

## CHAPTER 15

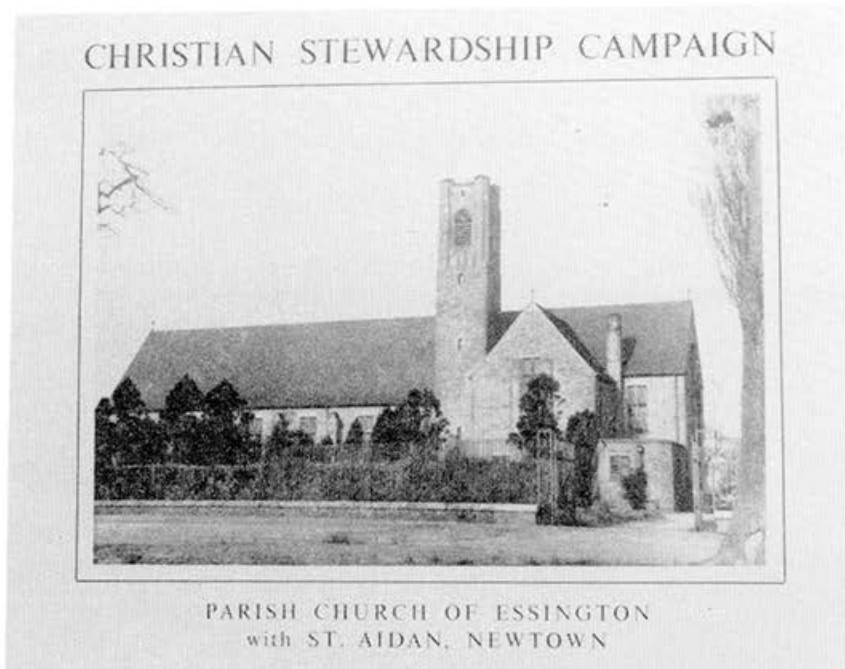
### THE 1960'S - THE YEARS OF RENAISSANCE

(These exciting years are here reviewed by Mr. Les Sadler)

The 1960's could possibly go down in history as one of the periods of revived growth that have taken place in the Church of England from time to time. The pangs of the rebirth that was to take place were created and felt in the late 1950's. The hierarchy of the Church of England, having been concerned at the downward trend of religion in this country, grasped the nettle and took steps to cure the malaise that had gripped the church.

One of the most significant introductions that mushroomed in the '60's was the encouraged participation of the laity in the Church, not only in each parish but also at the highest level. Synodical Government at both Deanery and national level was formed. The person in the pew was not just able to have a say in parochial matters but could get matters of concern carried to national level. In the Church services too, the laity were invited and encouraged to participate in the liturgy.

St. John's was, of course, involved in this upheaval that was to continue and grow through the decade we are now reviewing.



In 1960 the then recently appointed vicar, the Reverend Cyril Jenkins, was bold enough to convince the Parochial Church Council that a scheme contrived in the Diocese of Coventry and adopted in the Lichfield Diocese, should be introduced in the Parish of Essington. A Christian Stewardship Campaign, as the scheme was entitled, was launched in February 1961.

For the first time ever, men and women went out into the parish from St. John's Church as missionaries for God. Over 150 families were visited by men of the congregation, and women acting as hostesses personally invited all those families to a Church Supper. The canteen at Rubery Owen Ltd., at Darlaston was used for the event and some 150 people sat down to share a meal together in the Lord's name. It was recognised then to be the biggest event of its kind in the history of St. John's.

The change and revival that was taking place in the Church of England gathered momentum. The liturgy itself was modernised, particularly the Family Service. Modern language was introduced to restyle Communion Services: aptly called Series 1,2 & 3 they were the forerunners of our Alternative Service Book introduced in the 1980's.

The growth at St. John's consequently bore fruit. The income from the congregation was pledged and covenanted for the first time and from a yearly income of £600 to £700 in the late '50's there was an initial increase in 1961 to upwards of £2,000. The figure, as a matter of interest had reached over £24,000 by 1991.

The congregation of course grew in number and their activity, loving care and concern created the building of a new Church Hall (opened in 1966), a new oil heating installation, a complete re-wiring of the whole electrical system, together with a new church floor.

On the firm base that was established through Christian Stewardship, the Church was to grow into a well supportive and caring family which in the '90's is still growing. It is ever mindful of the time, talents and money that was and is still given gladly to further the work of God in the Parish of Essington and for the world-wide church overseas.



Carnival Atmosphere in the 1960's