

CHURCH

The parish, dedicated to St Mary Magdalene, was mentioned in the 12th century. It was served by a curate, who was not required to be resident, and was a dependency of the Priory of St Mary in Aix, which became a collegiate church in 1513.

To the left of the present church and car park was situated the old church and cemetery.

From the report on a pastoral visit in 1340 we learn that this church consisted of three chapels dedicated to St Theodule, Blessed Mary of Mercy and St Anthony.

In 1458 the building was repaired and alterations were carried out. The chancel was buttressed, a floor was laid in the nave, a gallery was added and the entrance was tiled.

In 1684 two new side chapels were added, one consecrated to Our Lady of the Rosary and another to St Abdon and St Sennen (patrons of coopers and who were interceded to for the healing of blind children, for the drowned and also for the protection of harvests from hail and locusts).

In 1782 Monseigneur Michel Conseil, Bishop of Chambéry, paid a pastoral visit and was concerned at the dampness and the small size of the old church, which was only 5 m high and had a total floor area of 170 m², yet served a population of 700 parishioners.



“A priest from Tresserve caught in the upheaval of revolution”

In March 1793 François Thérèse Panisset (1729-1829), a native of Tresserve and at the time parish priest of St Pierre d'Albigny, was elected bishop of the newly created department of Mont Blanc, with his seat in Annecy. In January 1794 he was imprisoned for two months by deputy Albitte, famous for his harsh repression of the clergy, because he refused to renounce his ministry. Eventually he did abjure and lived on in Annecy for two more years.

Encouraged by non-juring priests, he took refuge in Lausanne. On the 1st April 1796 Joseph de Maistre convinced him to reverse his abjuration. On 26th February 1796 he sent a letter of submission to Monseigneur Pietro Gravina, apostolic nuncio at Lucerne. On 6th March he was granted reconciliation and reinstated to the priesthood.

In 1801 he took up residence with his brother in Tresserve. In 1803 he was nominated parish priest of the village.

He died in 1809 and is buried under the church slab.

In 1820 a presbytery, backing onto the chancel, was added, built to plans drawn up by the architect Bernard Trivelli. It was now possible for a priest to be permanently in residence.



In 1829 a new bell, cast by the firm Mugnier of Chambéry, was installed to replace the faulty original. Since the outcome was unsatisfactory, this new bell was recast by the foundry.

Further pastoral visits all confirmed that a larger church was needed. In 1831 Count Pierre de Buttet and his daughter bequeathed 1600 livres for "the maintenance in perpetuity of a lamp burning day and night before the Holy Sacrament".

It was at this time that the priest, Fr Andrevon, financed a school for girls - the boys' school was the responsibility of the municipality. Each year on 7th September, the feast of St Gratus (protector of harvests - both grape and agricultural), the priest blessed the water which would be used at services as well as the seeds for sowing. In February, at the feast of St Anthony, he blessed salt for the livestock.

In 1869 the municipal council approved the plans and estimate submitted by the Savoyard architect Théodore Fivel (1828 -1894) for a new 275 m² church, to be built beside the old one.

When the Empress Eugenie came through Tresserve Mme de Pierrefeu, wife of the mayor, made the following request:

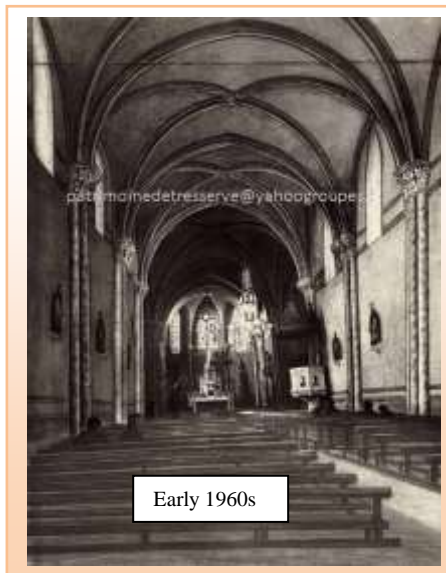
"Leave on our hill an eternal memento of your passage. We have set about building a church but our means are more limited than our faith and we can do nothing if Your Majesty does not say to us: I am with you"

In 1870 an appeal was launched by the committee charged with managing parish resources. 13000 Fr was collected from 126 donors. The state made a donation of 12000 Fr and the municipal council took out a loan of 10000 Fr over 15 years. This budget proved quite inadequate for such a large building.

Construction was entrusted to the firm of Jean Cometti who agreed on a discount of 12%. Work started with the demolition of the tower and the nave as far as the chancel, which was preserved since it adjoined the presbytery. During this period worship continued with services held in the Mairie. In 1872 the firm Cometti collapsed and the receiver, Mr Thouvenin, took over management of the building site.

In April 1873, at the point of hand over, numerous defects became apparent. Some of the work had been carried out incorrectly and damage had occurred. There was saltpetre on the walls, the roof timbers and doors were made of poor quality wood, rubble from the old church used to make cement, vaults made from badly fired bricks rather than tuff (volcanic rock)....

The church was opened for worship in 1876 but not consecrated until 25 years later, on 29th September 1901, due to building work having to be resumed time and again.



The building is neogothic in style, in the shape of a Latin cross. The tower and sacristy are placed symmetrically at the head of the chancel and the roof is of slate from Anjou. A Roman funerary stone bearing an inscription in Latin, has been incorporated into the exterior wall to the left of the entrance. (It is dedicated to the Manes, the death spirits, of his mother Pompeia Marina by Pompeius Fuscillus.)

The central stained glass window in the chancel was donated by Ellen Willmott, owner between 1890 and 1920 of the chateau, today the Mairie. It depicts the Risen Christ and Saint Mary Magdalene

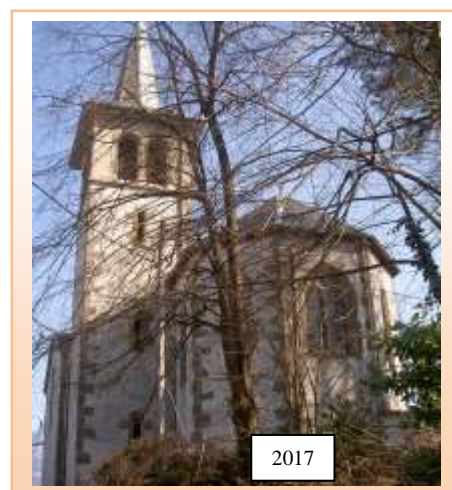
The panels and stalls of the chancel were in walnut. The altar was of moulded plaster and supported two rows of candelabra, one above the other. It was replaced in the 60s by the present altar, in sandstone from the Vosges. The hexagonal pulpit, decorated with religious paintings had a canopy in carved walnut. It had a moulded base representing the head of Lucifer and was situated at the intersection of the chapel of the Virgin and the nave.

In the two side chapels chairs could be found bearing the names of the families for whom they were reserved, either on brass plates or branded in. In the nave there were three closed pews for the families of dignitaries. An enormous coal burning stove, maintained by the verger, allowed the nave to be heated in winter.

The church was entered through a tambour (wooden doors) donated by Mrs Bellingham, owner between 1895 and 1930 of the property of that name.



In 1878 a bell, named Marie-Augustine (for its sponsors Auguste and Marie Poulain) and made by the firm Paccard of Annecy, was installed in the bell tower after an appeal had been launched, to which 14 donors contributed 1640 Fr. Their names are cast onto the bell.





North chapel dedicated to the Virgin



South chapel

The baptistry forms part of the south chapel. Above it can be seen a wooden statue of St John baptising Christ and to the right a statue of St Joseph holding the child Jesus.

The presbytery was demolished and replaced by a community house, which included a new presbytery, and a car park. The project was agreed in 1965 and works completed in 1968.



In 2007 the local heritage preservation society, l'Association pour la Sauvegarde du Patrimoine, restored and replaced onto the walls of the church the original Stations of the Cross. The plaques as well as the pulpit and the communion table had been taken down at the time of the Second Vatican Council in the 60s.



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Association pour la Sauvegarde du Patrimoine de Tresserve