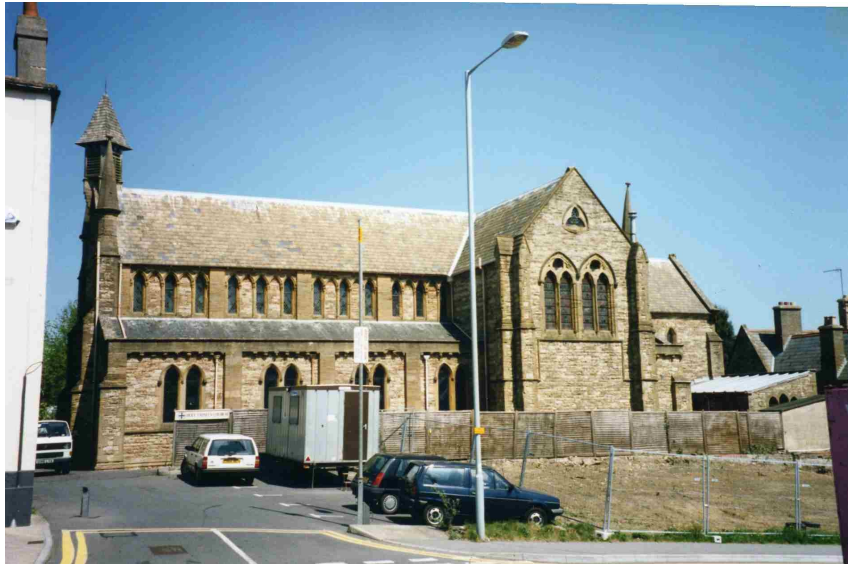


The first Holy Trinity church in Yeovil was built in South Street, just off the town centre

One reason for its creation seems to have been to avoid the embarrassment of masters and servants having to worship together but the main aim of the Oxford Movement, which provided much of the parish's inspiration, was to take the Church to the people in a form to which they could relate and respond. Thus Holy Trinity was, from the beginning in 1846, a parish that went to meet the people where they were, not expecting them to come to it. This willingness to take the church to the people has been a constant factor in the parish's development. The first Holy Trinity was primarily and unashamedly a church for the working classes, catering for their spiritual needs but not neglecting their social ones. In 1880 its vicar managed to get the Victoria Temperance Hall built and around 1900 it had the vision to raise money to build a social centre nearby



Holy Trinity Church from South Street

The establishment of St Mary's, a couple of kilometres from the main church, was a response to the westward growth of Yeovil. Houses and bungalows had been built in the twenties and thirties,



St Mary's church, Wraxhill Road

creating a new, middle-class area around the West Coker Road which, before the days of mass car ownership, was too far from any Anglican Church. In 1941 a temporary then later, in 1958, a semi-permanent building was put up to serve this community.

Further radical changes occurred during the sixties and onwards. Clearance of much of the housing around the town centre deprived Holy Trinity of many of its local members and the congregation dwindled. Newer and larger housing estates shifted the population centre

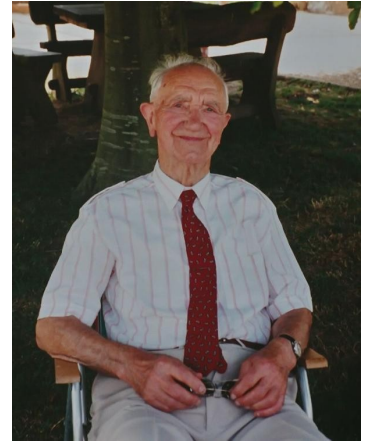
of gravity away from St Mary's, creating a new, churchless area along Lysander Road. The Church's first response to need in this area was the building of a new VA Primary School and from the very beginning close links existed between School and Church.

The size and age of the congregation at Holy Trinity and the deteriorating condition of the building forced the conclusion that it was no longer realistic to keep the centre going. It was accepted that no further repairs would be done and that closure was inevitable. This was doubly hard for those remaining, loyal members, since not only was this the end of the building in which many had

worshipped all their lives (some of which had been remarkably long) but the well-ordered, High Anglican style of worship contrasted strongly with the middle-of-the-road form at St Mary's, which would seem to be the alternative.

It became clear, however, that simply transferring to St Mary's was not the easy answer it appeared. This building, too, was in bad shape and had already gone past its intended life-span. There was a growing recognition also that it was in the wrong place in relation to the population centre of the parish. If we were to reach out to these people then, as in 1846 and in 1941, the Church would have to go to them, not the other way round. This was the vision that the then vicar, John Bennett, who had been in the parish only about four years, communicated to the PCC; they agreed on the closure of the two churches and the building of a new one.

What followed was indeed a journey of faith. It is one thing to have a vision, quite another to be able to realise it. There was no money nor the immediate prospect of any and there was no site, but the vision and the faith that it truly was what God was calling us to do remained. This faith was reinforced when it was found that Reg Priddle, organist for many years had left the residue of his estate to go towards the building of the new church.



Reg Priddle

Perhaps as an earnest of our commitment, it was decided to move the main Sunday service out of St Mary's and hold it in the hall of the Primary School. It already seemed possible that the new church could be built close to the school and it all seemed part of the preparation. As a further development the Worship Committee recommended the use of a different style of service that would be easier for new, or potential new members of the congregation to cope with. By separating the Ministry of the Word from the Ministry of the Sacrament with a break for coffee and socialising it was hoped that services could be less formal, less excluding.



Holy Trinity Primary School

The move to the school came in 1995 and while it took some getting used to, it soon became an enjoyable and truly worshipful experience. The Christian commitment of the headmistress and



At the closing service

staff and the lovely displays they and the children produced played a significant part in this process.

The closing service at Holy Trinity, led sensitively by the late Bishop Jim Thompson, was a sad time for many but the building was not destined to be demolished and become the site of a supermarket as some had feared. Knightstone housing took it, repaired, expanded and developed it to become a Foyer centre for young people in need of accommodation, help and

training; a really worthy purpose which helped to ease the sense of loss.

Though the transfer of Holy Trinity raised no money, the sale of St Mary's would. Even more significant was the result of the vicar's appeal to the congregation for pledges of support which raised £85,000. Even so, the target of around half a million pounds was a long way off, yet the faith in the vision remained. Had John told us all exactly how discouraging the Archdeacons had been that faith may have been dimmed.

A great deal of effort was put into making a submission to the Millennium Commission for a grant. The hope of success was not dimmed by the first refusal but when it was rejected a second time it was recognised that this was not part of God's plan for us. A generous donation from Westlands, support from the Diocese and the Church Commissioners however, made it possible to go ahead.



The new church arises

a new church but a new Church Centre, a place not just for worship but a focus for the community, where the Gospel could be lived out as well as preached. Thus a hall, meeting room, facilities for the disabled and for small children were included in the structure which would centre on the large and expandable worship area. All this he made possible at a cost that was accessible.

A further element to be included was the Window. A gift had been made for this specific purpose but it was accepted that this was the only money to be used. On the basis of 'what can you do for £10,000 in a space this big' artist (?) was commissioned to produce a window depicting the baptism of Christ. This theme, a point at which the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are all brought together, is very fitting for a church dedicated to the Holy Trinity. The result was to be quite extraordinarily moving.

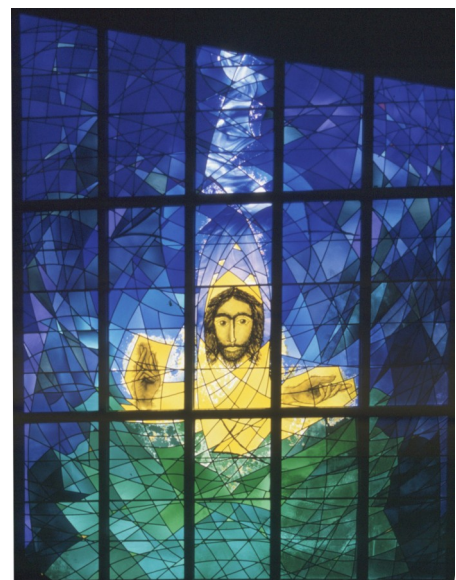
After several dispiriting conflicts with bureaucracy, approval was given for a site adjacent to the Primary School and preparations began in May 1998. Before this, however and all during the actual construction, spiritual preparation was going ahead with on-site prayer meetings, as well as



*John Bennet and Joy Price
turn the first sod for the new
Holy Trinity*

This was also due to the efforts of the architect. He had been more than ordinarily committed to the project and found ways to cut the costs without compromising the major

objectives of the design. From the beginning this was not to be

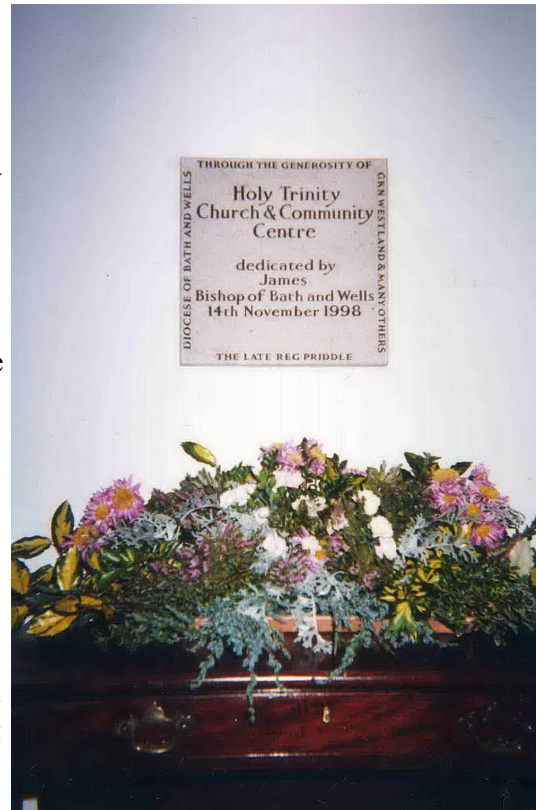


The window

regular prayer commitment, both individual and collective.

After some last-minute scrambling to get carpets laid, organ installed etc. the completed building was opened by Bishop Jim in November 1998 and the vision had finally become a reality.

So what of the reality? Many people, regulars and visitors alike have found it a very moving place. For some it is the wonderful window, especially when the sun streams in through its blue and yellow and green glass. For others it is the lightness and proportion and simple spaciousness. Many remark on its atmosphere, the sense of peace and prayer, created, perhaps, by the fact that it has been a place of prayer from its very foundation. Others are struck by its acoustics and by its utility and flexibility. Given the faith, the vision, the commitment that have gone into it, that it is a place where God is truly loved and worshipped and that it is a place with a purpose extending far beyond its walls, perhaps it is no surprise that it should move people.



Much has been done yet much remains. The original vision of the first Holy Trinity is still that of the new; in the words of our Parish Prayer:

.... deepen our faith and enlarge our caring. Empower us to reach out with your love to invite our neighbours to faith in your Son and membership of your Church.

(For more images of the Holy Trinity story go to the pictures section of the website)