meet him and hear how he survived the war, following his time at St John's. Immediately afterwards is the "Parish Tea and Social" costing 1s 6d each (*incredibly the equivalent of only £1.50 today*). And then there's the cake - who made that? It must be the vicar who has to make the first cut to everyone's cheers.



And the next day, Sunday, 8 am Communion, 9.15 am. breakfast for communicants, 11 am. Matins preached to by the Right Reverend the Bishop of Lewes, and in the afternoon, the Bishop consecrates the Garden of Remembrance. What an impressive picture it all makes as the Bishop, surrounded by the choir, and the churchwardens, raises his hand in blessing.



After the bishop goes, there's an Evensong and another Social described as "Meet the Vicar". He ended his History brochure with a hymn - "*Rise in the strength of God, and face life's uphill way; the steps which other feet have trod you tread today. Press onward, upward still, to win your way at last, with better hope and stronger will than in the past.*"

After all the excitement, there's a challenge to bring us back to earth. The roof repairs, which cost £700, are only partly repaid leaving £214 to find. But the euphoria is holding and brings donations amounting to £317 (*a magnificent £6,210 in 2021*) and, as a consequence, the vicar has bought 250 new Ancient and Modern hymnals. "*Sing out my soul!*"

The Diocese write to say that St John's should meet a 'Quota' in 1954 of £103 (*which would today be a cost of just £2,019*) but, this year is only £34 so why the huge increase? They refuse because it is too costly.

There are further thoughts about the new housing estates and the need for a Sunday School but where can land be found?

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

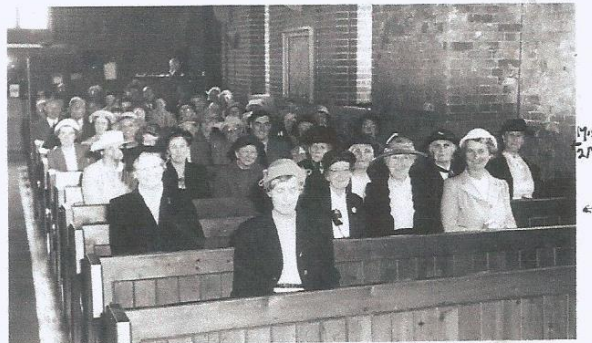
"Ashes to ashes"

Thursday, 28th January 1954 So soon after the bishop consecrated the grounds of the Remembrance Garden, we see today the first interment being conducted with due reverence. How many of the family and relatives have come to say "goodbye"? The vicar, the Rev'd Harry Parsons is saying an appropriate prayer as he enters the ashes of Frederick Richard Bear who died the previous March, in 1953.



This is the first of what will become (over the next 60 years or more) 413 remembrance tablets evidencing each plot having ashes. It is strange that he is being placed in the middle of what will be the middle row of three. The record that is started today of the details of each interment, says he is buried "deep" to allow subsequent additions of ashes in this individual plot. By 2021 the Garden will lovingly hold the ashes of almost 800 people. This year, there will be a total of eleven interments in plots, sometimes reserved in advance, otherwise on demand.

Sunday, 20th June 1954 As we absorb this history of St John's, it is difficult to reason why someone should have chosen 20th June 1954 to 'snap' two photos of the congregation sitting patiently waiting for the vicar and the choir to appear to begin their worship together. But you may agree that they look composed, orderly and well-behaved. Just like today.



Saturday, 3rd July 1954 Another day of furious activity at St John's, except it is not at St John's but in the grounds of Bernhard Baron Cottage Homes. This is an afternoon where there is a Sale of Work, possibly plus other amusements. And who has produced the works for sale? Most likely the Ladies Working Party which the Rev'd Harry Parsons identified just last year in his 75th Anniversary brochure. And is it a worthwhile afternoon? Most certainly, because they have raised £160 (worth a wonderful £3,070 in 2021). Have they got plans for using this money? You bet - Broad road. Tomorrow, Sunday, like every Sunday at St John's, there will be an 8am Holy Communion, a Morning Service and perhaps an Evensong, drawing the church family together each week, glorifying God.

Tuesday, 31st August 1954 This is a 'visit' day with Mr Dingwall who is the Secretary of the Diocese of Chichester, coming to see the vicar together with some others, most likely. He has come to present the case of the Diocese about the 'Broad road' site and whether to build a church or just a church hall on the plot of land left to the Diocese. It must be a shock when he states that no permission will be given unless Jevington can be amalgamated with St John's Polegate parish. This challenge has been brought about because the Jevington vicar is due to retire in September next year, 1955. How will the Parochial Church Council handle this?

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

A busy church programme centered on God

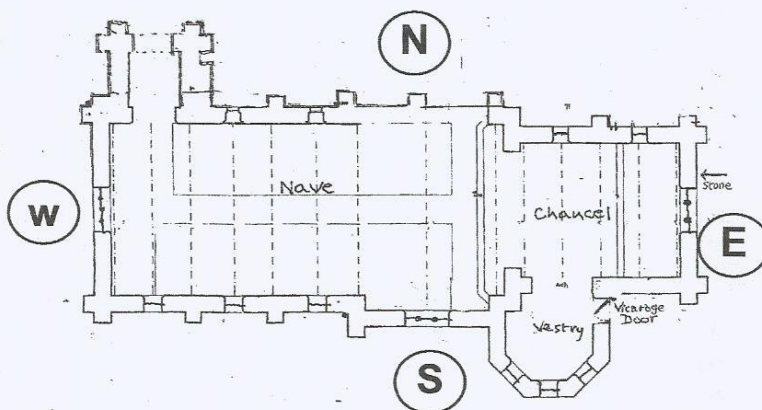
1955 The year begins with a warm glow after the experience of everybody at Christmas. The Christmas tree in the grounds had been such a good idea, causing various denominations to come and hold services round it, drawing the community together. But early on, Mrs Carter, the organist for several years, has had to resign after the death of her husband. They had a collection for her raising £24 (a gift of about £440 today)

By the Spring, discussions have reached a conclusion in the PCC that they should pursue an extension to the church vestry by appointing two architects. That moves them to hold two concerts and other fund-raising events to start a fund to pay for it, as Benz and Williams, the architects offer to extend the church on the south side, on the north side, and at the west end. By June they are a little daunted when the Diocese reports the Church Commissioners interest-free loans have closed. Then in July, a Gift Day raises £328 but that has to pay for the dry rot and woodworm in the pew ends, just as a Faculty is issued for alterations to the electric lighting in the church. All of that causes the PCC postpone any decision about extending the church, not because of the expenses, but because they may instead build a church in Broad road. Wow.

In September, the Bishop listens to the views of Jevington and Polegate, which are both against combination and agrees to install a priest-in-charge at Jevington, later confirmed by the Church Commissioners. Finally, the Jevington decision brings about a change of mood again, and it is decided to extend the south side of the church next to the existing vestry. Perhaps or perhaps not?

Thursday, 4th January 1956

The Rev'd Harry Parsons and his warden have driven up to Merstham to inspect the site of a company who manufacture pre-fabricated buildings suitable for use as a chapel or church. They are soundly unimpressed as they think of the Broad road site.



A busy church programme of events, a full church or a concern for social justice are nothing if they don't flow from a church family centred around worshipping and enjoying God. So it must be at St John's. Social events, fund-raising, Confirmations, visits by the Diocese, then the Archdeacon as well. Buildings are such a distraction from worship.

Plans from the architects suggest a new aisle on the south side along with the vestry extension costing £6,000 (equal to a difficult sum of £104,960 in 2021) or for a gallery, a North Transept and new vestries £8,900. The archdeacon walks round the parish is adamant that enlargement of the church is essential if the population figures are right; plus, the Broad road site should be for a Sunday School. Down in Pevensey there is a 'sectional' hut for sale but they reject that one too. By June the Church Extension Fund has reached £2,100 including two legacies (equivalent to some £36,740 today). Finally the architects price for a North Transept and new vestries at £4,250 (about £74,350). Perhaps we are getting there.

The highway authorities are making up the surface of Church Road and the PCC agrees to pay for a main sewer connection before the concrete is laid. And for over at Broad road the PCC agrees to pay £50 to clear the Diocese land but not the £84 to remove seven concrete blocks left from the war. In November, the 'Lady-worker' resigns due to ill-health whilst Sister Hampstead of the Church Army is appointed at a salary of £350 per annum. The Parish Magazine cost is up from 3d to 4d.

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

What's to come?

The coming years are going to show you a church demonstrating its belief and living out its' faith in a way to bring about an extension to God's Kingdom. Last year, 1956, started a dialogue about an improvement to the church building, possibly a South Transept and new Vestry, but that turns into a North Transept and new Vestry. At the same time we will see improvements to the Church Room, then (after such rehearsals), building a whole new church, called St Wilfrid's.

St John's

- 1957 March - Church, build a **North Transept & vestry**, contract signed
- 1957 May - **Church Room**, extension foundations
- 1957 June - Church, North Transept & vestry, work started £5,194
- 1957 November - Church Room lavatories complete, debt £400/556
- 1958 January - North Transept & vestry, Consecration by bishop
- 1958 January - Church Room, Bishop dedicates improvements
- 1973 - **Church Hall**, built, £22,000, opened by bishop
- 1995 - Church **Reordering** £75,000

St Wilfrid's

- 1960 June - **Church** build, fund-raising in third year
- 1961 January - Church build, £11,887 cost quoted
- 1961 July - Church build, sign contracts, loans from St. J's people
- 1961 December - Church build, Foundation stone laid
- 1962 June - Church complete, dedication by bishop
- 1963 - new vestry, cost?
- 1964 - **St Wilfrid's house** built, cost?
- 1967 - Church build, all 24 interest-free loans about £10,000 repaid
- 1976 Feb.- St Wilfrid's House, new central Heating £950
- 1976 Feb to 1978 Jan - Church, new porch, £2,120 + £950 fees
- 1977 May - St Wilfrids House, work on lounge, study, back door £158
- 1980 May - St Wilfrids House, interior & exterior decoration £2,120
- 1985 Sep. - Church, glass and window replacements £1,425
- 1985 Oct - Church hall, gas heaters £1,424
- 1989 Jan, **Church**, add 2 Sunday School , 1 upstairs room £200,000+
- 1989 Nov - Church addition, interest-free loans are 38,420
- 1990 Jul. - St Wilfrids House, windows replaced
- 1991 Mar. - Church, replace west window £5,030
- 2000 Jun - Church, storage and kitchen improvements
- 2002 Feb. - St Wilfrid's House, extension planning permission £39,000
- 2002 Mar. - Church, **hall extension** about £200,000

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

Furious activity

Friday, 11th January 1957 The architects for the church extension have completed two-thirds of their work, (so they must be getting short of lunch money) and ask St-John's to pay up £137 (a cost of about £2,800 in 2021). And it is the moment to write to the Archdeacon with the population figures the he asked for, quoting 1878 = 500, 1938 = 3,532, 1946 = 3,699, and 1957 = 4,383.

Wednesday, 6th February 1957 The decision is made; the Parochial Church Council votes to approve a motion that the church is extended by building a North Transept and clergy vestry rooms having heard that estimates reach a maximum of £6,200 (equal to about £104,900 today). But instead, they accept an estimate of £5,000 and appoint Messrs Mark Martin, builders for the job. Keeping the Diocese onside is important in a project as big as this, so Mr Dingwall, the Diocese Secretary is told of the contracted cost against which there is £1,568 in hand, with £1,435 due soon. There is an awkward response; "the Quota has not been paid in full for four years". Further correspondence ensues and a promise to visit when the building project is crystallised.

Tuesday, 5th March 1957 Faculty forms are provided, and we keep the Church Commissioners in touch. The Diocesan grant application causes them to quibble about the population figures, so, because the records of Hailsham Rural District Council are not yet up-to-date because of the large increase in housing over the last year or so, one of the church Standing Committee and his wife walk the entire town counting houses. There are emergency meetings about raising money; a 'talent' scheme, furniture sales, collecting boxes and anything anyone can suggest.

Wednesday, 10th April 1957 The Eastbourne Gazette (picture, top right) proclaims that £3,141 has been already collected, just as the Church Commissioners approve the plans - with one exception; that the vestry roof must be of concrete, adding £83 (another £1,400 to find in today's money). Meanwhile the Men's Society members are hard at work laying the foundations of the extension to the Church Room. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe." (Proverbs 18:10)

Sunday, 16th June 1957 Miss Tolhurst, who can claim to be one of the first to be baptised in St John's is seen here (picture below, right) cutting the first grass turf, after the Morning Service.

This gives the green light for Mr E W Goldsmith and his builders team from Mark Martin and Sons Limited to start work using the "Kentish Ragstone" stone blocks to match the outside of the church from 1876. An ironic gift, this building material comes from St Anne's of Eastbourne, which was bombed during the Second World War. Seeing the start of work, a Gift Day and other activities bring in £566.19/- (equivalent to an amazing £9,590 in 2021).

Then, looking ahead and out to the boundaries of the parish, the church gives notice to Lower Willingdon Sunday School to quit the Library Hut on the Broad road land. It sounds unkind, but there is an offer that they can use the Free Church during Sunday afternoons. A first step for a new church?



St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

Feverish construction and fund-raising.

Saturday, 20th July 1957 the church family welcome Canon and Mrs Stephens from Nigeria (a Christian Missionary Society visitor) who preaches, sharing the wider world beyond Polegate boundaries.

The Rev'd Harry Parsons writes to the Right Reverend Geoffrey Warde, Bishop of Chichester, to tell him the church extension cost is £6,000 and that there is still £400 to find, asking him to agree to consecrate the extension before the end of January 1958 (when the bishop is due to leave the Diocese). He replies that Thursday 9th January next year is the date.



St John's holds a Gymkhana at Nightingale Farm as one of the fund-raising events. It is well subscribed - 73 horses, making 370 entries in various events. A grand occasion raising £100 (a healthy contribution equal to about £1,690 in 2021).



Stage payments are being made to the church extension builders reaching a total of £3,250 by October (a value of £16,915 in 2021) out of the £6,000 total. Some way to go?

The records muddle us with the church room development when we see that a £98 bill (about £1,660 today) is paid for the builders work alongside a note that an

agreement is executed with Francis Hilton to extend the building with new 20 foot by 30 foot ladies and gentlemen's lavatories. It states the cost of the extension is £400 and that the debt will be discharged by instalments within a deadline of 24th December 1962.

At the end of the year, final arrangements are being made for the bishop's visit in January. There will be tea in the church room which will be ready by then. And the vicar travels up to High Wycombe to inspect the stock of Messrs Harper-Wycombe where they have varieties of pews, hassocks and folding chairs on offer. He selects carefully and makes an order. He gets press coverage for raising £117.6/6d by issuing 2/6d 'Talents' six months ago. This recalls the parable of Jesus where servants were given money to put to use for their master and rewarded according to their success. The Diocese solicitors respond to the Petition for Consecration saying the bishop must consecrate "*all the land between the church and Church road, as well as the paths to the North and South of the church.*" One of the mysteries of the Church of England?

At the very end of the year, Mark Martin and Sons Limited, quote the sum of £104 for providing a screen (?), ironmongery and a European Oak vestibule door. You might have expected that such furniture would have been in the extension contracted plans.

Paul's letter to the Thessalonians says "*We beg you, brothers, to acknowledge those who are working so hard among you and in the Lord's fellowship are your leaders and counsellors.*" The text for a sermon on a Sunday?

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

1958 - getting there.

Monday, 6th January 1958 Just in time, the High-Wycombe firm deliver pews, hassocks, and vestry furniture. Hill and Son of London confirm that the organ blower is moved today so that the organ is working in it's new position in the North Transept. Tomorrow, we have a full evening rehearsal for the proceedings in anticipation of the bishops arrival on Thursday.



Thursday, 9th January 1958 In fine church tradition, the Right Reverend Geoffray Warde at exactly 3 pm. hammers on the North Transept door with his heavy metal crook. As he is let in he receives a Petition 'praying' him to consecrate.

The church is packed to capacity with the Diocese Chancellor, the Diocese Registrar, the Archdeacon, the Rural Dean, and, of course, our vicar, the Rev'd Harry Parsons and his churchwarden (as you see, with his 'wand' of office).

The bishops consecration includes the new North Transept, the new vestries, the paths outside the church to the extent of ten feet, not previously ever enacted.



After prayers, hymns and a simple homily from the bishop, they all retreat to the church room, where again, the bishop dedicates the new extension. In proper fashion, a church tea follows to everyones' relief. And he is not reticent in talking to very many of the church family, an unexpected pleasure. The day is complete with the receipt of a £1,500 cheque issued by the Diocese as an Extension Fund grant (*worth a very generous £24,660 in 2021*)

Later in the month, Harper-Wycombe Limited provide two replacement chairs for damaged ones and give an estimate for a porch (never proceeded with) and say they are glad that everyone likes the new pews which will look even better after 50 years. As the PCC meet they send two estimates to the archdeacon for fencing at the Broad Road site as the vicar attends a farewell service to Mr and Mrs Clouldrey at the Coppice Avenue Free Church.

Wednesday, 9th April 1958 Churchwarden Mr Furneaux has decided to stand-down and is commended for his faithful work. Mr Page and Mr Tyler are elected. The vicar calls for them all to encourage greater attendance at family worship with satisfaction over the activities of the Young Wives, Men's Society and the Sunday School. The Electoral Roll stands at 375 and the grounds are improved. Great applause as they hear that a stage has been constructed in the church hall.

In May, the new PCC has submitted plans to Hailsham Rural District Council for a development with bungalows behind the Broad road church site. The archdeacon encourages the church, once planning permission is granted, to sell to developers.

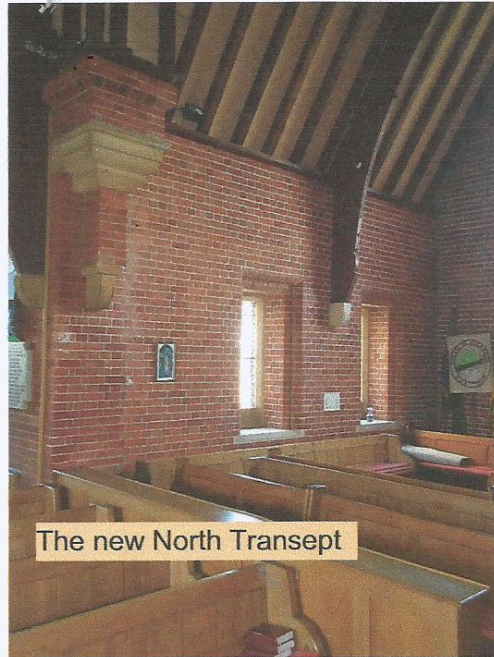
At last, the British Legion approach the church, who apply to the Diocesan Advisory Committee for a Faculty for a World War Remembrance Tablet inside the church. "Go ahead" received.

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

The war is still lingering.

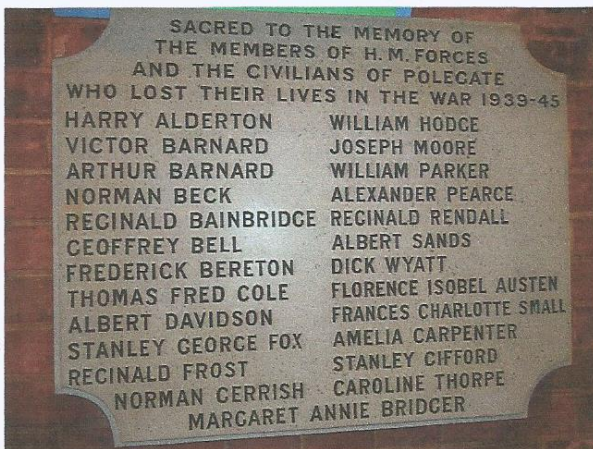
Thursday, 19th June 1958 The church extension architects write to tell the Parochial Church Council of St John's that the final cost of the North Transept and the vestries is £5,194.6/6d. (equivalent to ££85,400 in 2021). Benz and Williams then ask for the balance due £294.6/6d. With such a great task complete, the committee propose improving the church grounds, after the mess of building, by spending about £100, (well over £1,500 today). Wonder what they intend to do? Then, in July, a Gift Day raises £278 (note the similarity to the amount remaining due for the church extension), and, Mrs Davey's Jumble Sale gets some £60 for Sunday School expenses.

Thursday, 21st August 1958 It cannot really be on Thursday, but perhaps the Gymkhana date is because our note comes from a newspaper published on Thursday, or the minutes of a meeting that day. In any case, we don't know how many horses, events or other details, but we do know they raised a great £61 (worth a wonderful £987 to us today)



The new North Transept

Monday, 22nd September 1958 The Diocese have agreed to the affixing of a Hopton Stone tablet with those names to be remembered from the Second World War. It remains today on the North wall of the church not far from the First World War memorial. With the go-ahead today can it be made and fixed by Remembrance Sunday? Yes, it most certainly can, and on that Sunday 9th November, Mrs Tolhurst unveils it as the British Legion dedicate it and the Vicar delivers the Remembrance Service to a packed church.



Many things have to be done before the end of the year; four new doors are being provided to replace those which had developed bad stains; erect an oak fence between the vicarage garden and the church grounds; buy curtains for the transept door. (This is instead of building a porch and screen at the new North Transept which was a proposal lying on the table for the new Parochial Council this year). And there's a gift of new curtains for the stage and windows of the church room.

Back in September, Mr Reginald T Salt started his 22-year term, serving faithfully as the church organist.

"Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress." (Psalm 46:10-11)

Sunday 4th January 1959 The year starts with young people at Evensong leading the worship and performing a Nativity Play in mime, to a full congregation. Uplifting.

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

So many 'irons in the fire'.

Thursday, 12th February 1959 The news breaks that Mr Furneaux has died; he is the church treasurer, a sides-man, was a church warden during the last interregnum, and a faithful servant of the church family. The reaction of many people is for some remembrance for him; a consensus of opinion forms that the fund they have started should be for an improvement in the chancel. This will get dedicated in February next year. Later, Hailsham Council approve the development plan for the Broad road site, and a notice board is put up saying "Site for the church". Architects say "Putting wheels into motion".

In April, at the annual meetings, Mr R C Jones is elected as Treasurer, and later in the month many of the congregation do house-to-house visits, collecting during the Christian Aid Week. (This continues for more than 40 years). Next month, there is a modern passion play by P W Turner called "Christ in the concrete city". It is performed on the new stage in the church room and is different because Christ is not portrayed. Then, Mrs Davey's Annual Jumble Sale is a great success as usual and raises £66.9/9d (worth a welcome £1,078 in 2021). In June, on Mission Sunday, Canon and Mrs D I Okunfulure, previously a Nigerian deacon, are the guests of the vicar and everyone comes to hear him preach.

"Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to a city to dwell in, hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress." (Psalm 107:4-6)

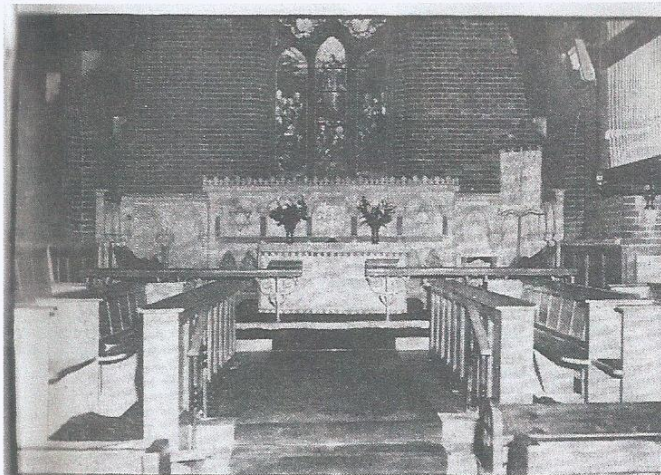
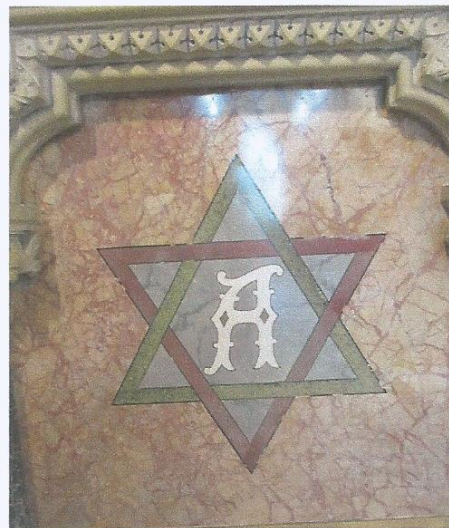
The very next Sunday, a service is specially set and aimed to welcome new-comers to the area, followed a week later by a Tea-party for other new-comers who are invited by members of St John's congregation. All this happy Summer activity might be the reason that the Gift Day raises £297.11/- for the Broad Road Building Fund (that is an impressive equivalent of £4,870 today)

In memory of Mr Furneaux, this is the moment when plans for a new pulpit, a lectern, plus new clergy and choir stalls for the chancel are completed and sent to the Diocesan Advisory Committee for their opinion. Will they agree or quibble at the designs, materials, the situation?

In August, the vicar, the Rev'd Harry Parsons and his wardens are visiting newly-built churches in Crawley for ideas and encouragement but might come back with their heads more confused as they also struggle with different quotes for the pulpit and things for the chancel. They are quoted £500, £625, and £700. The Diocese issue a Faculty but have to say that "no doors or ornamentation should be on the new stalls." Because of the sad loss of her sister, Miss Charlotte Walker resigns her post of Superintendent of the Lower Willingdon Sunday School. Mr Trevor Page and Miss C Pawson step in her place and the initial impression of everyone is that they are inspiring.

Wednesday, 2nd December 1959 There is a Christmas Sale to get everyone 'in the mood' and it raises a glorious £141 for the Broad Road Building Fund (that's £2,300 today) . And the "Church Fund" pays up £150 for the interior decoration of the Vicarage - (in time for the Christmas decorations?).

Sunday 28th February 1960 The 'new' Bishop of Lewes, the Right Reverend Lloyd Morrell comes to St John's to dedicate the new furniture at a Matins Service and full congregation, as usual. It looks splendid.



St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

1960, the end of a decade

Sunday, 20th March 1960 Once again St John's Polegate is living in an air of expectancy and happy solemnity, as the Bishop of Chichester, the Right Reverend Roger Plumpton Wilson visits to confirm seventeen candidates during the afternoon at 3 pm. These are not all from Polegate, but instead, there are some from Horam, Jevington and Hampden Park.

Soon after, in April, the vicar, the Rev'd Harry Parsons opens his mail and finds a cheque from the Diocese for £576 (*this is an amazing grant worth today about £9,320*) and the enclosing letter says it is "for the future erection of a mission church or a mission hall." But we know it is for the building of St Wilfrid's Church. Just before Easter, the Youth Fellowship presented for the second year running, the Passion play "Christ in the Concrete City" at three Eastbourne churches. At Christ Church "the congregation listened in absolute silence and absorbed attention and at the conclusion, knelt as if one man". Saturday, 25th June, another Gift Day raises £413.8/11d. which is over £6,500 nowadays.

Thursday, 7th July 1960, St John's steps out by throwing it's doors open with an "At Home" Day to which fifty-one people visit. But not everything always goes to plan; on 11th August, the annual Gymkhana, is held despite the incessant rain, chiefly because it is not possible to notify the competitors of the weather before they arrive. It makes a small loss.

Sunday 25th September 1960 Great excitement today because the Rev'd Terence P Day is being ordained at Chichester. He arrives back at St John's in time to read the lesson at the Harvest Festival Evensong. And, Sister J Town has arrived in the parish to be greeted by church family members at the morning service. She had been in the parish five years ago, on a Church Army Mission. Just four days later, the Rev'd Harry Parsons celebrates his Silver Jubilee, 25 years in the ministry.



REV. TERENCE DAY



At the end of the year, the Parochial Church Council are struggling with a debate on a subject that is difficult to handle - "Every parish member should face their duty for Christian Stewardship". How far does the command extend in modern life? In what manner? How must the PCC deliver the message in Christian love? They watch a film showing the impact of a campaign in a parish. They struggle for agreement.

But on Saturday 3rd December they hold a Christmas Sale which, despite floods and gales, does not deter the organisers nor the

supporters and they raise the princely sum of £182 (*would be a significant amount of £2,945 in 2021*) and this is firmly added to the St Wilfrid's Building Fund.

"In a world with low moral standards it is more important than ever that Christians should set an example to others and stand fast by their beliefs" the Right Reverend Geoffrey Warde (formerly Bishop of Lewes) tells members of the Mothers Union in St John's Polegate in the service of dedication of their new banner. The Rev'd Parsons, and curate, Rev'd T Day are present. Mrs Parsons carries the banner in procession .

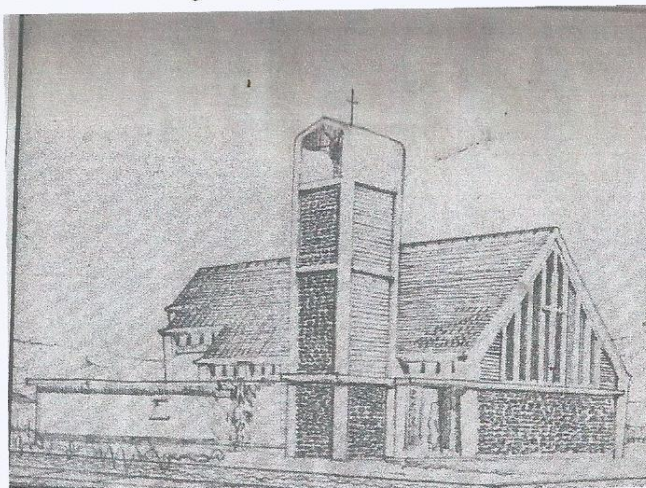
St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

Sunday School Sunday

Sunday, 1st January 1961 The climax of months of preparation and rehearsals, the Youth Fellowship, assisted by some older members in the evening, produce a Nativity Play called "*The Light in the darkness*". "Thought-provoking". "Intensely moving".

In March, there are three gatherings in the church hall - a dramatic film telling the need for Christian Aid collections, a talk about the Pestalozzi Village at Seddlescombe for deprived children, and Stainer's "*Crucifixion*" sung to a responsive audience by the augmented choirs of St John's and the Congregational church. About this time, hearing-aid equipment is given to the church in memory of someone's husband but remaining anonymous.

Every opportunity is taken to add to the St Wilfrid's Building Fund. Possibly in the Eastbourne Gazette, the church receives a big write-up, promising "*First stages of new church by summer?*" quoting the Rev'd Harry Parsons and a cost of £15,000 towards which they have only £3,650 (*the equivalent of £57,233 in 2021*). The newspaper says that Miss Pawson, (hon secretary) states that the land behind the site has sold for £576 (*a gain of some £9,030*). The new church will accommodate about 280 people, be built by a 3-stage construction approved by the Diocesan Advisory Committee, supervised by architects, Benz and Williams.



Sunday, 14th May 1961 Today is called "Sunday School Sunday" when Church Army Captain B A Tompkins (recently appointed as diocesan evangelist) preaches to Sunday School children with two simple objects; a lighted candle and a piece of coal. The children read lessons at the morning and evening services and act as sides-men, forming choirs to sing special hymns. They even carry the newly-dedicated banner to start the services. "*For many of the adults present it is a novelty to attend services in which such a prominent part is played by children.*"



Saturday, 27th May 1961 The Eastbourne Council of Churches today holds a half-day Conference entitled "*Jesus Christ, the Light of the World*" at St Elizabeth's Hall, Victoria Drive from 2.30pm. There are two subjects - witness and service, and two speakers; the Rev'd Hugh Martin, Chairman of the British Council of Churches, and the Rev'd Conon Patey, of Coventry Cathedral. Polegate's Rev'd T Day is one of the Group Chairmen. The following Tuesday, sees an "At Home Day" by the vicar, helped by Mrs Parsons and the curate Mr Day. The local newspaper says that these events "*are held every few months to introduce new parishioners to the local church.*" The coverage continues, "*The Polegate*

church, already bursting at the seams, will, in the next year or so, be relieved to some extent by the new Broad road church."

"One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts. On the glorious splendour of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate. They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness. " (Psalm 145:4-6)

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

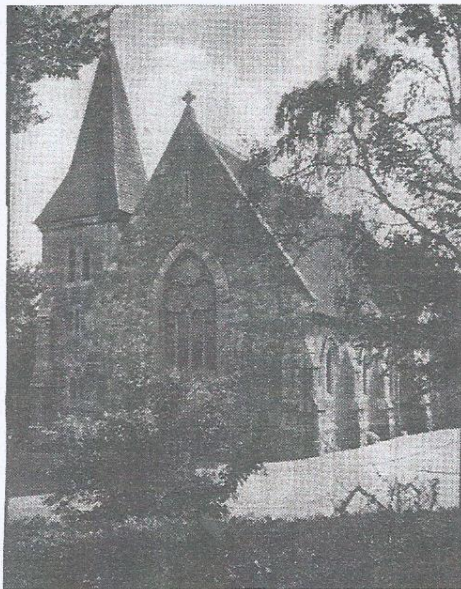
Shall we or shall we not go ahead?

Wednesday, 5th July 1961 St John's Church is unlocked by the churchwardens at 7pm this evening for the Special Church Meeting. Over the next 30 minutes, 120 people pour through the doors, and the vicar, the Rev'd Harry Parsons, opens the meeting with prayer and a Bible reading.

With great care, the meeting explores everything about the project to open a church to be called St Wilfrid's in Broad road, Lower Willingdon. There is a strong atmosphere that God's will is for them to build now. The total cost is expected to be £11,887 (*equal to a daunting sum of £186,390 in 2021*) and they already have £5,430 in hand (including the proceeds of the sale of land) plus a grant of £1,500 from the Diocese, and a Diocese loan of £2,500; this leaves them short by £2,500 or even £3,000.

The vicar then "*appeals to the members of God's Family at St John's to provide what is needed by offering loans, without interest if possible, for as long as possible.*" There is a great need to act swiftly because the PCC need to make a decision whether to go ahead and sign a contract.

Wednesday, 12th July 1961 Nineteen of the Parochial Church Council meet in the choir vestry with the vicar leading in prayer, then reporting that the Gift Day had brought in £851.4/1d and last week's Special Church Meeting had produced loans and gifts of £3,171. Everyone felt a "*deep sense of gratitude and humility at these results, which are a tribute to the loyalty and zeal of the Church people.*" They resolve to accept all the gifts and loans, and sign the contract to build the nave of the Broad road church, instructing Ringmer Building Works to carry out the contract. Sensibly the vicar disappears on holiday whilst the Rev'd SC Dyer of St John's, Redhill takes on locum duty.



Thursday, 31st August 1961 A fine day to enjoy the annual gymkhana which raises another £40 for the Building Fund, and three weeks later, Patrick Terence Day, the curate, is ordained a priest, at Chichester Cathedral, a year after he came to minister at the St John's. More blessings; the churches of the Eastbourne Deanery offer to help furnish the Broad road building when complete.

After 25 years as a teacher, then Superintendent of the Hailsham road Sunday School, Miss Connie Tyhurst is getting married and offers her resignation. There is great appreciation of her faithful service, presenting her with a copy of the New English Bible. Meanwhile the children from the Broad road Sunday School are encouraged to go to the Hailsham road meeting or Lower Willingdon.

Remembrance Sunday brings the Polegate branch of the British Legion with their standards, to swell the congregation in this annual duty.

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

St Wilfrid's, the dedication

There is an unexpected shock in November 1961 as Reginald C Jones, the Parish Treasurer, dies. Whilst he had been ill for some time, his death was sudden, leaving the parish unprepared. An electric clock appears in the Church Room as a welcome remembrance. Then, as a result of proposals by the Archdeacon, John Laing Limited, developers of London, write to say that, whilst they are developing a site at Dittons Corner, they are unlikely to release land for a church there. The Vicarage gets a downstairs lavatory and cloakroom when the Diocesan survey secures a grant to extend the study.

Everyone's been busy this Autumn. The Garden of Rest Committee pays for pillars to be sited at the garden entrance and some lighting in the church grounds. The Women's Working Party have made items for the sale later and the Embroidery Group have made kneelers and other fabric. The Sanctuary Guild weekly clean the brass and furniture and arrange the flowers. Busy, busy.

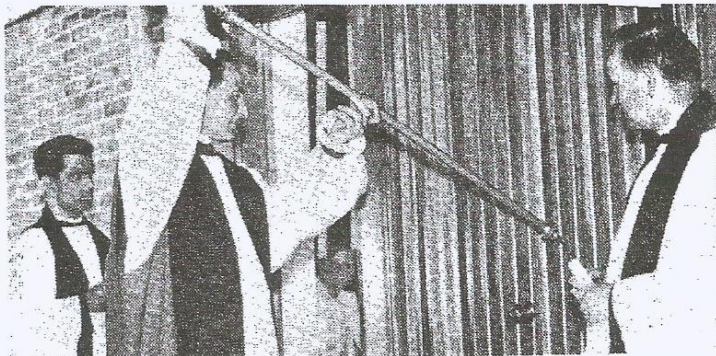
Saturday, 2nd December 1961 The Christmas Sale is opened by Mrs Parsons saying that *"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might"* and, *"wether in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus."* (Colossians 3:17) In a welter of wet days, today was one sunny respite which produced £219 (worth £3,430 today).

Saturday 16th December 1961 The Venerable Guy Mayfield, the Archdeacon of Hastings, is here at Broad road to give his blessing *"O Lord Jesu Christ, Son of the living God, who art the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his Person, the one foundation, and the chief corner-stone; Bless the laying of this Stone in thy Name, and be thou, we beseech thee, the beginning, the increase, and the consummation of this work, which is undertaken to thy glory..."* and then Mrs W H Miller does the tap, tap to lay the foundation stone. The ceremony closes with a prayer of blessing.

A snowy blizzard blows up on the Sunday, the last day of the year, but *"undaunted, a goodly congregation join together in this customary evensong worship"* to be treated to a Nativity Play *Come and behold Him*. *"The players are drawn mainly from the Youth Fellowship and numerous friends"*.

1962 reaches Easter with all the regular activity. On the Tuesday of Holy Week there's a performance of *"Pontius Pilate"*, the form of which does not commend itself to everyone, *"but the sincerity of the actors and loving care of the production is apparent."* On Good Friday, St John's holds a three-hour devotional vigil and, on Easter Morning, there is a record number of 498 communicants. They give an Easter Offering for the vicar of £107 (worth £1,612 to him today).

Saturday, 23rd June 1962 at 3 pm the Right Reverend Roger P Wilson, Lord Bishop of Chichester is present at the new building of St Wilfrid's, with *"a crammed church and there was an overflow of some 60 persons in the marquee A most inspiring and happy time."* The dedication (note: not consecration) of the church starts with the Rev'd T Day intoning *"Reverend Father in God, we pray*



you to dedicate this church" as the the bishop knocks three times on the closed door with his Pastoral Staff. The service ends by him speaking the words from the Book of Numbers *"The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you peace both now and evermore."* (Numbers 6:24-26)

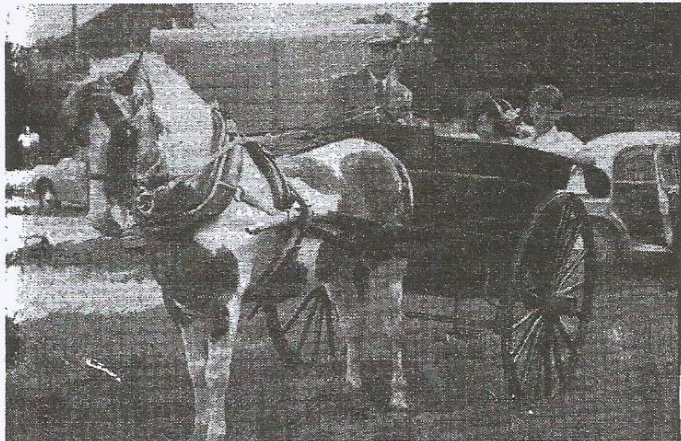
St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

Rot

Summer 1962 Everyone is shocked by something that has been quietly going on, of which they are unaware. "A major repair is found to be necessary. Damp rot is rampant in the 'old' vestry roof and is spreading along the wall beside the pulpit. The cost is heavy - £500". ("Heavy is the right word because that sum is equivalent to about £7,540 in 2021).

Saturday, 25th August 1962 It's the loveliest day of the year for the Gymkhana, so fortunate. And this year, there are several records broken; more entries, more spectators, and, more wasps! Financially too, a good result with a profit of £65 for the St Wilfrid's Fund. Thanks are given to all who helped in any way to make such a happy day. St Wilfrid's at some stage now appoint Alan Bailey as their organist.

Autumn sees much "working together" and the vicar calls for volunteers to deal with the "bad state of decorations in the Church Room".



December sees the Annual Parish Sale with stalls run by the Ladies Working Party (fancy goods and garments), Mothers Union and Young Wives (home-made cakes, biscuits and other food), Women's Fellowship (a roaring trade with household items and groceries), Men's Society (brisk business with their bottles and jars), Sunday and the Junior Church (sold gifts of all kinds). The magnificent profit for the continuing process of building at St Wilfrid's is £235 (a valuable £3,542 in today's money). Friday 14th December, sees a new venture, and one about which we have been given little detail, but is obviously very significant - a Parish Social from 7.30 pm. in the Pavillion, at the Winter Gardens in Eastbourne. What a significant step it is for members of the church family to travel into Eastbourne and hire such a significant venue; shows great credit to the spirit of St John's Church.

The end of December and the beginning of 1963 sticks in the memory for a series of blizzards, frost and ice. But that does not deter a full congregation gathering at church for a shortened Evensong on Sunday January 6th. A mini-interval separates the evening worship and a Nativity Play called "Thou Bethlehem" performed to the "hushed and reverent attention" of those who are in the pews. The dialogue uses commonplace language and contemporaneous characters.

Wednesday, 13th February 1963 There's a record number (but sadly the papers do not tell us how many) at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting. But it is "one of the best". Everyone is enthusiastic, and there's even a ballot for an election. Keeness on display. The vicar points to the narrowness of income and expenditure asking for "increased support for the Freewill Offering Scheme".

In April there's a Passion Play for Easter, and in May, Mrs Davey and her helpers raise £50.18/7d. (worth £751 in 2021) for the Sunday School Fund.

Tuesday, 4th June 1963 We say "Goodbye and God be with you" to the Rev'd T Day who is sailing, after a three-year stay, on the SS Chusan, going to a year's study in Benares University, India after an award by the World Council of Churches.



St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

Furious giving

Sunday, 23rd June 1963 It's almost exactly one year since the dedication of St Wilfrid's Church, and here's the bishop of Lewes the Right Reverend James Morrill, who dedicated it twelve months ago, but this time at the evening service with a happy turn-out by the Lower Willingdon congregation. During the service, the bishop dedicates the new Vestry block that has been built over recent weeks. Endless blessings. Then on the following Tuesday, Hailsham Choral Society deliver a concert at St John's church room to raise money for St Wilfrid's.

Tuesday, 10th September 1963 A Silver Wedding - for who? It's the vicar, the Rev'd Harry Parsons and his wife, basking in the good wishes of everyone. And, at another date, there's a Gift Day call on the congregation who produce an amazing £728 (equal to 10,738 in 2021's money terms) which the vicar records "we do give thanks to God for the wonderful result which enables us to pay off another instalment of the loan we had to raise to build the new church":

Saturday, 30th November 1963 The annual Christmas Sales makes a profit of £249.17/4d., (worth over £3,500 today) perhaps to be put towards the extra nave lights to be installed during the re-wiring of the church at St John's. This is discussed by the PCC in December, as they agree to get an estimate for putting down turf in the grounds and laying out a car park. There's a legacy of £300 (worth £4,420) received, which they put aside towards the St Wilfrid's Curate's House Fund. After all the Christmas celebrations, Carol Services etc, there is a Nativity Play to keep everyone in the spirit, called "The Light of Man" based on plays of medieval times in Chester and Coventry. Then, Mrs Brooks resigns as Church Cleaner after 10 years of faithful service, at the same time as the PCC presents Miss Pawson with a Parker Pen in recognition of 25 years as Parish Secretary.

Thursday, 1st January 1964 Electricians arrive to start re-wiring St John's because it is now twenty-nine years since the church was "electrified". It is a huge job and lasts a whole month. Moreover, every Saturday there is "the Herculean task to bring order out of chaos" to be ready for the services the next day, Sunday. "Still at Easter, some fittings are not yet installed".

In March there's great excitement as "help" arrives for the overworked vicar, the Rev'd Harry Parsons. The new curate, who is a former soldier with a distinguished career being awarded the Military Cross, ordained in 1957

and has been a Christian Missionary Society missionary in Pakistan, is the Rev'd Alfred Reeves Clark. In Pakistan he and his wife served the church in the North West Frontier, the Thal Desert and the city of Lahore. They will live at 4, Sunstar lane, on the Stud Farm Estate. He will need time to get to know the parish and to work with the vicar, as he succeeds the Rev'd Terry Day who left last Summer. But he and his wife may only be with us for six months, as he is looking to serve in prisons. The PCC agree to build the Curates House in Broad road.

In April, out of the blue, Tarry and Co of Brighton write to say they "have a site of one-and-a-half acres which is suitable for a church at the Dittons Corner development". The cost of the plot will be £7,000 (equivalent to a cost of £100,100 in 2021). The verdict of the Archdeacon is "the price makes it impossible".

Saturday, 27th June 1964 The congregations of St John's and St Wilfrid's are challenged by the call for another "Gift Day". When all is counted and agreed, this brings in the sum of £758 (in 2021 worth a smouldering £10,840) people are being very generous for the St Wilfrid's Building Fund.



St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

How bizzare it is to have a Bazaar

September 1964 This month is a vicarage-visitor month. First, on leave from Nigeria, Canon John Stephens comes to stay. He has been a parish mission link, who is with the Christian Mission Society. Then arrives the Rev'd Terry Day who was our curate. He and his wife are also on leave, but they are from Pakistan. The Rev'd Dennis Parker, who will be the new curate, is also around but studying at Bristol before his ordination in December, close to Christmas. He used to be a Methodist lay-preacher. Christmas services are thoughtfully arranged by the Rev'd Harry Parsons, grateful for any help he can get.

1965 slides-by as sometimes time seems to do, with the overhaul of the organ, the £133.14/5d Easter Offering to the vicar and Mrs Davey's Jumble raising £52. Early in July, the annual Gift Day brings in a whopping £620 (*equivalent to £8,477 in 2021*) and at the same time the Rev'd Terry day and his wife visit again. And the Rev'd Dennis Parker joins the parish to be the curate for St Wilfrid's.

Tuesday, 20th July 1965 Still in July, there is this afternoon a Special Service at 2.45 pm.. *"The Polegate Controlled Infants School is passing out of the hands of the Church entirely, and will be closed at the end of the month. In September it is to be combined with the Education Authority's Junior School. Until the new school is built, the Infants School building will be still used on a lease from the Diocese."* The service is attended by children, parents, the Deputy Senior Education Officer, plus the Rural Dean and School Managers.

In September, the Gymkhana nets £47 (*a worthy £643 today*). In October, the County Planning Officer writes to say that *"siting a church (at Dittons Corner) is premature until the Town Map is completed which will be by the end of the year."* He obviously does not know what the Archdeacon said - "too expensive".

Saturday, 27th November 1965 The all-day Parish Bazaar gets press coverage featuring the £100 given to Councillor Cecil Baker of the Sussex Churches Campaign (*as shown on the right with Eric Bradford, chief sidesman of St Wilfrid's and watched by the vicar, the Rev'd Harry Parsons*). The newspaper reports that *"the gaily decorated stalls were kept busy throughout the day, with people thronging the hall looking for bargains."* For the St Wilfrid's Building Fund, the sum of £303 was added (*a grand addition of £4,143 in today's money*). The press report ends with a long list of stall-holders.



Christmas celebrations under the Rev's Parsons and Parker are in very good spirit at both churches.

1966 also slips by with much routine parish activity. The whole parish joining in with the Christian Aid door-to-door collections yielding some £347 (*worth over £4,700 in 2021*) and the Jumble Sale in June by Mrs Davey making £46.1/9d and with the proud record of earning over £1,000 since 1945.

July 1966 The annual Gift Day produces £577 in cash (*giving worth £7,580*) and £305 in respect of loans which the lenders say "forgiven" and looking for no repayment (*a generous sum of £4,000*). The outstanding loans have reduced to £2,675. During the Summer there are many garden coffee mornings and these raise an additional £90.

Then there is the annual Gymkhana, the Harvest Supper, and in October one baptism, three marriages, and 10 interment of ashes, a Church Sale, a Christmas Sale and a Carol Concert in the Congress Theatre with all the Eastbourne area Combined Choirs.

At some stage during the year, the Diocese has applied to Hailsham District Council for half-an-acre on the Dittons site north-west of Shepham lane *"rapid development of the parish since 1961, a church is needed."* Outline permission is granted with lots of "buts".

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

Called into that fuller life.

December 1966 The church family succeeds when all 'do their bit'. But the loss of 'do-their-bit' stalwarts always leaves a gap in the church family especially when many die in a short time. 1966 saw the loss of Eleanor Lewin (Sunday School teacher and pianist), Frank Claridge, Alice Crouch, Eric Tweedale (of St Wilfrid's), Dorothy Sidebottom, Daisy Taylor (sister of Corrie Taylor, baptised at St John's in March 1885 and worked for the church her whole life.).

One such, also 'who did her bit', dies on 2nd December - Kathleen de Lattre whose ashes are soon to be faithfully interred in the St John's Garden of Remembrance. She *"gave herself unsparingly, selflessly and devotedly to others, for Christ's sake. Her priorities were absolutely straight and right, and her time, talents and money were God-directed."* The tribute in the parish "Matters of Interest" book continues *"The humblest jobs such as washing-up at a Coffee Morning, or after a 'do' at the Vicarage, and the dusting of the Chancel furniture....."* But she had wider visions, supporting Missionary Links, East Sussex Cripples Association, and many things for the church.

"Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world." 1 Timothy 6:7

The 1967 Annual Parochial Church Meeting, held at the appropriate date, has a full complement of elections to offices: - Mr Page as the Vicar's Warden, and Mr A S Heal as the people's Warden. Five are elected for a 3-year term until the APCM in 1970 and one for a one year. Nineteen are elected as Sidesmen at St John's and ten at St Wilfrid's (all men for both churches). The Fabric report reported the re-leading of the East Window, repair work and stone cleaning after the last Quinquennial, with thanks to *"Mr Tyler and his band of helpers who keep the grounds in such good condition"*

The Easter Offering this year for the Vicar is £137.0/2d. (Equal to £1,762 in 2021). The year already has been demanding with four baptisms (including one adult) in February, and another four in March. And in March there were held four marriages (even two on one day) because of the usual tactic of marrying before the end of the Tax Year on April 5th to obtain a whole years Married tax allowance. February and March records fifteen "burials" possibly some as interred ashes.

November 1967 There's been some set of enquiries about the Vicarage/Church boundary, and in particular, something about the removal of the hedge. The Diocese has examined the 1875 deeds of the Vicarage and are unable to reach a conclusion.



In December, Here are the St John's Pathfinder Group who are putting on the entertainment for the Sunday School Christmas Party. Perhaps they are singing *Penny Lane* and *All You Need is Love* which have been released during the year by The Beatles.

The Pathfinder Group were formed two years ago, and include ages of 17 to 20. They've been seen playing at church youth services and socials in the Eastbourne area. The newspaper bravely lists them (left to right) Peter Raddenbury, Roger Page, Enid Townsend, Lindsey Vinall, Michael Raddenbury, Jean Jeffries, Shona Betts, Anthony Martin and John Hopkins. *"Lord, bless 'em."*

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

Days slip by

Sunday, 17th February 1968 This is a great event at the beginning of a year - the Bishop of Lewes, the Right Reverend J H L Morrell is here! And not just a token visit; "This has not happened before in the history of our church and we are most fortunate and honoured that he is able to spend a whole day with us in this way" writes the Vicar, the Rev'd Harry Parsons. Arriving in time for the 11 am. service of Holy Communion at St John's enabling him to minister to 190 communicants and afterwards to preach. Then, at 3 pm. in the afternoon, also at St John's, is a Confirmation with 18 candidates, and followed by tea in the church room at which the Bishop meets Sunday School teachers and youth leaders and, almost all of the 80 church family members present. Over to St Wilfrid's at 6.30pm. because he is preaching to their Evensong. "Spent a very active day, and enjoyed being at Polegate" said the Bishop as he left.



1969 The St John's family saw three couples celebrate their Golden Weddings - that's Fifty Years together!

Here's a party arranged in their honour by friends for (showing left to right) Mr and Mrs A E Newman, Mr and Mrs I Jupp and Mr and Mrs A Heal.

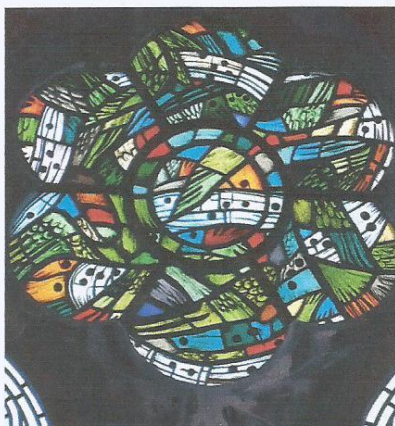
Who made the cake? Looks just like a Wedding cake.

1970 (below right) You see a great welcome, at the vicarage, for the Rev'd P H Amos, the new curate, and family enjoying tea with the Vicar, the Rev'd Harry Parsons and his wife.

They quickly settle in at St Wilfrid's and start to visit and make themselves known. Mrs Amos tends to join the coffee mornings at St John's, so is becoming well known to those who attend that event.

The Rev'd Amos replaces the Rev'd Parker who has served for three years.

And next year they seem to move on to be replaced by the Rev'd Robert Taylor who serves the congregation at Lower Willingdon in 1971 and 1972.



1971 sees a Faculty issued by the Diocese to replace the rose window on the south of St John's. The new 'musical' window will be designed and created by Miss Marguerite Douglas-Thompson.

Sadly, despite our best efforts, we have not traced any biography for this British lady, who plainly is 'local' because there are two stained glass windows at Michelham Priory and two small windows in St Michael's, Lewes. "Praise the **LORD!** Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens! Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! Praise him with sounding cymbals;" Psalm 150:1-5)

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

A new vicar



It is in January that the Rev'd Harry Parsons tells us that he is about to 'move on' to lead the flock at East Dean on Saturday 29th April when the Bishop of Chichester will induct him there. Harry Parsons came to Polegate in February 1951, so it will be a full 21 years when he goes.

Wednesday, 19th April 1972. The 'goodbye' day arrives, and there's a packed evening gathering in Willingdon County Secondary School, Broad Road, Willingdon.

Mr H F Page, churchwarden, presents a cheque for £220 to the vicar and his wife (*the equivalent of*

some £2,100 in 2021) as he remembers many of the events during the vicar's ministry. Then Mr C Bentley presents Mrs Parsons with a watch from the parishioners. There are tributes shared with those present by the curate, the Rev'd Bob Taylor and retired clergyman the Rev'd R Knight-Parker. (Above are L to R: Mrs and the Rev'd Parsons, Mr H Page). Harry Parsons tells everyone that he is overwhelmed and that the twenty-one years have gone very quickly.

Wednesday, 28th June 1972 It's only been a few weeks without a vicar. How did we manage? But here we are, probably an evening, as "nearly 300, crowded into Polegate Parish Church, welcome to their new parish, the Rev'd Peter Thompson and his wife. The Bishop of Chichester the Right Reverend Roger Plumpton Wilson institutes the new vicar, who is then inducted by the Archdeacon of Hastings, the Venerable Guy Mayfield." Also amongst the 300 are the Vicar of Eastbourne, Canon Colin Docker the Rural Dean, and many other clergy from Eastbourne and the surrounding district.



"The Rev'd Peter Thompson and his wife, who have four children, spent some time in Burma, Mr Thompson as a surgeon and his wife as a nurse. He was ordained in 1960 as curate at New Malden."

Two years later, Mr and Mrs Thompson returned with their family to Burma to work for the Bible Churchman's Missionary Society in the Buddhist district of Arakan on the west coast. They returned to England in 1966."

He then served as Rector of Slaugham, near Handcross." says the Eastbourne Herald.

"As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children. - with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts." (Psalm 103:15-18)

St John's new Church Hall



Saturday, 14th July 1973 On the following Friday (publication day) the Eastbourne Herald reports "Polegate Parish Church was filled to capacity last Saturday evening when the Bishop of Chichester, the Right Reverend Dr Roger Wilson, conducted a ceremony to open the new church hall. A small ceremony was conducted in the church and then the bishop walked through a guard of honour, comprising the First Polegate Scouts and Cub Scouts, into the hall which flanks the church." Then the dedication. "The Bishop then blessed the hall. With him were the Vicar of Polegate, the Rev'd Peter Thompson and the Archdeacon of Hastings, the Venerable Guy Mayfield. The hall cost £22,000 and took eight months to build (amazingly equivalent to an expense of £193,170 in 2021). Money has been raised during the last three years from events and gifts to the church." (Pictured above, L to R, are churchwarden Mr Wally Tompkins, the Bishop of Chichester, the Vicar of Polegate, and churchwarden Mr F Page.)

At some date in 1973, St Wilfrid's sees another change of curate. Finishing his traditional three-year term, the Rev'd Patrick Amos has left and arriving now is the Rev'd Peter Markby who will serve his church family until 1977.

In December 1974, St Wilfrid's architect writes to confirm the satisfactory completion of some work costing £1,123.76 (just over £8,500 today) of unknown nature.



The onset of winter in 1974 brings some excited anticipation of 1975.

St John's will be celebrating the centenary of its construction which began with the laying of the Foundation Stone in October 1875 and was completed a year later in 1876.

How do we celebrate one hundred years of God's blessings?



St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

.....96, 97, 98, 99, 100! !

Wednesday, 19th February 1975

The local issue of our Eastbourne newspaper, is called the "Gazette" whereas the Saturday copy, which covers the whole area, is called the "Herald". The difference is that the Gazette has an outer page of news just for, say, Polegate, Hailsham, Pevensey or a particular town.

Here we are with the Rev'd Peter Thompson, in his third year at St John's, making an historic mark in proclaiming the Centenary of St John's - well, Laying the Foundation Stone, as the building of the church started in 1875. The opening service was in 1876, and the consecration by the Bishop of Chichester was in 1878.

But here we are in February, announcing "a programme of special events has been arranged." In fairness, beside this coverage is also a press photo of the vicar pointing to the Foundation Stone. Therefore, we are celebrating the existence of the parish church at our earliest opportunity.

Friday, 18th July 1975 "a three-day Flower Festival opens, featuring flower arrangements by groups in the area, each arrangement depicting a different aspect of the church's work; 'welcoming',

'witnessing', 'praising', 'singing', 'helping' and many others. Polegate Primary School holds it's Assembly in the morning and St John's organist, Mr T R Salt, gives an organ recital in the evening. On Saturday, the Vicar of Polegate, the Rev'd Peter Thompson, will be outside the church all day to receive gifts towards the repair fund."

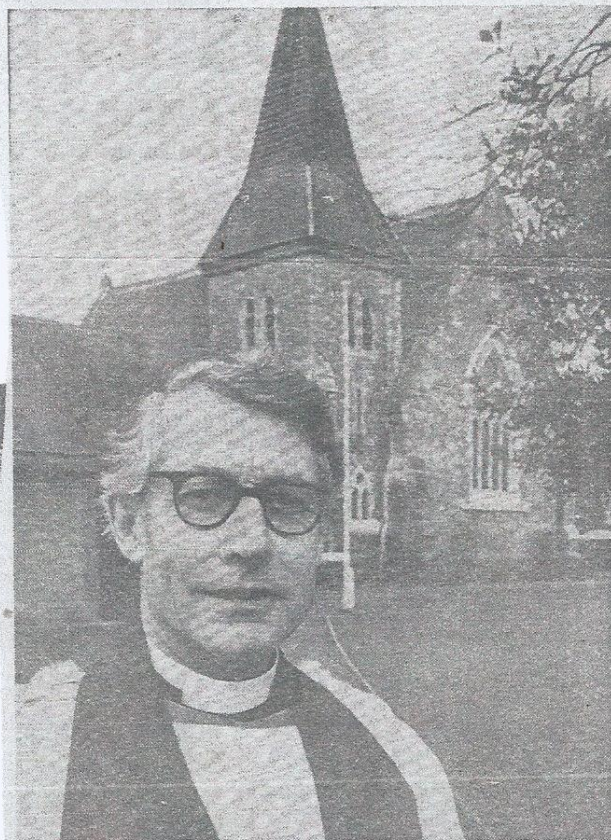
"On Sunday, Holy Communion at 8 am. is followed by the 10.30 morning service when the preacher is the Rev'd Roger Salisbury, Vicar of St Paul's, Dorking. He is the son of the Rev'd John Salisbury who became the first Vicar of Polegate when it became a separate ecclesiastical parish in 1938. The Sunday evening service will be led by the Interlude Singers." The article continues with the promise of refreshments throughout the weekend by various church organisations and on Sunday the Young Wives offering a ploughman's lunch. The newspaper does not end it's coverage there. It embarks on a complete history of St John's, happily filling many columns.

Friday, 12th September 1975 The committee of St Wilfrid's and the parochial church council agree to accept an estimate for the redecoration of the interior of the St Wilfrid's House at a cost of £265.33 (a reasonable sum of £1,662 today). One month later, the St Wilfrid's committee receive the preliminary plans drawn up by Jack Bowyer, architect, for a new porch to the church. No cost yet established.

Monday, 24th November 1975 Plainly there has been some correspondence, or even a Faculty Application to the Diocesan Advisory Committee, who respond today that " St Wilfrid's has not been consecrated, therefore any work on the building does not require a faculty"

Eastbourne Gazette, Wednesday, Feb. 19, 1975 * 17

Polegate church centenary



POLEGATE PARISH CHURCH celebrates its centenary this year. A programme of special events has been arranged. Above, the Vicar of Polegate, the Rev. Peter Thompson, indicates the church.

A sorry porch tale of St Wilfrid's

Tuesday, 26th January 1976 This is St John's Women's Fellowship annual New Years party. It's in the church hall, "with about 70 sitting down for tea and cakes and other goodies." says the Eastbourne Gazette. "After the meal they were entertained by Mr Charles Henshall, general manager of Coverdale House Publishing of Eastbourne, who showed slides of a recent trip to America." (Left to right: Mrs Jean (actually Rachel) Thompson (leader), Mrs Evelyn Oldham (treasurer) and Mrs Jean Henshall (helper).



In **February 1976**, St Wilfrid's hears that the central heating of St Wilfrid's House will cost £950 (the equivalent of £5,170 in 2021) followed in one month with quotes for the construction of a new porch on the church ranging from £2,336 to £3,148 (the highest figure would be the same as £17,130 in 2021). At the same time the Diocese issues a paper carrying the Diocese seal licensing St Wilfrid's to carry out Marriages under the Marriage Act of 1949.

They have an architect, Jack Bowyer, who confirms in **April 1976** that their contract is executed to employ Lovell Construction company of Eastbourne at the lower tender figure for the new porch and by **June 1976** starting dates are agreed.

Three months have gone by, and, early in **September 1976** the architect visits the site and finds it deserted. There is a storm asking why is no one at work? Lovell Construction claim that they have had sub-contractor trouble, and so, Jack Bowyer relents and issues an agreement to allow them extra time to complete the work setting a date of **16th October 1976**. However, that gives him no excuse to withhold an interim payment for work done to the value of £1,000.

November 1976 Jack Bowyer meets the contractors and the sub-contractors and lays down the law of their obligations under the contract they have been given and they have agreed to. The Rev'd Peter Markby, the curate for St Wilfrid's is present. News reached St Wilfrid's in **April 1977** that Jack Bowyer retired last September on health grounds due to the "intolerable" situation caused by Lovell Construction. Happily, because of retirement, his "health has now improved." We might assume that another partner in the architects firm has taken over the supervision of the contract for St Wilfrid's. **June 1977** Inexplicably, Lovell Construction have still failed to complete the porch construction even after 12 months have elapsed.

During 1977, the Rev'd Peter Markby has moved on. Then, finally, **January 1978** the work is done and the architects release the final stage payment of £2,120.04 (about £9,356 today) making a total cost similar to the higher tender in February 1976 which was rejected to get the work done at a lower price. Hearsay claims that the company collapsed soon after.

Sunday, 6th August 1978 St John's celebrates the Centenary of its Consecration. But how they celebrate on this day, we are unsure. The Rev'd Peter Tompson, vicar, would have devised an uplifting day for his congregation.

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God, And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

Let's build?

Friday, 6th May 1980 St Wilfrid's has had another, more reliable, contractor to re-decorate St Wilfrid's Hoise interior having to find £2,120 (*an expense in 2021 of £9,356*), but this job is worth it.

St John's Annual Parochial Church Meeting hears that the Electoral Roll stands at 461, and all the reports and elections go like clockwork. The meeting gave grateful thanks to Mr Reginald Salt as he retires from playing the organ at St John's after 22 years.

During the year, the Rev'd Anthony Beauchamp joins the parish to be the curate at St Wilfrid's. Then there is a quiet time when the Rev'd Keith Hodson takes over and our history source is empty.

1985 Early on in the year, St Wilfrid's apply to Wealden District Council for a grant to insulate the loft of St Wilfrid's House and get offered £69, the maximum. Wenham and Keates do the work but it costs £145 (*a cost of about £360 in 2021*). The same firm are employed in September to replace windows and glass costing £1,425 (*an expense of some £3,560 in 2021*). Then, two gas heaters are added to the church by Ashdowns costing £1,210.



1986 In October, St Wilfrid's receive plans drawn by Bouce, Kemp and Bron to enlarge the foyer by 10 feet wide and 28 feet long. Can we afford it? St John's joyfully give thanks for the receipt of legacies of £15,255 (*a very generous gift worth £36,795 in 2021*) but at the end of the year are shocked to see that, without the legacies, they would finish the year with an overspend of over £3,400.

July 1987 St Wilfrid's Foundation Stone was laid on 16th December 1961, and the opening service was in June 1962. Twelve years later, in 1978, the ill-fated porch construction was completed. But now the decision is made, the situation examined, the pro's and con's balanced - "Launch the Development Plan", say St John's vicar, the Rev'd Peter Thompson, St Wilfrid's curate, the Rev'd Keith Hodson, Vernon Found (churchwarden of St John's) and Joyce Asher of St Wilfrid's. What's the great Plan? To add two new Sunday School Rooms and one larger upstairs room to St Wilfrid's.

Such courage? But what's the cost? The rough figure now is £120,000 (*a real challenge of about £280,300 today*). And the architect, Chris Boyce, after they have accepted his plans, tells them that the building will not start until they have raised at least £80,000. Where can such a large sum come from? "*Our wallets and purses is where God will find the money*", says the vicar. Perhaps the fund-raising spirit is encouraged by a 'reunion' of all the previous curates who have an Anniversary Supper together.

"By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established: by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches." Proverbs 24:3

"Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" Isaiah 43:18

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

Building, buildings, work, works.

January 1989 With the Parish budget set for the year carrying a deficit of £5,135, it is a difficult moment to hear from the Rev'd Keith Hodson that St Wilfrid's wants to go ahead with the Building Project, because with high inflation running, Kenco (the builders) estimate the current cost will be £230,000 including fees (*a mountain equal to £491,450 in 2021*) and the Fund only stands at £125,486.

A month goes by and the contract to put the work in motion is still not signed and we feel that the architect or the quantity surveyor has been slow to get on with it. One month further on still, and the Building Fund amounts to £133,000 but that includes £11,000 in loans and there is some £7,000 tax and interest due in April. It's hard with this worry always in front of us to find another £90,000 just as the building actually starts in March.

Wednesday, 31st May 1989 Disturbing news arrives to say that, although the building progress is satisfactory, the foundations are going to cost an extra £3,000 (*equal to an extra £6,410 in 2021*) but the Pathfinders, bless them, have raised £180 towards it. Then the builders on site have noticed that the roof of the existing building is in need of repair that comes out at over £4,000! Keep praying? In June on Sunday 25th, St John's has a Morning Civic Service at the usual 10.30 am., attended by many of the Town Council and Scouts or Guides. The Council Chairman, David Day, is inclined to agree that this should be an annual date.

In September, there's a Gift Day and that is targeted this year to the Church Urban Fund giving over some £4,800, but also brings in £2,557 in loans over 3 years for St Wilfrid's. In October the Parochial Church Council hear that there are five applications for the position of Parish Worker, and by November, they have chosen Clive Redknapp who will start work in the parish in March next year. This is the moment that the building work completes, with the Fund up to nearly £206,000, of which £38,420 is in interest-free loans, means that some £27,000 will have to be borrowed from Barclays Bank. Twenty-two people volunteer to decorate as the building ends. A donation is made to cover the cost of a Loop System.

But there is also good news; Paul Zalmann of St Wilfrid's has become a Reader, and Dorrie Markham of St John's is appointed as Parish Administrator. The Eastbourne Herald prints an article carrying the churches' concern about the increasing popularity of Halloween as being spiritually divisive. And the PCC vote to reject the advert in the church magazine by Ashby's, the newsagents, because they break the law by opening all day on a Sunday. The vicar will visit them.



After making the decision, matters are put in hand to sell 17 Porters Way, Polegate, currently owned by the parish and to buy a larger property for the Parish Worker, Captain Clive Redknapp, just as Captain Stephenson, resigns to move on. They are both Church Army officers,

1990 continues in the same manner as recent days. St John's Main Door has to be treated for fungus, and the church hall roof needs repair, all costing some £400. The Quinquennial for St John's finds dry rot, a lightning conductor, electrics, and gas heaters all needing testing. Then in March, St Wilfrid's House needs new windows and outside decorating mercifully covered by a shocking gift of £10,000. God is good - through someone.

Wednesday, 4th April 1990 Contracts are exchanged today for the sale of 17 Porters Way at £69,000 and the purchase of 5 St John's Road is set in hand. There is a Holiday Club for 5 to 11's at St John's just as Captain Clive Redknapp, the Church Army Officer, arrives.

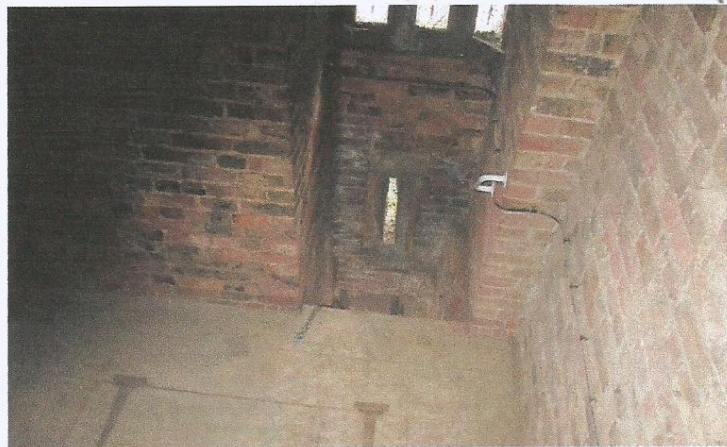
St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

Closing down (the building loans).

Wednesday, 18th April 1990 A familiar and recurring activity (in any people-linked gathering) is the Annual Meeting, and this year the elections result in Vernon Found and Paul Beale standing as Churchwardens. The Electoral Roll numbers 434 for the whole Parish, and the meeting breathes a sigh of relief as the report is made that the St Wilfrid's building is complete and the roof repairs done too. But, there is still a need for £26,000 (*equal to £51,900 in 2021*) to repay the loans. Since there is no demand letter from Barclays, we presumably have repaid the overdraft.

Tuesday, 1st May 1990, at St John's, begins the Polegate After-School Club, run by Mrs Neter and Mrs Pumfrey. They also accommodate children referred to them by Social Services, a valuable out-reach. Mrs Joan Law is elected to represent the church on the Polegate Community Association Council. We receive an estimate for the dry rot discovered in the width of the church tower giving us another £12,351 to find (*something like £24,700 in 2021*). On Sunday the 27th, what has now become an annual occasion, the Civic Service is well supported.

In June a parish outing, using a 50-seater coach, take a group to go to see "Caritas", and, in September, an Evangelism Committee will be formed by Captain Redknap, Mrs Gibbon, Ms. Deeley and Zallmann. Still in June, however, there is a dedication in the Garden of Rest, but that is not an interment of ashes, and the reason for a dedication, when the bishop consecrated the site in 1953, is a mystery. Accounts are produced for the Garden of Rest showing a balance in hand of £346.



July 1990 and the Building Fund of St Wilfrid's has loans remaining to be paid amounting to £16,340 (*a debt equivalent to £32,630, today*), showing that we have already repaid £10,000 just as the House windows are replaced at last, and all work finished by September.

October 1990 The Evangelism Committee have now done their homework and produced some ideas; Housegroups, door-to-door visiting, calling on subscribers of those in the parish that pay to receive the church magazine, The Messenger. At the end of the year are published the Parish Annual Accounts with £43,040 income (*about £86,000 in 2021*) and spending of £50,744 (*equal to £101,344*) - we've got to balance the books somehow. The Finance Committee also produce the budget for 1991 and that just balances! Well done.

Sunday 13th January 1991 A bright start to the year with a Confirmation Service, and on a Sunday, so everyone can be uplifted by the Bishop and to support those being confirmed. In March the figure for the replacement of the West Window at St Wilfrid's comes in at £4,895 including VAT, plus £135 for guttering (*that's about £9,350 in 2021*).

Wednesday, 3rd April 1991 The Annual Parochial Church Meeting hears the full story of the change of properties; the sale of 17 Porters Way produces £66,086 but the cost of 5 St John's Road is £85,140 with the extra and expenses taken from the O'Hara Fund leaving a balance of £63,316 on deposit. We now have a property immediately opposite the church to be a home for staff. Another amazing bit of news - the meeting is told that the St Wilfrid's Loans are all repaid after an anonymous gift of £7,500. But, to the churches that, like others, lent to us interest-free, should we offer interest anyway? Yes, and in June, Alan Packard (in charge of the St Wilfrid's Building Fund all along) pays them a total of some £2,000. "*Praise the Lord!*"

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

Too much about "money, not enough of the Gospel"

May 1991 Buildings and property only bring headaches. The church hall floor needs replacing with a cost of £2,800.71 (*the same as about £5,200 in 2021*) and the work will start in mid-June. AND, the hall gable end is bowing needing steel straps to stop further movement at another cost of £1,339. Insurance claim? Then, the outside of the church hall need decorating with a further cost of £642. The Diocese is changing the method of calculating the "Quota" payable to them and it will be on a 'cost' basis in future.



Saturday, 28th September 1991 Parish rejoicing as Ben Pratt is licensed at Chichester Cathedral today, after all his training to be a Reader, and the vicar, the Rev'd Peter Thompson, is made an Honorary Canon. A real day of celebration for the parish. Graham Little (the previous owner of 5 St John's Road, and who moved to the Eastbourne Road, allowing us to buy his house) is thanked for painting the inside of the windows of the church hall. In a couple of weeks we are faced with a visit by the Deanery treasurer to explain the new "Quota" and our obligations under what the diocese is calling "Towards Full Responsibility". Currently the church is not charging the parishes the full cost of clergy stipends, housing, support and central costs, by using investment income to meet part of the burden parishes bear, but that is intended to end over the next decade.

November 1991 There are fifteen Housegroups in the whole parish and we feel it would be a good idea to have training for the Leaders. Advent comes and catches the hearts as the days go by. Then the celebration of Christmas with extra numbers for Carol services, Christingles, and the Midnight Service. The end-of-year accounts will show parish income of £47,458 (*equal to £88,145 thirty years later*) and expenses of £47,090 almost balancing-the-books exactly!

Friday, 28th February 1992 An opening evening by seventy seven gathering from the parish but not in the church nor the church hall. Where are they? They are at 'The Links' in Eastbourne, where two couples are arranging and are leading a Parish Weekend Together. The brave couples are the Coomber's and the Horne's. It is a time of great fellowship and spiritual advancement for those who take part ending on the Sunday afternoon.

Wednesday, 8th April 1992 We have installed an alarm system and security lights outside the vicarage, with plans to refurbish the kitchen, followed a couple of weeks later by the APCM electing again Vernon Found and Paul Beale to be the churchwardens. Next Sunday, after the morning service at St Wilfrid's, there's a send-off at 4 pm to curate the Rev'd Keith Hodson, by many well-wishers. In May, there's a visit by the Rural Dean to give suitable advice to the churchwardens in anticipation of the Interregnum which will start in September. Then, the Rev'd Peter Thompson is going to leave after eighteen years and there all those things needing doing to advertise and find a suitable member of the clergy to take on the living. Vernon Found and Mrs Margaret Sheen (wife of retired Canon Vic Sheen) have been elected to represent the parish in this change-over.

Wednesday, 3rd June 1992 Arriving at St Wilfrid's and settling in St Wilfrid's House is the Rev'd Tom Ringland and his wife just as the members begin their road-prayer walks. Perhaps a bit of a surprise, and possibly overlooked by everyone, the Building Fund gets a tax refund of £4,200 but the Fund was closed some time ago. "*Put it in reserve on deposit*" is the decision (*good to have some positive news worth in 2021 £7,500*). At a St John's PCC meeting it is agreed to make a loan of £1,000 (interest-free) to Bishop Bell School after a plea from the Headmaster. Bishop Bell is a Church of England school and good to support. Muriel Found stands down as Coordinator from the St John's Sunday School, and Mrs Maggie Pratt takes on this responsibility.

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

So long, farewell, au revoir, auf wiedersehen.

Monday, 24th August 1992 St Wilfrid's are running today, and for four days, a Holiday Club to help parents out in the last days of the School Summer Holidays. Popular? You bet.

Saturday 19th September 1992 Here's a sad day as we all gather in the evening in Willingdon School, Broad Road, just opposite St Wilfrid's. It's a fond farewell to the Rev'd Peter Thompson and Rachael as they move on after a faithful eighteen years in the combined parish of St John's with St Wilfrid's. There are speeches and presentations, some hugs, and even a tear or two.



St John's also says "Goodbye" this month to Mrs Dunn who has been carefully cleaning in the church and hands over to Mrs Diane Williams. It also receives a welcome Legacy from Audrey Cotton's estate of £1,000, and three go on a Synod Away Day (Paul Zallman, Dorrie Markham, and Jean Gibbon).

Saturday, 28th November 1992 Fancy some cooking, a lot of cooking? There's 104 sitting down this lunchtime to a meal at St Wilfrid's. A great innovation boldly prepared and delivered by Paul Zallman and his chefs. Such a grand occasion, that their curate, the Rev'd Tom Ringland stood up and thanked them most warmly, asking could they be monthly now?

At the end of the year, in the absence of a vicar, what will the Parochial Church Council get up to? A firm determination to equip St John's with a new sound system. Someone has got four estimates which range from £2,200 to as much as £6,957. Are we going for the cheapest? Is that good stewardship? No. We choose the System Design set costing up to £6,063, and manfully prepare an application to go before the Diocesan Advisory Committee.

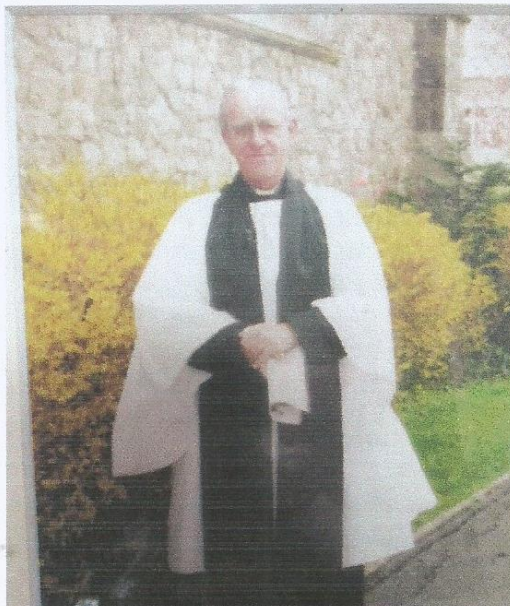
It reaches the next Diocesan sitting in February 1993, as the Fund set up to pay for it stands at £1,537. There's another Legacy of £2,000 for St John's from the estate of Mr W Gray. For reassurance on safety, the Parish Council talk about Sensor Lights round the church, and the subject from the Diocese of "Towards Full Responsibility" is always caught up with any talk about money. There being no vicar, and the curate has to tend to his own flock, the Good Friday vigil is led by Bishop Betts.

Wednesday, 24th March 1993 We've obviously already had a selection process and the invitee, the Rev'd David Gutsell, has agreed to join the parish in April. As a condition of his joining there had to be some alterations which the churchwardens have done and can present to the Annual Parochial Church meeting in full confidence; there are 486 on the Parish Electoral Roll. Full thanks are given by Vernon Found and Paul Beale to the three retired clergy, the Rev'd Vic Sheen, the Rev'd Gordon Gibbon, and the Rev'd Ken Sargeant as well as Captain and Mrs Redknapp.

At the end of the month, the new Sound System, approved by the Diocesan Advisory Committee, and which has cost some £4,623 (*equal to about double this in 2021*) is installed safely. It's an improvement, now the "Loop" is there for the hard of hearing, to be confident as they listen to the sermons, and try to keep up when singing hymns"! New Sensor lights will cost £549 in June.

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

A parish welcome



Wednesday, 28th April 1993 This is the day when the Rev'd David Leonard Nicholas Gutsell 'arrives'. The service in St John's consists of two parts; a 'Collation' by the Bishop of Lewes, the Right Reverend Ian Cundy, followed by an 'Induction' by the Archdeacon of Lewes and Hastings, the Venerable Hugh Glaisyer. It is a solemn occasion but not too solemn because there must also be much rejoicing at his arrival after some months of interregnum. So we sing -

*"Take heart for future days,
For tasks as yet unknown -
The God whose name we praise
Is seated on the throne:
Let trumpets sound and people sing,
The Lord through all earth is King!"*

No trumpets do sound, but the people do sing, and the service remains as a happy memory for many. In May, as he gets to know people, he and Avril 'throw' open the vicarage, and are suitably exhausted and gratified after no less than 140 people call in to meet and greet. In turn, his challenge to the Parochial Council is for each of them to write their priorities for the parish as if for the next five or ten years. From those ideas he makes his long-term plan.

June 1993 Work is going on in the vicarage, with a security system, kitchen refurbishment, heating system, and general smartening up. There is a cost as always, this one of £12,032 of which just over £6,000 is payable by the parish, the rest by the diocese. And this is the moment to deal with "Old Papers". There are paper records that might be considered at risk in the church office and need to be 'placed in the public domain'. Baptism Registers from 1879 to 1963, Marriage Registers from 1879 to 1976, a Building Minutes book of 1873, PCC Minute books from 1920 to 1988 and accounts up to 1971 are all safely deposited in the County Record Office. There is also a complete 'library' of parish magazines from 1892 to 1976 with the County, all available to anyone who wishes to go to examine them. What treasures.

Saturday, 10th July 1993 Today is called a Gift Day, with the church open from 10 am to 3.30 pm allowing for prayer and meditation as people listen to any guidance they might feel as they open their hearts thinking about God's gifts to them. Next month, two special happenings; Captain Clive Redknap has been accepted for ordination and leaves after the Sunday Service on the 29th August with the PCC promising to give financial support to him per term of training. The following Wednesday, Captain Mick Hough arrives, taking the role as "Parish Evangelist".

In the Autumn, St Wilfrid's have an 'At Home' day with talks aimed to describe 'Living Successfully' by Dr Bill and Francis Munroe. In October the PCC decide to dispose of several old Communion Table Frontals. In November, the first payment of £80,000 is made to St John's by the executors of the estate of Frank Rippin (died in March 1993). A few days later both the East stained glass window and the Transcept windows are vandalised causing a cost of £2,110. The year ends with Daphne Punphrey standing down as parish treasurer, and Bruce Margrett setting up a computer-based system from the 1993 hand-written accounts. The increasingly more complicated form of accounts directed by the church authorities, now requires the greater ability of electronic recording.

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

Ordering - Reordering

1994 is pretty uneventful, as St John's receives a further £48,000 instalment from the estate of Frank Rippin enabling some relief from years of penny-pinching. In May, a Loop and Public Address System is set up in the church hall. In June, St Wilfrid's have another "At Home" day, and in September, arrangements are made to construct a wall beside the hedge along the boundary of Church Road with the Garden of Remembrance.

In the Autumn, this is when the Rev'd David Gutsell sets out his plans for the Reordering of St John's church. The plain brick walls of the Chancel are to be plastered and painted, there is to be new lighting, the wooden ceiling (black at the moment) is to be highlighted to see the timbers, the pews are to go away to be dipped and remove all the surface varnish and grime, and lastly, the central heating is to be completely replaced. It's going to cost, and, as a safety-net the Rippin Legacy Fund can 'lend' to the Reordering Fund over four years, allowing the work to go ahead promptly and then subsequent fund-raising can repay the loan. All this extensive change needs an extensive Faculty Application to the Diocesan Advisory Committee and things jog along in their usual methodic manner.

The Vicar sets the church Housegroup meetings a challenge; be your own pastoral care groups not only looking after your members but also those who come to church from your area but who are not members of your Housegroup. The Vicar can't do it all. Care for each other?

1995 Sets out with another innovation; re-design the parish magazine, The Messenger, into an A4 format, still with adverts, but on eight pages, to make production easier. The production team leap into action.

Wednesday, 1st February 1995 The Reordering proposals to the Diocese have been agreed by the DAC and, since the proposals are of such a significance, they have to be published by notices displayed inside the church and externally, inviting anyone who disagrees with the proposals to lodge their disagreement with the Chancellor in whose power lies the permission to proceed.

In shock, the Parochial Church Council hear that there have been nine objections to the changes proposed. Either the proposals need changing, or the Reordering abandoned, or the parish needs to mount a legal appeal before the Chancellor at a Consistory Court of the Diocese. Expensive and a big problem, but, through negotiation and dialogue, things get resolved and



work starts. The pews are sent away, the church filled with scaffolding, workmen climb to the very top of the ceiling, cleaning, painting, and refurbishing.

For three months, at the end of the year, every service is in the church hall, which somehow brings everyone closer together. *"O LORD, save us; O LORD, grant us success. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD, we bless you."* (Psalm 118:25)

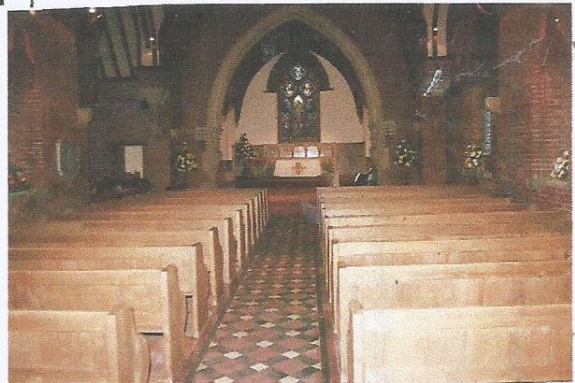
St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

Life is more than just a pantomime, if with God.



Just before the end of the year in 1995, there is a pantomime in the church hall, Humpty Dumpty, whose scenery is being painted (left) and directed by the Church Army Officer. Some from the congregation are willing thespians and the church hall resounds with laughter and "Oh yes it did". Refreshments follow and the generous donations (it was an admission-free evening) go towards the Reordering Appeal.

1996 With St John's reordered and opened in glorious splendour, the major event of the year sees our St Wilfrid's curate, the Rev'd Tom Ringland leave to follow his calling to go to Coalville, in Leicester. Arriving in his place is the Rev'd Chris MacDonald.

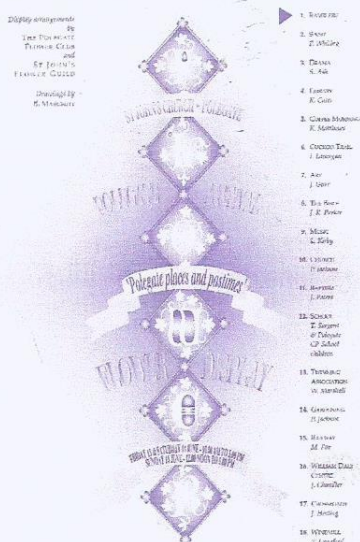


As over so many years now since 1875, regular services of worship continue day by day, week by week, and season by season. Fellowship is shared, grace and faith grow with all the church family interaction.

The non-routine things continue too with the vicarage having a bees nest, and Sheila Rusbridger raising £78 for the parish with her sponsored bike-ride. For the first time a purpose-designed church book-keeping computer programme is purchased for £180 with a built-in support line, to set up and provide print-outs in the correct format to meet the Charity Commissions specifications. Modernisation.

In December the figures are added up for the St John's Reordering Fund whose target is £74,300 and they find that £65,000 is raised to date.

In **February 1997** a re-conditioned photocopier costing £1,645 is purchased and this one can almost work without more human intervention than pushing a button. There is also the duplicating machine which is more economical to run copies of more than 100. After Easter in St Wilfrid's Miss Fayle



runs a Holiday Club, and at the 1997 Annual Parochial Church Council, Vernon Found retires as churchwarden.

Friday, 13th July 1997 St John's runs a Flower Festival to coincide with Polegate's Carnival weekend. Situated in various places around the church for visitors to enjoy, are eighteen arrangements; each has a theme, rambles, sport, music (right) church, baptism, school, railway and others. It's a great work.



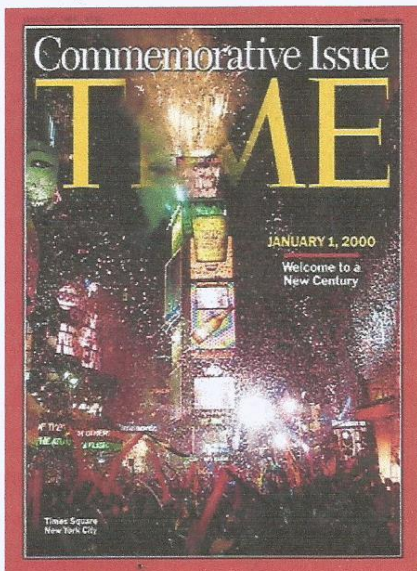
"Let every creature rise and bring, the highest honours to our King"

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

Comings, goings, and rumours of goings.

The annual accounts covering the whole parish for the year of **1998** show income of over £141,300 (of which voluntary income is £73,710 with rents and events making up the total) and expenses of £108,372. The combined Parish Contribution (the payment to the diocese) is £37,392, St John's church costs are £9,720, St Wilfrids ££7,873 and the church Magazine costs £2,885 to print. The Parish Charitable giving for the year is £8,308, and majors giving to C.M.S., Tear Fund, Scripture Union, Sian Hawkins (an evangelist previously of the parish and working in a country never to be revealed for her safety whilst she serves there - actually Afghanistan) and fifteen other worthy causes. Finally, the St John's Reordering Fund, starting with a debt of just over £2,000, ended the year with money in hand of £1,371. Not magic, a great blessing from the generosity of over four hundred souls.

September 1999 The Rev'd Chris MacDonald leaves his post as curate at St Wilfrid's, becoming the Chaplain of a school in Eastbourne, as the Rev'd Andrew Tucker arrives. The Rev'd Cannon David Gutsell, after nearly seven years as vicar of St John's and with a great reordering to his credit, warns of his retirement next year.



December 1999 The world totters on the brink of what some feel is a new millennium, but of course, a new millennium should start at "1" = 2001. Churches Together (St Georges, United Reformed, Downs Valley, St John's and St Wilfrid's) issue a "Millennium is Jesus' 2,000 Birthday" leaflet with the Christmas dates for all the services at all the churches. In the busy days before Christmas, volunteers deliver them door-to-door. A prayer is included - *Dear Lord, our heavenly Father, at the dawn of a new Millennium, in a world of darkness, give us your light; In lands of war and prejudice, grant us peace; In a world of despair, give us hope; In a world of sadness and tears, show us your joy; In a world of hatred, show us your love...."*

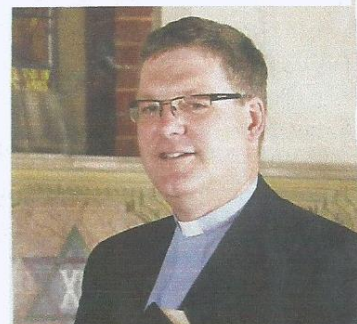
January 2000 A (new) Millennium, a new year, a new day, and new resolve for Faith, Hope and Charity. Activities and events continue, committees meet, sermons reflect the next passage of Gospel that is the current study, and services lift

voices in praise and worship. Even the Annual Parochial Church Council is the same even though it is a new millennium with the parish Electoral Roll at 410. St Wilfrid's get Wealden Council planning permission for storage and kitchen improvements. And plans for the retirement of the Rev'd David Gutsell progress.

Saturday, 1st July 2000 The Retirement Day has arrived, and promptly at 7pm a great gathering is assembled at Willingdon Community School in Broad Road, to say "Farewell, and God bless you both". Actually they were a little late because the cricket broadcast was getting to such an exciting point. Brilliant organisation gave everyone either a green, yellow, or blue ticket to direct the holder to the same-coloured buffet round the hall. Even the Rev'd Mick Hough (previously our

Church Army Officer) came back to join in. A happy evening.

By the Harvest Festival, (so soon) the Rev'd Mark Lucas (and family) arrive and he is installed, serving his flock until 2010.



A bigger house, then SEPARATION.

2001 It's a quiet year after the unique Millennium occasion that has just past. But some go to the Wintershall Charitable Trust production of the "Life of Christ". In the manner of Oberammergau, with almost total involvement by the local community, and a cast of several hundreds. The performance starts in the morning, pauses for lunch, and concludes in the afternoon. In 2000, last year, in which were the first performances, they were so appreciated and supported that they've decided to continue performing this year. It's not sung, and it's not in German, but the 3,000-odd audience are able to hear every word though concealed loudspeakers. There are three 'stages' and people get up, and walk from one viewing area to another. There's the nativity, visit to the temple, calling and baptism, feeding of the five thousand with Jesus and the disciples coming to share the bread with the audience. Then the betrayal, trial, crucifixion, burial, and RESURRECTION, followed by the meeting beside the Lake of Galilee with the fishing net breaking under the strain of so many fish. Amazing.



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February 2002 It's all happening at St Wilfrid's. They've just finished an Alpha Course and will start another in April. But this month, they go for planning permission to extend St Wilfrid's House. David John's Associates are awarded the contract for the work costing some £39,000 and we will borrow £15,000 from the Archdeacons Fund if available, then £50,000 from Church Funds Investment Measure 1958 or less as required. As well, there's to be an extension to the St Wilfrid's Hall costing about £200,000 (*that's about £299,400 in 2021*). An appeal is launched for a quarter of a £million.

April 2002 The Annual Parochial Church meeting receives reports from Tea & Tots, Noah's Ark, the 'J' Club, the Sunday Club, and others. During May, there's a Whole-parish Away-day at Pilgrim Hall. Then St John's church central heating boiler fails after only seven years needing £2,392 to replace, plus £2,881 to improve the sound system, plus £706 for the hall sound system, AND £1,938 for the church hall flat roof. "*It never rains but it pours*". Very soon, Richard Herkes is to be ordained at Chichester, intending to be a Non-stipendary Assistant Curate at St Wilfrid's.

WEDNESDAY, 1ST JANUARY 2003 This is the Day on which St Wilfrid's becomes a Conventional District. This means that they will elect their own officers, their own council, have their own bank account and monies, and be self-governing, whilst remaining part of the 'Combined Parish of St John's with St Wilfrid's', but run their own affairs.

Due debate and consultation has taken place, and at this moment the parish General Fund is divided 60% for St John's and 40% for St Wilfrid's. The first year, the Parish Ministry costs will be paid 66.666% by St John's and in 2004 just 60% by St John's with the balance falling to the account of St Wilfrid's. The financial division is suitably fully complex and all are satisfied.

It's an unusual step, but taken with courage, with the expectation that, as the next few years pass, St Wilfrid's will prove itself able to stand on it's own feet and become a full parish in it's own right.

"May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels." "For the sake of my brothers and friends, I will say, "Peace be within you." For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your prosperity." Psalm 122:7-9

Notes from St John's as it "stands together"

2004 St John's and St Wilfrid's get together to match book-keeping systems so that, as required, the two accounts can be combined to produce one parish statement. The staff accommodation (5 St John's Road) for Andrew and Christine Jervis and family, is refurbished at a cost of £20,586 (*a cost of some £30,000 in 2021*). Dorrie Markham becomes church organist. Suzanne Clare starts a new Youth Club. New lighting installed (previously replaced in the 1996 Re-ordering) and new electrical systems installed.

2005 A memorial seat to remember Lyn Hodge's father, Ron, is added in the church grounds opposite the Garden of Remembrance gate

2009 The February Holiday Club is called "The Circus". Many attend the big mission event launched under the title "Bible by the Beach" and it will be held each year. A property, financed by a 100% loan of £165,000 from the Diocese, is purchased to accommodate the Rev'd Graham Burrows and his family; 99 Greenleaf Gardens, Polegate. His curacy is funded by the Diocese as he leaves theological college.

2010 This year's Holiday Club is called "Wish you were here". St John's Electoral Roll is 147. Graham Burrows is ordained at Seaford. The Garden of Remembrance is renovated by cleaning and relaying each stone. The Rev'd Mark Lucas, after ten years, leaves to go to a new parish, Barton Seagrave, in the Peterborough Diocese. Retired Holiday club, "A Break from Routine" run by Dr Mike Hutchinson. Hugh Lowries is licensed as a Lay reader.

2011 We welcome in May the Induction of the Rev'd Chris Spinks, by the Right Reverend Wallace Benn, Bishop of Lewes, and the Venerable Philip Jones, Archdeacon of Lewes and Hastings. Polegate Residents Association, in June ask permission to hold their "Summer Fun Day" in church grounds, before a coach-load of us go to Arundel Cathedral for the Carpet of Flowers Festival Women's Fellowship and Mothers Union hold their usual Carol Service.

2012 Worsening church finances bring about the heartbreaking decision to make our children's worker, Christine Jervis, redundant.

2013 Because the Rev'd Graham Burrows has moved on, 99 Greenleaf Gardens, bought for £165,000, is sold for £187,500 less costs and sale expenses.

2014 Despite the loss of children's worker, Christine Jervis, and Curate, Graham Burrows, we run a Holiday Club "God's Zoo".

2015 All the equipment of the audio visual desk replaced, and some lighting with new LED systems. Lead stolen. Much anti-social behaviour in grounds. Vestry conifers cut down. Empty 5 St Johns Road is let to tenants after redecorating and re-carpeting the whole house.

2016 Away Day. Parish Ministry costs raised to £69,132. 106 on Electoral Roll. Card-drops started in new housing. Parish Giving scheme to be adopted.

2017 New security lights added. Plastic UPVC guttering replaced by cast-iron. Town and County Councillor Roy Martin's large funeral needed relay speakers for church hall. Church roof repaired under Quinquennial listing. Volunteers refurbish the covered way.

2018 Volunteers have decorated the vestry. Covered way doors are replaced.

2019 1970's electronic organ condemned. New Yamaha Clavinova given. Two new security cameras installed. Architect arranges stonework repairs costing £33,297 inc. his fees.

2020 A church team have worked hard to make new pew cushions with a gargantuan effort. Mary Rowland, living in Bernhard Baron Cottage Homes, gives up the church book-keeping after 13 years of faithful service. Friday 20th March the nation is placed in a COVID "lock-down"; churches are closed with not even the vicar allowed in, successive legal requirements to keep a distance from each other. The Spring Annual meetings are delayed until October, a time of socially-distanced services with fixed seating places followed by another winter "lockdown".

2021 At the start of the year, another "lockdown" and the use of a recorded Sunday service available 24/7 is provided for the second year. Zoom gatherings continue. Parish Ministry costs have risen to £74,304 this year. BUT,

"Come, Christians, follow where the captain trod, the King victorious, Christ, the Son of God; lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim, till all the world adores His sacred name!" hymn

St. John's Church, Polegate - God's creative story

From the Beginning to the End



Dear Reader, it is my hope that this attempt to sketch the history of St John's, and God's hand in it's growth, will have given you some pleasure and understanding. Inevitably it has had to be selective and unable to include much detail that otherwise would make it unreadable.

For this attempt, we have reached a destination. But each of us has a destination which we choose by the way we live the life which God has given us. If we live with the great God who sent Jesus to be the Saviour we all need, then our destination is to join the saints, angels and all the company of heaven singing our praise of an awesome God. .

When we sing hymns in this life, we join our voices with those who did so on Friday 10th November 1876 at the Opening Service of our church. Equally, we join with each true heart that has sung down the years afterwards, and we join our voices to those who will come after us, to those yet unborn and who themselves will become part of the long history of followers of Jesus Christ, part of God's great story.

Bruce Margrett, churchwarden, September 2022