

## St. Peter's Church, Bath Road, Devizes

St. Peter's Church was built in 1866, largely through the efforts of the Rev. B.C. Dowding, Vicar of St. James, for the spiritual needs of the people in the Nursery and Piccadilly areas to the west of the town. Houses had been built in this area when the canal was constructed around 1810 and these were later occupied by the families of the bargees. At one time Dowding had considered fitting out a barge on the canal to serve as a chapel. The church also served militiamen in neighbouring barracks. The church was built in Bath and Ham stone to the design of Slater and Carpenter of London and was consecrated on 17th July 1866. Like St. James' Church St. Peter's also fostered and built a school which still exists nearby. At first the church comprised a



chancel with octagonal apse, a nave of four bays, a west bell cote and a north porch. A south aisle, now the Lady Chapel, a vestry and organ chamber were added in 1884. The west window, a 1934 memorial to the Dowding family, is said to be one of the best examples of modern stained glass in Wiltshire. The registers from 1866 for christenings and from 1868 for marriages, other than those in current use, are held in the Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office.

Terry Gaylard has written a history of the Church and its schools for the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary 1866 -1991. [St. Peter's Church and School 1866 -1991](#)

St. Peter's Church serves the community of the parish and also people from the surrounding areas that are attracted by its orderly, traditional style of worship. It has always maintained the Catholic and Apostolic faith as the Church of England

received it from the Undivided Church. As Anglo-Catholics the Church emphasises that, in seeking to evangelise each new generation, the Church must take care not to abandon the teaching and practice of the early Christian centuries. The Bible, the Creeds, the Sacraments and the Church's Ministry are not ours to change. They were received from the Lord by the Church in apostolic times and have been faithfully handed down from generation to generation. We seek to pass them on to our children and grandchildren. [St. Peter's Church website](#).

Recent changes in the Church of England have prompted St. Peter's to seek the pastoral and sacramental care of the Bishop of Ebbsfleet, working in co-operation with the Bishops of Salisbury and of Ramsbury. The parish has affiliated to the Forward in Faith movement in order to secure its guidance and assistance. Resolutions A and B are in place, and our petition for extended Episcopal oversight under the Act of Synod (Resolution C) has been granted.

In a sermon preached by Father Peter Moss, our Priest-in Charge, on 13th July 2008 he attacked the decision reached in the previous week by the Synod in York on the above Resolutions. He took as his theme Isaiah 55:8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord". The text of this sermon may be downloaded here. The whole-hearted support of the congregation was indicated by the applause that this sermon drew. We share with St Paul the belief that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever".

**The future of St. Peter's Church is uncertain.** St. Peter's is a Forward in Faith church and as a majority of the congregation oppose women priests, they may leave the Church of England in 2014, when the first women bishops will be enthroned. The Bishop of Ebbsfleet has appealed to the Catholic Church and it seems likely that he will want to move his parishes to Rome. The PCC of St. Peter's have come up with an idea to build a social room on the side of the church, but this will cost a lot of money and will require much fundraising.