

# **MCCN Harrogate October 2009**

## ***Welcome***

We were welcomed by the Revd Shaun Swithenbank, minister at Wesley Chapel. The Town Centre Chaplain, Deacon David Hunt, led us in our opening devotions.

## ***The Harrogate Story – Shaun Swithenbank***

Harrogate is a mixed town and Wesley Chapel is well placed but with limited resources. The chapel is set in the shopping area and has links with the nearby International Concert Centre. Currently there are plans to make the chapel more open and to change the interior by removing the pews so that it is better suited for different kinds of worship. The current access is up steps to the front door or directly into the basement area through a not very visible side entrance. Neither offer an obvious way in to people who do not know the building. There is limited car parking and the caretaker's house adjacent to the chapel has proved too big.

There is a membership of a 100 and a community roll of 250 with most over 60 and fewer young people though an increasing number of people are using the premises. The challenges are: relevance and purpose, people and resources, finance and property. The vision is for open doors, an open church, and being open to the Spirit. This will be achieved through ecumenical partnership, sharing the work with community and business partners, the provision of flexible, efficient space that is more manageable and more usable. Already, the circuit has agreed that Wesley be the site for a town centre presence.

## ***A five year plan***

The building is 147 years old (and showing its age). The last major refurbishment was in the early 1990s which created the present foyer and lower hall and improved access to the building. A significant development is planned over the next five years. During years 1 and 2, church requirements will be determined, potential partners identified, architects consults (with the intention of appointing one to the project) followed by a feasibility study. Years 3 and 4 would be taken up with choosing a developer, discussions with planning authorities, and potential partners and the alterations to the worship space. In years 5 and 6 the congregation will move into the refurbished accommodation and the second phase of the development would begin mainly on the area at the side of the chapel (about one-third of the whole site) half of which is, at present, occupied by the caretaker's house. Possibilities include: a new entrance (into the side of the present worship space), an open garden, an outside covered area, a cafe, shops, an advice centre, a community room.

## ***Town centre church***

A meeting place, a place of spiritual refreshment, that is flexible, adaptable and available, offering a ministry of care and service, in ecumenical partnership and representing the wider church.

The work and ministry of Wesley is realised in a range of meetings and groups that provide opportunities for learning and provide caring support; in worship on Sundays, mid-week prayers, special services (civic, ecumenical, Ashville College), as a base for outdoor events and activities, and for weddings and funerals; in service and outreach through the weekly 'Forward Together' (feeding body mind a spirit), 'Spotlight' on church and society issues, public meetings, concerts, coffee mornings and lunches, community lettings, Alpha courses. The chapel is a resource centre with around sixty organisations and groups that use it regularly. Each month there is a concert and the worship area is often full. Some organisation merely want to use the steps to the front of the church as a good spot to sell goods or promote their work. On Christmas Day there is a Christmas

Lunch (with puddings provided by the famous Betty's Café). This is aimed at those who alone on Christmas Day.

The links with the town as a whole are strong. The town pays for a Town Chaplain currently Methodist Deacon David Hunt. David is a representative on the [Harrogate District Strategic Partnership](#) which provides an opportunity to hear what the town is saying and consider what the church's response might be.

On Good Friday when the ecumenical procession goes around the town people come out of the shops to see it go by. The churches are involved in Remembrance Day which is a major town event and is attended by large numbers.

Read more about Wesley's Chapel at [www.wesleychapelharrogate.org.uk](http://www.wesleychapelharrogate.org.uk)

### *St Peter's – Revd Canon Tony Shepherd*

St Peter's is the Anglican Church separated from Wesley Chapel by a hundred yards of shops and banks.

The mission of St Peter's is to 'the poor, the posh and the passing'. Planning permission has recently been granted for a major rebuilding and refurbishment project with a budget of around £2 million. The main aim of this project is to open up the church and included in the planned work will be the removal of some of the walls and their replacement with glass so that what is now a dark closed church can become an open light church where what is happening inside can be clearly seen by those outside. (If, for example, they can see that there is food to be had then they may be encouraged to come in.) There will also be major structural work to create more space for a greater range of activities and events.

One consequence of the present lack of space is that there is not sufficient room for the large (about 100) Sunday School to meet at St Peter's during the time it is not worshipping with the rest of the congregation. Half the children are taken down to Wesley Chapel for their Sunday School and crocoddiled back up to St Peter's (in all weathers) to join in Holy Communion with the rest of the church family. This is one example that illustrates the strong working partnership between the two churches.

St Peter's hosts a regular 'No Strings Attached' breakfast to which people with influence and power are uninvited to meet and talk with each with no strings attached.

Read more about St Peter's Harrogate at [www.stpetersharrogate.org.uk](http://www.stpetersharrogate.org.uk)

### *Homelessness in Harrogate – Liz Hancock*

There are a significant number of people who are homeless in Harrogate. The Harrogate Homeless Project, until recently, ran a night shelter for the homeless of Harrogate. The building that housed the night shelter has been refurbished to make it a nine bed hostel for the homeless. The reason for the change is that by only providing a bed for the night and returning their residents back to the streets for ten hours during the day was doing nothing to help them break out of homelessness. The hostel will allow people to stay longer and be helped in finding accommodation of their own. The hostel has been operating for about a month. A consequence of the change is a need for a drop-in centre where homeless people who cannot be accommodated at the hostel can find support and food during the day. The unused caretaker's house (which will in some years be demolished) next to Wesley now houses the drop-in centre called 'Springboard'. It has been operating for only a couple of weeks but is already busy. There are a large number of rooms in the house and it is hoped that agencies who provide help and information for the homeless will come and use these rooms so that those who drop in can be offered support quickly.

Read more about the Harrogate Homeless Project at [www.harrogate-homeless-project.org.uk](http://www.harrogate-homeless-project.org.uk)

### ***Town Pastors – Jeremy Clough (Salvation Army)***

The Harrogate Town Pastors have been operation for about a year and 12 to 16 of them will be out and about on the streets of Harrogate from nine o'clock on a Friday evening until three in the morning. They are also managing to get out on one Saturday each month and hope to be able to do this every Saturday. The scheme uses Wesley Chapel as a base and the Salvation Army has provided a catering van which since July has been dispensing water, tea, coffee and cake to any one who wants them.

Read more about the Harrogate Town Pastors at [www.townpastors.co.uk](http://www.townpastors.co.uk)

### ***Methodism and Urban Mission – Erica Dunmow***

*(Erica has been the UK's Urban Mission Development Advisor since 2004. She is the only employee of the Urban Mission Development Project which is 50% funded by the Methodist Church; the other 50% of her funding comes from Evangelical Coalition for Urban Mission.)*

The Urban Mission Development Project is small – and with limited resources.

### ***Methodism and Urban Mission***

- **Wesley's 'heart for the poor'**
- **urban mission 'passion for deprived urban communities'**
- **Methodism's Forward Movement – social action and preaching ministry**
- **Methodism's 'holiness - social and personal'**
- **urban mission 'integral mission'**
- **Methodism's lay leadership**
- **urban mission 'indigenous leadership'**
- **Methodism 'priesthood of all believers'**
- **urban mission 'ministry of all believers'**

### ***The purpose of the new urban mission hub***

- **enhance support for ministers/practitioners to equip them for the particulars of urban ministry and mission for community transformation**
- **strengthen the confidence and capability of lay people to engage in urban mission and community transformation alongside, or in the absence of, paid leadership**
- **encourage large denominations to value and utilise resources in independent specialist agencies and the smaller denominations**
- **be a voice of prophetic challenge into the national denominations and agencies to prioritise the allocation of resources to this area of mission, and maybe into national government**

The urban mission hub will implement the learning of the Urban Mission Development Project, add value to the existing agencies and networks, and utilise the strengths of the existing support mechanisms. By being linked to the hub, MCCN would have a broader base with a bigger voice, recognition within Methodism, recognition on national stage, and recognition by world church.

Read more about the Urban Mission Development Project at [www.urbanmission.org.uk](http://www.urbanmission.org.uk)

### ***The Pros and Cons of different types of Charity Structure – David Walton and Paula Smith***

David, who was Vice-president of the Methodist Conference during 2008/2009, is a partner in a firm of solicitors based in the north-west of England. Paula is a colleague of David and the law as it related to charities and other not-for-profit organisations is her speciality. A summary of their presentation is available in a [separate document](#).