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## THE MIDDLE YEARS

**C**anon Orford came as Rector to Ficksburg at the beginning of 1911, but in 1919 as a result of medical advice he decided to go to the coast. This meant that until the beginning of 1921 the parish was without a Rector, and services were taken by the Reverend Coster, the Rector of Ladybrand. The new Rector was the Reverend S.R. Griggs.

An interesting Minute in the Parish records in 1921 refers to the "Russian Famine Relief Fund". The "Bolshevik Revolution" was still in progress in some parts of the area which became known as the U.S.S.R., and famine struck almost the whole country. Hunger, typhus, and other diseases swept the Ukraine and the famine of 1921 struck Kazakhstan, as well as the Volga region, with particular severity. In South Africa grain destined for the famine relief fund was donated by local farmers and stored free of charge by Messrs. Leonard and Johnson. The grain was carried free by the South African Railways. Donations were also requested in cash or kind.

The Vestry meeting in 1922 was held "in the cottage opposite the Rectory at 5.15 p.m. following a 'quiet afternoon's reflection' in the church, which was conducted by the Bishop." At this meeting the Warden, Mr. Whitney, referred to the effort being made by the Diocese to obtain funds to purchase a motor car for the use of the Bishop, and it was decided that the ladies of the congregation would take up the matter "with a view to seeing that this Parish bore its share of the necessary expenditure." A bazaar held later in the year realised £58.14.11, of which £25 was donated to the Bishop's car fund.

Arising out of this, it was proposed at the 1923 Vestry Meeting that the parish should purchase a motor car for the use of the Rector. This was shelved until the following year when the Rector explained the advantage that the vehicle would be to the parish, citing as an example services he had taken at Hammonia. By June of 1924 a motorcar had been purchased and was fully paid for. This was a second-hand Oldsmobile which had been bought for £150. This enabled the Rector to take services at the farm of Mr. and Mrs. Wande of Hammonia, and to start visiting the members in the district including Fouriesburg. A large portion of the needed amount was obtained

through a stock sale carried through by Messrs. Joughin and Herne.

In the March 1924 edition of the Bloemfontein Diocesan Magazine, the Parish was bewailing the gradual diminishing of the congregation, with a loss of eight communicants in a few months. Later this same year the Reverend Griggs also left the Parish.

The 1926 Easter Vestry meeting discussed the question of a new incumbent and it was proposed that the Reverend Harcourt Vernon be invited, with the comments already noted in Chapter Five. In fact, one parishioner felt that there was no need for a resident parson at all. As the Bishop had no other person to offer the parish, the Reverend Harcourt Vernon duly moved to Ficksburg. Thereafter the motor car was sold.

During the years of Canon Harcourt Vernon's Rectorship in Ficksburg the parish went through the usual ups and downs of financial difficulty especially with regard to the payment of the Diocesan Assessment, but, thanks to the efforts of the congregation in general and the Women's Guild and Mrs. Vernon's Work Party in particular, they managed to win through.

As we have noted, Canon Vernon died in December 1936, and the parish was without a Rector until the Reverend and Mrs. Findley arrived from Britain in October 1937, when the Parish welcomed them with a public reception.

In 1938 the Diocesan Magazine recorded that Mr. Bok had undertaken the duties of choirmaster at All Saints', but the Vestry minutes of March 1939 recorded that he had left Ficksburg. The minutes indicate that the choir continued, but no reference was made in the minutes about a choirmaster.

A very successful Nativity Play was recorded early in 1938. There was some difficulty in fixing a date for the play performed by the children, and it finally took place on Sunday evening February 6th, in place of Evensong. Even then there was some talk of postponing the play due to very stormy weather, but it was finally decided to stage the play in spite of the weather. The Church was crowded and extra chairs were needed, with many people of other denominations attending.

The Reverend Findley involved himself with the youth of Ficksburg, very enthusiastically forming a Youth Movement and being instrumental in the revival of the Boy Scouts, the Cubs, and the Girl Guides. At the same time he endeavoured to increase the number of services held at Fouriesburg, while maintaining the number of services at Clocolan and Ficksburg.

This immediately raised the question of a motorcar again, and the Clocolan Chapelry led the way towards raising funds for this purpose.

The first meeting of the Parochial Church Council for the Parish of All Saints', Ficksburg, was held at the Rectory on November 15, 1938, it being decided at the

meeting to meet every two months.

Mention has been made of the memorial to Father Harcourt Vernon in the form of the Altar and Riddle Posts. In typical parochial fashion it took a number of "Extraordinary" Meetings and a letter from the Bishop, before the parish could decide on the material and colour for the curtains. However, this "vexed" matter seems to have been amicably settled in time for the Dedication by the Bishop on September 17, 1939. The interior of the Church was also renovated, this being paid for by the Ladies Guild.

The Free Will Offering or Envelope Scheme, was started in 1940 on a trial basis and it was unanimously decided in 1941 that it should be continued. The finances had improved to the extent that the Ladies Guild no longer had to assist the Parish with money for the annual Assessment to the Diocese, and they proposed starting a Rectory Fund.

The Reverend and Mrs. Findley left Ficksburg in January, 1946 and a farewell social was held for them in the Town Hall. The Reverend Wheat arrived in February of the same year.

Due to the difficulty of obtaining new cars in 1946 it was decided to replace the engine of the existing parish car. The old engine was sold and the new engine installed with the Cloolan and Ficksburg congregations sharing the net cost.

Although no previous mention is made of the stables in the corner of the Rectory grounds in any early records, the Church Council minutes of June 7, 1946, raise the matter of the disposal of the materials of the old stables. Apparently at one stage it was proposed that these materials be used for building a mission church at Gumtree, but these plans fell through and the materials were sold out of hand for £5 to Mr. A.M. Macaskill.

In 1946 it was also decided that the Acacia trees in the church grounds were becoming a nuisance and they were therefore uprooted in late April.

In 1947 the Rector, the Reverend Wheat, proposed that the furniture in the church be rearranged to allow the choir to sit in the Chancel and the organ to be immediately below the Rector's seat. The object of the plan was to allow a better view of the Altar from the nave, as well as make more seating available for the congregation. This plan was approved by the Vestry meeting held in May of that year.

By 1950 the old car needed replacing and after first considering the purchase of a Chevrolet it was decided to buy an Opel. It was considered necessary to buy a larger car rather than economise on a smaller one as the larger car would "give better service under hard conditions, greater availability of spare parts, and the prospect of a better trade-in price in the future".

An innovation which took place during 1949 - 1950, was the introduction of



The Reverend C. H. Wheat. Rector 1946 - 1951

a "Monday School" on Monday afternoons at 4.30 p.m. for those children who always missed Sunday School due to being out of town on the week-ends. The Sunday School still continued. At this stage Mrs. Louw was taking both Sunday and Monday School but when she left in March, 1952, Mrs. H. Tennent stepped into the breach and took over the Sunday School and also helped Mrs. Chatfield with the Monday School.

The 60th Anniversary of the building of All Saints' Church was celebrated in 1951, commencing on All Saints' Day, November 1, with the celebration of Holy Communion by the Rector, the Rev. B.G. Chatfield. Then Evensong was celebrated at which the preacher was Canon F. Findley, Rector from 1937 to 1946. The celebrations continued on the Sunday when Bishop C. W. Alderson celebrated Holy Communion and Confirmation. An informal social held in the Jewish Communal Hall on the Monday evening finalised the celebrations. At this gathering the Ficksburg News of November 10, 1951, recorded the attendance of, apart from the Anglican clergy, "the Rev. P. Victor, minister of the Ficksburg Methodist Church, and Mrs. Victor; The Rev. D.J. McDonald, Minister of the Ficksburg Dutch Reformed Church, and Mrs. McDonald; the Rev. Father C. Neu of St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, and the Rev. I. Mitavsky, Minister of the Ficksburg Hebrew congregation, and Mrs. Mitavsky."

Musical items and songs were given, the pianoforte soloist was Miss Cedar Sorour and the vocalists were Mrs. P.H. Tarr and Mrs. W.du Plessis, who were accompanied by Mrs. E. Taylor.

In November 1954, the Parish Council Minutes record that one of the council members enquired about items on the agenda at the forthcoming Synod. Two of these items were discussed; 1. That inter-racial services be compulsory, and, 2. That equal stipends be paid to European and African Clergy. The minutes record, "After discussion, the delegates were asked to oppose both motions".

The shortage of funds was always a matter for some concern in the Parish and 1958 was no exception. The "Wells" Scheme of fund raising was proposed by Mr. Kohlberg, a Church Warden. The "Wells" Scheme was one in which a consulting firm undertook (for a fee) to institute a fund raising scheme through a door-to-door "hard-sell" campaign. After consultation with the Bishop it was decided that there were too few parishioners in the district for the Wells Scheme, and in addition the Bishop was not in favour as the scheme was too commercialised. In spite of this the Church Council decided to go ahead in October with a Wells canvass although some members opposed the idea. However, before signing the contract with the Wells representatives it was decided not to go ahead with the canvass "in view of certain events here". This note in the Vestry Minutes seems to indicate that those opposing the Wells Scheme had won the day.

A Special Vestry meeting was called in August 1958, when it was explained that at least 1000 pounds per annum was required to meet running expenses, and in 1958 the income had amounted to only 761 pounds. At the meeting slips of paper were distributed on which parishioners were asked to write their names and the amount they would contribute annually.

This latter scheme, with the Free Will Offering envelopes in use, seems to have resulted in a better response to fund raising for the next year, although there are indications that assistance from the Ladies Guild was a large contributing factor. Thereafter there was again a steadily increasing deficit reported at each Annual Vestry meeting. In 1961 and 1962 Parish visitation by the council members was organised, and this seemed to have a positive effect on finances. Outstanding debt from Marquard seemed to be a perpetual complaint. The Marquard church seldom paid their dues to the parish, and although with much pressure they had been persuaded to pay in 1962, this matter continued to crop up.

In 1962 the new experimental liturgy was tried. In addition, the Rev. D.F. Stewart organised the rearrangement of the Sanctuary. The pews in the nave were moved back to make room for the moving of the altar rails.

At Christmas in 1962 a midnight celebration was held using the experimental liturgy. There was also a 7 a.m. service on Christmas morning using the old form of service.

The Provincial magazine "Seek" was published for the first time in 1962, the council minutes recording that it was originally called "See". This magazine came to an end in 1990/91 through lack of support.

Experimental liturgies continued to crop up in the years 1969 to 1971, leading up to the more permanent "Liturgy 1975" which continued to be used until the Anglican Prayer Book of 1989 was introduced. There was quite a lot of opposition to the experimental liturgies throughout South Africa, but the Parish of All Saints' seemed to settle down to "Liturgy 1975" quite well in the end.

For many centuries the altars in the Anglican churches were placed against the east wall, so that the priest stood with his back to the people during the prayer of consecration, "leading the people to God", as it were. As a result of research carried out by all the church denominations in what is known as the "Liturgical Movement", it was felt that the altar should be brought away from the East wall so that the priest, and his assistants in the larger churches, could be facing the people. This would revert to very much the way things were in the early church. During the introduction of the experimental liturgies in the 1960's, many churches in South Africa brought their altars forward. This was evidently done by the Reverend Stewart in 1962. During the

incumbency (the incumbent is the rector or minister who has responsibility for a parish) of a rector with more conservative views, the altar at All Saints' "bounced back" to the East wall. The passing of the "Peace" also received the opposition which was current throughout South Africa at this time. Discussion concerning the ordination of women showed surprisingly few objections from the Parish Council although the Rector himself was not in favour.

In 1971 the Ladies' Guild offered to have the Harmonium overhauled and so it was transported to Bloemfontein where, in addition to the overhaul, it was fitted with an electric motor and blower. This meant that the organist no longer had to pedal the instrument as well as play it.

The lower entrance gates were seriously in need of repair by 1972 and so the Churchwarden, Mr. W. Herne, suggested they be moved to replace the big farm gate.

Over the years Bible Studies and discussion groups started but after a while seemed to fade out, as for example the discussion group which met in the early 1970's. The rector of the Parish in 1972, the Reverend Canon Alex Shepperson, commented on this in his report at the Annual Vestry Meeting of that year. "...this is very sad as we need to discuss the relation between our faith and its practice in the everyday world." Various rectors commented in their Vestry reports on the "lack of spirituality" in the parish, and one, in his farewell address, pointedly expressed his joy at going to a parish in the Transvaal where he hoped the congregation would have a better spiritual response.

Although all the various churches in the area were, at one time or another responsible to, or part of, the Modderpoort Parish, they had become somewhat autonomous by 1970. Each paid their Diocesan Assessment directly to the Diocesan office even though served by the same rector. This was contrary to the Canons of the Church and so in 1973 an effort was made to rectify this situation. The Councillors of the various churches in Ficksburg, Clocolan, Fouriesburg and Marquard were asked to have a closer liaison as a possible first step. A meeting of the various Wardens was arranged in Ficksburg in August, 1973. The first meeting of the combined chapelries took place on April 23, 1978 under the chairmanship of the Rector, the Reverend Ted Schurr.

The first of the Deanery Council meetings was organised in November 1974 with membership consisting of the clergy and two representatives from each pastoral charge. This meeting was held in Ficksburg and attended by the Wardens.

Church Unity had been a subject of much discussion for many years. The Lambeth Conferences had had it on their agenda in the 1940's, and in 1974 the Church Unity Commission was established with the Anglican Church as a founder member. It

was therefore inevitable that efforts towards church unity should percolate down to the parish level. During the early 1970's the resident Methodist minister of the day felt that Ficksburg was not ready for it, so efforts in this direction came to nothing until in December 1974, when a joint Communion service was held in the All Saints' Church. It was acclaimed a great success.

Canon Shepperson was only temporarily resident in Ficksburg and, after he left, the parish was pleased to have Bishop Claxton of Blackburn, the sister Diocese in England, stay over in Ficksburg during the interregnum.

In September 1975 the choir from St. Andrew's School in Bloemfontein paid a visit to Ficksburg and in March 1977 the Reverend Don Martin was invited to conduct a Mission in Ficksburg. This was followed with a visit by St. Michael's School Choir in March 1978 and Father Ruston conducted the service. Father Ruston was the chaplain at St. Michael's school in Bloemfontein and, after moving to the Pretoria Diocese where he was a suffragan Bishop, has recently been elected Bishop of St. Helena.

Heating, the all-important requirement for the "comfortable pew", was decided upon in 1977. The Guild was again the main financial support for this venture, paying R500 towards the costs while the Parish paid the balance of R300, enabling the installation to be completed by the end of June. In addition the Aumbry for the reserved sacrament was installed in the wall of the church.

About this time, 1978, the story of the Anglican Church's support of the World Council of Churches' "Terrorist activities", together with other excuses for non-payment of contributions became a contentious issue. In spite of repeated denials that the Church of the Province was funding all sorts of illegal activities, the excuse was still heard well into 1989.

Naturally the whole "church must keep out of politics" debate was hotting up at this time throughout the country, and the Parish Council of All Saints' Church was no exception. In the rapidly changing political and social atmosphere of the 1990's the comments of various members as recorded in 1978 are surprisingly understanding for the times, although the rigid ideas of society, as it was then, show through.

During 1979 controversy arose in the Parish Church Council in Ficksburg over an entirely domestic matter. This resulted in the temporary resignation of the Chairman, the Reverend Ted Schurr. After some months and a visit from the Bishop some degree of reconciliation in the Council enabled meetings to continue. A radical change in the Parish Council took place at the next Vestry Meeting with only one member of the previous Council being elected onto the new Council.

The early 1980's saw further efforts to amalgamate the chapelries into a Parish with chapelries, and so bring them into line with the Canons of the Church. Vestry

Meetings were held to discuss this development, and agreement was reached about carrying it through. These efforts also meant a bit of a re-shuffle to bring Clocolan into the Deanery of Bethlehem, as up to this date it had been part of the Modderpoort Region.

For a while, combined Parish Council meetings were held in addition to Chapelry Council Meetings in all four areas, but by 1983 it was realised that a tremendous amount of duplication was taking place, and the decision was taken to hold only Parish Council Meetings, with representatives from all the "chapelries".

The first record of a proposed "Garden of Remembrance" for All Saints' was made at the June 1974 Parish Council Meeting in Ficksburg. At this stage there was apparently a possibility that a book made of granite would be donated to the parish for installing in the "Garden". The idea was for an area to be walled off with a gate to protect the garden "from animals and small children". There would be a lawn with the granite book placed in the centre and a pathway would go around the lawn. A map would be maintained to show the position of the ashes. Mrs. Barbara von Maltitz drew up the initial outline plan for the Garden.

An estimate of the costs of the Garden was made by Mr. Bowie in mid-1975. This amounted to R600 for material and R400 for labour. About 10% of this had already been donated. The granite book was at this stage also still available as a donation from a monumental mason in Bloemfontein.

By May 1976 the Rector, the Reverend Daile Pillans, reported that cut stone suitable for the garden was available free of charge from Mr. Steyn, and could be transported by Mr. John Moffett. However in August of the same year it was decided that "the matter should be deferred until further information was received and until the need arose."

In March of the following year the Council had to finalise the plans as the Vestry Meeting held in February had instructed that the project should proceed. This led to numerous discussions regarding the type of wall to be built.

In this way nothing more positive was done until the Vestry Meeting in 1978 when the subject was again raised. By June R1000 was available for the Garden but members of the Council were still maintaining that they did not have a clear concept of what was required. In August it was thought that a brick and stone wall would be too expensive and a stone wall would be acceptable.

By September a bird-bath as a feature had been offered by Mrs. Alice Tennent and stone offered by Mr. Peter Bowie, so it looked as though things were finally moving.

Surprisingly enough, a faculty for the Garden had been applied for and received. Surprising, because so often All Saints' Church seems to have done all sorts of things without official approval, much to the Bishop's surprise in each instance when

he found out.

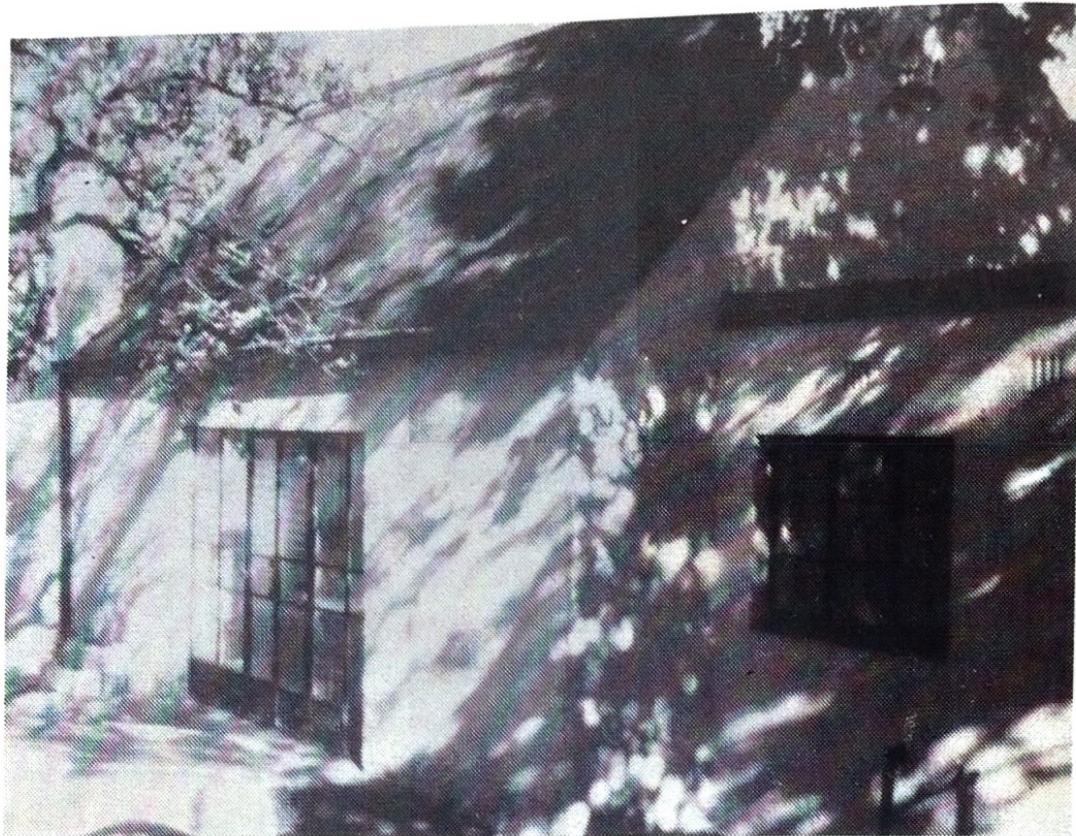
The minutes of the Church Council Meeting held on February 1, 1979, reported that the wall was almost complete, but that work on the grounds had been halted until a very clear picture was presented as to the placing of the ashes and the plaques. Mrs. Helen Dickson now offered to submit a drawing giving her ideas. The faculty had been approved on the original plan submitted, but some difficulty was now experienced in finding a copy of that original plan. As Mrs. Helen Dickson still wanted to work on the wall feature "but had other commitments," the work was again shelved.

In 1980, Mrs. Barbara von Maltitz agreed to see what could be done to make the existing wall more attractive. So the council decided to await her advice, and in July decided that the congregation should be asked for their ideas. About this time the Rector left Ficksburg and so everything was left until the arrival of the new Rector.

The Reverend Ivor Atherstone arrived in 1981 and managed to find the old plans and Mrs. Helen Dickson, together with her mother Mrs. Alice Tennent, agreed to complete the Garden. Six sandstone benches were donated to the church. Delays were encountered due to the difficulty in obtaining suitable labour to cut stone and so the Garden was not completed until the beginning of 1984, although cutting the headstones to the required shape still presented a problem.

This was not the end of the drama concerning the Garden of Remembrance as during 1984 the Rector moved the bird-bath without consulting anyone, and this caused considerable controversy among certain members of the Parish

The first ashes were buried in the Garden of Remembrance in 1987.



The All Saints' Hall. 1991

All Saints' Church. 1991

