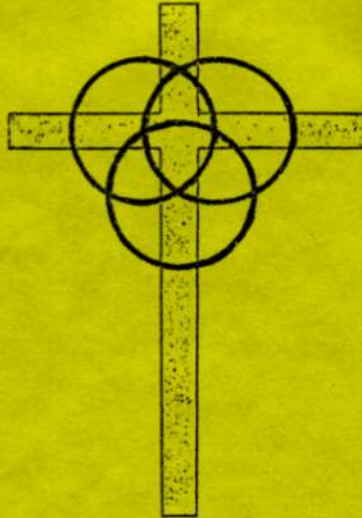


COOPERATING PARISH OF ST ALBAN'S, CHARTWELL

1966 - 1992

TWENTYFIVE YEARS TOGETHER



"How good and how pleasant it is for God's  
people to dwell together in unity."

Psalm 133

## St Albans, Chartwell 1966-1992

The major motivation for the establishment of a joint venture by Anglicans, Methodists and Presbyterians in Chartwell was the belief that the Church could do a better job if its various sectors worked together.

A core group of Christians in the new suburb (just beginning in the mid-sixties to be called "Chartwell") decided that if they worked together in one church they could:

- . provide a natural focus for Christian worship and action in the neighbourhood
- . develop as an integral part of the suburb as it grew
- . develop faster together than they could as separate denominational ventures
- . make a better use of their combined resources.

This concept was in accord with what was then the growing enthusiasm in the national churches for progress towards unity: a response to the prayer of Jesus that we might all be one.

A quarter of a century ago, Hamilton was changing rapidly from a rural town to one of New Zealand's major urban centres. (It is hard now to remember that in the mid-sixties Hamilton still had a railway line crossing the main street, and all traffic came to a stop every time a train went by.) Chartwell was a new growth area made up of competing separately-named subdivisions. But some residents felt that a wider vision was needed and they sought in numerous ways to develop a common identity for this northeastern sector of Hamilton.

So it was in the context of local concern for both church unity and community identity that Chartwell Church was conceived and born.

As early as 1956, the Anglicans had foreseen the need for development in the new suburb. In 1960 St Aidan's vestry purchased a section of the corner of Comrie and Herbert Roads. The people of St Aidan's raised money, took out loans and, in 1963, were able to put a small new building on the site. In October of that year, it was dedicated and named for St. Alban. Services were conducted there by clergy from St. Aidan's. A small but energetic band of local Anglicans soon had many activities under way. Community use was encouraged from the beginning: Plunket, kindergarten, indoor bowls, flower shows. The Ladies Guild, the Mothers Union, Young Wives and a youth group were formed. The Sunday School soon had five teachers and 104 children. At the end of the first year, it produced a nativity play, the first of many such annual events. Another historic development was a church fair in the Spring: thereby beginning a tradition which brought great social and financial benefit and which continues to this day.

In the early sixties, the Methodists also became interested in beginning work in Chartwell as an extension of Wesley Church in Heaphy Terrace. A Methodist layman, Mr T.W. Chapman gave a section and the Methodist Church purchased five adjoining sections on the corner of Comrie Road and Belmont Avenue. Much of the fundraising

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for these sections was done by a Methodist women's group which catered for stock sales. By these means, the present excellent site was acquired by the Methodists.

The Presbyterians had also given thought to further outreach to the north, although their new Fairfield parish church in Insoll Avenue was still being developed. The Presbyterians had a site on the corner of Glen Lynne Avenue and Clements Crescent identified for long-term development.

In April 1965, the Methodists took the initiative and proposed discussion on joint use of facilities in Chartwell (but not necessarily joint worship). Anglicans and Presbyterians responded readily. Discussions on joint use quickly gave way to plans for combined worship and the pooling of resources.

May 1966 saw the inaugural meeting of Chartwell Church Committee, a local creation based on membership from St. Aidan's Anglican, Wesley Methodist and Fairfield Presbyterian. By this time, there were living in Chartwell itself a number of energetic lay people from all three denominations committed to achieving the greatest possible level of local cooperation. This preceded the negotiating churches national Act of Commitment of 1967, but was inspired by the same spirit.

By local agreement, joint services were held over the next year in St. Alban's centre on the corner of Comrie and Herbert Roads. The arrangement was formalised in August 1967 and thereafter all services were combined. They were taken in rotation by clergy from St. Alban's, Wesley and Fairfield Presbyterian. Right from the beginning, it was emphasized that every service was for everyone. Services were not advertised as Methodist, Anglican or Presbyterian. So the oneness of the people was built up through common worship, even before there was full inter-communion. (In the seventies, a common Service book was prepared in Chartwell and used for some years.)

In 1968, the Anglican Synod created the Parochial District of St. Alban and Rev Jon Williams was appointed first vicar. -Worship and ministry were shared between him. Rev Wilf Cable (Wesley) and Rev Gordon Hall (Fairfield Presbyterian). Active lay people combined with the clergy to form a local congregation deeply committed to making a success of ecumenical cooperation in Chartwell. Strong lay participation in worship and in all the other activities of the parish became an enduring characteristic of St. Alban's, Chartwell.

In 1970, the clergy house in Comrie Road was built and the following year Rev Geoffrey Crawshaw replaced Rev Jon Williams. The building in Herbert Road was already proving too small and so planning for further development was begun.

In 1973, the Anglican building was moved on to the fine Methodist site and, with the help of a generous grant from the Presbyterian Church and a modest loan, major extensions were earned out. Chartwell members from all three denominations became Methodist trustees. The useable space was more than doubled by the addition of the sanctuary, choir and family corner, a vestry, committee room, office, study and

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storage and toilet space. The grounds were landscaped and there was plenty of space left for further development.

When the national guidelines for cooperative ventures were published two years later, the parish was reformed as the Cooperating Parish of St. Alban's Chartwell. A new Parish Council replaced the Chartwell Church Committee.

St, Mary's Anglican Church in Gordonton joined the Chartwell parish and a regular schedule of services has been held there ever since. Earlier, there had been approaches to provide a cooperating parish presence in Horsham Downs. Quarterly services in the church there were led by clergy and lay people from Chartwell for some nine years until 1983, when the local congregation decided to return to solely Presbyterian services.

The Methodist Church at Rototuna became part of the cooperating parish from 1977 and services of worship continued until it became clear that the congregation had become too small to sustain the church. After much consideration, the church property was sold in 1983.

The next few years saw considerable changes in ministry. These are detailed in the attached timeline.

By 1988, the Parish was again feeling pressure on the use of its building and a need for more space. By 1991, a tremendous fundraising and voluntary labour (under professional supervision) had made possible the addition of a large lounge and foyer, a new kitchen and additional space in the church, plus substantial alteration to the office and committee area. The extensions were designed to increase our capacity for outreach to the community, especially in meeting the needs of the young and the old.

There has been an extraordinary range of activities and events in the past 25 years. Creative forms of worship involving many people have become a part of life in Chartwell. The word is proclaimed and the sacraments are celebrated with a fresh blend of old and new.

Music, drama, clowning, dance, mime, thoughtful prayers and readings together with the beauty of flowers, candles and banners all contribute to a lively but reverent style of worship which draws on the riches of all three denominational traditions. The faithful work of those who tend the sanctuary, the church and the grounds contributes much to the spirit of worship. The use of chairs rather than fixed seats allows flexibility for worship as well as for other activities. Indeed, moving the chairs in Chartwell has become a traditional art form in itself!

Very large numbers of people have been involved in the Chartwell Church Committee and its successor the Parish Council, in their numerous committees, in representation on regional and national church courts of three denominations and in service on ecumenical bodies.

A variety of women's groups have flourished from the start. They have served as support groups for their members, as training ground for leaders, and as outreach

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networks. As fundraisers, educators, church housekeepers, sharers of the faith, workers for missions and community causes as nurturers through the ministry of hospitality, their members have kept warm the hearth which is the centre of our common life.

Sunday School began in the Herbert Road building, but could not long be contained there. It moved to Bankwood School where as many as eight classrooms were in use during the seventies. It then moved back to the church in the early eighties.

Youth groups have flourished over the years with varying numbers, but a continuing commitment to the honest sharing of Christian faith and values. Children and young people have contributed their exuberance and their insights to the worship of the church through their drama and music, especially at Easter and Christmas.

Many adults too have employed their God-given talents in the performing arts and in many crafts to the glory of God. There have been many beautiful choral presentations. Major dramatic productions have included "Construction", "Christ in the Concrete City", "After the Rain", "The Tower and the Glory", "The Better Butter Battle Book" and "The Toymaker".

Concern for the wider community has been expressed in help for those in trouble, assistance for refugees and for the needy at home and abroad, visiting the sick and the bereaved, running after-school programmes and public forums on economics, politics, health and religion. We have shared worship and study with Christians from neighbouring parishes and many denominations.

Over twenty five years, we have shared happy and sad times, fine worship and teaching, hospitality in each other's homes, and fun and learning in socials, camps and study groups.

We give thanks to God for the faith and witness of so many committed people who have built up the life of our parish. We think especially of those who have died.

There have been difficulties, as the parish sought to find new ways forward while respecting the three denominational traditions, but has found itself constrained by the old institutions. There have been theological and political differences, and personality clashes.

There have been conflicting attitudes to social issues of gender and sexuality. There is the continuing challenge of coming to terms with the bi-cultural reality of Aotearoa New Zealand.

The parish has sought to be faithful to its mission to be a witness to Christian unity. In 1989, we organised the Venturing Forward Conference of cooperative ventures to find new ways forward to unity between the negotiating churches.

In 1992, we look back with thankfulness for the blessings we have known and the unity the Spirit has given us; and we look forward with confidence to the future, knowing that we are in God's hands.

**St Albans, Chartwell 1966-1992**

*'Tis Jesus the first and the last  
whose Spirit will guide us safe home,  
We'll thank Him for all that is past  
And trust Him for all that's to come.*

## **COOPERATING PARISH OF ST. ALBAN'S, CHARTWELL**

### **TIMELINE OF COOPERATION**

#### **1966**

Commitment to cooperation by Anglicans, Methodists and Presbyterians. Chartwell Church Committee established. Beginning of joint worship in St. Alban's Church Centre, Herbert Road.

#### **1967**

Joint worship formally approved on basis of team ministry.

#### **1968**

Anglican Parochial District formed. Rev. Jon Williams (Anglican) appointed full-time, with visiting clergy Rev Derek Laws and the Rev Wilt Cable (Methodist) and Rev Gordon Hall (Presbyterian). Temporary office beside the church centre.

#### **1970**

Clergy house built in Comrie Road. Joint use of buildings agreement ratified.

#### **1971**

Rev Geoffrey Crawshaw replaced Rev Jon Williams, Rev Wilf Cable becomes part-time and Rev Gordon Hall continues on a visiting basis.

#### **1973**

St. Albans Church Centre moved from Herbert Road to the Methodist site on the corner of Belmont and Comrie Road and building greatly extended.

#### **1975**

Parish reformed under the national guidelines as the Cooperating Parish of St Alban's, Chartwell. A new Parish Council replaced the Chartwell Church Committee. St. Mary's, Gordonton (ex Cathedral Parish) became part of the Cooperating Parish.

#### **1977**

Rototuna Methodist Church was incorporated in the Cooperating Parish.

#### **1978**

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Rev Gordon Hall departed from Fairfield Presbyterian Church and the formal link with Fairfield came to an end. Rev David Ansell replaced Rev Wilf Cable part-time at Wesley and at Chartwell. Rev Geoff Crawshaw departed.

### **1978**

Rev Thomas Somerville (Presbyterian) replaced Rev Geoff Crawshaw as resident minister.

### **1981**

The parish experienced the keen sorrow of the untimely death of Rev Tom Somerville after a short illness. He was replaced by Rev David Ansell (Methodist) as resident minister. Decision to have two resident ministers. Rev Vance Vidal (Anglican) was appointed. A second clergy house was purchased in Pulham Crescent.

### **1983**

Rototuna Methodist Church Hall was sold. Rev Vance Vidal left.

### **1984**

Rev Diane Miller-Keeley and Rev Bruce Keeley were appointed by the Anglican Church to a shared ministry. The house in Pulham Crescent was sold and replaced by the house in De Vere Crescent.

### **1986**

Rev David Ansell moved to Tauranga.

### **1987**

Rev David Evans (Presbyterian) appointed.

### **1989**

Chartwell organised the Venturing Forward Conference for all cooperative ventures.

### **1988-1991**

Major extensions and alterations to the St. Alban's Church centre were completed debt free.

**1992** Celebration of 25 years of cooperation in Chartwell.