

BEHOLDING

THE GLORY OF THE LORD



75 YEARS OF



MINISTRY & MISSION

1946 • 2021

ST. ALBAN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, WACO



ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

LP Ref: PP/76778

75th Anniversary of the Founding of St Alban's Episcopal Church, Waco, Texas, USA

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

I am delighted to send you my greetings and congratulations as you celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the Founding of St Alban's Episcopal Church, Waco, in the Diocese of Texas.

This is an important milestone for your parish, and it offers the opportunity to look back with gratitude for all that St Alban's has been, and also to celebrate the role of the church in your local community today, and to plan and build for the future.

I give thanks to God our Father for his many blessings and your faithfulness in the Church's ministry, which today supports so many in your community and beyond, through the bonds of the Anglican Communion, as demonstrated by your continuing relationship with your sister parish in Malawi.

I pray that you will be richly blessed, both as individual disciples and as a Christian community as you seek to follow Christ and to witness the Gospel in the world today.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Justin Welby".

The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Justin Welby
Archbishop of Canterbury

BEHOLDING THE GLORY OF THE LORD

75 Years of St. Alban's, Waco

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

2 Corinthians 3:18

A HOUSE NOT BUILT BY HUMAN HANDS

From its location at the corner of Columbus Avenue and North 30th Street, the graceful neo-gothic church tower of St. Alban's has stood since 1953. A symbol of faith, worship, and service, this tower with its 36-bell carillon, has represented the values of St. Alban's: reverence in worship, boldness in service, and an ever-present witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

At the other end of the church, a stone cross was placed atop the building, rising above the sanctuary. Installed in 1951, it was destroyed by lightning 55 years later. When it was replaced in 2020, this cross was joined by two more crosses: one atop the brand-new Welcome Center and another above the entrance to the new Parish Hall. These three crosses call to mind the Passion of our Lord and the grace of God for all who enter our doors.

But in 1944, there was no tower. No crosses. Not even a St. Alban's Church.

THE EARLY DAYS

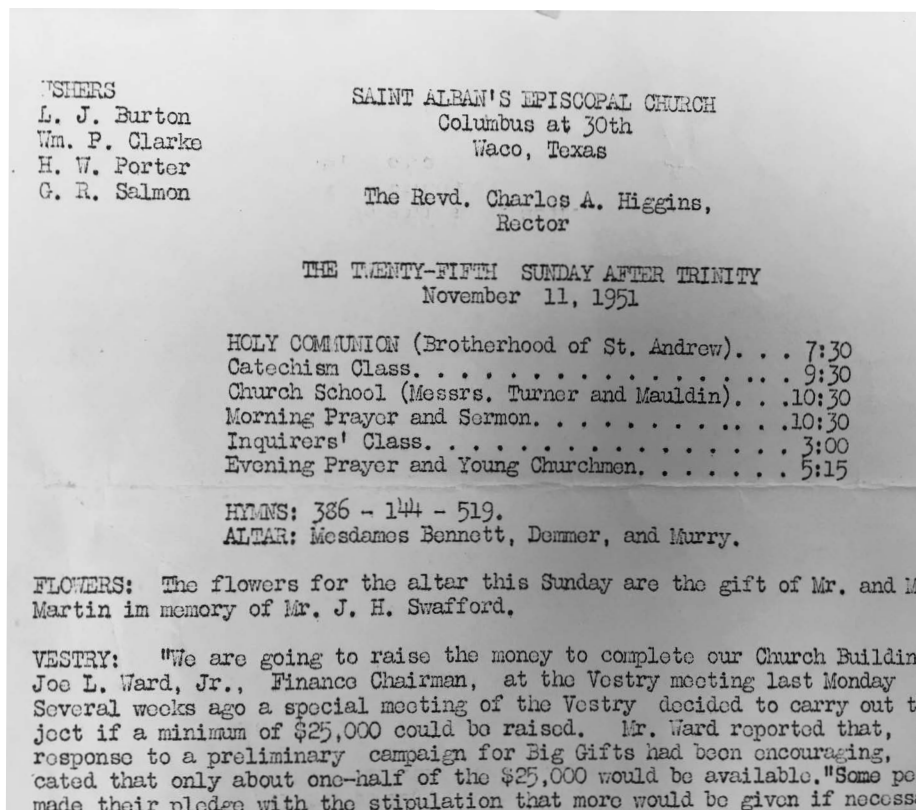
At the close of the Second World War, the Diocese of Texas was undergoing a church planting boom, with new congregations

springing up in Austin, Houston, and other parts of the Diocese. In Waco, the Rev. Robert R. Brown, Rector of St. Paul's, Waco, and Texas Bishop Clinton S. Quin, discerned the need for a second Episcopal church.

It was a prescient move. Waco was growing. In 1942, the Waco Army Airfield had opened (it would later be known as Connally Air Force Base and now houses TSTC). Waco's population in 1940 had been just under 56,000 people. By 1945, it would soar by

more than 50% to 85,000.

On May 1, 1944, the vestry of St. Paul's formally asked the Diocese of Texas to establish a mission “north of Austin Avenue and west of the Brazos River.” On January 18, 1945, twenty-five communicants of St. Paul's signed a petition asking that a mission, dedicated to the memory of St. Alban, the protomartyr and Patron Saint of England, be established in Waco. The rector of St. Paul's had chosen the name after his first parish, St. Alban's of Harlingen, TX.





Groundbreaking for the new church, with the Rev. Robert Brown, rector of St. Paul's, the Rt. Rev. Clinton S. Quin, and the Rev. Charles A. Higgins.

In those early months of 1945, this group of church planters met in the Parish Hall of St. Paul's or in private homes. By September 1945, the Diocese had wisely purchased two lots at the northeast corner of Columbus Avenue and North 30th Street for \$2,750 (about \$42,000 today).

The new congregation needed a leader. The Rev. Charles Ashley Higgins was the early (and only) choice. He had been a classmate and friend of Robert Brown at Virginia Theological Seminary and came highly recommended.

Charlie Higgins was a native of West Virginia and son of a dentist. After graduating from Duke, he toured with Les Brown's band as a trumpeter. Later, he went into ministry and became an Episcopal missionary in China. While serving there he met Mary Atkinson Tyng. Mary had largely grown up in China as the daughter of Episcopal missionaries, and descended from several generations of Episcopal priests. She famously said that since

she couldn't become a priest, she married one. Newlyweds Charlie and Mary soon found themselves detained as POWs during the Second World War. Their first son, Charles Tyng Higgins, was born in 1942 while they were still in captivity. When they were released as part of a prisoner exchange, Higgins took a job at an Episcopal parish in Joplin, Missouri. It was then that Robert Brown invited him to plant a new mission in Waco.

"Parson" Higgins, as he preferred to be called, visited Waco to

explore the new opportunity. Waco was booming and real estate was scarce. G.I.s were moving home and attending Baylor on the G.I. Bill. Higgins called the housing situation "far from good." With two sons and another on the way, the Higgins family needed a big house. Ultimately, they found one at 1821 Morrow Ave., St. Alban's first rectory.

In January 1946, the 97th meeting of the Council of the Diocese of Texas accepted the new mission and Bishop Quin appointed Parson Higgins to be Priest-in-Charge. Mr. Marshall Saunders was the first lay warden of the congregation. Higgins and his family arrived in Waco on March 7, 1946. Eight days later, March 15, the first congregational meeting of St. Alban's Episcopal Church was held. Parson Higgins announced he was already thinking about a church building and a school.

BUILDING BEGINS

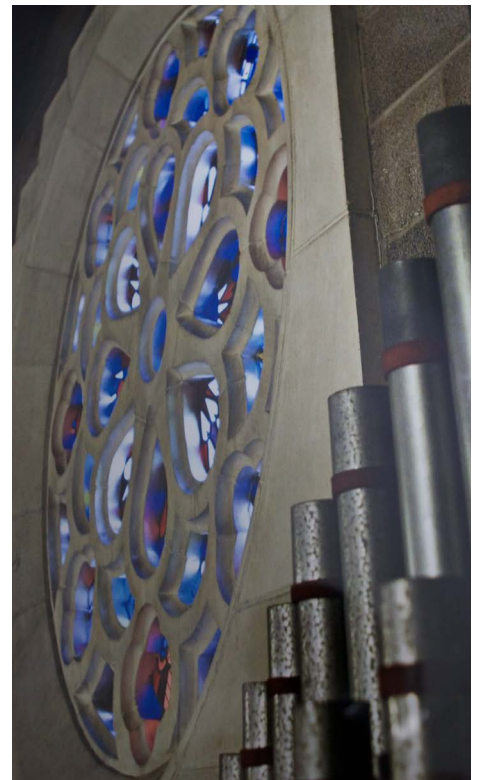
Before any of that could be done, however, St. Alban's needed a place to worship. They secured rooms at the Hamilton House. Located at 1521 Austin Avenue, the former home of Col. Hamilton was a social club and event space;



The 1950 kindergarten class of St. Alban's School.



would become the first Protestant parochial school in Waco. They purchased three more lots and built a wood frame building, the first building on campus to be called "The Crèche," in September 1947. It was completed just in time for the opening of St. Alban's Day School on September 24. In 1949, an anonymous gift of \$25,000 enabled the church to begin a permanent building for St. Alban's Day School, designed by architect Robert Olson. It would be completed in September 1951. This building stands today as the St. Alban's Outreach Center. Its second story was added in 1953.



it is now a law office. The first Sunday services were held on Palm Sunday, April 14, 1946, with forty-six people in attendance, eighteen of whom were children. They held Sunday School on the porch. The very next day, the forty-seventh member was added: Mrs. Higgins' son Ashley was born. The Higgins family would welcome two more sons during their time in Waco.

Plans began almost immediately to build a Parish House on the lots at 30th and Columbus to serve as temporary worship space. The new mission contracted with Smith Building Company for a \$25,000 Parish House at a time when there were less than fifty adult communicants on the roster. Communicants of St. Paul's Church also contributed generously to this project. The first public service held in the Parish House was on November 21, 1946. This building is now known as The Crèche and houses our nursery and children's chapel.

Higgins and the growing church now turned their attention to what

In 1949, while they were raising funds for the school, Sunday worship was still taking place in the Parish House. With 185 communicants and an average attendance of 152 (85 adults and 65 children), it was getting crowded. Higgins later wrote of these years that "the congregation

was made up almost entirely of young married couples." He noted that in its first decade, the parish characteristically "catered to families with young children; and such families have responded to its programs in increasing numbers."



CHILDREN from the St. Alban's Episcopal Church Children's Choir have returned from Camp Kinsolving where they learned more about their duties as choir members. Choir members shown at the church from left are Sammy Ferguson, Lizbeth Steves, David Ferguson, Scott Hatfield and Evan Klaras.



The original interior of the church.

The church selected Waco architect Walter Cocke, Jr., who had designed both commercial structures and churches in central Texas. Cocke and Higgins selected a beautiful neo-gothic design with a large bell tower. They planned a courtyard separating the church from the Parish House.

Such an ambitious plan was tackled in stages. The plan was to build half the church first: the sanctuary (where the altar is), the choir, and a nave with ten rows of pews. No tower, no rose window, no narthex or balcony, and no big brass doors. In 1949, the church completed this stage at a cost of \$37,000 (about \$420,000 in today's dollars), plus \$4,500 for furnishings. The altar rail was a gift of the widow and children of the late Albert Lacy Clifton, Sr., as a memorial to him. Mrs. Albert Clifton, Jr., gave the Celebrant's chair as a memorial to her mother. Bishop Quin dedicated the completed first half of the new church on January 22, 1950.

One year later, St. Alban's went from mission to parish status, now able to fully support itself financially without diocesan funding. Consequently, Parson Higgins went from priest-in-charge to rector. The 102nd Council of the Diocese of Texas made this official by receiving the parish of St. Alban's Waco on January 28, 1951.

Higgins and the congregation now began work on completing the second half of the church building. Starting in 1952, the church built the narthex, balcony, and bell tower. In 1953, a carillon of thirty-six bronze bells made by Petit and Fritsen was imported from Holland and installed in the new tower. A long-time friend of St. Alban's, Mr. R. J. Tolson, gave the greatest single financial gift that St. Alban's had received up to that time. The purpose: build a pipe organ. The organ was installed by the Reuter Organ company in 1954, in memory of Mr. Tolson's wife, Elvie Starr Tolson. Mr. Tolson also gave the money for the marble and shell-stone altar, lectern, and

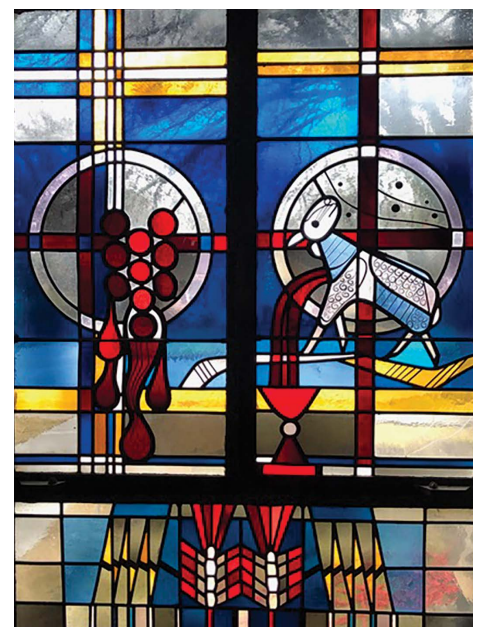
pulpit, which were completed by the Vermont Marble Company.

By the end of 1953, the exterior of St. Alban's Church looked largely as it does today. From the inside, however, a St. Alban's member of today would notice two major differences: no stained glass and no intricate woodcarvings. We now tell those stories.

THE WINDOW PROJECT

In 1951, before the church building was even completed, Mr. Higgins began corresponding with a major German church artist, Ernst Jansen-Winkel. Through extensive correspondence, they developed a vision for some brightly-colored abstract windows representing events and themes from Christ's life. The windows together were a single work entitled "Christ Through the Church, Through the Church to Christ." The plan was to make the windows blue in tone on the south side of the nave—representing the cool light of morning—and amber in tone on the north side—representing the golden light of the setting sun.

Each window was donated by various groups in the church: The



vestry gave the rear rose window, the physicians of St. Alban's gave the "Christ the Healer" window, and so on. The hand-blown glass for the Jansen-Winkeln windows was manufactured by H. Oldtman in Linnich, Germany.

While St. Alban's interior may seem traditional today, Jansen-Winkeln's windows were seen as highly contemporary at the time. Some church members thought them too radical. Today, with the recent resurgence in the popularity of mid-twentieth-century design, we can appreciate those who boldly chose these windows and held their ground in the face of opposition.

The window project was an enormous and tedious undertaking. Choosing to work with a German artist, and in the pre-digital age, made the process long and slow. Typed letters—with sketches of the windows—had to go back in forth via airmail. Dealing with customs was a significant hassle. Translation could be challenging. When it was time to deliver the windows, the heavy crates were shipped to New Orleans and brought over land to Waco. An additional wrinkle: when the first windows arrived in New Orleans, a quick inspection revealed that they would not fit the already-built window casings, which were literally set in stone. They had to be sent back, fixed, and returned.

Before the window project was completed, Parson Higgins was called to be the Dean of the Cathedral in Little Rock, Arkansas. The windows would be finished during the tenure of the next rector, the Rev. Wayne "Bill" Mahan, under the direction of Marshall Saunders.

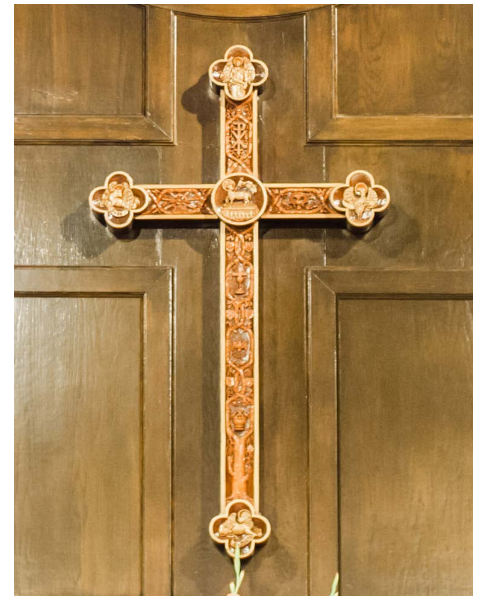
You will remember that Saunders was the first Warden of the parish; as such, he was called "Father of St. Alban's Church." The beauty of the windows we enjoy today is a testament to Higgins' determined vision, Jansen-Wilkeln's artistry, and Saunders' faithfulness.

In 2021, the parish began the process of restoring the Jansen-Wilkeln windows and protecting them for posterity. Each panel was removed, cleaned, and repaired. High-strength insulated clear glass windows were placed in the original steel window frames, with the original stained glass panels suspended adjacent to them.

In 1996, as part of a renovation for the parish's 50th anniversary, a wooden reredos replaced the original red dossal curtain behind the high altar. A circular stained-glass window, commissioned by the Pearson family, was installed above it. Waco artist Bryan Stanton designed the window with a nod to our Texas heritage: the *Agnus Dei* (lamb of God) standing in a field of Blue Bonnets. Twenty-five years later, in 2021, as part of the 75th anniversary Renew & Restore building campaign, this window was removed, repaired, and relocated. Bryant Stanton, under the guidance of a committee chaired by Florence Scattergood, designed a new rose window with stone tracery to take its place. The new window, echoing the design of Jansen-Wilkeln windows, features the same style of German glass as the original windows.

MRS. WARD AND THE WOOD

Visitors to St. Alban's immediately notice the carved woodwork. As they cross from the narthex to the nave, they pass under a panel



The St. Alban's cross, carved by Camille Ward.

declaring, "Prayer is work." When they leave to go back into the world, that panel's twin reminds them "Work is prayer." During the service, when they come forward for Holy Communion, they see the following words from Isaiah carved on a panel on the eastern wall: "Those who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength." As they kneel at the altar rail, they look up to the organ casing with its exquisitely detailed scene of King David dancing before the Ark of the Covenant. The most central feature, the focal point of the entire church, of course, is the wooden cross with its carved symbols of Christ and his ministry. The artist behind all these works was one of our founding members, Camille Ward, who carved them in memory of her husband, Mr. Joe L. Ward, Sr.

The carvings were (and are) an inspiration to many. Her work was sought after and installed in churches around the Diocese of Texas.

Her final work at St. Alban's was a tabernacle, also called an

aumbry. This small wooden box is now mounted on the wall next to the altar. Designed to hold consecrated bread and wine, it was finished in 1978. By that time, Mrs. Ward was blind. So great was her artistry that she carved the tabernacle by hand, using only her sense of touch. She offered the tabernacle in thanksgiving for the ministry of the Rev. Everett Cain, our sixth rector.

PASSING THE TORCH: THE RECTORS OF ST. ALBAN'S

I. Charles Ashley Higgins (1946-1956)



By the time Parson Higgins left St. Alban's in 1957, the parish had over a thousand members and an impressive campus. In addition, they had been able to hire an additional priest as Assistant Rector, the Rev. James Hudson. Higgins, the trumpet-player from West Virginia, the POW, the former friend of the young Chairman Mao, had made a lasting impact on Waco. Through his friendship with city leaders, he was instrumental in Waco's adoption of a city-council structure of government. He was the one person the mayor invited to meet with Elvis Presley before his 1953 Waco concert to address the star's provocative dance moves. On a serious note, Higgins was the



Higgins playing the carillon.

first minister to arrive and care for victims in the horrific aftermath of the May 1953 tornado in downtown Waco. Two St. Alban's acolytes died in the tornado: Billy Betros and Stan Skyles. The main chalice used at St. Alban's was given in memory of Skyles.

Through sacrificial and generous giving, the congregation had built a church, school, and parish hall (all air-conditioned) at a total cost of \$268,000, or \$3.5 million in today's dollars. St. Alban's later memorialized his impact with the construction of Higgins Chapel (now Higgins Parlor) in the 1980s. But in many ways, the entire campus is a symbol of his energy, vision, and drive. His values of education, beauty, music, and service remain the values of the parish. A later rector humorously recalled a package that arrived

at the church addressed to "St. Higgins Episcopal Church."

On February 20, 1957, from his new post as Dean of Trinity Cathedral in Little Rock, the (now) Very Rev. Charles Higgins wrote to the people of St. Alban's: "I hope you will always think of me at my best for I shall always remember you as the most generous and gracious congregation of Christians in the fellowship of Christ's Church."

While at the Cathedral, Higgins was an outspoken advocate for desegregation. In a sermon, he pleaded for "a spirit of charity and forgiveness between those who disagree" and argued for the dismantling of the three "barriers to the brotherhood of man - slavery, gender or sex, and race."

After retiring from the Cathedral in 1977, Parson Higgins and Mary

moved to Sewanee, Tennessee, just off the campus of the University of the South, an Episcopal liberal arts university, where he directed the band for many years. He returned to St. Alban's in 1984 for the thirty-seventh anniversary of the school, and was hailed by his former flock. Parson Higgins died the next year.

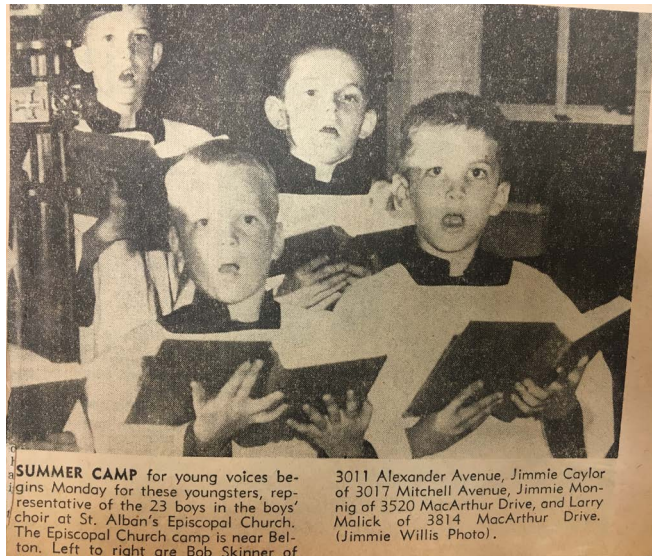
II. The Rev. Wayne W. "Bill" Mahan (1957-1962)



Parson Higgins' successor was the Rev. Wayne W. "Bill" Mahan, a championship boxer in college and a graduate of Union Theological Seminary. He studied under two giants of 20th-century theology: Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich.

Known as a thoughtful preacher, St. Alban's published a short collection of his sermons, entitled "Wine and Water." He and his wife and three children came to St. Alban's from the Church of the Incarnation, Dallas. Mahan's father had been chair of the Philosophy department at SMU.

In the late 1950s, St. Alban's had over 800 baptized members, a vibrant youth program that drew participants from area churches, a very active chapter of Episcopal Church Women (ECW), a Men's Ministry, and more. The church supported missionaries in Japan and Hong Kong and had a large outreach to the now-closed Connolly Air Force base. St.



SUMMER CAMP for young voices begins Monday for these youngsters, representative of the 23 boys in the boys' choir at St. Alban's Episcopal Church. The Episcopal Church camp is near Belton. Left to right are Bob Skinner of

3011 Alexander Avenue, Jimmie Caylor of 3017 Mitchell Avenue, Jimmie Monig of 3520 MacArthur Drive, and Larry Malick of 3814 MacArthur Drive. (Jimmie Willis Photo).

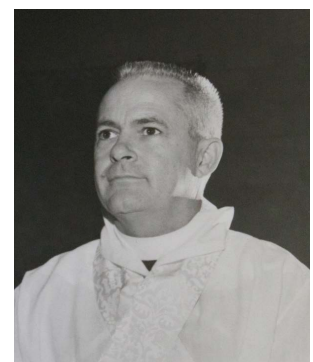
Alban's supported seminarians and in 1962, hosted the ordination of Billy Grissom. The church had a large Boy Scout troop and was involved in evangelism and service through the Brotherhood of St. Andrew. A favorite annual tradition was the Michaelmas Fair in September, commemorating the Feast of Michael and All Angels.

On Sunday evening, August 18, 1958, a fire occurred in the rectory at 2909 Sanger Ave. Bill's five-year-old son, Winky Mahan, died of smoke inhalation. The funeral was held the next day at St. Alban's, with the two bishops suffragan of Texas, the Rt. Rev. F. Percy Goddard and the Rt. Rev. James Clements, presiding. As an outpouring of support, St. Paul's, Waco, gave their Christmas offering that year to St. Alban's for the construction of the Winky Mahan Memorial Library. It is now known as Mahan Music Room. The silver bread box used for Holy Communion was given in his memory.

After leaving St. Alban's, Bill Mahan served at All Saint's, Austin, adjacent to the University of Texas campus. During his ministry there, he mentored many

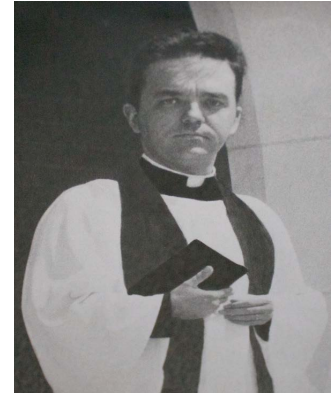
undergraduates. After earning a Ph.D. in Philosophy from UT, he went on to teach at there, as well as at universities in New Mexico, London, and Arizona. He retired as Professor of Religious Studies at Northern Arizona University. He authored several books including *Is It Possible to Be a Christian and Modern?* (1993), *The New Testament: A Manual for College Students* (1997), and *The Taming of Jesus by Christianity* (2001). He died in 2004.

III. The Rev. Grover C. McElyea (1962-1967)



Grover McElyea came to St. Alban's from the Diocese of Dallas and was our first rector to use the title "Father." This was not without some controversy. He was lovingly known as "Father Mac,"

IV. The Rev. Fred W. Kneipp (1968-1972)



A native of Shreveport, Louisiana, and a graduate of the seminary at Sewanee, Fred Kneipp was known for his humor, wit, and intellect. He called himself either “the highest low churchman or the lowest high churchman” there was. The Associate Rector and head of school was the Rev. Norman Lowe. Lowe was a native of England but had grown up in Saskatchewan, Canada. He had joined St. Alban’s near the end of Father Mac’s time.



BEDBUGS AND EVENING BAGS will be among scores of Christmas Bazaar items on sale Tuesday 9 a. m. to 7 p. m. in St. Alban’s Episcopal Church parish hall at 311 North Thirtieth. Surveying some of the homemade merchandise above are, left to right, Mrs. A. E. Mann, Mrs. C. R. Grossenbacher and Mrs. Graham Cole. Baked foods will be on sale and the coffee shop stays open all day. Women of the church offer such other items as pompan Beatles, stuffed snakes, flower and fruit arrangements, and children’s clothes. All are suitable as Christmas presents.

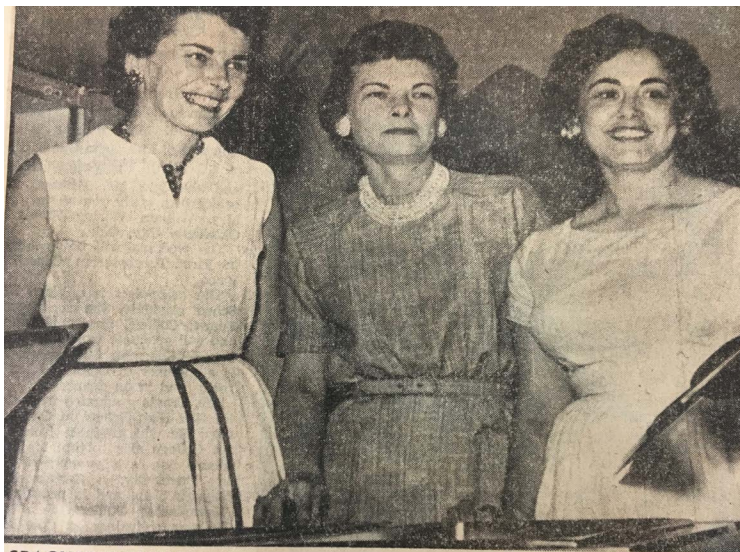
and was often seen in his collar playing baseball and other games with children of the church and school. He had a big smile and a big heart for outreach. He filled the *Waco Tribune* with advertisements inviting people to come to St. Alban’s “Inquirer’s Class.” The advertisements had two hallmarks that are still true of St. Alban’s events: all were welcome, and a nursery would be provided.

Father Mac hired the Rev. Phillip Gill as Assistant Rector and Headmaster of the School. In addition, the church’s Children’s Choir, directed by Mrs. Gustav Nelson, had thirty-five children. They could be heard singing from the balcony almost every Sunday. During the summers, Gustav Nelson, the organist and choirmaster, would help lead

camps for St. Alban’s children at Camp Kinsolving, a former camp of the Diocese of Texas in Belton. The insects of the forest were safe during these camps as Mr. Nelson, a committed Christian pacifist, would not permit children to squash a single ant or spider.

A favorite tradition in these years was the annual Christmas Bazaar. Featuring homemade items crafted by women in the church, the Bazaar would be bustling from 9:00 AM to 7:00 PM in the Parish Hall. A favorite place to buy Christmas gifts, the Bazaar was a wonderful fundraiser for ministry, as well as an anticipated social occasion.

In 1966, Father Mac was called to St. Phillip’s, Dallas. He later served St. Luke’s, Dallas. He passed away on New Year’s Day in 2014.

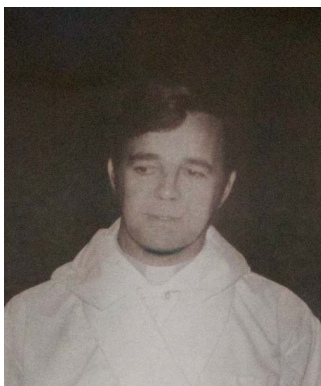


SPAGHETTI SUPPER will be served in the parish house at St. Alban's Episcopal Church Tuesday from 5:30 to 7 p. m. Woman's Auxiliary hopes to add to funds it is collecting to pay for kitchen equipment. Mrs. Russell Brown, left, is Italian spaghetti sup-

per chairman, Mrs. H. A. Sedberry is ticket chairman and Mrs. Walter Fadal is Guild president. Tickets may be bought at the door and friends are invited. The parish house is at Thirtieth Street and Columbus Avenue.

The parish hired a young English clergyman, the Rev. F. Graham Cliff, as Associate Rector in June 1972. Shortly thereafter, illness overtook Fred Kniepp and he died at a hospital in Houston in August 1972. By October, St. Alban's had called Graham Cliff as their next Rector.

V. The Rev. F. Graham Cliff (1972-1974)



A former soldier in the Royal Artillery of the British Army, where he was a champion cross-country runner, and a Physical Education teacher in England, Cliff was ordained in 1966 in the Church of England. He came to the United States first to work at St. Thomas, Houston, as a priest in the church and a soccer coach in their school.

Cliff, a low church English evangelical, was the first priest to bring guitars and praise music into St. Alban's worship services—no small thing in the days of the old 1928 Prayer Book. Cliff also brought an openness to the outward signs of the Holy Spirit. Vestry minutes from those times noted that Cliff's ministry emphasized "healing, prayer, witnessing, and sharing."

Another change was to our Sunday worship schedule, from 8:00 and 10:00 AM to 7:30, 9:15, and 11:00 AM in September 1973. This short experiment ended in January 1974. It would take another 30 years for the church to try again (this time successfully) to offer three services on Sundays. Change is always challenging, and Graham's tenure ended after two years as rector. Nevertheless, he was a caring and dedicated pastor who made an impression on many.

Some highlights from that time: the church sent Ed Scott to seminary in 1973. That same year, the church completed an internal Master Plan. The Rev. Charles Chatham came

on board as half-time Assistant Rector. St. Alban's School had two Volkswagen station wagons. Vacation Bible School had 60 kids in 1973. In addition, Cliff hired Dan & Doris Scott as choirmaster and organist. The Scotts still worship with us today.

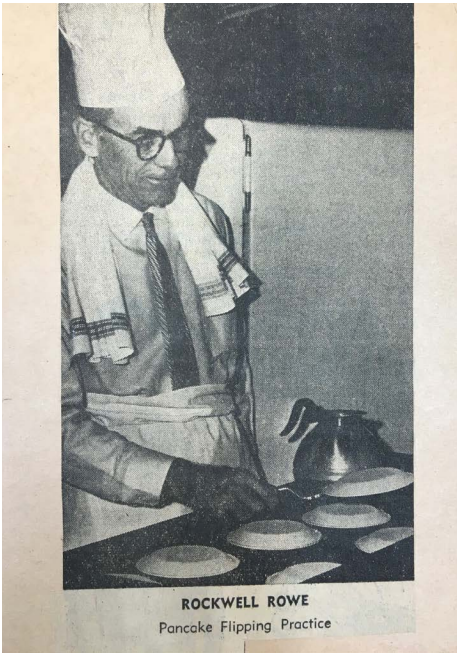
Cliff's last Sunday at St. Alban's before heading to St. James, Potomac, Maryland, was July 28, 1974. He later served parishes in the Diocese of Pittsburgh and Pennsylvania. He continued to serve churches in his retirement. In March 2016, Cliff visited St. Alban's to take part in our 70th anniversary celebrations. He and his wife Mary Jo found the visit deeply meaningful. Cliff died September 14, 2021, in Pennsylvania.

VI. The Rev. Everett H. Cain, Jr. (1974-1978)



Everett Cain and his wife Marilyn came from the Church of St. John the Divine in Houston, where he was one of three assistants. Warm and friendly, a gifted preacher, and blessed with a caring pastoral heart, Cain was beloved as rector.

St. Alban's in those days had a large Lebanese-American community. Many of them were members of a local Lebanese Club. Cain was so welcomed, they adopted him as an honorary member.



Cain oversaw a significant campaign to build a new Parish Hall, including kitchen facilities, which was completed in 1976. This Parish Hall also served as the cafeteria for St. Alban's School. It stood until 2018, when it was demolished to make space for our new Welcome Center.

A humorous incident from Cain's tenure occurred one evening when he was looking for a solitary place to pray. He selected the carillon chamber, way up in the St. Alban's tower. When he finished praying, he found that the sexton had locked the door.

St. Alban's during these years had a beloved gift shop, the only place in Waco that stocked James Avery jewelry. Another ministry highlight of the late 1970s was the hosting of a "Faith Alive" conference. These weekend conferences took place in Episcopal parishes around the country and were a source of great spiritual renewal for participants. This was true at St. Alban's as well.

In 1978, Cain accepted a call

to become Rector of Church of the Good Shepherd, Austin. He later served Trinity, Houston. Now retired, he lives with his wife in Spring, Texas.

VII. The Rev. Paul E. Taft, Jr. (1979-1992)



Paul and Lucy Taft had been serving at Holy Trinity, Dickinson, when they were called to St. Alban's. As our longest-serving Rector, Taft presided over the change from the 1928 Prayer Book to the 1979 version, still in use today. Those years witnessed the first ordination of women in the Episcopal Church. At the same time, the charismatic renewal movement was spreading and calling people into deeper faith. Taft is remembered as a man of exceeding kindness, compassion, and humility.

Under Taft's leadership, St.

Alban's was the first Episcopal Church in Waco to sponsor a woman for the priesthood. The Rev. Lacy Largent is now the Spiritual Director of Camp Allen and leads the congregations of Redeemer, Houston, and St. Francis, College Station. Women took on roles in the vestry for the first time, with our first women Senior Wardens: Arlene Bellegie and Margie Grossenbacher Allen.

In the 1980s, St. Alban's partnered with St. Paul's and Church of the Holy Spirit to offer a combined youth group for all Episcopal youth in Waco. This large and dynamic group hosted retreats, lively meetings, and took annual ski trips over spring break.

Local Episcopalians also brought the spiritual renewal movements of the national Episcopal Church to Waco in those days. Lay leaders from St. Alban's, St. Paul's, and Christ Church, Temple, hosted annual conferences at Waco's Lee Lockwood Library and Museum with nationally known Christian speakers. These events introduced attendees to the powerful role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.



As an outgrowth of these movements, it was in those days that St. Alban's again brought in some contemporary music. In addition to organ, piano and guitar was a regular part of Sunday worship. Taft was aided in these efforts by two Assistant Rectors, both alumni of Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry, the Rev. Billy Disch and the Rev. S. Mark Browne. During these years, the church also sponsored local attorney Phillip "Dog" Jones for ordination and sent him to Virginia Seminary.

Another major change, also reflected in the larger church, was the introduction of adult Sunday School classes. Previously, the custom was Sunday School for children, but not adults. To teach St. Alban's first adult Sunday School classes, Taft tapped Jerry Campbell, a local attorney, vestry member, and long-time parishioner. Campbell's roots in the Baptist tradition gave him a deep knowledge and love of scripture. His humor and intellect made him a wonderful teacher.

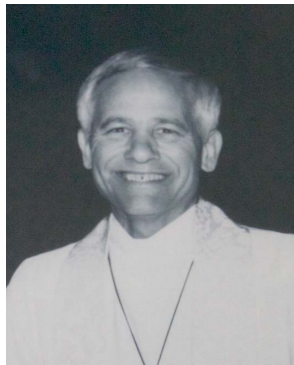
Taft's tenure also saw several improvements to our physical campus. A small chapel was dedicated "in thanksgiving for the ministry of Rev. Charles A. Higgins" on December 14, 1980. In 1986, to correct a drainage problem in the area between the church, cloister, and Parish House, a group of parishioners decided to both solve this problem and beautify this area with a single solution: a courtyard garden.

A grand garden dinner to commemorate St. Alban's fortieth anniversary kicked off the fundraiser for the courtyard. The donations and memorials given

that night were matched by a couple of the parish in memory of Parson Higgins. Hal Stringer, a local landscape architect, designed the lovely courtyard garden. The courtyard garden was dedicated on May 9, 1987. This area has been a beloved spot for fellowship and prayer ever since. Baylor undergraduates have reportedly used it both for fraternity initiations and proposals of marriage. (Hopefully, not simultaneously.) In 2022, the church plans to renovate the courtyard and install a columbarium.

Upon leaving St. Alban's, Rev. Taft became the eighth vicar of St. John's Episcopal Church, Austin, in December 1992. He guided that mission to parish status and became its first rector in 1995. Now retired, Taft and his wife live in Tyler, Texas.

VIII. The Rev. Douglas J. Tucker (1993-2001)



"Friar Tuck" came to St. Alban's in 1993 after a colorful career. He was a quarterback on the 1962 Nebraska University football team. He was an Air Force chaplain for five years. Then he spent seven years as an FBI Special Agent before entering ordained ministry.

A dynamic and energetic leader, Friar Tuck is remembered fondly for his gregarious spirit

and efficiently-run services. He recruited many new members to the parish and saw it experience significant growth. The youth group and fellowship activities were extremely active during this era. A beloved youth leader during this time was Patrick Miller, now the rector of St. Mark's, Bellaire. The parish also took adult groups on retreats to Laity Lodge, along with members of St. Paul's and Holy Spirit.

St. Alban's turned fifty in 1996. Five decades of use necessitated a \$300,000 renovation of the church worship space. Tucker led the charge and completed the campaign in September of 1996. The parish added a new rose window (mentioned earlier) and wooden reredos to replace the original red dossal curtain. The church also renovated the organ, refinished woodwork, and covered the original tile floors with red carpeting. The bell tower was cleaned and much-needed repairs were made to the carillon. The outside stone of the facility was sandblasted and sealed to its original appearance.

The school needed attention as well. In 1997, a \$1.2 million campaign expanded and renovated St. Alban's Memorial School. New offices for both church and school physically joined the two buildings into one structure. This closed off "St. Alban's Alley." In February 2000, St. Alban's got a new 80-space parking lot in the rear of the church. For the first time, the church had off-street parking.

In 2001, Friar Tuck was called to serve on the staff of St. John the Divine, Houston, and later at St. Cyprian's, Lufkin. He retired in



Friar Tuck in conversation with David Tekell in the cloister after church.

2008, and he and Cheryl retired to Galveston where he assisted at Grace Church and Trinity Church. He died at age 78 on August 3, 2021.

IX. The Rev. Janne Alrø Osborne (2002-2005)



In 2002, the vestry called Janne Osborne as St. Alban's ninth rector. A native of Denmark, Osborne brought a fresh perspective. With her Danish and academic background, she was an adjunct professor at Baylor teaching courses on Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard.

During her ministry, St. Alban's deepened its focus on outreach

and fellowship. Osborne was known for her devoted pastoral care for the sick and infirm.

In addition, she hired a gifted youth minister, Aaron Dowdy, who oversaw a growing ministry dedicated to serving the poor. During her tenure, St. Alban's crafted a new mission statement:

"A family of God welcoming everyone home." St. Alban's also brought more technology into the office.

Osborne made another important addition to our staff when she hired Howard Thompson as Director of Music. Howard's wife, Mary Ann, served as our carillonner, with organist David Gilbreath completing the music team. The Thompsons and Gilbreath would serve St. Alban's faithfully until they retired in 2016.

There were some challenges during Osborne's time as well. Changes in the national church were too progressive for some and too swift for others. This dynamic put pressure on St. Alban's school, which already found itself competing in an increasingly crowded field of private schools in Waco. Osborne worked tirelessly to bolster the school. In addition, she appointed a task force to look

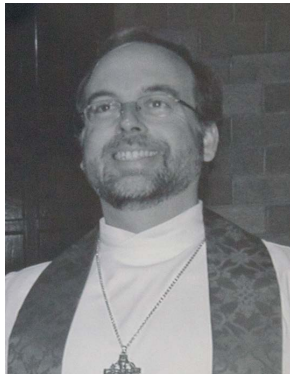


Rev. Osborne teaching children to make bread at Vacation Bible School.

at the future of the Episcopal schools in Waco. Nevertheless, the pressures on both the church and the school intensified. Both church membership and school enrollment declined, and the parish faced serious headwinds.

In 2005, Osborne was called to serve at St. Michaels, Austin. She retired from full-time ministry in November 2015 and makes her home in Austin, where she has assisted at several churches.

**X. The Rev. Jeff W. Fisher
(2006-2012)**



Before coming to St. Alban's as our tenth rector, UT-Austin alumnus Jeff Fisher was a CPA with a background in finance. Before going to Virginia Seminary, he was a CFO in Houston. After ordination in 2004, he served as curate at St. Mary's, Cypress. From there, the vestry called him to be our rector.

He arrived to find the parish facing significant difficulties, both financially and in membership. After much prayer and planning, in 2007, under Fisher's leadership, St. Alban's School became the St. Alban's Outreach Center, home to organizations and ministries that serve Waco. At the time of the school's closing, it was the oldest Protestant parochial school in Waco. While this was a sad chapter for many, the Outreach Center became



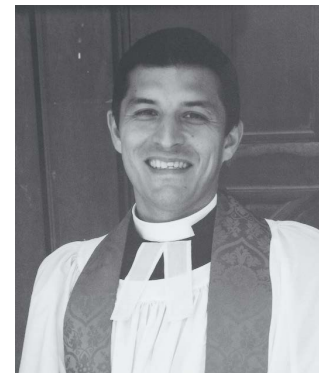
Jeff Fisher in discussion with Altar Guild director Jacqueline Frahm before a service.

a vibrant source of hope, healing, and beauty to many people, young and old. It now houses the Central Texas String Academy, the Youth Chorus of Central Texas, several 12-step recovery meetings, and the Youth and Children's Ministry of St. Alban's.

During his time at St. Alban's, Fisher re-focused the parish on children's ministry, spearheading a renovation of the nursery and children's rooms. He also encouraged evangelistic and outreach ministries, with the hiring of Newcomer's Coordinator Rebekah Stille and curate the Rev. Jimmy Abbott to oversee young adult ministry. Fisher's humor and effective Christ-centered preaching drew new families. Under his careful watch, that parish grew significantly.

He was elected bishop suffragan of the Diocese of Texas and consecrated in 2012. He and Susan live in Tyler, where he serves as the regional bishop of the eastern part of the Diocese.

**XI. The Rev. Aaron M. G.
Zimmerman
(2013-Present)**



In 2013, St. Alban's welcomed our eleventh rector, the Rev. Aaron M. G. Zimmerman. Previously, he had served at St. Martin's, Houston, and St. Stephen's, Sewickley, Pennsylvania.

Zimmerman had graduated from Harvard with a degree in History of Science and an M.Div. from Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry. Before going to seminary, he worked as a missionary and educator in Kazakhstan, a case writer at Harvard Business School, and an analyst at H.J. Heinz.



*St. Alban's clergy at the diaconal ordination of the Rev. Alberto Melis, June 2015, Christ Church Cathedral, Houston.
L-R: The Rev. Benjamin B. Maddison, the Rt. Rev. Jeff Fisher, the Rev. Alberto Melis, the Rev. Aaron M. G. Zimmerman, and Mrs. Carol Melis.*

Upon his arrival, Zimmerman and lay leaders quickly worked to retire the debt remaining from the recent difficulties and re-focused the parish on four areas: children & youth, newcomers, pastoral care, and outreach. Zimmerman's lively preaching emphasized the unmerited grace of God for sinners. In 2014, a Strategic Planning and Visioning process led to a new mission statement: "St. Alban's proclaims to all, in word and deed, the grace of God in Jesus Christ." Along with that, the parish defined its core values: Worship, Acceptance, Children and Youth, Outreach, and Lifelong Christian Formation.

Increased staffing in youth and children's ministry, re-branded and re-focused communications, and new administrative staff helped the church continue the renaissance begun under Fisher. A new priest, the Rev. Ben Maddison, came on board in 2015 to work with young adults and college students. In 2017, the church added an additional Sunday service. From 2013 to 2018, Sunday attendance went from 140 to 240. In early 2020, just before the Covid-19 pandemic, St. Alban's was welcoming an average of 350

people each Sunday, the highest in the parish's history.

With its renewed clarity on values and a growing membership, St. Alban's initiated a master planning process in 2015. The goal was to identify how to renovate or repurpose existing space to ensure the parish has the facilities needed for the future. As it was at St. Alban's founding, Waco was again growing rapidly.

In 2016, the parish adopted a master plan with the help of architect Jaime Beaman of Austin-based Casabella Architects. The central feature was a new 5,000 sq. ft. Parish Hall on Waco Drive, along with a Welcome Center, Higgins Parlor, porte-cochere, and a re-designed nursery area. To achieve this vision, the church launched Our One Foundation, a \$6 million capital campaign, in 2016. St. Alban's broke ground for the project in September 2018. Seventeen months later, the church dedicated the new spaces with the Rt. Rev Kathryn Ryan, bishop suffragan, on Shrove Tuesday, February 2020.

St. Alban's continued to find ways to serve others. In August 2017, St. Alban's sent four teams

of volunteers to Houston to aid in relief from Hurricane Harvey. The church deepened its work with Mission Waco, and added a partnership with The Cove, a new non-profit serving teens experiencing homelessness. Church members also mentored incarcerated teens at the facility in Mart. St. Alban's also strengthened a partnership with Waco ISD's Cedar Ridge Elementary. In 2016, the parish sponsored Korey Wright for the priesthood. He was ordained in 2019.

In 2016, Zimmerman initiated a new St. Alban's annual tradition: inviting a guest preacher for Jonathan Daniels Day. Daniels was an Episcopal seminarian martyred in the American Civil Rights movement and was a college friend of St. Alban's member Bob Gianella. St. Alban's Jonathan Daniels Day preachers address questions of race and justice in light of the Gospel. Past preachers include Jonathan Tran, Peter Heltzel, Esau McCauley, Korey Wright, Stephen Reid, and Malcolm Foley.

There were additional staff transitions. Waco's retired police chief, Alberto Melis, was ordained to the Diaconate in 2015 and

joined our staff to assist with worship, service, and pastoral care. New Zealand native Eugene Lavery joined in 2017 as Director of Music. The Rev. Neal McGowan was called as our curate in 2017, becoming our Associate Rector in 2019. Also in 2019, Stephanie Drum came on staff as our Director of Ministry to Children, Youth, and Families. That same year, the Diocese of Texas asked St. Alban's to serve as the home for a new Hispanic church plant under the leadership of Padre Oscar Huerta.

The parish did not know it at the time, but with a strong team in place and renewed facilities, St. Alban's had the resources to face what would be the next enormous challenge, the Covid-19 pandemic.

March 8, 2020, was the final Sunday with normal services before the pandemic. The next Sunday, church went entirely online. The overnight change to livestream worship was bumpy at first, but the church quickly learned the ropes. St. Alban's online Easter service in 2020 was noted in the journal *Anglican and Episcopal History* for its high attendance and quality of music and worship. Even with the return to in-person worship, livestreaming is now a permanent part of how St. Alban's invites people to worship and serve the Lord.

The church did not know it in March 2020, but in-person worship would not resume for another six months. The people of St. Alban's finally re-gathered at an outdoor service on October 4, 2020, discovering that our

renovated parking lot and new porte-cochere made a beautiful spot for outdoor worship. Through wind, fog, sun, and clouds, the Word was preached and the sacraments administered. New people continued to join the church, even in this very different setting.

Early in the pandemic, in March 2020, by God's grace, St. Alban's received a surprise \$3 million anonymous gift, the largest in



St. Alban's history. The vestry wisely paid off the debt on Phase 1 of the master plan, Our One Foundation, and embarked on the second phase: Renew & Restore. The goal of this \$3 million project was to renovate and restore our aging church building, as well as to install a new organ by world-class organ builder Schoenstein. With significant parish support, the project got underway.

That winter, Texas was hit by Winter Storm Uri in February

2021. With five consecutive days of freezing temperatures, and two days registering sub-zero lows, Waco was shut down. Power outages led to dangerously cold conditions. The church's power, however, never went out. Zimmerman reached out to the city and with their help, opened the Parish Hall as a warming center. For those five days, Andrea Zimmerman coordinated over fifty St. Alban's volunteers, from doctors to social workers, to provide food and round-the-clock care to some of Waco's neediest citizens.

By April 11, 2021, the state of the pandemic allowed the congregation to return to indoor worship. But with the church under construction, services met in the new Parish Hall. This new space—which had just recently been a warming center—was also ideal for worship in a pandemic. It allowed social distancing, had good acoustics, and featured a new HVAC system. During those months, masks were sometimes required, sometimes optional, depending on the guidelines of the CDC and local medical professionals.

Another new ministry launched during these times was a weekly Sunday evening service of Choral Evensong. A gem of the Anglican choral tradition, St. Alban's joined the handful of parishes in the United States offering this service. With four Sunday services and an online congregation, St. Alban's now gathers around 450 people each Sunday to worship the Lord.

From May to September 2021, Aaron Zimmerman took a four-month sabbatical, making him

the first rector of St. Alban's to take a sabbatical leave. This time of rest and refreshment was funded by a grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc., and included a nine-week tour of Europe. Zimmerman also pursued his passion of trail running, completing the 100-mi *Tour du Mont Blanc* route. Back in Waco, under the leadership of the Rev. Neal McGowan, the parish continued to thrive.

**LOOKING BACK,
LOOKING AHEAD**

In December 2021, St. Alban's will gather to celebrate 75 years of ministry in Waco. Many things have changed over those years. Online giving has largely replaced the offering plate. Morning Prayer is conducted via livestream. The campus looks vastly different.

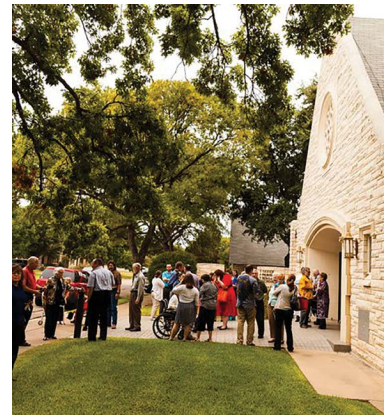
But many things remain the same: The parish continues to raise up ministers for the wider church, like Larry Adams-Thompson and Karen Pettit. Christian formation is central: Our small group ministry and Sunday School classes, under the leadership of Dr. Rachel Toombs, are thriving. We continue to serve people in Waco and around the globe. Through the past three-quarters of a century, God has remained faithful, even when things appeared dark. May St. Alban's continue to reflect God's glory for another seventy-five years and beyond.

*Mr. Tony Henson
The Rev. Aaron M. G. Zimmerman
With contributions from
Paula & Jerry Campbell and Carol Melis
Updated December 2021*

- 75th Anniversary Committee
- Tom & Kathleen Stanton, co-chairs
 - Clayton & Caitlin Young, co-chairs
 - The Rev. Neal McGowan
 - Stephanie Kucera, Senior Warden, ex officio
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“Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.”

Psalm 127:1

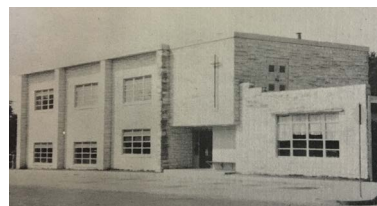


Remember this date ***
OCTOBER 18, 1957
The All-New, Stupendous, Colossal,
Greatest-Yet
MICHAELMAS FAIR
Fun ☆ Frolic ☆ Food
An exciting, festive good time for all the family ...
make your plans now... don't miss this gala
fun-filled occasion. Bring your friends!
REMEMBER... Friday, Oct. 18th
at 5:00 p. m. in St. Alban's Alley
☆
SEE YOU THERE!!



Partners in learning

Staff photo — Rod Aydelotte
Champe Fitzhugh listens as Jasmine Ramos, a third-grader at Bell's Hill Elementary in Waco, reads a book in the hallway. Fitzhugh has volunteered at the school for the last six years.





The Episcopal Diocese of Texas

The Right Reverend Jeff W. Fisher, D.D.
Bishop Suffragan of Texas

December 11, 2021

Dear Friends at St. Alban's,

Congratulations on the occasion of your 75th Anniversary! Susan and I are so pleased that we can join you, in person, for the celebration.

My relationship with St. Alban's actually began 40 years ago, in May of 1981. At that time, St. Alban's hosted a Happening weekend, a renewal weekend for teenagers that continues to this day in our diocese. At the Happening weekend that I attended in 1981, I worshipped in the beautiful nave of St. Alban's and I slept on the floor in a sleeping bag, in the area that is now called The Crèche. In God's good timing, 25 years later, almost to the day, I stepped into the pulpit at St. Alban's, as your tenth Rector.

Before I was elected as Bishop Suffragan in the Diocese of Texas and the bishop for the east region, I was your Rector from 2006 until 2012. During my tenure, I witnessed what makes St. Alban's so special: faithful, fantastic, and fun lay people. Clergy come and go; yet lay people stay, as they make Jesus Christ the sure foundation.

St. Alban's is where our two sons, Scott and John, were raised in the faith, and where Susan used her gifts for ministry. Our family still cherishes our time in Waco, during BG. (BG = Before Gaines, as in Chip and Joanna). We remember decorating the church for Christmas Eve, Advent worship with the kids from the Central Texas String Academy, acolyting for countless services, making pancakes then burying the Alleluia on Shrove Tuesday, serving on the altar guild while stripping the altar on Maundy Thursday, funerals for faithful saints, weddings full of love and hope, and mission trips with youth.

Strong and relevant preaching, excellence in music and worship, and connection and outreach to the community - throughout the history of St. Alban's, these have been pillars in the service of Jesus Christ and his people. Susan and I give thanks for 75 years, and for many years to come. We love you, St. Alban's!

Faithfully yours,

The Rt. Rev. Jeff W. Fisher
Tenth Bishop Suffragan of Texas

