

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. That 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 our 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.

April 2023

30th April A service of celebration led by Reverend Andrew de Ville, a former minister.

All who attended the service were given a crocheted cross book mark (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 the back of the church in front of the newly commissioned mural. The church community had commissioned a local artist, Katy O, to paint a mural on the rear face of the church building. The design chosen is of a stain glass window, which features a central cross, mirroring the cross on the windows at the front of the church, and the colours which feature in the windows of Coventry's cathedral Baptistry window, and featuring the changing seasons in each quadrant. The Reverend Doreen Koffie Williams prayed a blessing on the mural and it's impact on all who pass by and see it.

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

May 2023

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. The video of the interviews played on a loop throughout the day and was projected onto the front screen. The video included pictures of the historical Earlsdon and some of the photographs included in the static display.

There was a time line display which tracked the development of Earlsdon Methodist church buildings from Ribbon Factory to its' current purpose built church. This included architects 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, festivals.

A very interesting display about the church organ was prepared and presented by the church organist

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 it's first years were displayed in chronological order with an opportunity for people write, and pin to the board, their memories of individual clergy's participation in various "rites of passage" moments in the 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

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.

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, who were celebrating their 75th anniversary, and 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.

June and July 2023

3rd June A Barbeque welcoming 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, once again sitting outside and enjoying the good weather or enjoying the comfort of 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 another lady arrived with a professional looking arrangement of white flowers and foliage. The building smelled wonderful.

The event showcased photography, cake decorating, a study of the symbolism of flowers, a new skill of felt flower making learned during lockdown, a tapestry worked twenty years ago to a vase of tissue paper blooms specially created and a panel of flowers made from old coffee percolator filters during a children's craft day.

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 2023

9th September Heritage Weekend National Heritage Weekend was marked by repeating the Memories display originally shown in May

October 2023

Saturday 14th October

A cinema night 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.

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 films shown were Steam Boat Willie starring Buster Keaton and Pay Day starring Charlie Chaplin

In true cinema style ice creams were available in the interval.

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

November 2023

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+ were: Earlsdon Primary School Choir; Jill Purser Theatre School; the Worship Band; Steel Bands Dayspring 1 and 2, Resprung and Panache; the Ukulele Ladies; the Centenary Choir,

The evening was attended by the Lord Mayor and a councillor. The Lord Mayor gave a well received speech before the second half speaking of the important role faith groups such as EMC play in the life of local communities.

The church was filled to maximum capacity and those waiting to perform were able to take advantage of the viewing windows, and link to the sound system, available in the upstairs rooms.

The concert was a great success and this was reflected by the encore demanded of the final performers, Resprung Steel Band.

December 2023

7th to 10th December Christmas Tree Festival

Earlsdon Methodist Church has had a Christmas festival in various forms, for the last 30 years so to make it memorable for our church centenary, we set the ambitious target of having at least 100 trees with a suggested theme of Christmas past.

Entries came from church groups, groups that use the church buildings and also groups from the wider community, and ranged from decorated Christmas trees to hand crafted displays from all age groups

In total we had 38 individual entries. The final tree count, including all the hanging tree cutouts, the covers on the music stands and multiple trees on some of the entries, totalled over the 100 tree target in the church for the festival.

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 featuring a fabulous live band called Rack and Ruin.

Rack and Ruin is 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 for the event.

The evening 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. (The caller was also impressed at the speed with which the dancers were picking up on his instructions!)

The event started at 7pm and ended at 10pm. 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.

April 2024

Sunday 28 April, an act of worship followed by a meal, to draw to an end to a year of Centenary Celebrations. A time to reflect and look forward.

The Centenary celebration Review. The final entry

The Future

The Centenary committee informally reviewed the year against our self-imposed criteria of organising events which, involved, invited and welcomed people from the wider community served by Earlsdon Methodist Church to attend and /or participate in.

It was felt that, over all, this criteria had been successfully met, with the possible exception of the Heritage Weekend exhibition which was poorly attended. This poor attendance could probably be attributed to the fact that it was merely a repeat of that held in May.

We felt strongly encouraged to carry many of the events forward into 2024, and probably beyond. Specifically

- Barbeque
- Strawberry cream tea
- Ceilidh
- Christmas tree festival
- Film night
- Concert
- Heritage Weekend

It was acknowledged that any future Ceilidh or Film Night would need to be self-financed through ticket sales

The concert was very successful and well attended, and is worth repeating in the future but not necessarily every year

A theme "A Celebration of Creativity" was proposed for participating in the Heritage Weekend this year. This idea was very positively received.

Across the 18 month period of planning and delivering the events the Committee included: Lois (chair), Rev Doreen, Penny and Adrian McAinsh, David and Lynda Pinks, Helen and Bill Holdforth, Gill and Tim Weller, Heather and David Mills, Steve Fox, Eve Cooper, Tim Jefferies