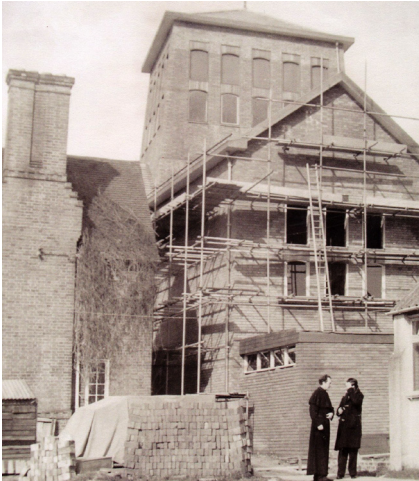




THE BUILDING

'Now the Building stands here dedicated and ready to be used, and I know that the church will be used. It will not be an unwanted or superfluous or redundant building as some of our churches are today. We build our churches not simply to shelter a congregation – not simply as a place for people to meet in. We want our churches inside and outside to lift up the hearts and minds of our people to God.'

Extract from the Bishop of Oxford's address at the dedication. Sept 1966



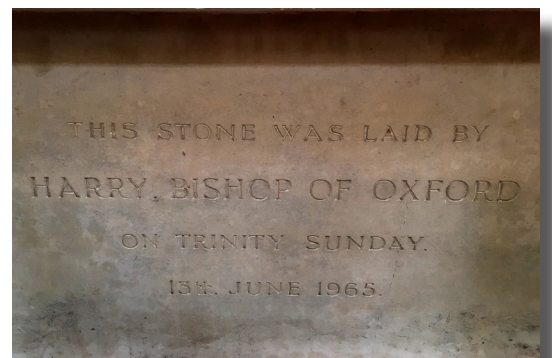
The story of the building in which you are standing began not in the 1960s as you might have assumed, but in the years before the First World War. It was during the peace celebrations in 1919 that the foundation stone, which can now be seen on the outside of the building, was laid on what was intended to be the site of a new church to serve the growing community of Amersham-on-the-Hill.

When it became apparent that construction on the scale envisaged was not going to be possible at that time, the decision was taken to erect a 'temporary' church further back from the road. This building, now known as St Michael's Hall, was to become a place of worship for more than 40



Foundation Stone laid in 1919

years. It was not until 1963 that all the permissions needed for the agreed design were in place. The project was funded by the sale of excess land not required for the new building. Work started in 1965. A 2nd foundation stone was incorporated into the inside of the north wall on Trinity Sunday, with the earlier one in the same position on the outer wall.



Foundation Stone laid in 1965



St. Michael's House 1961 - now called the Vicarage



THE BUILDING



St. Michael's soon after opening



Madonna and Child



Carved reredos screen



Changing the light bulbs 1997

On September 17th and 18th 1966, the new church was dedicated by the Bishops of Oxford and Buckingham, and its altars consecrated. Many of the features of the old church, including the organ, the carved reredos screen, which is now in the Lady Chapel and the painted Madonna and Child hanging in St Michael's Square at the end of the portico, were moved into the new building as the old one was transformed into the hall it had originally been designed to accommodate.



Consecration of the Church

Unfortunately, the euphoria which surrounded the opening of the new building was to be short-lived, as it soon became apparent that all was not well. From a practical point of view, sound went straight up into the tower, meaning that people had difficulty following services. The underfloor heating caused the floor to crack, and water was getting into the tower. Various solutions were proposed, including knocking the building down, and starting again, but there were insufficient funds to do anything much. These discussions went on during much of the 1980s, during which time it was debated whether so much space was needed for Sunday use, or whether it would be better to create facilities which could be better used by the Monday-Saturday community. In 1988, a decision was taken to redevelop the site. Various ideas were put forward including the addition of sheltered housing, offices and retail space. It was estimated that this would cost £250,000 much of which would once again be raised by the sale of surplus land, this time including the Hall and the Vicarage. Nothing came of these ideas due to the general economic downturn, so the PCC concentrated instead on the upkeep of the building they had.



THE BUILDING



St. Michael's 2008

In 1995, Marks and Spencer expressed interest in acquiring the site for a new high street store. This time, the suggestion was that the church would occupy the first floor above the retail outlet. Further options for the future of St Michael's were explored including the creation of a new shared Christian Centre on the site of the Free Church on the corner of Woodside Road. Negotiations on these concepts continued for several years but in 1999, the developers decided that a two-storey building would not be viable, so made a new offer on the basis that the church vacated the site. At this point, a new development in Chiltern Avenue, on the site of the library, was being explored. (The library would be incorporated into the Sycamore Road development).

In 2001 following two briefing meetings, all members of the congregation were given a questionnaire asking them to vote on which of three proposals they would prefer:-

1. Move to the library site.
2. Build a new church and hall in Sycamore Road above the retail development.
3. Refurbish the current building.

At the conclusion of this exercise, a significant majority were found to be in favour of Option 3, recognising the importance to the Church's ministry of a central location within the town. In 2002, a fundraising campaign for the refurbishment was launched with a target of £1m.



Members of the congregation decorated the church for Easter



THE BUILDING

'At present Amersham-on-the-Hill lacks a focal point which can and should be provided by St Michael's Church situated in the Square. In this way, the life of the town would be centred on the church, which would thereby become of real importance on seven days of the week, and not just on Sundays, as it will be if it is built behind walls and gates.'

Contribution from Amersham and District Residents Association to the debate about the redevelopment of Sycamore Road. October 1961



The work was to be in three phases – external, internal and the refurbishment of the forecourt.

Phase 1, the external repairs, was started in 2004 and completed in 2006.



Phase 2, which cost £1.4m included the installation of a new kitchen and toilets (these were previously in what is now the Griffiths Room) as well as rewiring and new lighting. At the same time, the former confessional (behind the doors in the North Transept), which was no longer in use, was converted into storage areas and a new kitchen was fitted in the Hall. At the conclusion of this stage, a thanksgiving service was held in November 2007.



Phase 3 started in 2011 when new designs for the space in front of the church were sought. The intention was to create a bridge between church and community; an attractive place of hospitality and stillness, fulfilling the wishes expressed by the Residents Association 50 years previously. The reconstruction of the entrance,

replacing solid wooden doors with glass ones, was an important part of this openness. The commitment to partnership and the creation of a 'town square' for Amersham-on-the-Hill enabled the church to access external funding, and in 2012, the renamed St Michael's Square was opened by the Bishop of Oxford, along with the adjacent Quiet Garden and Labyrinth.



St. Michael's 2012



The Bishop opens St. Michael's Square