

# Earlsdon Methodist Church Centenary Celebrations

April 2023 – April 2024

## A double celebration!

150 years ago Earlsdon village comprised eight streets. There was no church of any kind, no doctor and no school. In 1873 a group of Wesleyan Methodists began worshipping together in a disused ribbon factory in Cromwell Lane (now Berkeley Road South). A school was begun in the same building. The Methodist Church community began its life of worship and service. In 1884 the first purpose-built church was opened (now the Criterion Theatre). The day-school moved with them. Together spiritual and educational needs were being met for the people of Earlsdon. 50 years later, 1923, the church we all know on the corner of Earlsdon Avenue and Albany Road was opened. From April 2023 to April 2024 we celebrated the Centenary of this church, and 150 years of Methodism in Earlsdon.

## Our vision for the year

- To look back, relish and reflect on the church and its community.
- To examine where we are now and celebrate our presence in the community.
- To look forward to how we can use these celebrations to reach out and involve as many people as possible in our future.

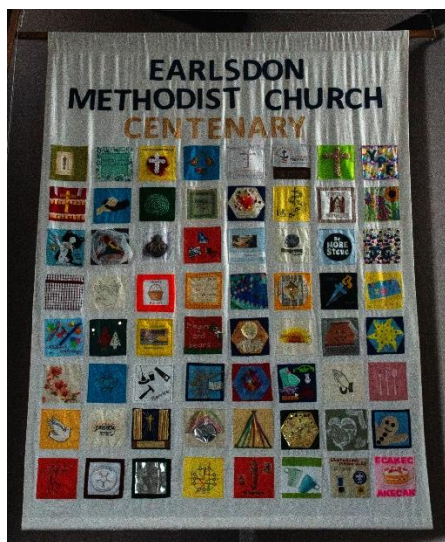
To reflect, and enable this vision to be achieved, entrance to all celebration events would be free of charge. This was made possible by a private donation and a grant from the circuit.

## February

### Fundraising and a banner

The year started with a concert to raise money to fund activities later in the year.

The congregation were also invited to each produce a textile square depicting what Earlsdon Methodist church means to them. These were stitched together to create a Centenary banner which now hangs at the front of the church



## April

### 30th April A service of celebration

This was led by Reverend Andrew de Ville, a former minister.

All who attended the service were given a crocheted cross bookmark (made by the prayer shawl ministry team) and a commemorative

order of service in a cover with pictures of the church buildings over the years.

After the service everyone assembled outside to dedicate our new centenary mural. The church community had commissioned local artist, Katie O, to paint a mural on the rear face of the church building. The design chosen is of a stained-glass window which features a central cross mirroring the cross on the windows at the front of the church, and colours echoing those in Coventry Cathedral's Baptistry window. The mural depicts the changing seasons in each quadrant.



The Reverend Doreen Koffie Williams prayed a blessing on the mural and on all who pass by and see it.

### April - continued

This was followed by a sit-down meal served to 100 guests in the church hall. This occasion included speeches and cutting a celebration cake.



There was a board of poignant and powerful memories written by past members. The names and photographs of all the clergy who had served the church since its first years were displayed in chronological order with an opportunity for people to add their own memories of individual clergy's participation in various "rites of passage" moments in their families' lives.

There was a detailed and interesting display about the Reverend Samuel Goodyer, minister in the church between 1916 – 1921. The Local History group were welcomed and contributed a display of some of their research pictures and documents.



### May

#### 1st – 6th May Memories Exhibition

This exhibition was timed to coincide with Earlsdon May Day Festival. In the church there was a unique display of materials, photographs and memories gathered from those who have been part of the life of the church or whose families have recollections that precede living memory.

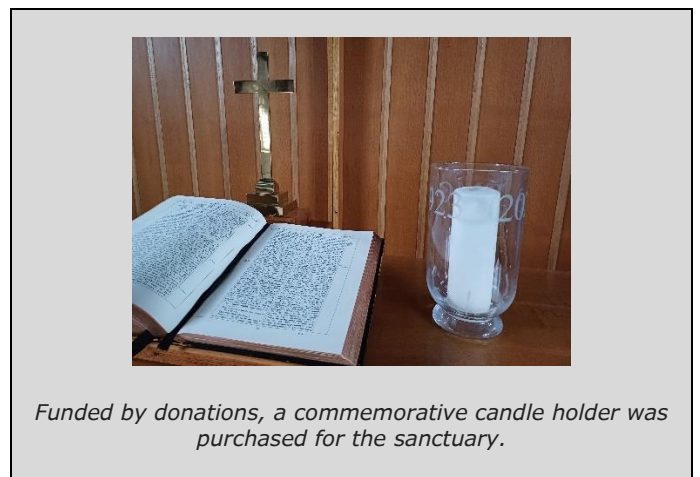
Members of the church had been interviewed and filmed over the previous few months, talking about their memories associated with Earlsdon Methodist church. A video of the interviews played on a loop throughout the day and was projected onto the front screen. The video included pictures of historical Earlsdon and some of the photographs included in the static display.

There was a timeline display which tracked the development of Earlsdon Methodist church buildings from Ribbon Factory to its current purpose built church. This included the architect's plans, photographs of building and development work and articles written over the years.

The myriad of photographs illustrating the lives of the people of the church were displayed under theme headings and organised by decade: music, uniformed organisations, Sunday school, fellowship, weddings, stewardship, sport and festivals. A very interesting display about the church organ was prepared and presented by the church organist.

A steady stream of people came through all day, looking for pictures of family members, fascinated by the changes in fashion over the years and reminiscing about events and people in their lives. Also in the church there was a range of table top activities for children while in the hall we continued the Methodist tradition of serving excellent tea and cakes.

**Sunday 28th May a choral concert** held in the church. The concert featured the London based LEOA Academic Male Voice Choir supported by the Coventry Male Voice Choir and introduced the church's own newly formed Centenary Choir. Everyone enjoyed a varied and entertaining programme of music.



*Funded by donations, a commemorative candle holder was purchased for the sanctuary.*



*June and July*

### **3rd June A Barbeque**

We welcomed shoppers, residents and anyone passing by, to a free barbeque. Dayspring 1 and 2, Resprung and Panache steel bands played. Over 150 people shared food and good company while listening to music from the steel bands in brilliant sunshine on the pavement outside the church on the corner of Albany Road.



### **17th June A strawberry tea.**

The BBQ success was repeated with a free tea party for Saturday shoppers. They were treated to strawberries and cream, fruit scones and plenty of Methodist tea, sitting outside and enjoying the good weather or the comfort inside the Wellspring Café area.



### **26th June – 2nd July Flower Festival**

Hundreds of flowers filled the Church. Paintings, embroidery, paper folding, knitting and many other crafts surrounded by fresh flowers decorated the church in a varied and colourful display celebrating everything floral.

Local organisations Earlsdon WI, Resource Centre for the Blind, Phoenix Stitchers, Friends of Spencer Park, Sing and Sign, the Govind Centre Art Group and the Gilbert Richards Centre exhibited the work of their members. Church groups entering displays included St Barbara's Busy B's, Hearsall Baptist and the Methodists' own Prayer Shawl Ministry. Well known local charities Pass the Smile for Ben and Palestine Awareness were there along with contributions from church members and individuals from the community.

There was an amazing seven foot high tower of sunflowers, a river of woollen flowers, a whole corner filled with beautiful paintings, lots and lots of flower arrangements and even the steel band had covered their music stands with flowers. A youth group had created bunting, there was a beautifully presented display of historic coronation mugs all filled with flowering plants and a clever arrangement of single flowers displayed in glass bud vases.

A local family spontaneously brought in bunches of flowers from their garden to share and a complete stranger donated a professional arrangement. The building smelled wonderful.

The church welcomed around 200 visitors enjoying the colour and scent and marvelling at the intricacy of many of the crafts on display. On leaving they were given ribbon decorated recycled mini jam-jars with a sprig of flowers all presented by a "waiter" built from old garden watering pipes.



*September*

### **9th September Heritage Weekend**

National Heritage Weekend was marked by repeating the Memories display from May

*October*

### **Saturday 14th October Cinema night**

A film evening was held in the style of 1923 when the church building was first opened. The church was decorated in Art Deco style to reflect cinema décor of the period and musical accompaniment to the two silent movies was provided by professional organist Donald MacKenzie from The Odeon in London. The films shown were "Steamboat Willie" starring Buster Keaton and "Pay Day" starring Charlie Chaplin. In true cinema style ice creams were available in the interval.

### October - continued

Some of the audience came dressed in clothes inspired by the fashions of the 1920s and a prize was given for the best outfit, which was judged by the organist.



The evening was voted a great success; the films were amazing and hugely funny, the organist's playing was spectacular and the décor (all recycled cardboard) was impressive.

### November

#### Saturday 18 November Concert

A concert organised to celebrate the church's service to the local community through the use of its buildings. All organisations with links to the church were invited to demonstrate their musical talents in a concert.

The performers, aged 8 to 80 plus, included Earlsdon Primary School Choir, Jill Purser Theatre School, EMC Worship Band, Steel Bands Dayspring 1 and 2, Resprung and Panache, the Ukulele Ladies and the Centenary Choir. Guests included a local councillor and the Lord Mayor who gave a well-received speech about the important role that faith groups such as EMC play in the life of local communities.

The church was filled to maximum capacity and those waiting to perform took advantage of the viewing windows and link to the sound system available in our upstairs rooms. The concert was a great success with everyone joining in the encore demanded of the final performers, Resprung Steel Band.

### December

#### 7th to 10th December Christmas Tree Festival

Held by EMC in various forms, for the last 30 years, the festival was made memorable for our centenary by setting the ambitious target of having at least 100 trees. Entries on a theme of Christmas past came from church groups, organisations that use the church buildings and

groups from the wider community. Exhibits ranged from traditional Christmas trees to innovative hand-crafted displays and were received from all age groups.

The final count totalled well over the 100 tree target as ingenious ways were found to include multiple trees in some of the entries.

During the four days of the festival we welcomed over 300 people through to the church to enjoy the trees, mince pies and a chat.



### February 2024

#### Saturday 3rd February Ceilidh

This featured a fabulous live band called Rack and Ruin, a professional band with an experienced caller. 100 free tickets were available and every ticket was claimed before the event.

The Ceilidh took place in the church hall which was cheerfully decorated with bunting. It was kicked off by a great demonstration dance given by an Adult Education Dance Group and from then on the dance floor remained full of people enthusiastic to take part. Importantly, the majority of people there came from the wider community.



The caller was impressive and very quickly had people learning the dances and their specific routines. In three hours the band only took a ten minute break and the energy and enthusiasm displayed by dancers and band alike was amazing.

The evening was very successful, and people left asking when the next one would be.

**Sunday 28 April 2024, an act of worship** led by Reverend Doreen Koffie Williams, followed by a meal, to draw to an end to a year of Centenary Celebrations. A time to reflect and look forward