

History of our Church from 1969 to 1982

We arrived in SWF in February 1969 and joined the small but active group of Catholics who attended Mass each Sunday in the old WI Hall. Father Clay was a very much loved PP and would collect parishioners on his way from Danbury through Top Woodham and bring them down to Mass. Sadly he died, I think, in 1970 and was greatly missed.

The next few months proved quite telling. We had a new, young priest in his first parish (David Kenny) at the same time as the Anglicans had a new minister (Alastair Haigh) for South Woodham. Up till this appointment the Anglicans had been served from Woodham Ferrers by Rev Stone. The two ministers quickly established a good working relationship and before long Alastair suggested that we might like to use St Mary's Church for Sunday Mass. To begin with, when put to the respective congregations, there was a certain degree of concern and reluctance on both sides but after a few joint meetings and with the support of both the Bishop of Chelmsford and Bishop Casey and Father Tom McMahon-later Bishop Mc Mahon - it was agreed to give it a trial. It worked very well and in fact the village benefited greatly from this working together. The Link magazine was a shared enterprise involving the Methodists and Evangelicals as well. The Community Association was another by product as was the Community Care Scheme.

Everything would have probably continued on similar lines until however in 1973 plans were both proposed and approved for a third airport for London to be built on Maplin Sands on Foulness Island. Almost immediately after that announcement the news came that South Woodham was going to become a "Riverside Town - the place to be "!! It was envisaged that with a new airport there would be a need for much new housing.

As it became apparent that, with the development and increase in population, the little St Mary's chapel would no longer be large enough for either congregation, it was decided to put in a bid for a site for a shared church which the Methodists were now prepared to join and also for two schools. Chelmsford planning committee would only agree to this if it was in the Town although many of us would have preferred to build on the St Mary site. The ensuing planning was long with many meetings on all sides but it culminated in Holy Trinity opening in 1982

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