

Mr Aitken was appointed by Downing Street, the last such appointment. He had served in the forces and was the National Chaplain of the Dunkirk Veteran's Association.

The church magazine does not give a lot of information on the activities of the various parish organisations. Several organisations either ceased to exist or moved elsewhere. The Rose Queen no longer took place, and the Guides closed down. The Scouts after some 30 years of association with St Stephen's had their sponsorship withdrawn by the vicar. However they continued as an independent unit and in 1994 regained sponsorship with our friends at the United Reformed Church in Bridge Street. Several members of the Group continued to be members of the congregation and are so to this day.

This was a time of change in society in general the Bishop of Manchester wrote *Tombola and Bingo are the boils on the face of the affluent society, It is somewhat strange that, when so many people are better off than they were, they still want more.* As a sign of the times, it was decided to have the church locked when not in use because several acts of minor vandalism had occurred

It was the custom to have vases of flowers on the altar table; some pictures show six such vases on flower sermon Sunday. Mr Aitken pointed out these restricted the view of the Alpha and Omega motifs on the reredos and initially reduced the number of vases to two. However these were removed in 1962 and gave way to two candlesticks. Two cushions were placed on the altar table replacing the brass stand as this was considered "Latin".

There was support for the Billy Graham Mission to Manchester and some 250 people from the Audenshaw churches went to Maine Road to the rally. There was also progress in church co-operation within Audenshaw.

A great deal of work by the men of the parish went into painting the church interior. Sometimes work continued to 10 or 11 o'clock in the evening with the ladies acting as "brewer uppers". The large arch at the west end of the gallery was filled in to help reduce the draught from the steeple.

A major fault arose on the church steeple, caused in part by pigeons. Guards were put onto the windows, but it was also necessary to do extensive re-pointing and replace the finial rod, tie beams and the top stone. The total cost was £400 (equivalent to £4000 today).

Mr Aitken wrote the following in the Church magazine just prior to his departure in October 1963 reflecting on how he found the Parish when he arrived *The number of people attached to the various organisations was not reflected in attendance at the Holy Table, at the statutory services or in the collections.*

After a very short interregnum Rev. J. Painter became the Vicar in February 1964.

A move towards co-operation between the Audenshaw churches had started in Mr Aitken's incumbency, but began to flourish in 1964.

Our PCC were very much in favour of the joining of the C. of E. and the Methodist church at the national level but this was rejected by the General Synod. However the Audenshaw Council of Churches was formed in 1965 comprising St Stephen's, Guide Lane, Red Hall and Bridge Street, and a very well attended service was held in our church on St Stephen's Day, 26 December 1965. Our neighbour St Paul's Roman Catholic Church opened in 1963 and started to participate in the united services and by 1966 all the Audenshaw churches held a joint open air service in the grounds of Rycroft Hall with all the ministers taking part.

The choir started to increase in numbers and special events again started to occur. There were choir Sundays held near to St Cecilia's day in November and a choir concert held in school. Stainer's "Crucifixion" was sung by an augmented choir on Palm Sunday in 1965 and "Olivet to Calvary" in 1966 both were received well by the congregation.

Two Reader's were licensed, Dr Elves and Mr Patrick. The Mothers Union flourished and a Mother and Baby club was formed and run by Mrs Painter.

It is not clear why Mr Painter left after such a short stay in Audenshaw departing to Isle of Wight. In his last letter in the magazine he writes that *No one could wish for more kindness than we continually received during our time in Audenshaw.* He also says that one of his sons was improving with the change in air so possibly his son's health influenced his decision.