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# Parish and community

No. 31: Church of the Holy Angels, Hale Barns, Cheshire

COMING from the M56 motorway at Hale Barns, Cheshire, you can't miss the Church of the Holy Angels. It faces the village cross, a testament to the successful marriage of old and new.

The late Arthur Farebrother, church architect who was also a parishioner, designed it with the Benedictine Abbey of Quarr, in the Isle of Wight, in mind.

Next door is St Ambrose College, the Christian Brothers' school for boys, and it was in the college chapel that a Mass centre for the area began, served from neighbouring St Vincent's, Altrincham. Bishop Murphy sent me to Hale Barns in 1958. Bishop Grasar opened the church, built on the site of a derelict mansion, in 1964.

Because of good travel facilities (two miles from Manchester airport, a stone's throw from the motorway) and good schools, the parish has a dormitory aspect: but many people were born in the area, Parishioners number towards 1,000. The oldest organisation in the church is the Blessed Sacrament Guild, which provides all needs for the altar and added a stained glass window to the Lady Chapel. Members wanted to add more glass, but loyally decided that paying off the church debt must come first.

A First Friday Club is for men and women, with speakers on thinking subjects, A group of professional men, the parish advisory committee, helps in various ways, and a parish social committee dreams up ways of raising [money](#) and bringing people together.

Equally important: there is a branch of the national organisation Crux in the parish. Boys and girls read at Mass. Until equal opportunities made this illegal, the choir was male but now includes girls. In spite of having no parish hall, a successful youth club meets in a room hired from our friends, the village Anglican church.

Evening pilgrimages to local shrines in Lancashire and Derbyshire are popular, and in their second year. After the pilgrimage, there is a modest feast, usually in a country pub.

Many parishioners have made interest-free loans to bring down [payments](#) on the interest, on the church debt.

For 18 months we have produced a successful monthly magazine with news items about parishioners, and hope this helps produce a family atmosphere in the parish.

We belong to a twin-village inter-denominational Neighbourhood Group of Churches, and join in various activities. Lenten discussion groups. an outdoor Christmas carol service, an annual unity service (in Holy Angels, in 1975) and, one year, a dramatic enactment of the Passion on Holy Saturday, partly on Holy Angels' Church steps and partly in the village shopping precinct.

Readers with long memories may remember Granada televising a concelebrated Mass from the church in 1969. During Holy Year it was the diocesan venue for the Apostolic Delegate's visit to Shrewsbury's clergy and religious,

Fr Gerald McDonald