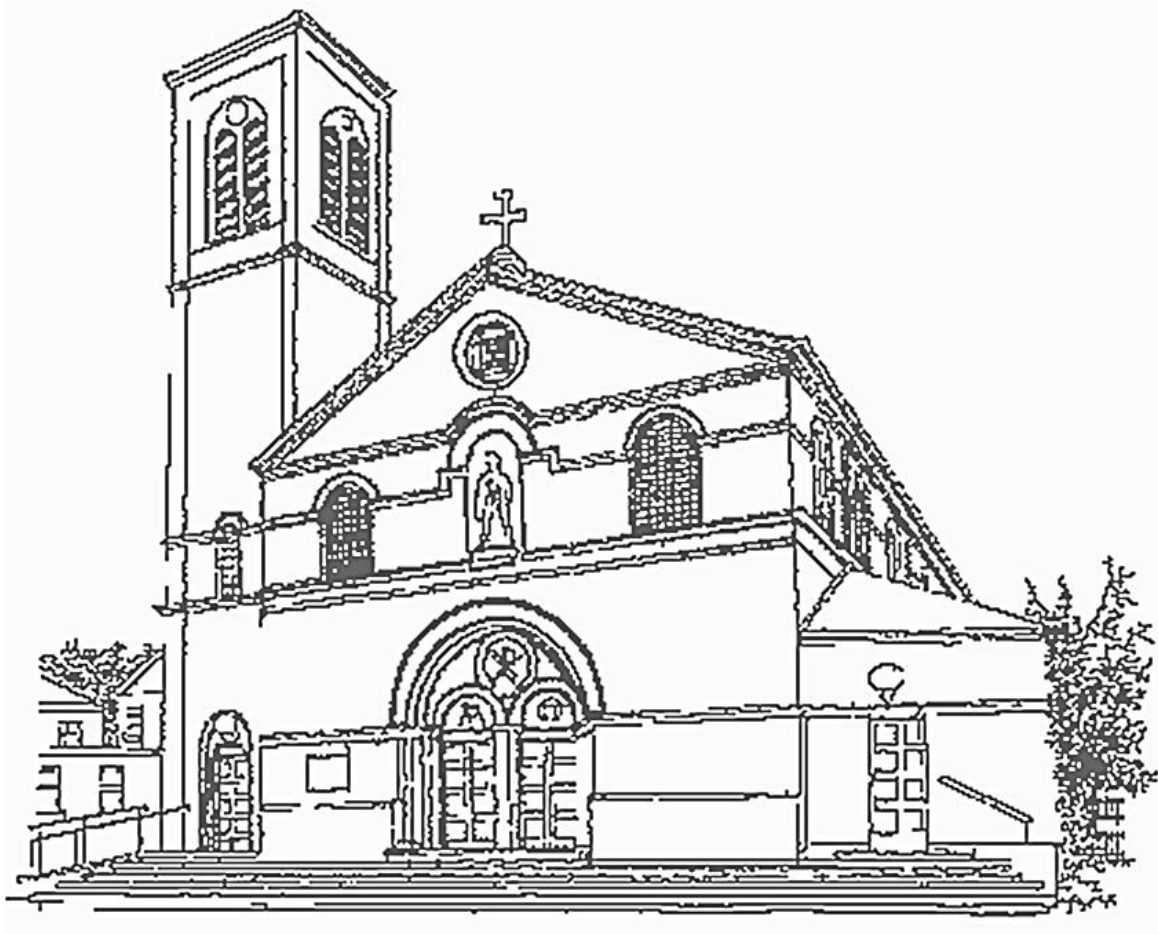


Parish Directory 2021



St Alban & St Stephen Catholic Church

14 Beaconsfield Road, St Albans, Herts AL1 3RB

Tel.no: 01727 853 585

e-mail: stalbans@rcdow.org.uk

www.albanstephen.org

During the current pandemic, meetings are conducted under strict Government and Diocesan regulations. Please contact the Parish Office and consult the Bulletin and website for further information.

Welcome to Ss Alban & Stephen

Whether you are a long-standing member of the parish, or have newly arrived, or are a visitor to St Alban & St Stephen, I am delighted to present to you the directory for our parish.

There are many organisations and groups doing great work in the Parish which will all welcome new members. I hope that you will find this booklet helpful. I also invite you to consider joining one of these groups and thus help us to build up the Kingdom of God in St Albans. I hope that we can be of help to you but remember that you too can be of great help to us. I believe that the best way for all of us to develop our faith is to become involved in the life of the parish. This directory presents those possibilities to you.

The Parish Office is open every weekday from 9am to 1pm, and our Parish Administrator will be pleased to help you if you have any questions. I hope that you will feel at home in our parish and that you will become involved in our common mission of making Christ present in our community.

**Our parish is part of the Diocese of Westminster:
(www.rcdow.org)**

Fr Michael O'Boy (Parish Priest),
Fr Julian Davies (Assistant Priest)
Deacon Steve Pickard
Angela Gray (Parish Administrator)

Times of Masses: Please check website for those open to the public.

All Masses are live-streamed on

www.youtube.com/channel/UCZ49xqq4xbky9S9Aq859X1A

Saturday

Church 6.00 pm (Vigil)

Sunday

9.30 am, 11.30 am and 7.00 pm

Monday to Friday

10.00 am

Monday, Wednesday, Friday

7.00 pm

For further information about contact details, Baptisms, Confessions, First Holy Communion, Confirmation, Marriage or Funerals, please contact Parish Office.

ALTAR SERVERS

www.guildofststephen.org

Altar servers assist the principal minister at Mass and other liturgies. Servers, both girls and boys, are expected to be available to serve at Mass at weekends and on major solemnities such as Christmas and Easter. The Guild of St Stephen is the national association for altar servers.

ASCENT MOVEMENT/LIFE ASCENDING

www.lifeascending.org.uk

An international Christian movement for men and women in their middle and later years. The ethos of the movement is spirituality, friendship and mission. Meetings comprise prayer, study session, talks, social activities and outings, days of recollection, meetings with other national and international groups.

ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROPAGATION OF THE FAITH

www.missio.org.uk

APF educates and finances poor countries around the world, and sends priests to foreign missions. It is a national organisation; St Albans has 19 promoters and 180 members. Members are needed to distribute the APF magazine and empty mission boxes quarterly.

BAPTISM

The parish runs regular Baptism preparation sessions for parents baptising their first-born child into the Catholic faith. These sessions will familiarise them with the Baptism service so that they can enjoy it more on the day, and also explains the commitment they are undertaking to bring up their child as a Christian.

Parish Office: 01727 853 585 Monday – Friday, 9am – 1pm)

BIBLE STUDIES

Please see “Wednesday Bible Study Group”.

BULLETIN

Published every week and available at Sunday Masses and on-line. Contains Mass times and intentions, items of news and information for parishioners, and homiletic material. Notices about events may be submitted to the parish office no later than 12noon on the preceding Wednesday and must be accompanied by a name and phone number.

Parish Administrator: 01727 853 585 (Monday– Friday, 9am–1pm)

e-mail: stalbens@rcdow.org.uk

CaFE www.faithcafe.org

Catholic Faith Exploration or Catholic Evangelisation Services to use its full title is a national charity producing faith building resources for parishes worldwide but is actually based in this parish. **08450 509 428 resources@faithcafe.org**

CAFOD www.cafod.org.uk

The official overseas development agency of the Catholic Church in England and Wales. CAFOD works through the church's organisations in the developing world in 75 countries. CAFOD is supported by church members and many other individuals.

CARETAKER

Parish Buildings & Grounds. To report any maintenance / health / safety issues please contact Mark Healy by e-mail to the parish office.

CATHOLIC CHARISMATIC RENEWAL www.ccr.org.uk

'Life in the Spirit' courses encourage individuals and small groups to come together, learn, share and grow in knowledge of what the Spirit offers, helping to make their faith more alive. **07932 457767** ccrcentre.goodnews@gmail.com

CATENIAN ASSOCIATION www.thecatenians.com

Established in 1908 with the objective of furthering the position of Catholic lay men; it is now a worldwide charity of ~10,000 members, organised in groups called Circles, who aim to advance faith and friendship through family and social gatherings, prayer, fundraising and assisting the clergy.

CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE www.catholicwomensleagueio.org

Open to all women in the parish, part of a national organisation. Members are active in many charitable organisations, and support local projects. We have speakers on a variety of interesting topics, days out, and a yearly retreat day.

CENTRE 33 www.centre33.org

Run entirely by a dedicated staff of volunteers, Centre 33 is a drop-in centre where homeless and socially or materially disadvantaged people in the St Albans community can come to relax, be social, and enjoy a free meal and a drink in a friendly, welcoming environment.

CHILD PROTECTION/SAFEGUARDING

To ensure a safe environment for our children and young people, the Child Protection team are responsible for registration of all those working with children, completing Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, and providing training.

Mary Harber: stalbanssg@safeguardrcdow.org.uk

CHILDREN'S LITURGY

Normally takes place Sundays normally during term time, at 9.30am in Church. Age specific in Church (babies & reception/years 1 & 2/years 3 & 4). During Mass, children explore a simplified reading, discuss it and take part in a range of fun activities. Several catechists/adult leaders, mainly parents of children attend. Older teenagers and other adult parishioners needed to help: normal involvement is one Mass per term.

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN MARSHALSWICK

Marshalswick Mass Centre at, Baptist Free Church, St Mary's, St Leonard's Sandridge, and St Saviour's Anglican churches, the United Reformed Church Homewood Road: share acts of worship and fellowship such as candle exchanges to mark The Week for Christian Unity; Lenten Talks; joint blessings of palms on Palm Sunday; Festival of Lessons and Carols; Quarterly collections at Budgens supermarket for the FEED project.

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN ST ALBANS (CTSA)

www.ctstalbans.org.uk

CTSA works toward the unity that Jesus prayed for. Main events are forums where people from different churches meet and share their views. Other events include a sports day, a procession with the cross then a Unity at the Cross service on Good Friday, and the week of prayer for Christian unity.

CITY CENTRE CHURCHES

Ministers from the following churches meet once a month for prayer: Dagnall Street Baptist Church, Marlborough Rd. Methodist Church, The Salvation Army, St Alban and St Stephen Catholic Church, St Peter's Church of England and Trinity United Reformed Church. They also meet to initiate particular projects such as a Christmas market stall and the Severe Weather Emergency Beds Provision.

CONFIRMATION

The Sacrament of Confirmation is offered to all young parishioners in school year 10 and above. Our programme begins in the autumn and continues through to the end of May. Sessions run fortnightly on Sunday afternoons in the parish hall. Enrolment for the programme will be advertised in the Parish Bulletin 4 weeks before the programme begins.

CONVERSATION CLASSES

A free conversation class for ladies whose first language is not English normally held on Monday afternoons in the Parish Hall from 1pm until 2.30pm during school term times.

FIRST HOLY COMMUNION AND RECONCILIATION

Receiving the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion for the first time are key moments in a child's life. It is where they experience the forgiveness of God and receive the Eucharist in a very special way. This is a Parish-run programme involving the parents and the people of the Parish.

FLOWERS

Flower arranging are prepared for liturgies, especially for weddings and also for other services such as flowers for funeral masses.

GIFT AID

A Government scheme that enables the Parish to reclaim tax paid on donations to the parish. Taxpayers are asked to sign a Gift Aid declaration authorising the parish to reclaim from the Inland Revenue, tax paid on Offertory donations paid in numbered Offertory envelopes or by bankers order. For every £1 donated, the parish can reclaim an extra 25p. Approx. 300 parishioners currently help in this way.

HANDS TOGETHER – TIPLYANG PROJECT

www.handstogether.org.uk

Tiptyang is a rural community in Nepal which struggles to provide adequate food and education. The Project works with the villagers of Tiptyang and neighbouring communities to provide support. The charity has grown out of the efforts of a handful of people– several of whom are based in our parish.

handstogether@hotmail.co.uk

HOLY HOUR FOR MEN

Regular monthly meetings normally 8pm in the Prayer Room. The hour includes a Hymn, the Rosary, a Gospel reading, a reflection and silent prayer, followed by coffee.

JOURNEY IN FAITH FOR YOU (JIFFY)

www.becomingacatholic.org.uk

A group for adults (single or married) who wish to explore and broaden their faith within a small group; or want to support their children by exploring their own faith; or are thinking of returning to Church or becoming a member of our Catholic faith community.

JUSTICE, PEACE & THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

The Justice, Peace & the Integrity of Creations (JPIC) group are part of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart Justice and Peace initiative. Our aims are to raise awareness of issues related to JPIC and to offer practical help to local and international projects, both by fundraising and getting involved in direct action with charities and initiatives.

KNIGHTS OF ST COLUMBA www.ksc-stalbans.org.uk

The Knights of St Columba (KSC) is a national organisation of Catholic men who support and assist the work of the Catholic Church. Our activities include raising money for various charities and causes at social events.

LIFE www.lifecharity.org.uk

Offers practical help and support to pregnant women and temporary accommodation to homeless pregnant women and mothers and babies. St Albans' Life house can accommodate up to four homeless pregnant women and/or mums and their babies. Life also provides experienced speakers who go to schools and colleges to discuss issues including relationships, pregnancy, abortion, life before birth and euthanasia.

Life Helpline: 0808 802 5433 Life HQ/Education: 01926 312 272

LITURGY GROUP

Clergy and laity work together, to ensure all services are fitting celebrations of God's love, mercy and compassion. Catechists, musicians, Ministers of the Word and Eucharist serve on a rota basis for weekend and special liturgies. The group also raises awareness of significant feast days both through literature and prayer. Meetings are advertised in the Bulletin and everyone is welcome to attend.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION

Devised by married couples, our marriage preparation programme examines various aspects of married relationship. It also reflects on Catholic understanding of marriage as a Sacrament. It is a four night programme given at weekly intervals to groups of three or four couples. More couples are needed to help; they should be prepared to present at least one programme per year.

Tel: 01727 853 585

MEN'S ACTIVITIES

A number of activities are organised on a regular basis as an opportunity for the men of the parish to meet each other socially and in prayer. These include prayer breakfasts, Friday film nights and the occasional cycle ride. In addition there are separate entries in the directory on a monthly Holy Hour and the Parish Football team, St Albans Romans FC.

MERCY ASSOCIATES

Friends of the Sisters of Mercy normally meet on the third Wednesday of March, June, September and December. Their activities include prayer and charitable activities.

MINISTERS OF THE EUCHARIST

Ministers assist with the distribution of communion at Mass and/or bring Holy Communion to the sick and housebound in their homes and in hospital. New ministers are always needed.

They must be committed to serve the parish community both diligently and caringly.

MINISTERS OF THE WORD

Ministers read the Word of God at Mass: by rota on Sundays (including vigil) and other Holy days and ad hoc on weekdays. New lectors are always needed. They are asked to adhere to their dates in the rota, or find a replacement. Lectors normally read once every four weeks.

MISSION GROUP

Jesus said "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you" (Mt 28:19-20).

The Mission team aims to help the Parish fulfil this mission. This entails both outreach to those who do not know Jesus and enabling adult parishioners to deepen their understanding of their faith. We arrange talks, events and retreat days which are open to all. We also work with Churches Together because of the importance of a united witness. Committee meetings are held each month and are open to all.

MISSIONARIES OF THE SACRED HEART www.mscomissions.ie AND THE CHEVALIER FAMILY

From 1899 to 2019, the priests of our parish were Missionaries of the Sacred Heart an order founded by a French priest, Fr Jules Chevalier in 1854. He believed that God showed his great love for the world through the human heart of his Son, Jesus. He founded a missionary congregation to make that compassionate love known everywhere. He envisioned three groups working together to fulfil his mission: (1) Religious men and women, (2) Diocesan priests (3) Laity who would take this mission to their homes and to their work. Today, the extended Chevalier family works throughout the world in parish ministry, in retreat and spirituality ministry, accompanying the poor, the sick, the marginalised and refugees, in education, in the promotion of justice and peace. Here, a small group of laity meet regularly to pray & reflect about the importance of the Spirituality of the Heart in the world today.

MOTHERS' PRAYERS

www.MothersPrayers.org

An ecumenical group of mothers who normally meet every 2nd Monday of the month at 8pm in the Parish Centre. This is an international organisation praying for children.

MUSIC IN THE LITURGY

Our parish is rich in liturgical music:

6pm Saturday is normally a quiet Mass

9.30am Mass is primarily a family Mass as is reflected by music.

11.30am Mass traditional liturgical music.

Cantor leads 2nd & 4th Sundays.

Choir 1st & 3rd Sundays; new members should ideally be able to read music and attend practices and Mass.

7pm Mass Contemporary music, new members should contact the parish office.

NEIGHBOURHOOD LINKS

Neighbourhood Links was devised by the Community Support Group and came from the recognition that St Alban and St Stephen covers a large geographical area and so dividing the parish up into 'neighbourhoods' would be one way of trying to reach out in a more personal and effective way to our parishioners. More volunteers are always needed.

NEWMAN ASSOCIATION (HERTS CIRCLE) www.newman.org.uk

An association aiming to further the mission of the Christian religion with particular reference to the Roman Catholic Church in the light of the life and work of the Blessed John Henry Newman, by promoting greater understanding of the Christian faith and the application of its principles to the contemporary world. Organises meetings and discussion groups; publishes books, periodicals, papers, pamphlets and articles.

PARISH ASSEMBLY/PPC

www.albanstephen.org/groups/parish-pastoral-council-and-parish-assembly/

Objectives: “To make the Church more alive and open to the Spirit and to further the spread of the Kingdom of God; to provide a structure for constructive dialogue with the parish community and thus serve as a means of consultation and communication in the parish; to ensure an ongoing assessment of the spiritual, social and human needs of the parish and to foster ways to meet these needs; and to draw out, draw together, and draw upon the talents and gifts of the Christian Community in the parish.” It meets every three years to elect a new PPC and to consider the areas on which to focus development. In 2017, the priority areas are: Youth, Community Support, Justice and Peace, Liturgy, and Mission. The Pastoral Parish Council (PPC) meets monthly and reports to the Parish.

PARISH FRIENDS

Parish Friends aims to help the elderly, lonely and more vulnerable members of our Parish lead brighter and happier lives. Activities include arranging transport to Mass, social activities, visits to sick, elderly and housebound parishioners, Sunday tea parties, and film shows. The group helps organise distribution of Christmas gifts and Easter eggs for struggling families.

RCIA – RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS

Diocesan approved programme for adult initiation and education with a view to reception into the Catholic faith. Another committed catechist would be welcome.

ROSARY GROUP

The “Good Morning” Rosary prayer group normally meet after morning Mass every week day in the Prayer Room. Optional tea and coffee afterwards. Anyone can join with the group at any time.

SACRAMENTS

See individual entries or contact the Parish Administrator 01727 853585

SAFEGUARDING See Child Protection

SCHOOLS The local Catholic Schools are listed under Appendix A

SMALL COMMUNITIES

About 15 Small Communities, each comprising 5–10 people, normally meet for an hour or two in houses across our parish. Most meetings include a combination of prayer, listening to scripture, sharing beliefs, reflection and socialising. Some meet during the day and others in the evening, some meet weekly and others only once a month. During autumn and Lent many of the groups meet more often to follow the Diocesan faith sharing programme.

SOCIETY OF ST VINCENT DE PAUL (SVP) www.svp.org.uk

An international lay Christian voluntary organisation working in over 130 countries with the poor, disadvantaged and marginalised. Locally, we visit the sick, lonely, elderly, hospitals and homes. We deliver Christmas hampers, and make available financial aid among many other charitable undertakings. New members should be committed to express their love of God through personal service to their neighbour.

ST ALBANS CELEBRATE www.celebrateconference.org

One of the 12 weekends which run throughout the UK. Many families attend for the children's streams, but the weekend is open to all: married or single, young or old.

ST ALBANS ROMANS FC www.stalbansromans.com

A football club for men aged 16 years and above founded by the two Catholic parishes in St Albans. Two teams compete in the Herts & Borders Churches League which is FA affiliated. The club is centred on playing sport in a Christian spirit and is open for anyone, including those outside the parish.

TRAI DCRAFT

Fairtrade goods are available after weekend Masses: normally Church first weekend of the month, Marshalswick second weekend. Coffee mornings and sales are held at other times. We can take orders for Traidcraft items from their catalogue or website to save postage costs. We stock a wide range of foodstuffs, sweets and chocolates, stationery, cards and seasonal items at Easter and Christmas. All proceeds benefit the Third World either through Traidcraft or via CAFOD. Help always welcome.

THE CATHOLIC WORKER FARM

www.thecatholicworkerfarm.org

Provides accommodation, food, English lessons, counselling and other services for destitute female asylum seekers and their children, at no charge. All of the women are street homeless, and are referred to the CW Farm by refugee services/agencies. The CW Farm meets the physical needs in relation to shelter, food and clothing, whilst enabling the guests to live in a supportive and loving environment.

01923 777 201 thecatholicworkerfarm@yahoo.co.uk

THE LIVING ROOM www.thelivingroom.me.uk

An addiction recovery charity providing free intensive structures abstinence-based, day treatment for adults (18+) with substance and behavioural addictions alongside a free creche for the addict's children and free support group for family and friends. The Living Room (St Albans Centre), meets at the rear of 156 Hatfield Road, AL1 4JA. **01727 854 479** enquiries@thelivingroom.me.uk

TODDLER GROUP

Weekly meetings normally held during school term time for mums, dads, guardians, grandparents, tots and toddlers in the Parish Hall after 10am Mass every Monday until 12noon.

WEBSITE

www.albanstephen.org is the main parish site –it is updated weekly and includes mass times, topical news, stories and the current bulletin.

WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY GROUP

'Bible study' might be an incorrect description of our Wednesday meetings which are normally held after 10am Mass until 11.30am. It is more reading, sharing, discussion and to see 'where the Spirit' takes us. It is not onerous: just bring your bible; New Jerusalem or the N.R.S.V.

WELCOMING MINISTRY

Groups of parishioners welcome people to Sunday Masses on a rota basis, new volunteers always needed.

YOUTH CLUB

Youth Club is open to all children in years 3–6 and is held in the parish hall twice a month in a safe and fun environment with games on the big screen and the cheapest tuck shop in the city.

YOU CAN BE SANTA

An initiative aimed at spreading the joy of Christmas by making a difference to some of the more disadvantaged children living in our parish. The children write letters to Santa that are passed on to our benefactors who buy gifts which are then delivered by parishioners. The initiative has expanded to providing Easter eggs to further spread the good news. Visitors and helpers are always needed.

stalbansycbs@rcdow.org.uk

APPENDIX A : CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN THE AREA

St John Fisher - JMI, mixed

Halzemere Road, Marshalswick, St Albans, AL4 9RW

01727 861 077

<https://www.sjfisher.herts.sch.uk/>

admin@sjfisher.herts.sch.uk

SS Alban & Stephen - Primary and Nursery, mixed

Cecil Road, St Albans, AL1 5EG

01727 866 668

<https://www.ssas.herts.sch.uk/>

admin@ssas.herts.sch.uk

Nicholas Breakspear - Secondary, mixed

Colney Heath Lane, St Albans, AL4 0TT

01727 860 079

<https://nbs.herts.sch.uk/>

admin@nbs.herts.sch.uk

Loreto College - Secondary, girls

Hatfield Road, St Albans, AL1 3RQ

01727 856 206

<https://www.loreto.herts.sch.uk/>

admin@loreto.herts.sch.uk

St Columba's College - Secondary, Independent, mixed

King Harry Lane, St Albans, AL3 4AW

01727 855 185

<https://www.stcolumbascollege.org/>

collegeadmin@stcolumbascollege.org

St Columba's College Preparatory – Primary, Independent, mixed

King Harry Lane, St Albans, AL3 4AW

01727 862 616

<https://www.stcolumbascollege.org/>

collegeadmin@stcolumbascollege.org

St Adrian's - JMI, mixed

Watling View, St Albans, AL1 2PB

01727 852 687

<https://stadrians.herts.sch.uk/>

admin@stadrians.herts.sch.uk

APPENDIX B: A brief history of the Catholic Church in St Albans

The first public Mass celebrated in St Albans after the Reformation was on **3rd May – the Feast of Corpus Christi – in 1840**, when a room in the White Hart Inn on Holywell Hill was used as a chapel. Fr William Crook commenced the mission in St Albans, travelling from St Edmund's College, Ware in a pony and trap once a month. He offered Mass for a congregation of 43 St Albans' Catholics. It was the first public Mass in the city since the 16th century and the embryonic start of our parish.

In **1848**, Alexander Raphael, an MP and a convert to Catholicism, decided to build a Catholic Church in Verulam Road. Shortly after the building commenced he died intestate. The church site was purchased by Mrs Worley, who had the church completed and donated it to the Church of England. Known as Christ's Church, it is now offices. The mission of St Albans from **1852 to 1854** was described as vacant. No mention is made of it in the Catholic Directory for **1857 to 1861** and in **1861** the Barnet priests commenced to serve St Albans once a month. From **1870** Mass was said every Sunday.

In **1876**, Fr Bampfield of Barnet decided to build a small church in London Road. It was dedicated to Ss Alban and Stephen by Cardinal Manning on the Feast of St Alban, **June 22nd, 1878**. Thus the first Catholic Church was opened in St Albans. Fr Bittleston became the first resident priest in **1883**. The clergy who served the Catholics in St Albans were then missionaries from Barnet; it was not until **1886** that responsibility for the parish passed to the diocese.

In **1899** the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart were invited by Cardinal Vaughan to take charge of the mission of St Albans. Fr Michael Tierney MSC was appointed Rector. He realised by **1900** that the church in London Road was too small (seating for 80 people) and too insignificant for a place as important as St Albans, the scene of the first martyr of England, so he decided to build a larger, more ornate church that would help to restore the place to its former glory as a Catholic centre, when it was renowned throughout the land as a place of pilgrimage.

In **1903**, having purchased a site in Beaconsfield Road and after raising another £6,000 to build the church, it was built. The new church was, of course, this church; although it was smaller than it is now.

When the nave was completed the church was dedicated and blessed by the Archbishop of Westminster on **New Year's Day 1905**. St Albans had now become a real mission centre, with the priests administering to the faithful in the surrounding districts, eventually building a church in Harpenden in **1905** and in Radlett in **1910**.

In the south side of the city sites were secured in Vesta Avenue for church, school and presbytery in **1954**. A Mass centre was established at St Columba's College in **1955**, in the temporary chapel. The Mass centre was continued at St Adrian's School, which was built in **1959**, and served the people until the new church of St Bartholomew's was completed in **1964** and blessed by Cardinal Heenan.

The people of Marshalswick were catered for in **1959** when a Mass centre was started at Skyswood Primary School and later transferred to St John Fisher's School.

A modern presbytery was constructed next to the church as well as a new parish centre providing space for a limited car park. With the unit complete, and all debts cleared, the church was solemnly consecrated on the **4th May 1977** by the Right Rev. B. C. Butler, Bishop in Hertfordshire.

Around the church noticeable changes have taken place; in the **mid-1960s**, the side aisles were added, the Church was lengthened back towards the railway, and the tower was added. In the summer of **2005**, the roof of the church, as well as all the top windows, were replaced through the generous offerings from the parishioners. The Church was then very much as we see it today.

This updating of the history of the parish is about mission rather than maintenance. In the **late-70s** the mass attendance was 2500. There were 11 weekend masses, including one in Italian at 5 pm on Sunday. A slow decline started in the **80s**, and the present average is about 1100 attending 6 weekend masses. Over the years many parishioners have responded to a great need for collaborative ministries in sacramental preparation and liturgical participation; details of groups can be found in this directory or on the parish website (www.albanstephen.org).

From the **70s** there has been a continuing outreach to other churches. Catholic Mass is said at noon every Friday in the Lady Chapel of St Albans Cathedral, attended by Catholics and Anglicans. Ministers and lay people from different faiths regularly meet together for discussion and prayer, and have initiated projects to help the disadvantaged living in St Albans.

As the directory shows, this is a very active parish with over 40 groups serving its various needs. Many courses are run and talks given that enhance our faith, help us to appreciate the spirituality of our priests, and often lead to practical action to aid the marginalised of our society. These are open to all and details are given in the Bulletin. There are also many small Christian communities across the parish that meet regularly to share their understanding of the Church and faith.

Another great spiritual resource has been the creation of the **Prayer Room** at the back of the Presbytery. About 100 parishioners have their own key to the room, and they come privately and in groups to pray before the Blessed Sacrament. By opening the door of the Tabernacle, a permanent monstrance becomes visible.

In **1999**, the parish exuberantly celebrated a centenary of continuous ministry by the MSC priests and the Mercy Sisters; sadly, Maryland Convent and nursing home, where the sisters served so faithfully, closed down in 2014.

On **12th June 2005**, **Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor** led us in our celebration of the centenary of that pivotal event in the history of the parish.

In **2013**, the Sacred Heart Centre was opened, following a complete renovation of the meeting rooms and hall, and provides a welcoming space for parish groups to interact.

In **2019**, the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart decided they did not have the personnel to provide continued ministry in St Albans and handed the parish back to the pastoral care of Westminster Archdiocese.

The Catholic community is an integral part of the religious, civic and social life of St Albans. From our small beginning we now have a splendid church, five schools to nurture our children, an incredibly evangelistic parish, and a wonderful history of Christian witness and public service.

*Many thanks to the late **Malcolm Smith RIP** for the original article, based on the book "**Celebration**" by the late **James Corbett RIP**, and to **Geoff Miller** and **Sara Nash** for more recent updates.*