

## **CHAPTER 17.**

### **THE 1980's - YEARS OF CONTINUED CHANGE**

**[This decade is reviewed by Alan Harrison]**

The world saw many changes in the eighties and the Anglican Church had its fair share of change, which Essington did not escape.

At the beginning of the decade the Alternative Service Book was introduced. Several members of St. John's congregation went along to St. John's Church in Wolverhampton to hear about the new service book, which, as the name suggests, was an alternative to the Book of Common Prayer which dated back to 1660 with an attempted revision in 1928.

The Alternative Service Book, or ASB as we have come to know it, had been in the making for some years and had been partly born out of the Series 1, 2 and 3 Holy Communion supplements. These supplements were no strangers to the congregation of St. John's Essington, and it was natural to progress to the new service book. At first only the Holy Communion or Eucharist section was used but it was not too long before we were using the Evensong section and learning new chants to the psalms, the pointing in the new book being helpful to newcomers. Most other services were quickly adapted to the ASB format and the service book became well used.

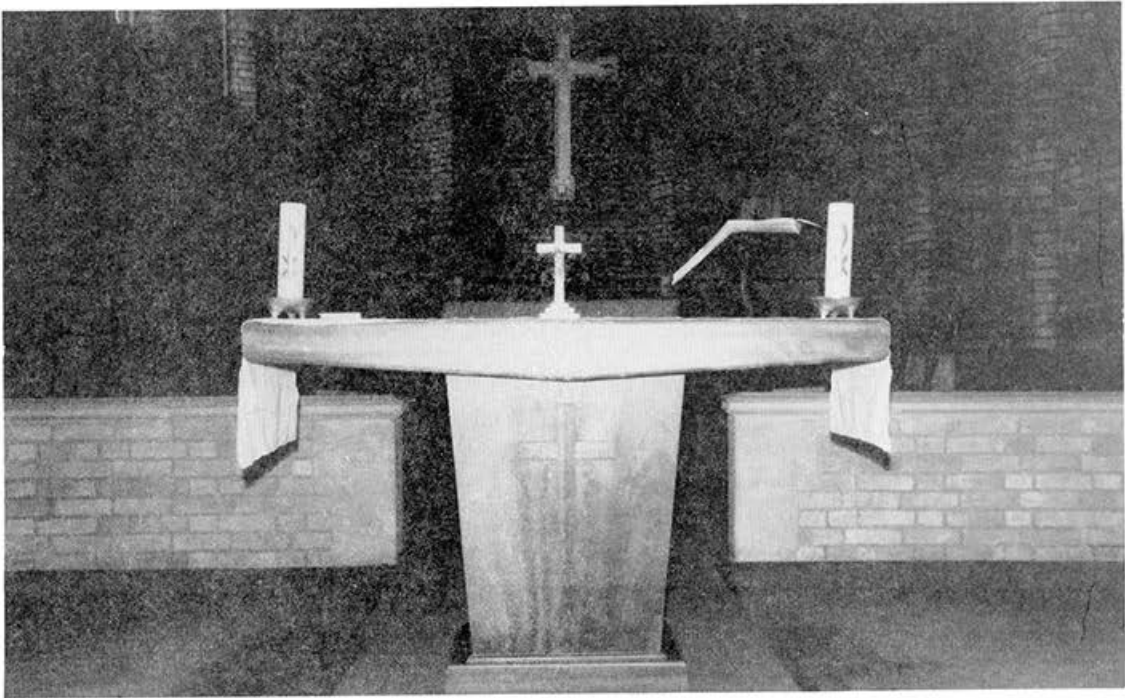
Besides the ASB we also saw the introduction of new hymn books. The Ancient and Modern and the Hundred Hymns for Today were replaced by Hymns Ancient and Modern (New Standard), followed by Mission Praise I and II which were produced as a result of the Mission England rallies held in 1984.

During the decade the world became more conscious of the environment. There was concern for the devastation of the rain forests and the breaking down of the ozone layer. With the departure of Rev. Timothy Fox in July 1981, the Parish of Essington also became 'Green' with the arrival of Rev. Trevor Green and his family in February 1982. Most of the changes already mentioned happened while Trevor was at the helm and this was just the start.

Soon after his arrival a Tuesday evening Holy Communion service was introduced and the 9.30am Sunday Family Eucharist was moved to 10am with Sunday School starting at the same time. This allowed staff and children to join the congregation for the final part of the service. Some time later the 8am Communion service on the first Sunday of the month was discontinued and on that day the Holy Communion was incorporated with Evensong.

There were also changes in Liturgy, including the introduction of three servers at the main eucharist services. The position of some of the church furniture was also altered, as was the width of the centre aisle but the major change was the introduction of the Dais and the Nave Altar. For some years, the Church as a whole had

been moving away from the Priest celebrating Holy Communion with his back to the congregation and here in Essington, for some time, most of the Family Eucharist had been led from the Chancel Steps. Initially, the old altar from St. Aidan's was used and this was later replaced by a purpose built altar donated by Les Sadler in memory of his late wife Dorothy.



**The Nave Altar in memory of Mrs. Dorothy Sadler.**

In May 1983 the Lichfield Diocese organised a day of celebration called 'Mayfire' at the County Showground in Stafford. Many members of our congregation attended and still treasure the mugs that were issued to mark the occasion.

Mission England Rallies, held in several locations in England in 1984 and led by the famous American Evangelist Billy Graham, have already been mentioned. The nearest rally to us was at Villa Park. Coaches took many people from Essington, not only members of the various churches in the village but also others who were not in any way attached to a Church. Many people committed or re-committed themselves to Christ.

From this time there seemed to be a new impetus in the Church nationwide and again Essington was not left out. Shortly after this event we saw the introduction of the course called Saints Alive and it is said by many that this course changed their lives. The congregation of St. John's Essington grew from this point both numerically and spiritually.

Housegroups were nothing new in the parish but in the 1980's we did see a variation of material and out of these housegroups several mission events were born. Services were held in Park House and Moseley Court once a month and a group became involved with the Open Doors organisation.

Inevitably the 1980's saw the loss of the church's stalwarts; the ones that come to mind are Wes Hinks, Sybil Pemberton, Anne and Albert Littler, Lizzie and Jim Richards and others who went about life in a quiet way living out the Christian gospel. Yes, the 1980's were a time of both change and growth.