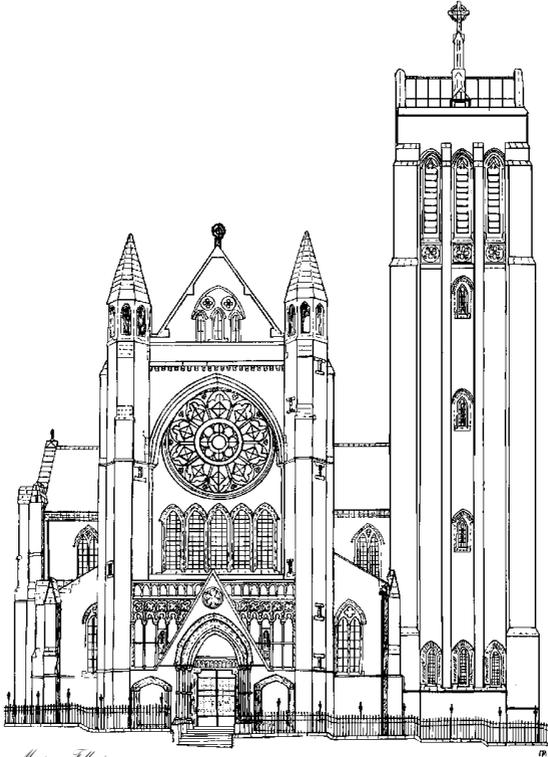




The Church of  
St Alban the Martyr  
Birmingham 12



# ST ALBAN AND ST PATRICK PARISH MAGAZINE



**March**  
**2021**  
**70p**





**Church of S Alban the Martyr**  
**Conybere Street, Birmingham**  
*(Traditional Anglo-Catholic)*

(www.saintalban.co.uk)

**Vicar:** Revd Dr Gerald Sykes,

The Vicarage, 120 Stanhope Street, Birmingham B12 0XB

☎: 0121 440 0404

**Sunday Services**

Choral Mass 10.00 a.m. Solemn  
Evening Service 6.00 p.m.

**Weekday Masses** *(Please note that weekday services are presently cancelled due to Covid-19.)*

Thursday 11.30 a.m. Low  
Saturday 9.00 a.m. Low  
Saturday 5.00 p.m. Multimedia Mass *(Term Time)*  
Holy Days of Obligation 7.30 p.m. Solemn

**Confessions:** By appointment

**Authorized Eucharistic Ministers** *(Bishop's Permission)*

Mr Dennis Clark ☎: 0121 430 3727

Mrs Verna Smith-Broadbent

Mrs Amanda Cadman

Dr Christopher Smith ☎: 0121 471 1301

**Churchwardens**

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130, Royal Arch Apartments,  
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## *From The Vicarage*

Dear All

Lockdown makes Lent seem even more penitential than normal. Lockdown also affects each of us differently. I find that I am extra busy because doing things online involves a lot of extra work. Using Zoom and making videos takes time and with no live music all the music has to be edited before the services. The same goes for the readings and prayers. On the other hand, it is always interesting to learn new skills and revive old ones. For others the pandemic has been a seemingly endless time when they can't go out or meet friends and family.

Let's have some positive news; the PCC has decided that we will reopen the church for public worship on Sunday March 7<sup>th</sup>. At the moment we are NOT restarting the Thursday and Saturday morning Masses. We are asking that everyone books either through our email [info@saintalban.co.uk](mailto:info@saintalban.co.uk) or by 'phoning me (0121 440 0404). This will mean that as more people feel confident to come out to church we don't have to turn people away. Please remember that we all have to behave responsibly and follow the rules.

- Please book before you come to church.
- You must wear a face covering over your nose and mouth at all times except when receiving communion and you may also remove your face covering to read the lessons or intercessions.
- Please sanitize your hands on entering the church.
- Go straight to your seat, the seats are marked up green for places you can sit and red for those that are less than 2 metres away from other seats or standing places and are not to be used.

- Please bring a pen with you and fill in the track and trace form.
- Only the cantor(s) are allowed to sing.
- When moving around church please follow the one-way system and if you have to queue stand on the yellow arrows marked out on the floor.
- Please sanitize your hands before and after receiving communion.
- When leaving the church please don't stand around in groups with less than 2 metres between bubbles. I know we want to catch up with each other but please remember that it is dangerous and unlawful.

If we follow all these rules we minimise the risk of cross infection with Covid-19 while in the church.

Rules all sound a bit negative so here is something more positive. Enjoy being able to come to church rather than focus on the necessary restrictions. Use Lent as a time of spiritual growth and drawing closer to God. In that context, what can we make of Lent this year? If we only think of Lent as a time of fasting and abstinence, then I think this Lent will be extra difficult. Lent has never been just about giving things up, one aspect has always been taking up new things that help us on our journey in holiness. If we see Lent as being a time in the wilderness when we hope to make real progress in our pilgrimage to God, then it will be much more productive. For those of you who are able to use computers we have put on some extra events. We are having our usual Stations of the Cross on Friday at 6.00 p.m. but we are also putting on Evening Prayer and a Study Group:

details of these are elsewhere in the magazine. If you don't have access to the internet one traditional path to holiness in Lent is to read a Lent book.

To end on a positive note, infection rates, while still high in Birmingham, are falling; longer days and warmer weather are on the way; and the church roof has

been replaced; the cloister entrance made better; and we are ready for renewal in our renewed building.

Fr Gerry.

Next month we hope to print an obituary, together with any thoughts, memories and reflections on the life of Mary Goodman,

In view of the rather strange situation and restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Mary's Funeral Mass was not exactly what we would have expected or desired.

Nevertheless, the way in which it was presented with the help of modern technology, resulted in many appreciative comments from those who were able to view from a distance, including, we understand, the country of Canada, albeit in the very early hours of the morning on that side of the world.

When the final health restrictions are removed and we are allowed to have a fully occupied church, it is to be hoped that we can have a special service of thanksgiving for Mary. She was a tremendous pillar of the church during her lifespan of 102 years, and we invite anyone who would like to write their thoughts about her and their personal experience of knowing her, as an item for next month's magazine.

These will then be printed together as a token of our love and respect for our departed sister, who will be greatly missed by all.

If anyone who was unable to attend on the day would like a copy of the Requiem service booklet, please notify Fr Gerry.

## Lent at St Alban's

We are doing more than usual during Lent which means there is a lot to remember. I think it would helpful to go through our weekly offerings.

**Monday:** there is nothing set for Monday.

### **Tuesday: Study Group 7:30 p.m.**

In recent years we haven't had a Lent course because I felt it was difficult to ask people to travel in to St Alban's at night in the dark. Now that many of us are used to Zoom we can join each other without leaving our houses. We are using one of the York study courses "Caring for Creation" as our Lent course. I'm sure everyone of us is aware and concerned about the environment, pollution, global warming and single-use plastic. This course gives us a chance to think about all these issues from the perspective of our faith. We are being joined by some from Highgate Baptist Church.

This is the link for all our study groups:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89094465550?pwd=VXI0SllYkFtS2VoL3hSallZZE9idz09>  
Meeting ID: 890 9446 5550, Passcode: 568346

### **Wednesday and Thursday: Evening Prayer 6.00 p.m.**

On the middle evenings of the week we have a service of Evening prayer using the 1662 book of common prayer. It is a beautiful step back from the day and a chance to pause from our tasks and concerns.

The link for evening prayer is:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85409950826?pwd=Z3JydGRxdnBKSSStpTkNsK0xLbmRXUT09>

Meeting ID: 854 0995 0826, Passcode: 048753

### **Friday: 6.00 p.m. Stations of the Cross**

We have traditionally meditated on Christ's passion on Fridays at 6.00 p.m. during Lent with the devotion of Stations of the Cross. We are going to do the same but in Zoom this year. I'm not quite sure how it is going to work out but I am sure that we will find it a holy experience. I hope that by the end of Lent it will be possible to make the service in church public, but I expect to continue with Zoom as well.

The link is the same as for Evening Prayer.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85409950826?pwd=Z3JydGRxdnBKSSStpTkNsK0xLbmRXUT09>

Meeting ID: 854 0995 0826, Passcode: 048753

### **Sunday: 10.00 a.m. Mass**

I hope that we will soon have public services at St Alban's again, but we will continue with Zoom as we have been doing. The link to the Sunday masses is:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87284149495?pwd=MnMzZVlrY3VheEpWK1B1TDdETGVYUT09>

Meeting ID: 872 8414 9495, Passcode: 167282

## The Church's Year — March

March came in like a rattlesnake! — I shall never forget reading those words in my student days in some Ian Fleming novel! Let's pray that S David's Day, which Monday March 1<sup>st</sup> is, will be rather finer than that — but this time of the pandemic has qualified us to be prepared for anything.



We can pray especially for the Principality of Wales whose patron saint is S David. The saint was born sometime in the sixth century and died sometime at the start of the seventh century, usually taken to be 601. He founded a monastery at Menevia, now called S David's, where his cathedral stands. He was especially renowned for his kindness and compassion, qualities which should mark a truly Christian life.

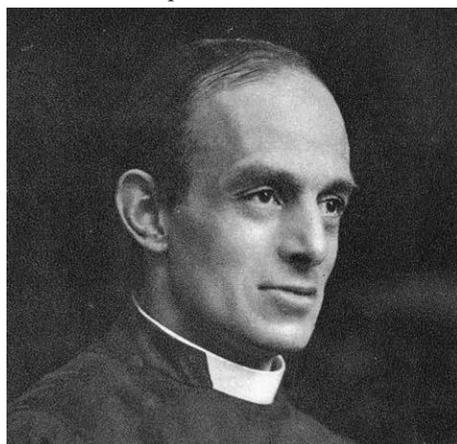
The very next day, Tuesday March 2<sup>nd</sup>,



is the Feast Day of S Chad, a missionary bishop — in many ways very like S David but living about a century later. He was active in precisely this part of the country and became Bishop of Lichfield. S Chad's

Cathedral in Birmingham is the Cathedral of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham — still open for services, it might be pointed out! — so we can remember our Roman Catholic brethren in our prayers on this day. I have briefly met Archbishop Bernard Longley once or twice and can say what a charming and accessible man he is!

Monday March 8<sup>th</sup> contains a 'commemoration' of Studdert Kennedy, who was a chaplain in the trenches in the



First World War and who was a poet of considerable talent. There is a poem in his collection of poems, *'The Unutterable Beauty'*, titled simply *Well?* which is one of the most moving poems I have read. It describes a vision of Jesus experienced by a Cockney soldier who thinks he has been killed in battle, but who is 'sent back' by Jesus to re-live his life. Do track it down on the internet, if you have time, and read it for yourself. I owe my discovery of it to the Rector of the parish of Poplar in the East End of London, where I was a curate — it was one of his favourite poems and he could never read it without tears coming into his eyes.

Sunday March 14<sup>th</sup> is the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent, roughly half through this season,

and also Mothering Sunday (again, please note, not Mother's Day!, although we fittingly remember our own mums on that day). I still regret the omission from the lectionary of the wonderful passage from S Paul's letter to the Galatians, 4: 21 – end, which is contained in the Book of Common Prayer; but which is clearly regarded as too difficult for our tender ears nowadays. It speaks of the heavenly Jerusalem, which is 'the mother of us all' and is a reminder of how the Christian Church is also seen as a mother and that leads on to a reminder of how we are all a family in the Body of Christ, which S Paul also identifies with the Church.

Again, I cannot resist mentioning that Monday March 15<sup>th</sup> is, in Roman history, the Ides of March, the day on which Julius Caesar was assassinated. On the evening before I always read — or recite! — John Masefield's rip-roaring poem *The Rider at the Gate* which describes the ghost of Pompey galloping up to Caesar's house to warn him of his impending fate. I mention this because last year March 15<sup>th</sup> was the last Sunday on which I — and no doubt other priests — was able to take a service before the first lockdown and then Sunday July 12<sup>th</sup> was the first Sunday on which I was able again to take a service — in fact, two services — after the end of that lockdown. These dates are significant in Roman history because, as already said, March 15<sup>th</sup> is the date of the death of Caesar and July 12<sup>th</sup> is the date of his birth. Could this, therefore, be seen as a kind of pagan, pre-Christian, prophecy of the closing and re-opening of churches, as defined by those dates?!! The early Christians certainly held that the pagan world, characterised at least by sybils, contained prophecies of the birth of Jesus — that is why we see sybils as well as prophets in Michelangelo's painting of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Also, the

Fourth Eclogue of Virgil, containing the words The Firstborn of the New Age is already on his way from high heaven down to earth, was regarded as a prophecy of the coming of Christ. I see no reason why the dates of March 15<sup>th</sup> and of July 12<sup>th</sup> of last year should not also be given a Christian interpretation! (But I confess, you may think that far-fetched, in which case please forgive me!).

Wednesday March 17<sup>th</sup> is the Feast Day of another missionary bishop, the great S Patrick, patron saint of Ireland, whose moving Confessions are one of the classics of Christian literature, beginning with the words, "I Patrick, the sinner...". for that is how he regarded himself. To him also are attributed the words contained in a letter



to the king Coroticus, in which S Patrick is addressing his converts and says, “As you are Christians, so may you also be Romans” (*Ut Christiani, ita et Romani sitis*) — very interesting words, in which he held clearly that being a Christian means we should also strive to emulate the best of the traditional Roman virtues of courage and steadfastness and resolution in the face of danger — a stimulating message perhaps in the time of a pandemic!

Two days later, Friday March 19<sup>th</sup>, is the Feast Day of S Joseph, the husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We know very little about him but how great was his responsibility, together with Mary, for bringing up Jesus in his humanity. Just as Mary later received in Christian tradition the title of ‘Mother of God’, so Joseph



could also be regarded as the Foster-Father of God. He might not have been fully aware of the significance of his awesome responsibility, but we can be sure that he fulfilled it faithfully.

Thursday March 25<sup>th</sup> is the only Red-Letter Day in this month, the Feast of the Annunciation of our Lord to the Blessed Virgin Mary, also referred to sometimes

as ‘Lady Day’ (partly because it used to mark the end of the financial year). It was on this day, exactly nine months before Christmas, that we read that the Angel Gabriel came to Mary to announce that she



would give birth to Jesus. But the message of the angel had to depend upon Mary’s acceptance of it, which she did with love and humility, regardless of how she may have felt about it — Behold the handmaid of the Lord! Be it unto me according to thy word. We pray, especially as we approach the climax of Lent, for a similar spirit of love, humility and obedience, especially as the last Sunday of this month, March 28<sup>th</sup>, is Palm Sunday, commemorating Christ’s entry into Jerusalem, and the beginning of Holy Week, the most important week in the Christian calendar. The whole of this month of March falls, therefore, in the season of Lent — let’s make the most of it so that we may be worthily prepared for the glorious celebration of Christ’s resurrection on Easter Day.

*Fr Andrew*

## From Proposed Iron Church to Pearson “Cathedral”

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of March 1871 the first ‘permanent’ Church of St Alban the Martyr, designed by John Davis with space for 480, opened on the corner of Dymoke Street and Leopold Street; on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August the London Gazette published the Order in Council creating the district of St Alban’s and on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November Fr James Pollock became Incumbent. In the six years from the opening of St Alban’s Mission on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September 1865 in a ‘temporary’ chapel on Leopold Street with space for 250 much had been achieved.

The mission had survived the controversy of the “Excommunication Case”, attacks on the building by a mob and the efforts of the Protestant Association and Aston Trustees to prevent the formation of the District. But problems remained. Before the District could become a Parish, the condition of the church must satisfy the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England. With the success of the mission and continued growth of the population as the vacant land in the District was built up, the accommodation was already insufficient for the would-be congregation.

A public appeal had been issued for funds to enlarge the schools and provide a further church at the top end of the district, where St Patrick’s Mission was opened in November 1873, initially as a dual-purpose school/chapel on Highgate Street.

In November 1874, the Church Building Committee resolved to suspend carrying out the Ecclesiastical Commissioners’ recommended alterations to the existing

Church and wrote to inform them that they now intended either to enlarge the existing church or to build a completely new church for the District.

In 1875 a crisis came. Fr Tom Pollock’s health broke down and in the summer he left Birmingham for nearly two years, wintering in southern France and Italy. Fr James Pollock was also in poor health and in early 1876 he retired to the Isle of Man for three months staying with his sister Anna at their family home, Strathallan House near Douglas in the Isle of Man. The mission was left in the charge of two assistants, Rev. Edward J Scarlett and Rev. John H Cowan.

Before he left, Fr James, in his own words from Vaughton’s Hole — XXV Years in It: “packed up all my goods, feeling quite uncertain as to whether I could return or not. Before I went away, I took a step which perhaps was mistaken, and which certainly led to enormous difficulties. I asked a few of the most earnest and influential friends of S. Alban’s to hear a statement on the subject of Mission work. I set before them the growing needs of the district, and our scanty Church accommodation — only 750, including S. Patrick’s, which was then only a school-chapel. I urged what I had advocated at the beginning of the Mission, the erection of a large plain iron Church, or a brick Church like that in Leopold Street, deprecating strongly the idea of attempting any costly enterprise. With the noblest and best intentions, my plan was set aside, and the immediate result of my appeal was a proposal to commence the erection

of a good permanent Church in the following spring, 1875. The Church was commenced in September 1879, and was opened on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1881. So I did not attain the object of my earnest desire; but, on the contrary, brought upon myself and my people the burden of debt which it was my fixed determination to avoid.”

Charlotte Ratcliff’s notes provide a fuller and more dramatic picture of this meeting: “One Sunday Morning Mr Ratcliff got a letter from Mr Pollock as nearly I can remember these words:

“Dear Mr Ratcliff, I have called a meeting at your house for tomorrow evening after church. I have asked Mr Sproston, Mole, Middleman & Droughton. We shall have business of great importance to discuss”.

The dear Brothers & all the others named came. We had supper & then immediately after we went into the Breakfast Room & Mr Pollock began as nearly as I can remember in these words: “I have called this meeting this evening because God’s work at S. Albans cannot go on on its present basis any longer. I am placed there to minister to God’s people. I cannot get my flock into my fold. Crowds willing to be ministered to go away Sunday after Sunday, because they cannot get in church. This is not right, it must not be. I am willing to minister to them, they are willing for me to minister to them. I ask & demand room to do it, & to do it now while I have strength before I am effete, when it will be no good giving it me. I ask for no great outlay, but I do ask for room, I ask for an iron church. I have all the particulars of such a church as I want. Gentlemen will you give it me in six months, if not,” (& here putting his hand in his pocket & bringing out a long

envelope) he said, “Here is my letter of resignation if you refuse.”

If a thunder bolt had fallen among us it could hardly have caused greater consternation. For some moments there was dead silence. At last in very measured tones Mr Thomas Middleton spoke & said:

“The position of things is this, I believe. Mr Pollock desires to have a church of sufficient size to be able to admit the crowds that now seek for admittance; but cannot get in. He asks for room, and he shall have it, & have it without delay. He asks for an iron building, but I cannot help feeling, & I think you will all agree with me, that an iron Church would hardly be a fitting monument of the Catholic Faith which our Clergy have planted here. Mr Pollock shall have a church the size he wishes; but it shall be of brick & of stone not iron and he shall have it without delay.”

Mr Pollock protested, he said he could have an iron church in six months; but all were unanimously against it & he had to give in; but he said:

“Gentlemen almost all of you are in business & have works large enough to do your work in & when you need more room you add to them. My works are too small to do my work in, & it is larger works to gather in the bodies & souls of my people I plead for.” It was I believe five years from this time before our church was opened! Mr Butterfield the architect was asked for a design first — which Mr Pollock could not endure & would not consider even its plan for which Butterfield charged & they had to pay £100 & then Mr Pollock said Pearson was the only man to be thought of & it was decided to ask him to design

the church which he did.”

Although the original Minute Books of the Building Committee are lost, two volumes were transcribed by Fr Cecil Hunt, curate at St Patricks and his transcript is deposited in the Birmingham Library Archives with other notes of his and Fr Underhill’s for a planned, but still unwritten history. These minutes throw more light on the stages by which the plea for a cheap Iron Church evolved into the building of our present cathedral-like Church.

The informal meeting at the home of the Ratcliffs was not minuted, but the minutes of a meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September 1875 include: “It was resolved that Mr Pollock be authorised to confer with Mr Butterfield as to the future alterations of St Alban’s Church” and at a meeting on the 29<sup>th</sup> of December: “Resolved that Mr Middlemore be instructed to write to Mr Butterfield asking for Plans of proposed Alterations to S. Alban’s Church.”

Both resolutions refer to alterations to the 1871 Church on the corner of Leopold Street and Dymoke Street — it seems that a completely new church on a new site was not yet envisaged, despite the notification that had been given to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners of the possibility.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of January 1876, while James Pollock was away recuperating on the Isle of Man, the lay members of the Building Committee “Resolved That the Plans & Specifications of Mr Butterfield for the proposed alteration of S. Alban’s Church be accepted by this Committee subject to the approval of the Incumbent.”

Fr James returned to Birmingham in April, but on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April “Mr Middlemore reported that the designs for alteration of S. Alban’s Ch. were still in the hands of Messrs Butterfield & Christiani and it was agreed that Mr Middlemore should write to those gentlemen and inform the Committee as to result.”

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 1876 “Mr Middlemore reported that he had seen & written to Mr Butterfield (in accordance with the resolution of April 19<sup>th</sup>) and that satisfactory arrangements had been come to. Mr Middlemore was authorized to write to & see Mr Butterfield respecting the Plans for alteration of Chancel & report thereon.”

It is not until the 25<sup>th</sup> of September 1876 that the minutes refer to building a *new* church — surely a necessity to provide the increased capacity that Fr James Pollock desired — “It was resolved that as many members of the committee as conveniently could, should meet at Mr Butterfield’s office in London to confer with him as to the best mode of carrying out the projects of a new Church, and report at next meeting.”

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of October: “Mr Middlemore stated the members of the Committee did not meet Mr Butterfield but that he (Mr Middlemore) saw him in London, that Mr Butterfield’s advice was that we should build an entire new Church on the present or on new ground — commencing with the Chancel. ... Passed unanimously: That Mr Butterfield’s scheme for altering the Church without enlargement ... be abandoned. ... Passed unanimously: That Mr Butterfield’s Plan for the immediate Rebuilding of

Chancel be rejected on the grounds that it does not provide the accommodation required by the Parish. It was resolved that Mr Middlemore be asked to write to Mr Butterfield explaining more fully our position & asking as to building Nave first.”

It seems that there had been some failure in communicating the urgent need for additional accommodation to the architect.

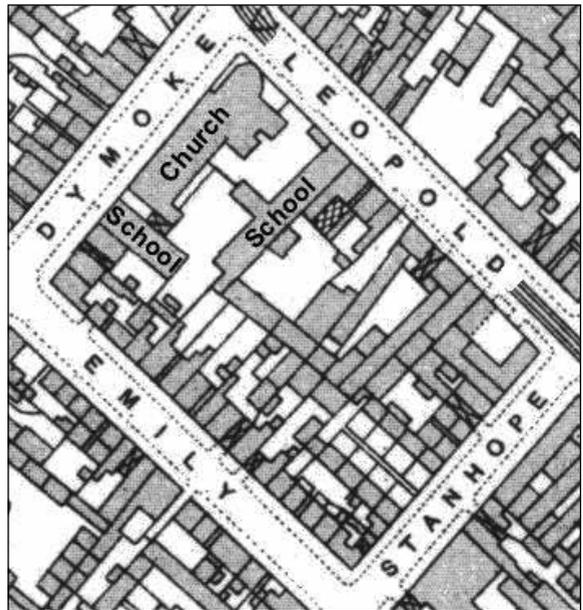
21<sup>st</sup> of December 1876: “Mr Middlemore reported that he had given instructions to Mr Butterfield to prepare plans for a nave & aisles on the old site at an estimated cost of £5000. ... It was suggested that Mr Butterfield should be told that the west window of S. Albans New Church might be blocked up unless due provision was exercised. ...”

25<sup>th</sup> of December 1876: “Mr Pollock reported that he had seen Mr Hemming respecting property in Leopold St. but no final result was come to. Mr Pollock was requested to make enquiry as to price. ... Passed unanimously that the Playground should be sacrificed for the purpose of building the Church. ... Mr Pollock undertook to ascertain from Mr Hemmings (1) What he would take for the leasehold property joining the School in Leopold Street, and (2) What he would grant the power of lighting the Schools from his side. ... To draw Mr Butterfield’s attention to the fact that the West window may at any time be blocked up.”

31<sup>st</sup> of January 1877:

“Resolved. That Mr Middlemore be requested to give instructions to Mr Smith to procure certain information about the neighbours at W. End of Church according to Mr Butterfield’s requirements. Resolved. That in view of Mr Butterfield’s suggestion to shorten the Church sixteen feet at the sacrifice of 52 kneelings Mr Middlemore be instructed to advise Mr Butterfield that in case of need the Committee would consent to such reduction but would expect that if in any way such reduction could be avoided Mr Butterfield would not make the reduction.”

Building a new church on the site on the corner of Dymoke Street and Leopold Street was clearly a problem. The land at the southwest corner, between Dymoke Street and Emily Street was not for sale, and a tall building here would block



*Plan modified from the 1916 edition OS Map*

the light to the ‘west’ window of a new church if it was built to the end of the plot. The new church would itself block light from the boys’ and girls’ schools located in opposite ends of the original mission building, which had windows only in the northwest side.

Was the plan to build the new church filling the playground space between the existing church and the school? Or to use the site of the existing church as well as the playground? If so, how was the congregation to be accommodated while the new church was constructed?

By the 29<sup>th</sup> of March, sense seems to have prevailed and the search for a new site was now underway: “Resolved that Mr Mole be authorized to make enquiries as to another site for Church.”

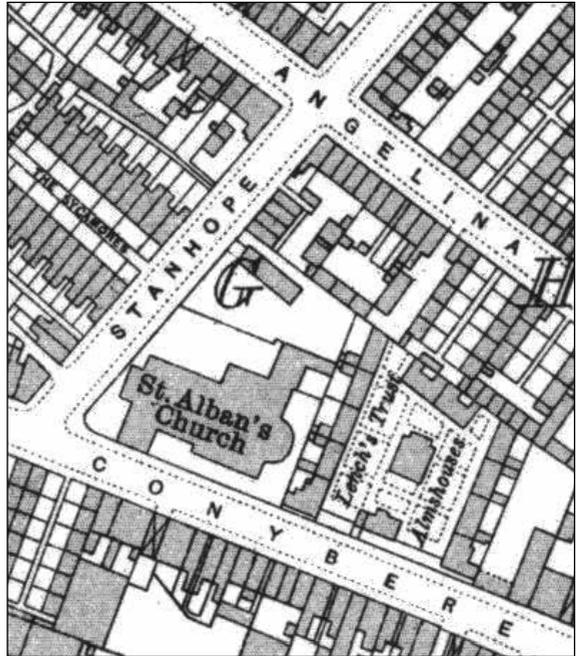
23<sup>rd</sup> of May 1877: “Mr Mole reported that a site for new Church offered at the corner of Darwin St — also a piece of ground at the Corner of Ryland St (now Stanhope Street) & Conybere St and that Mr Cheshire on behalf of the Trustees of the late Mr Colmore had offered half an acre of this ground at the price of one thousand pounds. ... Resolved — That the Trustees of S. Alban's in conjunction with Mr Mole be requested to ascertain the Terms on which the land can be obtained & complete contract for purchase if the Terms be satisfactory.”

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of June Fr Tom had at last returned to Birmingham from his long recuperation in better climes and attended the meeting of the

Building Committee.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July it was “Resolved — That the Trustees as appointed be empowered to negotiate with the vendors for the purchase of the Land, in accordance with Mr Butterfield’s Plan marked B.” What a pity it is that we do not have any of the plans prepared by Butterfield!

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of September “Mr Middlemore reported that he had seen the Agents of the Vendors of the Land in Highgate St on behalf of the Trustees and had verbally agreed to take 3266 yards of Land at the price of £1423, and had received a copy of agreement to purchase which was read to the Committee & approved ... That Mr Middlemore be instructed to send to Mr Butterfield plans both of surface and



*Plan modified from the 1916 edition OS Map*

Levels with instructions to proceed with plans of new Church." I think Highgate Street must be an error for Conybere Street, as the area of land mentioned is close to that of the church plot in the map on page 11s and there is no other reference to the purchase of the site for the present church.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of December 1877: "Resolved — That Mr Middlemore be requested to obtain from Mr Butterfield the number the proposed new Church will accommodate. That the Ground Plan be circulated among the Committee previous to next meeting."

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 1878: "It was resolved — That Mr Middlemore be instructed to write to Mr Butterfield asking him to give rough estimates for building Chancel & Nave & Aisles without decorations."

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of May: "Mr Middlemore reported that he had written to Mr Butterfield as to cost of building. Mr B. had in reply requested the Plans to be returned & would then comply with the requirement of the Committee. Resolved that Mr Middlemore be requested to forward the Plans, at the same time informing Mr Butterfield that the cost of excavating the ground would be about (£300) Three hundred pounds."

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of May: "Mr Middlemore reported that he had received a letter from Mr Butterfield together with approximate estimates of cost of Building the proposed new Church which came out very much higher than was expected, it was therefore Resolved: that a further meeting should be arranged as soon as Mr Middlemore & Mr Ratcliff had seen Mr Butterfield."

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of June "A revised estimate of Building sent by Mr Butterfield was submitted to the meeting. ... it was resolved unanimously: — That as the requirements of the Parish would not be adequately fulfilled by the amended Plan submitted by Mr Butterfield that it be rejected. ... That Mr Butterfield's plans so far as the Chancel, Furnace Room & Clergy Vestry amounting in all to about £3300 be accepted & that a Temporary Iron nave to hold eight hundred people be erected, it being understood that the Iron Nave be at once proceeded with in view of its being opened at the end of the year. ... That Mr Middlemore be requested to write to Mr Butterfield informing him of the decision of the Committee."

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of June: "... they had not proceeded with the Iron nave as they had not received the Tracings of the Chancel from Mr Butterfield."

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of September The Chairman read a letter, dated the 5<sup>th</sup> of August, which he had received from Mr Butterfield resigning his position as Architect. The committee asked Butterfield to reconsider, but on the 26<sup>th</sup> they read his letter confirming his resignation, dated the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September ending "I cannot go into a fresh scheme, of the unsoundness of which, I am satisfied, after my experience of the three schemes with which I have already been engaged. I have therefore thought it best to retire. I may say in addition that I cannot connect myself with such a permanent deformity as this plan with an iron nave & aisles will be, if carried out." And "Mr Pollock was requested to make some enquiries as to a future Architect, the names of Messrs Pearson, Blomfield,

Burgess & Boddy being mentioned.”

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of November 1878: “It was resolved that the resolution of the 9<sup>th</sup> of June be carried out viz:- That an Iron nave to hold about eight hundred persons be erected on the site in Conybere Street, subject to the approval of the Architect, such nave to be opened as early as in the next year but not later than March 31<sup>st</sup> 1879. Mr Pollock reported that he had seen Mr Pearson & had told him the requirements of the Committee informing him that we might spend ultimately £10,000 in building a church & it was Mr Pearson's opinion that a church similar to S. Peter's Vauxhall, London might be built for that sum.”

Pearson had prepared plans for St Peter's Vauxhall in 1860, and it was built in 1863 - 4 together with schools, orphanage and vicarage. Apart from its vaulted stone roof it has less stonework than St Alban's, having a brick west end.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of November: “Resolved — that Mr Pearson, Architect of 46, Harley St. Cavendish S1. London W. be requested to meet the Committee at the site in Conybere Street for consultation as to the New Church.”

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of December: “Resolved that Mr Pearson be appointed Architect for the Building of the New Church. It was resolved that a letter be written by the Chairman to Mr Pearson, requesting him to prepare Plans for New Church at a cost not exceeding £10,000 & to inform him that the Committee would be prepared to carry out at once the second Plan mentioned in his letter, to the cost of £6000.” Sadly the letter was not preserved with the minute book.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 1878: “Mr

Middlemore reported that he had in accordance with the direction of the Committee sent a cheque value £150 in discharge of Mr Butterfield's bill & handed in Mr Butterfield's receipt for same. The chairman read a letter received from Mr Pearson ... with general plan of New Church: It was resolved that the Rev J.S. Pollock be requested to write to Mr Pearson asking him to prepare completed plans for New Church.”

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of April 1879: “Mr Pearson's Plans of the New Church taken into consideration & approved. It was resolved that Mr Pearson be instructed to proceed with the working drawings as soon as possible.”

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of June: “Mr Pollock reported that he had seen Mr Pearson, who said the Plans & Specifications would be ready in about three weeks.”

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of July: “The Chairman reported that he had received a letter for Mr Pearson with information that the Surveyor would complete his work by the end of next week.”

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of July: “Resolved unanimously that: Messrs Shillitoe & Morgan tenders be accepted and that they be approved of as the Builders of the proposed New Church subject to contracts to be approved by the Committee.”

These tenders apparently included separate quotations for erecting different parts of the building, and a contract was entered for building part of the project. Evidently there were differences over the order in which sections of the building should be erected as funds became available.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of August 1879: “The Rev.

T. B. Pollock read a letter from the Rev J. S. Pollock giving his views as to the mode in which the Church should be built after reviewing the different methods, he had finally come to the conclusion that however much of the church we intended building that we should work from west to east ... The Rev. T. B. Pollock was requested to write to Mr Pearson advising him of Mr Pollock's Letter."

Clearly Fr James wanted to begin with the Nave, to provide maximum room for the congregation as soon as possible, perhaps with a temporary iron east end — as was used when St Patrick's was built some fifteen years later. It seems that the architect's plan had been to begin with the chancel and transepts.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of August, when Fr James had returned to Birmingham, the Committee considered Pearson's reply: "... I have carefully read it & have also carefully considered all he says in it, but I am afraid he has not converted me to his views. I send you enclosed a small plan (to scale) which shows the arrangements that would have to be made if the Church be begun in the way suggested by Mr Pollock, and I think as regards external effect that by this Plan the building would be much more unsightly than if the plan I have suggested were carried out — but on this score I ought to be with him — you will observe that the unfinished parts would not be screened by the Almshouses and more especially as the Church will tower over the low buildings. I send you also another plan which I think is by far the best that has yet been suggested & which will provide in a far better way than by Mr Pollock's plan for the numbers he wants room for in the first instance and it

has the advantage that by it there would be no necessity to put up any temporary building & thus wasting money. The plan is simply to build one or two more bays of the nave & aisles beyond the line which marks the 1<sup>st</sup> division in the builder's tender, and by one bay the accommodation would be (the children to occupy the N. Transept) 576 including the Chr & 34 only in the chancel and by two bays 692. Now the probable cost of each bay would be somewhere about £850, so that with one bay & the 1<sup>st</sup> division the cost would be £8000 & with two bays £8850 (the vestry buildings are not included in these sums). In this way you would have a complete church as far as it goes & the only unfinished part the west end. I venture to offer this suggestion for the consideration of the Committee, at the same time I wish it to be understood that I am quite ready to carry out the Church divided in any that they may like best. In any case there will be no difficulty as regards the contractor, he will only be paid for what he does and at the rates which have governed his tender.

...

P.S. You will observe that the West End can be added without any disturbance of any kind, the temporary wall need only be removed at the last moment. I roughly estimated the vestry buildings at £750 & I now think that such a sum would now pay for them. The builder tells me that he has made arrangements for the bricks & stone — so the work can be begun without any delay."

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of August, the contract for building the new Church was signed.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of November 1879: "The

consideration of putting in the whole of the foundation of the New Church was brought before the Committee by Mr Middleton & after long discussion it was resolved That Mr Middleton be requested to write to Mr Pearson for information as to cost of putting in the remaining foundation for the whole structure, & also the cost of building any other part of the Church not in the existing contract.”

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 1879: “Mr Middlemore reported that he had seen Mr Pearson who advised that the whole of the Foundation should be put in & the wall carried up as far as the level of Nave floor. ... carried unanimously that: — Mr Pearson’s suggestion of putting in the Foundations & raising the walls to level of nave floor be adopted.”

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of January 1880, Mr Middlemore announced that a scheme for building the whole of the church would propose at the next meeting of the Committee “That the Church should be finished in its entirety (with the exception of the tower) with the addition of stone from the pillars upwards as well as the roof.” He promised that if the whole of the work was proceeded with that he would give to the work £1000 in 1880 and the same in 1881; Mr Mole promised under to give £500 in 1880 and the same amount in 1881.

Even though this would not cover

the full cost, this was an offer that the Committee could not refuse, and on the 13<sup>th</sup> of January: “it was resolved unanimously that: instruction be given for the Building of the whole of the Church (excepting the tower) and substituting stone for brick in the Roof, Nave & Chancel as suggested by the Architect.” Both Fr James and Fr Tom were at this meeting and apparently agreed.

The ceremonial laying of the foundation stone took place on the 31<sup>st</sup> of January 1880.

In February 1880, the Committee requested the addition to the plans of a door in the north transept. It is not clear why they thought this was needed at that time but now provides the step-free entry from the cloister lobby. The Committee also enquired as to the cost of adding the foundations for the tower to the current works, and asked Pearson to design the font.

In July 1880, the Committee received a quotation from the contractors for building the first stage of the tower to Pearson’s design. We know that this work was carried out and the tower remained at this level until it was completed to a new design in 1938, but regrettably the transcription of the minute book ends with this entry.

*Chris Smith  
February 2021*

*Material for the magazine each month from members of the congregation would be most welcome to help keep the magazine alive and interesting. If anyone would like to submit an item, please forward it to Fr Gerry for his consideration.*

## Calendar for March 2021

| Date                   | Feast         |  |                    |
|------------------------|---------------|--|--------------------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup>        | Monday        | S David B                                    |                    |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup>        | Tuesday       | S Chad B                                     |                    |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup>        | Wednesday     | Feria  |                    |
| 4 <sup>th</sup>        | Thursday      | S Casimir                                    |                    |
| 5 <sup>th</sup>        | Friday        | Feria  |                    |
| 6 <sup>th</sup>        | Saturday      | Feria  |                    |
| <b>7<sup>th</sup></b>  | <b>Sunday</b> | <b>The Third Sunday of Lent</b>              | Parish of Highgate |
| 8 <sup>th</sup>        | Monday        | S John of God, Religious                     |                    |
| 9 <sup>th</sup>        | Tuesday       | S Frances of Rome, Religious                 |                    |
| 10 <sup>th</sup>       | Wednesday     | Feria  |                    |
| 11 <sup>th</sup>       | Thursday      | Feria  |                    |
| 12 <sup>th</sup>       | Friday        | Feria  |                    |
| 13 <sup>th</sup>       | Saturday      | Feria  |                    |
| <b>14<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>Sunday</b> | <b>The Fourth Sunday of Lent</b>             | Parish of Highgate |
| 15 <sup>th</sup>       | Monday        | Feria  |                    |
| 16 <sup>th</sup>       | Tuesday       | Feria  |                    |
| 17 <sup>th</sup>       | Wednesday     | S Patrick B                                  |                    |
| 18 <sup>th</sup>       | Thursday      | S Cyril of Jerusalem B Dr                    |                    |
| 19 <sup>th</sup>       | Friday        | S Joseph, Husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary |                    |
| 20 <sup>th</sup>       | Saturday      | S Cuthbert B                                 |                    |
| <b>21<sup>st</sup></b> | <b>Sunday</b> | <b>The Fifth Sunday of Lent</b>              | Parish of Highgate |
| 22 <sup>nd</sup>       | Monday        | Feria  |                    |
| 23 <sup>rd</sup>       | Tuesday       | S Turibius of Mongrovejo B                   |                    |
| 24 <sup>th</sup>       | Wednesday     | S Oscar Romero B Mr                          |                    |
| 25 <sup>th</sup>       | Thursday      | The Annunciation of the Lord                 |                    |
| 26 <sup>th</sup>       | Friday        | Feria  |                    |
| 27 <sup>th</sup>       | Saturday      | Feria  |                    |
| <b>28<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>Sunday</b> | <b>Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion</b>     | Parish of Highgate |
| 29 <sup>th</sup>       | Monday        | Monday of Holy Week                          |                    |
| 30 <sup>th</sup>       | Tuesday       | Tuesday of Holy Week                         |                    |
| 31 <sup>st</sup>       | Friday        | Wednesday of Holy Week                       |                    |

**Note:** The daily Mass readings can be found at: <http://universalis.com/mass.htm>

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