



WINDOWS INTO CHRIST CHURCH

STORIES OF A CHURCH
THROUGH ITS STAINED GLASS

PART II

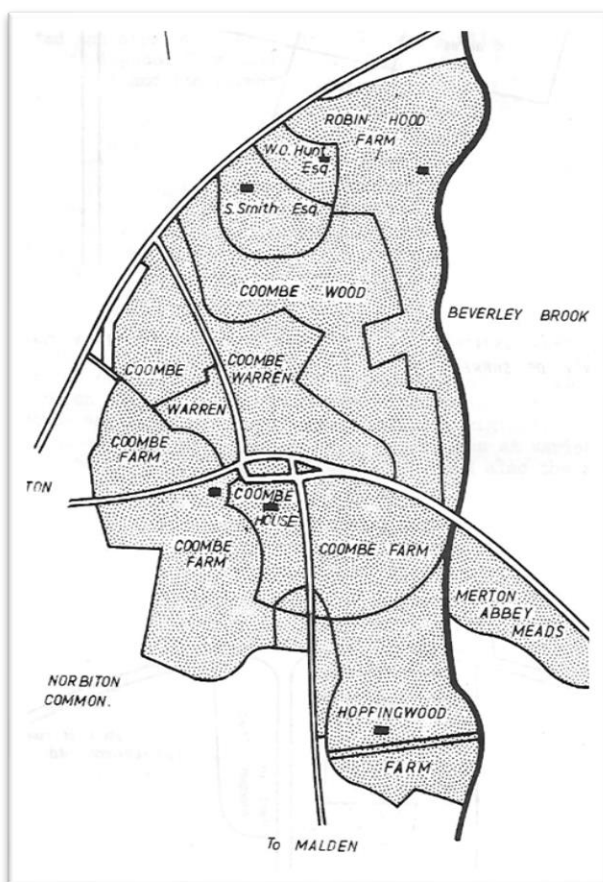
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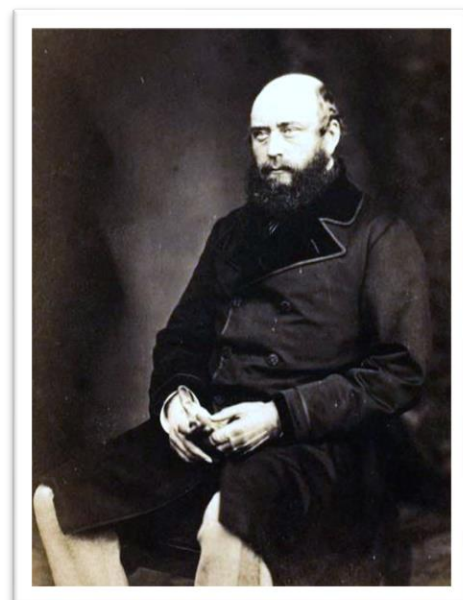
Simeon and Anna (1912)



One of the features of the New Malden area in the nineteenth century was the amount of local land that was used for farming. **A map of the Coombe Warren Estate in 1837 shows how much this was the case.** It was in that year that the estate was



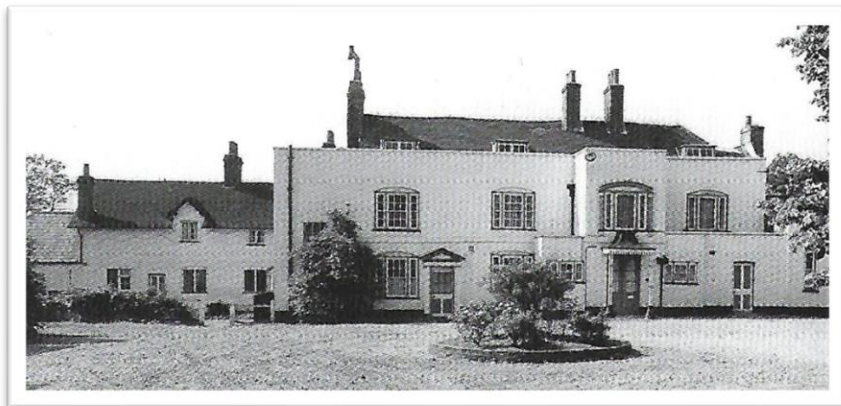
It was in that year that the estate was purchased by Prince Adolphus Frederick (1774-1850), the Duke of Cambridge and uncle of Queen Victoria who had come to the throne that year. Following his death, ownership of the estate passed to his son, **George, the second Duke of Cambridge** (1819-1904). It was this Duke who was involved in the famous 'Battle of Coombe Warren' in 1853 when the Croydon Assizes found against him for restricting access to the footpath on Warren Road to 'respectable people'. It was the second Duke of Cambridge who also gave the land for Christ Church to be built upon in 1866.



The two largest agricultural holdings on the Coombe Warren estate were Coombe Farm and Robin Hood Farm. In 1857 the tenancy of Coombe Farm passed to James Page. Page, who was born in 1816, had previously been an agriculturalist at Merton Hall farm and had already found prominence for seeking to resolve the financial problems affecting farmers. In May 1849 he had been presented with a silver cup bearing the inscription: 'Presented to Mr James Page by farmers and other attending Kingston and Epsom markets as a tribute of their esteem for the zeal and energy displayed by him in promoting the County Meeting relative to agricultural distress'. Two years earlier on **14th April 1847, he had been married to Mary Ann Baker at the Parish Church of Yatton in Somerset. On his marriage certificate, James is described as a yeoman with his father, John Page, given as a merchant.**

1847. Marriage solemnized at the parish Church in the parish of Yatton in the County of Somerset								
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
52	14 th April 1847	James Page Mary Ann Baker	31 years	bachelor	Yeoman	Merton Surry Yatton	John Page Samuel Baker	Merchant Yeoman
Married in the <u>parish Church</u> according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the <u>Church of England by Licence</u> by me, <u>Rich^d Jones</u>								
This Marriage was solemnized between us, <u>James Page</u> <u>Mary Ann Baker</u>			in the Presence of us,		<u>Anna Maria Chapman of St. John's</u> <u>Mary Jane Frost of St. John's</u> <u>John Chapman</u>			

Mary was the daughter of Samuel and Mary Baker and had been born around 1827. The marriage resulted in eight children: James Baker Page (1848-1939), Sidney John (1851-1936), Marian Charlotte (1855-1929), born when they lived in Merton, and Alice Anne (1858-1947), Ada Jane (1851-1929), Arthur Edward (1863-1942), George Frederick (1867-1955) and Frank Harold (1871-1950) born after they moved to **Coombe Farm**. For the time, the longevity of all eight of the Page children was very unusual. According to the census records, James and Mary also had six servants at their home in Coombe Farm.



Possession of Coombe Farm involved James Page farming around 461 acres of land. The Surrey Comet described him as 'gaining a reputation amongst agriculturalists as an excellent farmer, his opinion on all matters of farming carrying considerable weight'. Page was also known for his wit. On one occasion when he was challenged by a lawyer about the profit made by farmers from the carcass, mutton

and wool from their sheep, he evidently said that it was nothing compared to that made by lawyers through their use of its skin for parchment!



Another area of interest for James Page was in the development of the gas industry. He was elected as a director of the Kingston Gas Company in 1866 and appointed its chairman the following year. James went on to

become chairman of the Mitcham and West Kent Gas Companies as well and was still in possession of all three posts at the time of his death.

James and Mary Page were very regular worshippers at Christ Church from its start in 1866. Before this they evidently worshipped at its predecessor, the temporary church of St James in Poplar Walk (now Grove) which was established in 1857, the same year that the Pages came to Coombe Farm. Charles Stirling was a formidable personality who fell out very seriously with at least two of his Churchwardens in Frederick Somner Merryweather (1867-71) and Edwin Farley (1883-85). In the first case this was over Christ Church School in Lime Grove and in the second over the wild accusations Stirling made that W.E. Gladstone, the four times Liberal Prime Minister, was a closet papist! James Page served as Churchwarden at Christ Church from 1872-73 and evidently managed to maintain a good relationship with his fiery Vicar who regarded Page as properly supportive of him!

James Page died at home on 21st October 1892 at the age of 76. He had been in good health until the year before and it was not until 23rd August 1892 that he became seriously ill when he had to return early from a meeting at the Kingston Gas Company. Tributes to James following his death covered his role in farming and the gas companies but also his public service on the Kingston Board of Guardians from 1863 and his membership of the Royal Sanitary Authority which involved being their representative on the Lower Thames Valley Main Sewage Board. He also served on the Union Assessment Committee. The tribute in the Surrey Comet mentioned 'his strong common sense and his genial bonhomie that made his presence always acceptable' and concluded by saying: 'There are few public men in the neighbourhood whose loss will be more sincerely regretted, for Mr Page was one of those cheery, good natured men who are favourites with everyone'.

The Sunday after James Page's death, Charles Stirling, the first Vicar of Christ Church, spoke of

the great loss that he

felt at the death of one who was 'a staunch supporter of the church and a dear friend'. He added that Mr Page had 'never wavered in his kindness and attachment to himself, and he was therefore deeply moved by the removal of such a member of his flock'. The Vicar invited the congregation to pray for the sorrowing family and 'alluded to the faith in Christ which Mr Page had manifested on his dying bed, so long as his mind was clear'. Stirling's sadness at the loss of James Page was compounded by the death on the previous Sunday of **Lady Revelstoke** who as Mrs Edward Baring had laid the foundation stone for Christ Church in June 1866 and been

a major supporter of Christ Church whilst she and her husband resided in Coombe. Charles Stirling was in his last few months at Christ Church and in mentioning these and other deaths of members of Christ Church during 1892 expressed regret 'that his



successor should be without that help and sympathy and support from Coombe which it was his privilege long to enjoy’.

James Page’s funeral took place on Wednesday 26th October and he was buried at Kingston Cemetery. Charles Stirling took the service and its report in the Surrey Comet mentions a letter of condolence received from the Duke of Cambridge and floral tributes sent by each of the companies and organisations with which Mr Page had been involved. In his will, James Page passed on effects of £14,654 1s 6d to his widow, **Mary Ann Page**.



Following his father’s death, James Baker Page took over the tenancy of Coombe Farm. By 1904 however, James was no longer the tenant of Coombe Farm having moved to another

farm in Buckinghamshire. This was chiefly because of the rapid growth within the Coombe area of mansions to house its wealthier inhabitants. As the Surrey Comet declared that he ‘would have remained in possession for a longer period, had not the march of building operations threatened him with the loss of some of the best land’. Mary Page, however, continued to live at Coombe Farm house until she died on Christmas Day 1910 at the age of 83 and was buried alongside her husband at Kingston Cemetery.



Following the death of Mary Page, her children decided to commission a window in their memory of their parents at Christ Church, New Malden. The firm that made the window were J. Dudley Forsyth and the subject of the window were Simeon and Anna –

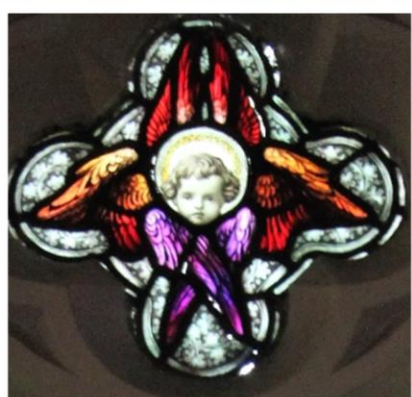


the two older people who encounter the baby Jesus in chapter 2 of Luke's Gospel. It was placed in the south wall.

A striking feature of the window was the use of **James's face for Simeon** and **Mary's face for Anna!** This is unique amongst the windows at Christ Church New Malden but was apparently not uncommon at the time.

The **very human face of the cherub at the top of the window** has caused some to speculate whether it used the face of a child of James and Mary, who perhaps died young. However, no evidence exists of such a child.

As mentioned, all eight Page children achieved relative longevity. Several of them were **subsequently buried with their spouses and alongside James and Mary at Kingston Cemetery.**



'I will give you the crown of life' (1920)



Few places in Britain were not affected by the appalling loss of life brought about by the First World War (1914-18). New Malden was no exception sending numerous young men to fight

on the Western Front, many of whom were killed or horrifically injured. Christopher Challacombe, the son of the second Vicar of Christ Church, survived his service in France but with terrible shell shock. Two marble tablets remember individuals who died in the war. **One in the south wall remembers Captain Stanley Frank Ayres**, 7th Battalion, East Surrey Regiment, who was killed, aged 30, at Cambrai on 20th November 1917. The **other in the south wall of the chancel remembers 2nd Lieutenant Humphrey Morris Swift**, 2nd Battalion, The Welsh Regiment, who was killed, aged 24 at Passchendaele on 16th November 1917.

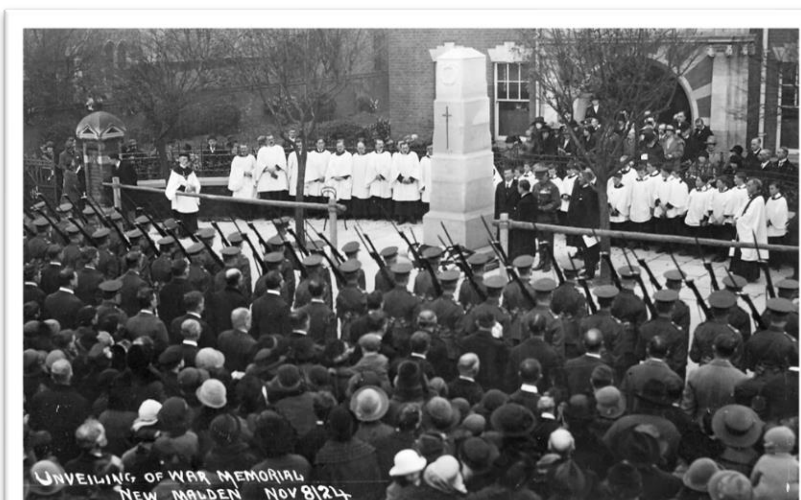
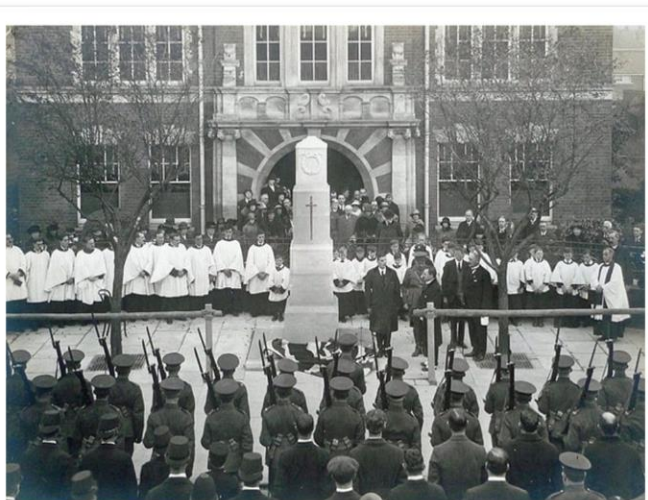
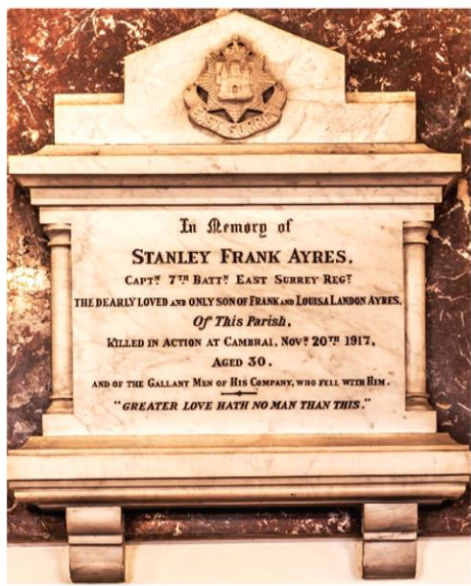
In January 1920 the decision was taken at

Christ Church to place **an Oak Screen and Names Tablet at the front of the chancel** in memory of

those of

the Parish whose lives were lost during the Great War. The establishment of such a screen at Christ Church was surprising but reflects the widespread inadequacy felt by evangelical Christianity at how to respond to the slaughter and the way that increased ritual and ceremony met this need.

It was in November 1924 that **the war memorial was established in New Malden High Street** with its dedication led by the third Vicar of Christ Church, Alvan Birkett (1921-35).



One of those remembered on both the names tablet at Christ Church and the war memorial is Captain Rashell Montague Rashell Davison. Monty, as was known was born on 31st May



1886 in **Battle, East Sussex**. He was the youngest of six children born to Dr Rashell Thomas Davison and his wife Frances. In 1891 the family were living in Battle High Street with Dr Davison established there as a medical practitioner. As well as three maids and a cook, a governess was employed to look after Cecilia (11), Anthony (9), John and Kathleen (both 8), Kaye (6) and Monty (4). A medical student called John Bailey was also lived with them.

By 1901, the family had moved to Vernham, 2 Kingston Road in New Malden near the Fountain. Mary Morton, a 68 year old woman, boarded with the family and they also employed a cook and a housemaid. Monty's elder brother, Anthony, had been educated at **Epsom College Upper School** between 1894 and 1898 and on 27th April 1901 Monty entered the Upper IV form of the school, joining his brother Kaye. Monty was successful coming top of his form in 1901, passing his School Certificate with two first class passes in Maths and Latin in 1902 and the Higher Certificate in 1903. In 1905, although he came fourth out of the four boys in the Sixth Form, he took the form prize and had two pieces of work shown to the Headmaster. He was also awarded the prize for English literature.



After leaving school in Easter 1905, Monty became the Far Eastern agent for Spicer and Co. living in India. His parents and siblings continued to live in New Malden. In 1910 Monty travelled from Isfahan in Iran to the Gulf port of Mohammerah, a journey of three weeks by mule caravan. He wrote to Epsom College to say that the strangeness of the surroundings did not detract from the pleasure with which he read all the news in the college magazine. In January 1911 he was in Karachi.

It was a year into the war that Monty embarked from Colombo, Ceylon, on the ship Gloucestershire, to return home. He arrived back at Tilbury on 4th May 1915. **Lord Kitchener's famous recruitment campaign** was in full swing and it was perhaps as a result of this that Monty had returned and enlisted in the Inns of Court Officer Training Corps on 28th June 1915. The details taken record that Monty was 5 feet 7 inches tall with 33 ½ inch chest and a 3 inch expansion, a good physical development and 6/6 vision! He served as Private 4493 until 6th

October 1915 when he was discharged to a commission in the 3rd North Staffordshire Regiment.

Monty was sent to France on 5th July 1916 where he was attached to the 8th Battalion of the Leicestershire Regiment, following which he was involved in numerous engagements. On 21st March 1918, the German forces on the Western Front launched a massive attack. Planned by their new general,

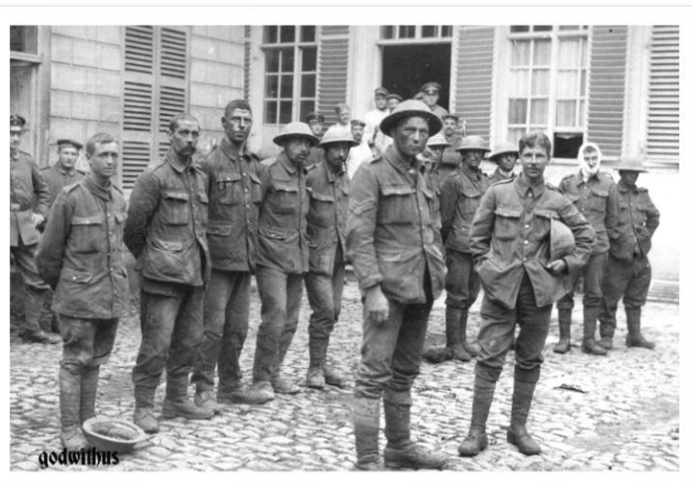
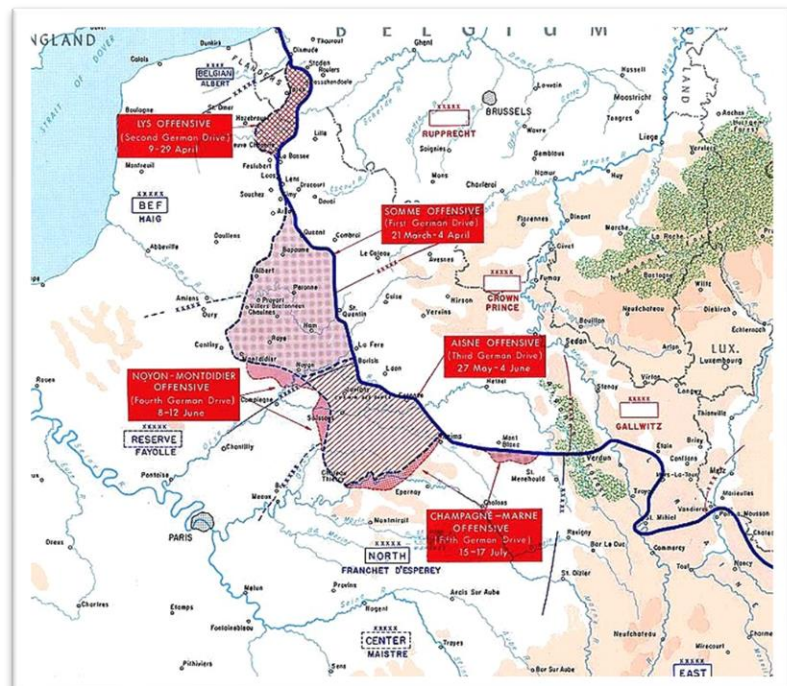
Ludendorff, Operation Michael was designed to exploit the Germans' last chance to gain victory in the war before the resources of the USA could be fully deployed.



The Spring Offensive marked the deepest breakthrough made by either side since the beginning of the war. Monty was involved in fighting the German advance at Epehy. The stand that

the 110th Brigade (comprising the 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th Battalions of the Leicestershire Regiment) took at Epehy has been described as heroic in slowing the German advance, which by late April had lost momentum.

However during the fierce fighting on 22nd March, just a day into the German offensive, Monty was shot through the forehead and taken prisoner. A series of telegrams informed his parents, still living in New Malden, that he was wounded and missing. On 18th April, they received a letter informing them that Monty had



become a **Prisoner of War** but that the War Office did not know at which camp he was being held. Monty eventually managed to get a message to his parents that he was in Karlsruhe and that his wound had caused paralysis in his right arm and caused him to lose his voice, although this was improving. He also had six wounds to his legs. His father wrote to the War

Office to inform them. In August, he was informed that Monty had been transferred from Karlsruhe to Landshut and that he also had a wound at the back of his cheek.

By that stage, the German war effort was nearing collapse, resulting in the armistice in November 1918. It was following this that Monty was repatriated and admitted to the Prince of Wales Hospital for Officers in Marylebone as he was still partially paralysed from the waist down. He was operated on but complications arose and Monty died of pneumonia

and post-operative cerebral meningitis at 5.30 pm on 27th January 1919. He was 32 years old. Monty's father, Dr Thomas Davison wrote to the War Office stating that it was his 'solace and pride that his boy had died true to his lineage'.

Monty's funeral took place at Christ Church on Friday 31st January 1919 and was conducted by the Reverend William Allen Challacombe. **He was then buried at Kingston Cemetery.**

It was after Monty's death, that a friend of his gave Dr Davison a poem that Monty had written the night before going into action at Epehy. Monty had a premonition that his greatest friend and brother officer would not come back from the engagement and

that he himself would only come back for a short while. He left instruction that the poem was not to be given to his family until after his death.

Vale: A Soldier's Farewell

By Captain Rashell Montague Rashell Davison

*So I lay dying – while the hours of Life
Slowly welled forth, staining the shattered ground;
The poor shell-shattered ground, victim of strife
Which rocked and crashed and shrieked and echoed around.
Dim velvet shadows veiled my aching head
and in a few short hours I should be dead.*

*Dead! Yet to me Life gave with both her hands.
Joyous I stayed down paths with pleasure strewn:
Laughed lightly, lightly loved in many lands,
And reaped in fields which fairy hands had sown;
Drinking deep draughts of joy that had no end.
And once, at any rate, I found a Friend!*



*A Friend! Ah! Yes, I too have plumbed the deep
Of Friendship's passionate moments, calmer hours
I have snatched happiness from gentle sleep
Culled the sweet blooms of Night's exotic flow'rs;
Won too great joy – a joy that stifled breath –
And lost it in a moment to chill death!*

*E'en as I lie, I see the Bridge of Fate,
Linking me to the Future of the Past,
And, as I strain my dimming eyes, the Gate
Of Life-through-Death flings open wide at last.
There limned in colours that may never fade
Are all the reassures of my mind portrayed.*

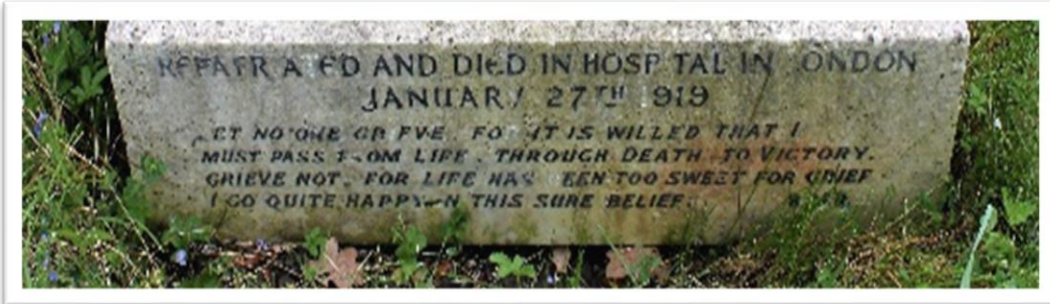
*The poor grey battered bastions which remain
Of all the glory Ypres gave to mankind,
The sacrifice of Him-without-a-stain
Which faithful souls at countless crossroads find
A narrow road-strip leading to the sea –
All these are living memories for me.*

*Orion leaning down to greet the moon,
As daily round the outpost line I go,
His golden belt fading fast while, forlorn –
He vainly strives to meet the new Sun's glow –
The pale French grey of dawn and mist and sky
As Flanders' battle days go grimly by.*

*Street scenes in Arras – 'Eppy's' coat of snow,
A red cross ambulance at eventide
Speaking to weary wounded of the slow
And comfortable homeward motor-ride,
Glories of old gold on the puddle way,
Sun flashes of a washed-out winters's day.*

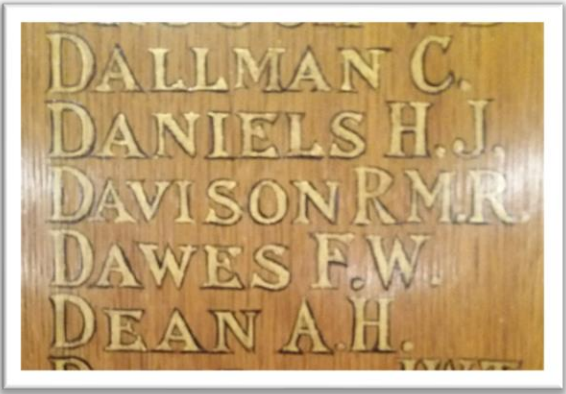
*Dear memories that live, though I must die!
Mind paintings that are still a part of me!
Let no one grieve – for it is willed that I
Must pass from Life to Death to Victory.
Grieve not – for life has been too sweet for Grief.
I go quite happy in this sure Belief.*

Dr Davison had the poem published in the Surrey Comet on Saturday 8th February 1919. **The last part of the poem was reproduced on Monty's grave.**



Rashell Montague Rashell Davison's name can be found on the memorial tablet at Christ Church. Following the reordering of the interior of Christ

Church 2007, the tablet was moved to the south wall.



Monty Davison is also remembered on the War Memorial at Epsom College and the one established in 1924 in New Malden High Street

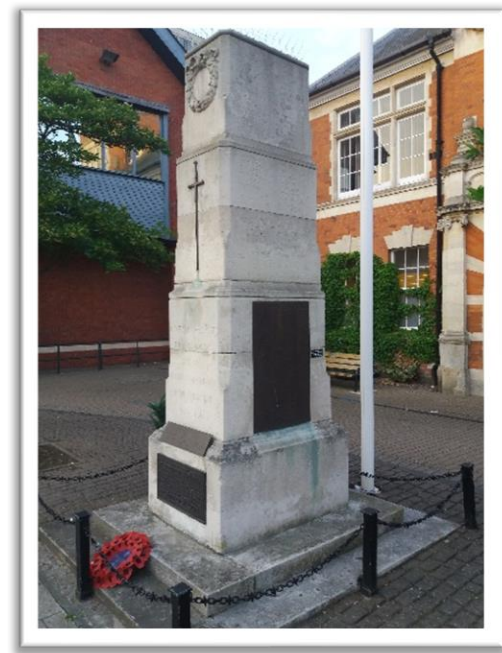


It was in 1920 that a

stained glass window was established at Christ Church to remember Monty Davison. As well as bearing the insignia of his regiment, the window portrayed a fallen warrior receiving the crown of life (Revelation 2.10).



The window was originally placed in the north wall but when the Christ Church Centre was built in 1980-81, it was transferred to a lit box in the south wall.



Monty's father Rashell Thomas Davison died in 1936 at the age of 83. Before that, his wife Frances had died in 1927 at the age of 79 and in 1929,

Thomas lost another of her sons when Anthony died at 47. Kathleen died in 1945 aged 61 and John in 1948 aged 64. All of them are buried with Monty at Kingston Cemetery.



Jesus with Mary and Martha (1965)



In over a hundred and fifty years of Christ Church New Malden, there have been a number of people who have held key positions with remarkable longevity. Charles Stirling (1865-1892) and William Allen Challacombe (1893-1920) both served as Vicar for 27 years. William Hyde, the first Verger of Christ Church held the position for 34 years (1875-1909), with the fourth Verger, Albert Jones, serving in that role for 29 years (1936-1965). David Burton (1940-70), Reg Ellis (1942-1969) and Atkinson Bachhoffner (1908-33) served as Churchwardens for 30, 27 and 25 years respectively.

Longer than any other ministry at Christ Church, however, is the incredible 46 years that Mrs Elizabeth Katherine Bunn served as Superintendent of the Christ Church Sunday School. When she took up this role in 1909, Elizabeth Bunn was 26 years old. When she relinquished it in 1955, she was 72. Her time in charge of the Sunday School spanned the incumbencies of four Vicars of Christ Church: William Allen Challacombe (1893-1920), Alvan Birkett (1921-1935), Willoughby Habershon (1935-44) and Claude Bartle (1944-1958).



Elizabeth was born in Islington in 1882 and married Frederick Charles Bunn in 1908. Frederick came from Southampton where the couple were married. By the 1911 census, Frederick and Elizabeth Bunn were living in a house called Beaulieu in Mount Road in New Malden. Frederick is listed as working as clerk in the Secretary's Office of the Post Office. He was involved in the

committee work that established and furnished the Parish Halls at Christ Church in 1927 and later, in 1939, he was working as a Civil Servant in the Ministry of Transport.



At some point Frederick and Elizabeth moved to 107 **Coombe Road**, quite close to Christ Church. The couple never had any children of their own and perhaps this is part of the reason why Elizabeth Bunn threw herself into the work of the Sunday School with so much energy and dedication.

The Sunday School movement in Britain had begun the late eighteenth century. **Robert Raikes** (1736-1811) is seen as the pioneer of a movement that was originally concerned to provide an education for children on the only day of the week when this was possible. These provided basic lessons in literacy alongside Christian instruction. By 1831 Sunday Schools in Britain were teaching weekly, 1,250,000 children, approximately 25% of the population. Christians

were at the forefront of week day education for children then expanding in the mid nineteenth century with the Ragged School Union forming in 1844.

Christ Church began its own Day and Sunday School on 25th March 1867. This was in the tin building previously used for 'The Temporary Church of St James' in Poplar Walk (now Poplar Grove). This was replaced three years later by **Christ Church School in Lime Grove**. In the same year, the 1870 Education Act obliged all local councils to set up School Boards to provide elementary education for those children not already catered for by church schools. The churches



had to raise significant sums of money to retain control of their school rather than cede this to the School Boards and a strong priority was placed upon this at Christ Church. The education provided by Christ Church School was further expanded when the Elm Road building was completed in 1896. The result of all of this was a flourishing of educational provision for children in New Malden with Christ Church at the heart of this.



Against this background, the role of Sunday Schools inevitably changed. Freed from the role of promoting basic literacy and numeracy, Sunday Schools could encourage a more devotional approach and, within evangelical settings, a strong emphasis upon the personal decision to faith in Jesus Christ.



The Christ Church Sunday School that Elizabeth Bunn took over in 1909 met at 3.00 pm each Sunday afternoon in the Church Room. An iron building that was intended to be temporary, **the Church Room** had been built on the south side of Christ Church in 1900. Affectionately known as the 'Tin Tab', the building lasted for 81 years, until its demolition in May 1981. The Sunday School was well attended. For children there was little else to do on a Sunday afternoon and many of the parents encouraged their children's attendance partly to get a couple of hours rest. Children from 3½ to 8 years old would attend and were taught stories from the Bible and encouraged to memorise verses from it. The children were tested on this and prizes awarded to those who did well at this. Hymns were sung



and a weekly collection from the children was also taken up. Perhaps most crucially relationships were built up between the leaders and the children that modelled what following Jesus Christ was all about. The Sunday School also took part in the regular **Church Parades** down the High Street of New Malden and a number of photographs of these survive.

These developments also produced an interesting class differentiation within the provision for children at Christ

Church. Both the Day School and Sunday School essentially catered for working class children. Those from a more middle class background were invited instead to a Bible class held at the Vicarage. Jessie Challacombe, Vicar's wife from 1893-1920, led the Bible Class for girls. There was some criticism of the 'class distinction' since the majority of her girls went to private schools. But in the first Parish history written in 1952, William Authers declared of Mrs Challacombe: 'The quiet charm and



personality of a great leader's influence became irresistible to many, and today her memory is revered by those who consider it a great privilege to have been one of her Class'. When she died in 1925, it was partly members of her Bible Class who provided the Oak Panelling in the Chancel in her memory.

All of this work provided an important outlet for women's ministry, which was restricted through most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in a way that would be unrecognisable today. This of course strongly reflected gender roles in wider society. Even the constitution of the Parochial Church Council (PCC), formed at Christ Church for the first time in November 1897, stated explicitly that its members had to be men.



Wealthier women such as Mrs Baring and Mrs Bevan were influential benefactors and the successive Vicar's wives all had significant ministries. But for all the women at Christ Church, opportunities were restricted to involvement in groups for women, the visiting and help of poor people, care and decoration of the church and its furnishings and the leadership of children in the Sunday school.

As the years went by, Mrs Bunn remained constant in her running of the Sunday School. So much so, that within two decades it was known as 'Mrs Bunn's Sunday School'. The First Parish History spoke of 'her love for the children, her constancy and loyal endurance'. In 1954, there were 160 children's names on the register and twelve teachers. One of Mrs Bunn's Sunday School teachers was **Beatrice or 'Bea' Authers**, who had begun this role in the early 1920's and became a later Superintendent. Another was Jeanne Burford (later Buchanan) who later went to Columbia as a missionary. By the 1950s, Mrs Bunn was, in the words of one former member of her Sunday school, 'a lovely, kind old lady' who was also remembered her as being 'round and short'!



It was in January 1955 that Elizabeth Bunn finally decided to step down from being Superintendent of the Sunday School. The fifth Vicar of Christ Church, **Claude Bartle** wrote in the Parish Magazine: 'It is with great regret that the resignation of Mrs Bunn has been

received, after being Superintendent of our Sunday School for 46 years. I know that my predecessors will join me in thanking her for her devoted service through all those years. She will be remembered with great affection by the many pupils who passed through her hands, and by those who worked with her. A presentation was made by the teachers on her last Sunday. Let us pray that God will send the person of His choice to undertake this delightful but very responsible work in Mrs Bunn's stead.' Part of the reason for Mrs Bunn's retirement may have been poor health. It's rather surprising that no further account appeared in the magazine or subsequent ones about the significance of her ministry.

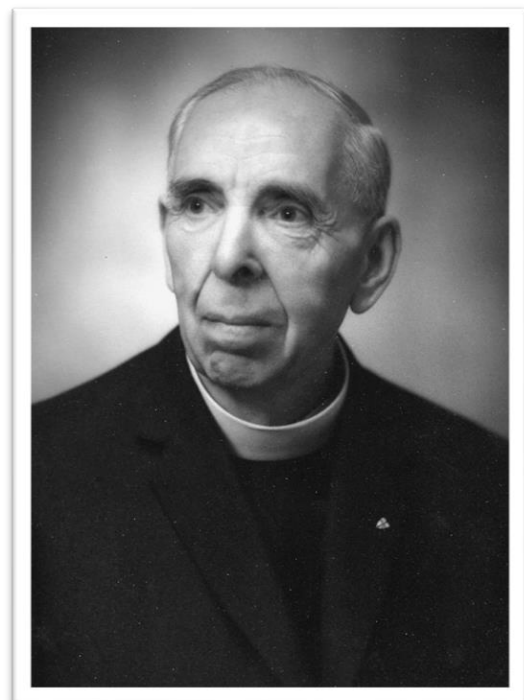
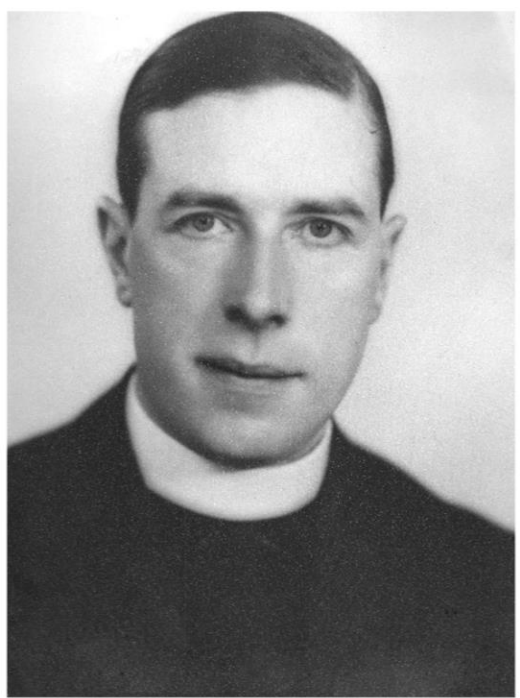
For a good numbers of years after her retirement from the Sunday School, however, Elizabeth and Frederick Bunn continued their regular worship at Christ Church. They sat at the front of services on the right hand side in front of the lectern and were noted for being extremely kind, polite and full of good humour. By that stage, they lived in Rosebery Avenue.

Mrs Bunn died at the age of 81 on 9th March 1964. Once again the Parish Magazine contained rather less coverage of her ministry at Christ Church that might have been expected. Under 'In Memoriam', the April 1964 magazine simply said: 'After many years of pain, borne with courage and triumphant faith Mrs Bunn was called into the presence of her Saviour on March 9th. For her it means the joy of fuller service to the Master she loved and served so faithfully as a member of Christ Church. Our prayers and sympathy are extended to her beloved husband in his sorrow and loneliness'.

By 1965 it was forty five years since any stained glass windows had been established at Christ Church. The building was plainer than it had been in earlier eras and it is probably true to say that there was greater reservations about the value of anything

visual. The chancel screen, established in 1920, was removed at this time. It was nonetheless decided that Mrs Bunn would be remembered by the establishment of both a **baptismal font** and a stained glass window depicted the story of Jesus with Mary and Martha from Luke 10.38-42.

The sixth Vicar of Christ Church, the Reverend **Llewellyn Roberts** (1958-1968), chose the design for the window. When PCC members had other ideas, the



Vicar said that the window would only go ahead if his view prevailed. Once again the Parish Magazine (which the Vicar edited) contained little about it, other than notice of Canon T.G. Mohan from CPAS coming to dedicate the new Baptistry and window given in memory of Mrs Bunn on Sunday 2nd May 1965. The font originally stood by the north wall before being moved to the head of south aisle near the window when the Christ Church Centre was built in 1981. It was eventually removed when the church was refurbished in 2006-7.



The window was made by **Goddard and Gibbs, a firm founded in 1868**. The firm's head designer after the Second World War was Arthur Edward Buss (died 1999) and it was him who designed the window given in memory of Mrs Bunn. Similar in its format to those given in memory of Herbert Streeter (1896) and James and Mary Page (1912), it is strikingly different in its use of bolder colours and more angular design. Buss learnt stained-glass techniques from Scottish artist William Aikman and his windows have been described as 'balanced and informative, with fine figure drawing and well-researched heraldry'.

No specific information survives of why Jesus with Mary and Martha was chosen as the subject for the window. But its quotation at the top of the window: **'Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken from her' (Luke 10.42 KJV)** suggests that the story was a favourite one for Elizabeth Bunn as she taught literally thousands of children the importance of sitting, like Mary, at the Lord's feet and listening to him.

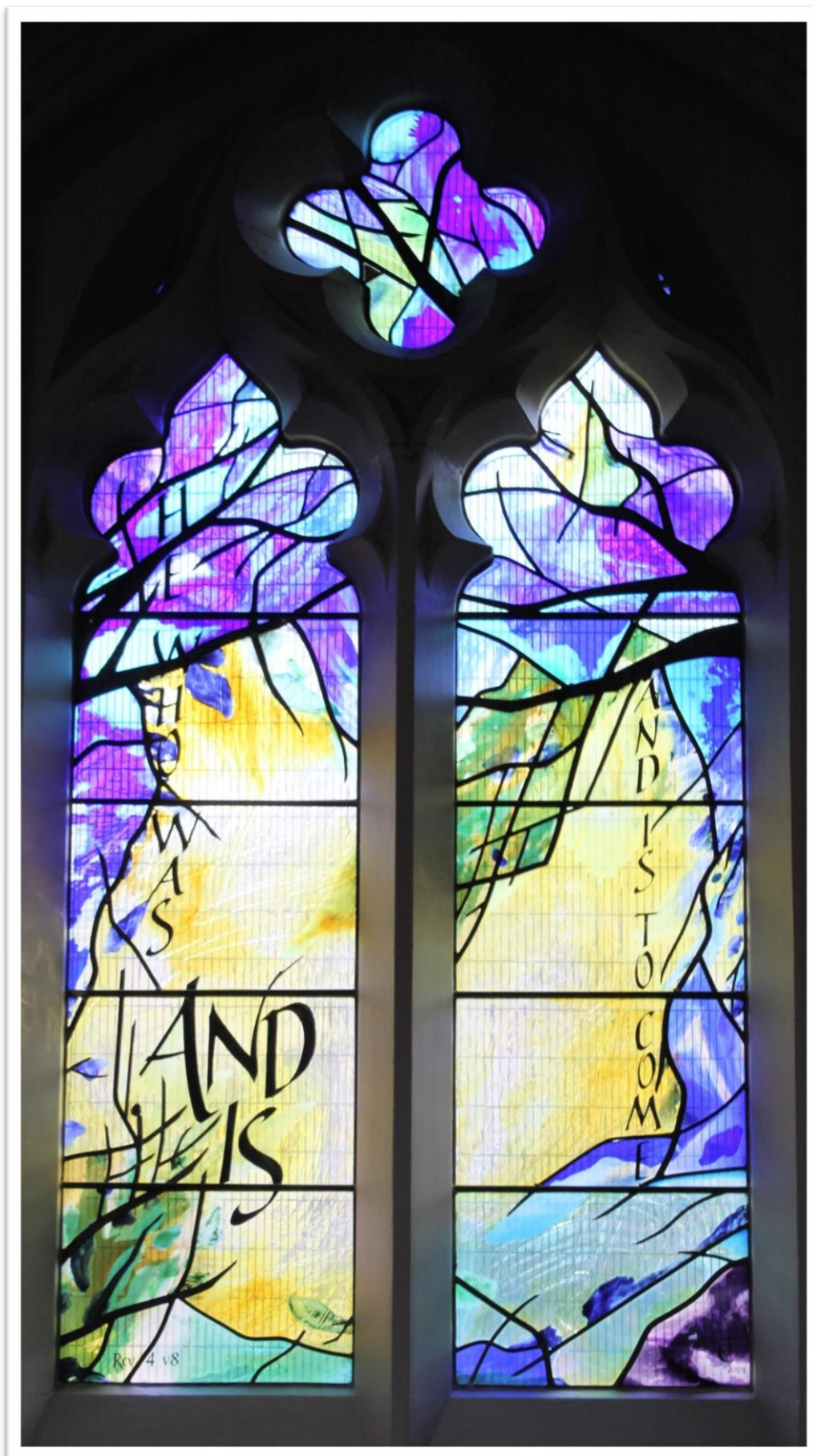
Frederick Bunn lived for a further four years after the death of his wife before he died in Eastbourne in 1969.

From 1959 the 3½-5 year olds of the Sunday School continued to meet in the 'Tin Tab' and the 5-8's in the Parish Halls. From 1924 and 1941 older young people

were served on Sunday afternoons by Kings Own Bible Class (14-18's) and the Children's Service (8-14's). From 1931 a Young People's Church (8-14's) started on a Sunday morning and a Junior Young People's Church (3½ to 8's) from 1962. In 1975 the morning and afternoon groups merged to produce the Sunday morning format that we know today.



'Gateway to Heaven' (2001)



Vastly different in character from all the other windows at Christ Church is **the striking one in the centre of the south wall which was given in memory of Susie Morris in 2001.**

Susan Mary Williams was born at Epsom Hospital on 21st April 1963, the daughter of Trevor and Betty Williams. Trevor was Managing Director of Tudor Williams, the Department Store in New Malden, which had been founded by his father Tudor and his mother Nora in 1913. Tudor was one of eight children born to the congregational minister of a tiny village called Tiers Cross in Pembrokeshire and had moved to London and then New Malden to make his fortune in retail. After the First World War, the store was considerably developed and it was as his father's health deteriorated that Trevor took over its running.

Susie went to school in Worcester Park and later Sutton High School for Girls. In October 1981, she went to Cardiff University to read Business Studies. After graduating, Susie spent a year travelling before returning home in September 1985. She already knew John Morris from their time as students in Cardiff when they had shared a house with four others during their second year.

However, it was following the wedding of mutual friends in Hull that a romantic relationship began to develop between them. From that point on, things moved fairly quickly and in

March of the following year, **they became engaged on a day out in Greenwich.**

On 23rd August 1986, **John and Susie were married at Susie's local church of St Mary the Virgin, Cuddington in Worcester Park.**



Both were 23 at the time of their wedding, although it was much to her amusement that Susie was a day older than John! The couple honeymooned in Taormina in Sicily and then lived in a one bedroom flat in Brunswick Road in Kingston. In September 1987, **they moved to 134 Blagdon Road** and enjoyed some carefree years of travelling and young married life.

Susie had worked in recruitment in the West End before moving on to work in the Head Office of Top Shop in Oxford Street. By the late 1980's, she had left to join **Tudor Williams**, with responsibility for buying in the Haberdashery

Department and involved in Fashions as well. It was whilst they were

living in Blagdon Road that Susie and John's first child was born in September 1991 – **Tudor Charles Morris**.

In 1992 Susie received the devastating news that she had cancer. She was also pregnant but was assured that the cancer would most likely kill both her and the baby, if she did not have immediate surgery and chemotherapy.

The couple decided to go ahead with the procedures and baby Sam's life was finished before it had started. Susie and John named him after the book of Samuel in the Bible, which they had opened in search of inspiration and comfort.

It was out of this dark time, that Susie's Christian faith grew deeper. The tragedy had particularly led her to a much deeper appreciation of the Bible and one of the results of this was Susie's regular attendance at Christ Church and its midweek group, Wednesday Women. This had formed as Wednesday Wives in 1977 to study the Bible in small groups and continues today as Connections. Here Susie learnt more about her faith and gained great support and encouragement. Other members such as Anna Angell later spoke of how blessed they were by Susie's deepening love and trust in Jesus Christ, her lack of self-pity, compassion for others and wonderful hospitality.



By the mid-1990s, life seemed back on track. John had left his work in the City to join Tudor Williams in June 1994. The business was expanding opening its first bed and linen store in Cobham in 1997 followed by stores in Dorking and Guildford.

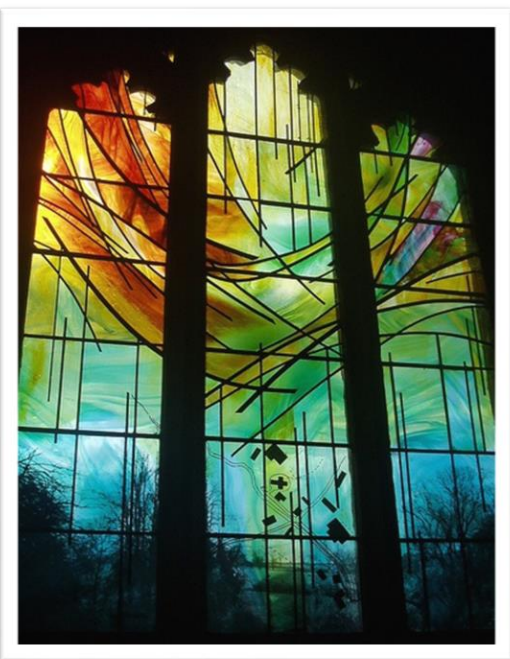


A daughter, **Daisy Martha Morris**, was born to Susie and John in January 1995. By now, they had sold the house in Blagdon Road and, after a spell with Susie's parents, moved into Burghley Avenue that summer. In 1996 John and Susie celebrated their tenth wedding anniversary by returning to Taormina and in November of that year, their third child, Dylan Charles Morris, was born.



In 1997 that Susie received the dreadful news that her cancer had returned. As she became physically frailer, friends said that Susie never lost her vitality for life. Despite further treatment, she died on 3rd July 1998. Susie was 35 years old. Her funeral service was taken by the Vicar, Stewart Downey and at her request, members of Wednesday Women attended in a 'riot of colour'. At the time of her death, **Tudor was six, Daisy three and Dylan one**. It was a very tough time for the family. But with the support of his parents and a wonderful

nanny, Molly Roberts, John managed to carry on. Working in the family business in New Malden meant that he was able to be flexible and spend time with the children.



Following Susie's death, her family decided that they wished for a window to be given in her memory at Christ Church. The lack of a stained glass window in the centre of the south wall made it the obvious location. Stewart Downey played a central role in selecting the artist and was particularly taken with **the work of Jane Campbell**, a woman of deep Christian faith from Reigate. The eventual design represented a period when artists were exploring new ways of using stained glass. Instead of the approach of earlier periods, when lead was used to put small sections in place, Jane Campbell allowed the glass to flow more and merge. The design also reflected a great deal of engagement with the context of Susie's Christian faith but also her love of colour, movement and light. The window was entitled 'Gateway to Heaven' and its design flows from the top, where heaven is depicted in gentle

bluish and lilac hues, before gradually approaching earth in different tones. The resurrection is the theme and reflects the confidence Susie possessed concerning her eternal future with God with the quotation 'Who was, and is, and is to come' from Revelation 4.8. The glass, in some parts, was fired 32 times in a kiln in Germany to attain the graduations and allow its subtle shades to be achieved. The window attracts a great deal of attention from those who come into Christ Church and its vivid colours appear to change at different times of day.

The subsequent years for the Morris family have continued to be a mixture of deeply testing and joyful experiences. In December 2004, 13 year old Tudor was diagnosed with Stage 3 Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma. The treatment involved lengthy stays in the Marsden and the children's ward at Kingston Hospital. After two years, Tudor was given the all-clear and subsequently threw himself into work for the children's cancer charity Momentum. This has involved giving talks to parents and raising over £30,000 through **a cycle ride from John O'Groats to Land's End in 2010**, an Ironman in 2012 and finally swimming the English Channel in 2014.



John started a new relationship with Chloe and had two further children, Poppy May Morris born in July 2007 and Felix Charles Morris born in December 2009. The relationship did not last but in 2015 John met Georgie Symonds. Georgie's first husband had died at the age of 50 and she had experienced similar sorrows to John.

She had two children, Leila and Greg. The relationship between **John and Georgie developed and they were married at Christ Church in August 2017**.

At the wedding, Tudor was John's best man, Dylan usher, Daisy, Leila and Poppy bridesmaids with Greg and Felix as pageboys.



Daisy carried on the family tradition of going to Cardiff University where she read English. She met Roy Carley on her first day at University. **By 2018 Daisy and Roy were engaged and married just before Easter 2019 at Christ Church.**

Dylan also attended Cardiff University, where he read Geography. Susie was a keen supporter of Rugby and would have been very proud to have seen **Dylan representing England under 18's against France and Ireland in 2015.**



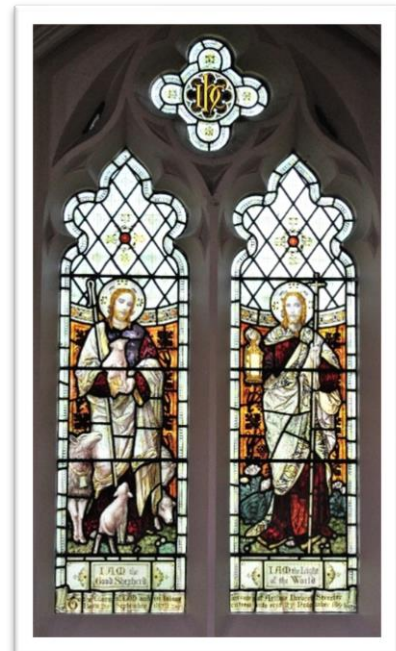
The Message of the Windows

During May and June 2018, the sermons at Christ Church focused upon the stained glass windows. The preachers presented much of the background that has been established about the people and situations surrounding each window and then focused upon their content and the gospel messages they hold out to us.



Stephen Kuhrt spoke on **the Herbert Streeter window of 1896 and in its depiction of Jesus as the Good Shepherd and Light of the World**. The royal robes being worn by Jesus in the window remind us that the shepherd imagery is used in John 10 (and drawn from Ezekiel 34) to show the nature of his kingship. Whilst other human rulers commonly display greed or indifference to those in their charge, Jesus is the loving Shepherd King who knows his 'sheep', is known by them, who acts as the human gate that leads them out to

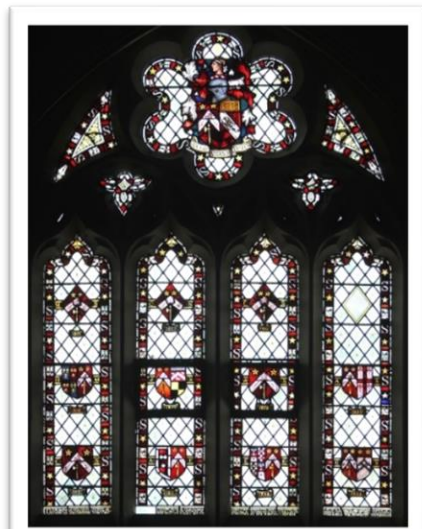
pasture and even lays down his life to protect and save them. Reflecting the pastoral context of Herbert's early death, the mother sheep in the window has her eyes fixed upon Jesus and is completely happy for her lamb to be in his arms. This reflects the challenge to entrust those whom we love to him. The bell around the mother's neck with the symbol of Jesus upon it, indicates the importance of us belonging to him if we're going to receive this peace. This is reinforced by the grapevine growing behind Jesus, recalling his saying 'I am the Vine', which speaks of the life that comes from continuing to abide in Jesus.



This is complemented by the other image of Jesus as the Light of the World, which emphasises his role as our guide. The presence of the lantern in Jesus' hand and his eyes focused upon us, reminds us that this is particularly true in times of darkness and the cross shaped staff in his other hand indicates that following this light will always involve us taking up our own crosses, as Jesus told us to. For us, as much as those grieving the loss of Herbert Streeter in the mid 1890's, the windows remind us of the love of God which comes to find us and bring us rescue but also solace and guidance in dark times through his Son, Jesus Christ.



Stephen Kuhrt also spoke on **the 1899 east wall window depicting John the Baptist and John the Evangelist witnessing to Jesus the Risen Saviour**. Its replacement of the family heraldry in **the Sim window of 1878** serves as a picture of 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ and his shall reign for ever and ever' from Revelation 11.15. Whatever their generosity, the Sim window does represent the human tendency to build ourselves up. By contrast, the crown



being worn by the risen and exalted Jesus reminds us of the need to acknowledge him, rather than ourselves, as king. The current placement of these windows at opposite ends of Christ Church encourages us as we worship each week to turn from those things that promote our own importance towards Jesus Christ and what has done for us through his death on the cross. The latter is reinforced by the presence of the pelican at the bottom of the central window. This image, seen also in the Frederick Merryweather window of 1901 reminds us of the centrality to our faith of his act of self-sacrificial love. The witness of John the Baptist, representing the old covenant, and John the Evangelist, witnessing the new covenant, remind us that the whole of the Bible is focused upon Jesus' death for our sins. The prominence of 'Faith', 'Hope' and 'Love' amongst the rich grapevine imagery in the window then reminds us of the need to prioritise these fruits of the new creation in our response to what Jesus the Risen Saviour has done for us. The abundance of grapevine imagery in three of the stained glass windows at Christ Church serves as a wonderful affirmation of Grapevine, our lunch club, which seeks to share the saving love of God in Jesus Christ with everyone.

Stephen Kuhrt also spoke on **the Merryweather window of 1901**. The scandalous conflict in 1870 between two such outstanding servants of Christ Church and New Malden as Frederick Merryweather and Charles Stirling, reminds us of how easily sin can take root in the most devout people. The frequent result of this is pride, folly and immensely damaging actions. Against this background, the pelican and the lamb depicted in the window remind us of the nature of Jesus' sacrificial death to take away our sins. The grapevine imagery (occurring for a third time in the windows at Christ Church) further shows how the life and goodness of Jesus Christ is meant to flow into our lives as a result. The Alpha and Omega remind us that Jesus Christ represents the beginning and the end of everything within this world. This points us to the message of Revelation and how both God's mysterious purposes and the kingship of Jesus are revealed through the lamb who was slain (Revelation 5). Both the Merryweather window and the story behind it, therefore speak powerfully of necessity of our lives being constantly shaped by the sacrificial love of God revealed in Jesus Christ. We need to reject the things that would pull us into destructive ways of living and be constantly determined to see the fruit produced in our lives that comes as a result of us being joined to Jesus Christ.

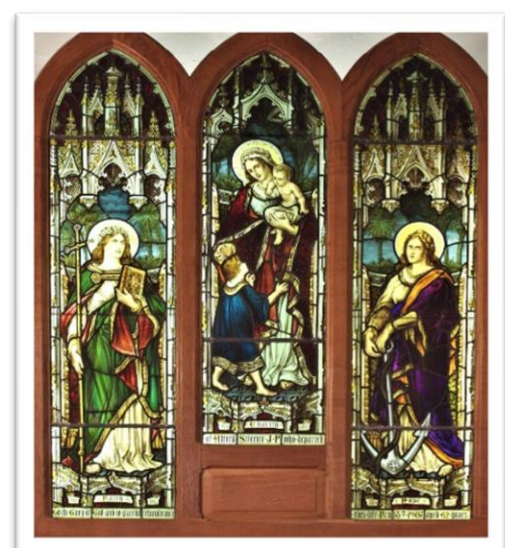


Katy Loffman spoke on **the Alfred Streeter window of 1908, which depicts 'Faith, Hope and Love' in personified form**.

The masonic influence upon this window can help us to reflect on the way in which a Christian understanding of faith, hope and love differs from that of Freemasonry.

Faith is depicted as carrying a cross and a Bible and looking up to heaven. This helps us to understand its nature as trusting in God's promise to bring us to the eternal city through Jesus' death on the cross. Freemasons affirm God as 'the Great

Architect of the Universe' and the importance of faith in him. However, by avoiding any talk of Jesus and his death, they leave



the focus of this faith as vague and incomplete. Hebrews 11.10 refers to God as an architect, but with very specific reference to the heavenly city that we travel towards through faith in what Jesus Christ has achieved for us through his death on the cross.

Hope is depicted as holding an anchor recalling Hebrews 6.19-20 and its reference to the Christian hope as 'an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain where Jesus, who went before us, entered on our behalf'. Freemasonry takes language used of Jesus in the Bible such as 'capstone', 'foundation' and 'holding all things together' and applies them instead to 'the brotherhood', suggesting that fellowship with other masons is the basis of hope. Christian hope is based instead wholly upon the person of Jesus Christ as both its basis and destiny.

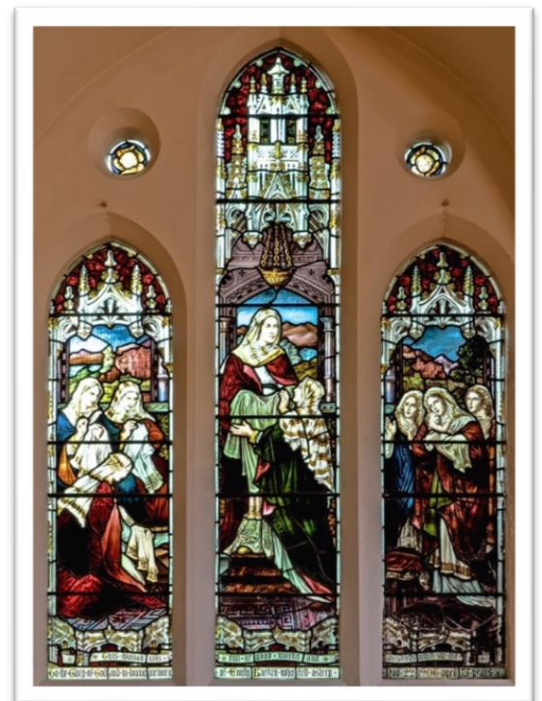
Love or Charity is depicted in the central window as a woman caring for a baby and feeding a child. Within Freemasonry, acts of charity are promoted but part of their motivation is to climb a ladder to salvation. Another are the oaths of loyalty made to fellow masons and to maintain secrecy, which compromise their stated aim to show charity to 'all men'. Christian love, by contrast, has nothing to do with achieving merit and is entirely based upon the love of God at work in us through a relationship with Jesus Christ. This enables this love to be more open, transparent and more clearly targeted at everyone.

Nathan Larkin spoke on **the Emily Larkin window of 1908 and its presentation of Tabitha or Dorcas**, the woman from Joppa who was raised from the dead in the Acts of the Apostles. Like Emily Larkin, Tabitha was full of good works and charitable deeds for the poor, to whom she showed active compassion and mercy.



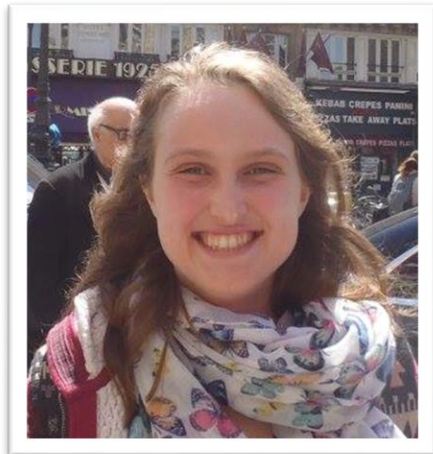
The window depicts one of the major ways in which Tabitha expressed this love by making garments for those who were poor. This would have been tedious and demanding work but can inspire us to us to serve others with whatever talents God has blessed us with. Tabitha's good works were well known in Joppa, especially amongst the widows, and we can be inspired by the way God used her deeds, as well as the event of her death and resurrection, as a means for preaching the gospel and drawing others further towards him.

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The window provides a challenge to us about how we will be remembered. This recalls another biblical story where Jesus says that wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world Mary's act of love 'would be told in memory of her' (Mark 14.9). Dorcas was remembered, not so much by the rich and powerful, as by the poor, the widows and marginalised who were sad because the woman who had shown them God's love was no more. The window being paid for by those whom Emily Larkin had served with her life reinforces this.

A further feature of the window is its inclusion of a garden and city, recalling the start of Genesis and the end of Revelation. The presence of a new born baby and elderly widows also reflects beginnings and ends. Our lives all have a beginning and then build towards a future. Some of us have more advantages and opportunities than others and some of us have to battle through some unfortunate circumstances. But all followers of Jesus Christ are heading to that great city where one day we will stand face to face with our God who will ask us what we have done with what has been given to us. Will we be remembered as being lavish in love and generosity like Tabitha and Emily Larkin?



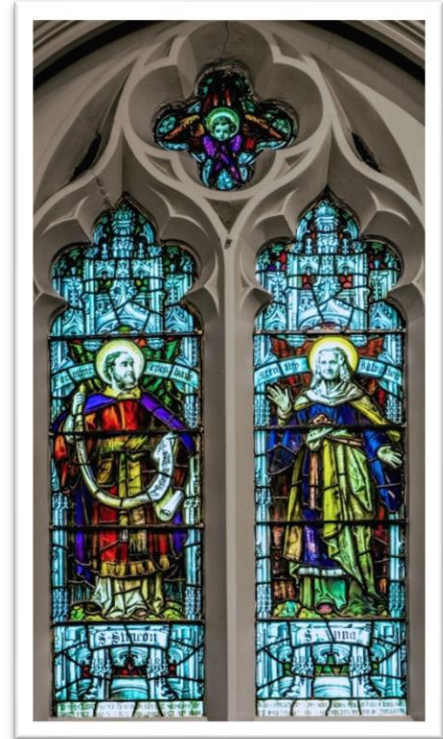
Alison Hill spoke on the **James and Mary Page window of 1912** and its presentation of **Simeon and Anna** who met with the infant Jesus and spoke of the fulfilment of God's purposes that he represented. Simeon and Anna were humble servants who continuously and faithfully served God. Like Mary Page, we know very little about them. But their presence within the Temple, perhaps symbolised by the background of the window, reminds us that we don't need to do anything dramatic or spectacular to worship God throughout all of our lives and live a life devoted to him.

Simeon and Anna also serve as an example that we are never too old to be used by God. Simeon's scroll may contain his words 'Now let your servant depart in peace'. Anna further demonstrates that being an elderly widow in a patriarchal society was and is no barrier to be used by God. Particularly in the new age of the Spirit that had arrived with Jesus. In fact, it is a highly significant that after a gap of some four hundred years, the first that we hear of the renewal of prophecy is through a woman. This reminds us that women, like Mary Page, may feature less within historical records than men like her husband James, but their quiet and faithful service is nonetheless still noticed and appreciated by God.

The central emphasis of the window is Simeon and Anna's role in witnessing to the fulfilment of God's plan in the coming of Jesus. Behind them is written 'For mine eyes have seen your salvation' which both Simeon (with his words) and Anna (with her presence) witness as coming for everyone. The baby at the top of the window probably represents Jesus and speaks of how God's plan of salvation came to its amazing climax, not in anything flashy or spectacular, but in the humility of a baby born into poverty. Simeon's words in the story also remind us of the divisive nature of Jesus. We can't sit on the fence – he calls all of us, like Simeon and Anna and perhaps James and Mary Page, to a life of faithful service and devotion to him.



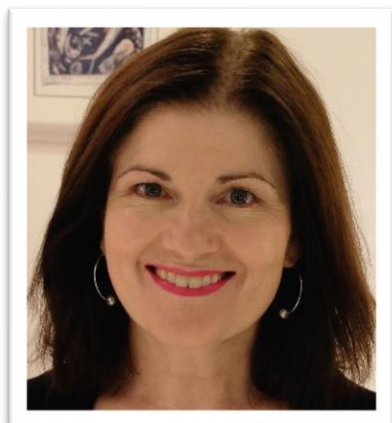
David Taylor spoke on the **Rashell Montague Rashell Davison window of 1920** and how its depiction of 'I will give you the crown of life' from Revelation 2.10 speaks into the context of the suffering and death of the Christian believer. The verse forms part of the assurance to the Christians at Smyrna that their suffering would be a slight and momentary affliction ahead of their eternal glory. The window reveals this future, with a man



laying down his sword and shield in surrender to God and receiving the crown of life from an angel witnessed by heavenly cherubim. Rather than representing defeat, death is pictured as a victory recalling the final verse of the hymn 'Stand up! Stand up for Jesus!' which continues 'The strife will not be long. This day the noise of battle, the next the victors song. To him that overcometh, a crown of life shall be; He with the King of glory, shall reign eternally'.

The poem that Monty wrote the night before he went into action reveals his personal response to this. 'Vale: A Soldier's Farewell' vividly describes the horror of the bombardments he endured and Monty's premonition of his fatal wound. But two lines from the fifth verse, he also speak of the death of Jesus Christ saying: 'The sacrifice of him-without-a-stain, Which faithful souls at countless crossroads find'. This, reflecting the roadside Calvaries Monty would have seen in France, explains the previous verse: 'E'en as I lie, I see the Bridge of Fate, Linking me in the Future to the Past, And, as I strain my dimming eyes, the Gate, Of Life-through-Death flings open wide at last'. How Monty has responded to the call of Christ in this life – what would soon be past – would soon determine his passing over the bridge that leads to Life-through-Death. It is this that leads to the confidence with which the Christian can approach death, illustrated by the final verse: 'Let no one grieve – for it is willed that I, Must pass from Life to Death to Victory. Grieve not – for life has been too sweet for Grief. I go quite happy in this sure belief'.

The armour can also point us to Paul's use of this imagery as appropriate these truths. The 'helmet of salvation', 'shield of faith' and the 'sword of the Spirit which is the word of God' can give us same confidence in approaching death as we're assured that, like Monty Davison, our faith will result in the crown of life.



Becky Mills spoke on **the Elizabeth Bunn window of 1965 and its depiction of the story of Jesus with Mary and Martha**. The story from Luke 10.38-42 has been commonly used to promote the importance of devotion to Jesus over activism. It is possible that this is the interpretation that was originally associated with window and how it was taught within the Christ Church Sunday School. The most important point of the story of Mary and Martha, however, and one extremely relevant to the extraordinary ministry of Elizabeth Bunn, is the

strong endorsement that Jesus makes within it of women. Martha was following the basic first century conventions in being limited to the both the roles and places within the house allocated to women. Mary, on the hand, was challenging these conventions. She was within the part of the house reserved for men and sitting at the feet of a rabbi in a manner associated with those who would then go on to become teachers. The key text and the one produced at the top of the window is where Jesus says that 'Mary has chosen that good part which shall not be taken from her'. This endorsement of women's ministry is further reflected in other New Testament texts such as Romans 16.1,7 where Paul commends Phoebe as a



deacon of the church at Cencreae and then affirms both the male Andronicus and the female Junia as 'outstanding amongst the apostles'.

In the years since, women's ministry has often been far less affirmed within the church with the hegemony of men soon becoming dominant. Elizabeth Bunn's truly remarkable ministry in running the Christ Church Sunday School for 46 years was exercised within a setting where there were major restrictions on women's ministry totally inconsistent with the story of Mary and Martha. However, now that the radical perspective of Jesus on this issue has been rediscovered, the window can serve as an inspiration to all of us at Christ Church to encourage our women and girls to be disciples of Jesus with completely equal status to the men and to exercise their gifts, talents and callings to the full.



Ruth Henson spoke on **the Susie Morris window of 2001** and its presentation of the hope of resurrection life brought to us by the one 'who is and who was and who is to come' from Revelation 4.

This hope speaks very strongly into the context of the window as we struggle to cope with our decline and death. 2 Corinthians 4 is another part of the Bible that links the two, as it speaks of the inward renewal of the Christian believer accompanying our outward wasting away and

how 'our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all'. Like St Paul, who wrote these words, and Susie Morris who embodied them, we therefore need to fix our eyes, not on the earthly things that are seen, but on the unseen heavenly realities that are eternal.



This path from our present experience to the eternal future that God has promised to his people is symbolised in the window. 'Gateway to Heaven' uses Susie Morris' favourite colours of blue and turquoise to present an archway of trees that then lead and flow into the golden colours of the eternal future that we are promised in our resurrection and the new creation.

This is reinforced by the wider context of Revelation 4. The scene is the heavenly throne room and the constant praise there summed up by 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come'. These words recall both Exodus 3.14 and God's revelation to Moses that 'I am who I am' and Hebrews 13.8 with its declaration that 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever'. The presence of these words within the window reminds us that the great I am of the story of the Bible, the unchanging one throughout history, is also our ever present help in the here and now, our comforter and bringer of the certainty, as held by Susie Morris, of an eternity spent in his presence. This is reinforced by the present tense of its final phrase, more accurately translated as 'and is coming'. This reminds us that Jesus' coming is already on his way and that we have a role in the arrival of this future as we share God's love and justice as part of God's kingdom coming 'on earth as in heaven'.

Concluding Reflections

As mentioned in the introduction, the stories associated with the ten stained glass windows represent just some of the thousands of stories of the worshippers at Christ Church, New Malden since its establishment in 1866. The memories that they preserve are deeply valuable. It also needs to be remembered, however, that their witness to the life of Christ Church is partial rather than complete.

One of the reasons for this is that most of the windows at Christ Church were established within a fairly narrow time frame within the church's overall history. The Sim window was installed in 1878 and the Katherine Bunn and Susie Morris windows in 1965 and 2001 respectively. The other seven windows, however, were all established at Christ Church between 1896 and 1920 – a period of just twenty four years out of over 150 years that the church has existed. All seven of these windows were created during the incumbency of the second Vicar of Christ Church, the Reverend William Allen Challacombe (1893-1920), which is why he features so prominently within their stories. As staunch an evangelical as the other nine Vicars of Christ Church, William Allen Challacombe was perhaps more attracted than some of the others to the value and appropriateness of visual beauty and its power to enhance our worship. The advance of Anglo-Catholicism either side of the First World War, with its promotion of 'the beauty of holiness', may have also influenced Christ Church more in this regard than some have cared to admit!

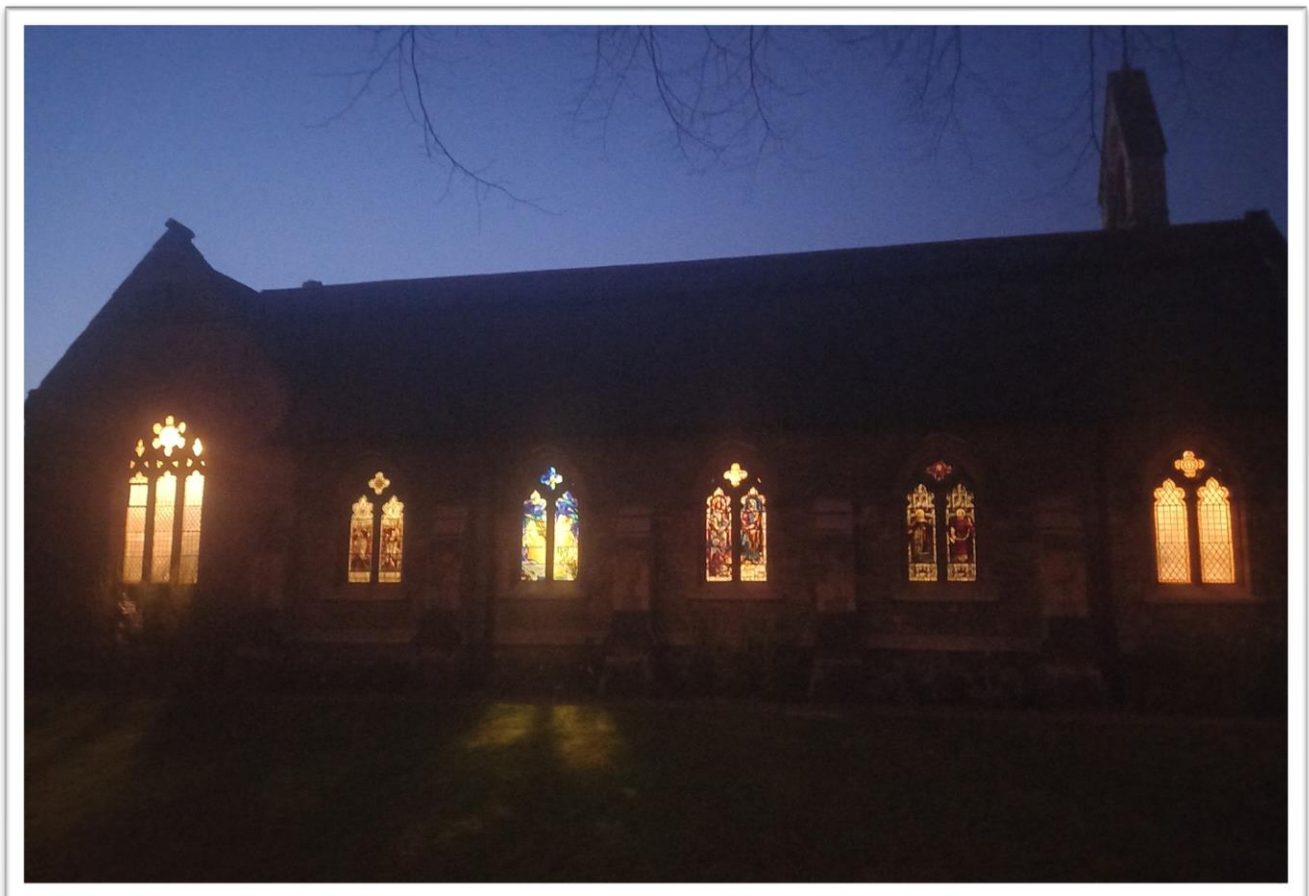
We owe a huge amount to the subsequent custodians of Christ Church, particularly in the fantastic buildings that they passed onto us – the Parish Halls in 1927, St John's in 1939, the Vestry Hall in 1966, the Christ Church Centre in 1981, the refurbishment of the interior in 2007 and the Youth and Children's Hall in 2017. Other eras have made outstanding contributions in terms of youth and children's work, the promotion of mission and evangelism, worship, teaching and preaching, pastoral care and events that have brought Christ Church closer together as a community. All of these areas and many others continue to be crucial to church life. But what that twenty four year period which gave us so many of our windows can remind us of is our God-given calling to nurture beauty. This forms part of what it means to be made in the image of God. Our fantastic and dedicated gardening team already do this. But it is perhaps time to explore further ways in which we can seek to enhance the beauty of the place where we gather each week to worship the God of creation.

Another reason that the stained windows present only a partial representation of the stories of Christ Church is because their cost means that they are inevitably associated with the church's wealthier members. This is not true in every case. Emily Larkin, in particular, was a woman of no great wealth. Furthermore, despite their bias towards the wealthier members of Christ Church, in other ways the windows witness quite strongly to the God revealed in Jesus Christ being for everyone. Some of those that they remember died young, whilst others achieved great longevity. Some were married with children, whilst others remained single or childless. Some possessed great standing in the local community, whilst others were relatively unknown outside of the church. In an age when women were accorded much less significance than men, it is wonderful that women feature strongly in the stories or images of at least five of the ten stained glass windows.

But alongside those associated with the windows, it is also good to remember the many thousands of others who have built up Christ Church through their hard work and dedicated

service and whom, for whatever reason, have nothing visual at the church to remember them. Recent efforts to discover and present more of the story of what God has done through 'the great cloud of witnesses' who have gone ahead of us at Christ Church represent an attempt to redress this and will continue as we make valuing our history and learning its lessons more central to our life as a church.

Having recognised their limitations, the ten stained glass windows of Christ Church and the stories associated with them have much to teach us. One of the most obvious ways is through their witness to the fragility of human life and yet the way in which the stories of the Bible, supremely the saving death of Jesus Christ and his resurrection, speak directly into this reality. Another feature of the windows is their witness to the love of families, friends and whole communities for those whose lives have touched their own with God's love. What many of the windows represent is an attempt to express gratitude for these lives by recalling biblical stories or teaching that explain or point to the virtues they embodied. John the Baptist, John the Evangelist, Dorcas, Simeon, Anna, Mary and Martha were all flawed people. So too were those remembered by the stained glass windows, as well as those who generously provided them. But they were also women and men in whom faith, hope and love were present because they were touched by the grace of God and used in his service. This was and is made possible by Jesus the Good Shepherd, the Light of the World and Risen Saviour. He is the one through whose death and resurrection, we can overcome suffering and death and receive the crown of life and our own resurrection, so that we can be part of God's kingdom coming on earth as it is in heaven. In this, we can stand with those from the past, present and future of Christ Church and take our place alongside those associated with our beautiful stained glass windows.





**WINDOWS INTO
CHRIST CHURCH**

STORIES OF A CHURCH
THROUGH ITS STAINED GLASS

BY STEPHEN KUHRT