

PURTON METHODIST CHURCH

A history of Methodism in Purton, from 1740 to October 2010

The first record we have of any Methodist presence in Purton says that on 3rd June 1740 John Wesley (the founder of Methodism) rode on horseback between Oxford and Bristol, and in Purton he 'ate and conversed'. There were several other similar journeys, but these journeys are not so well documented, and July 1741 is the only other definite visit to Purton. As Oxford and Bristol were John Wesley's main centres of work outside London, Purton would have been ideally placed for the direct visits and also the follow on work from other emerging Methodist congregations in North Wiltshire. It is therefore a little surprising to have to wait over 100 years before we find further documented reference.

1843 was the year when the first Methodist chapel was opened in 'the Row'. This original chapel was replaced by the **Upper Square Methodist Church** at Mount Pleasant in 1856 and was part of the Primitive Methodist movement.

The Wesleyan Methodist movement in Purton had its first chapel at the Playclose in 1866, and this was replaced by the **Playclose Methodist Church** in 1882.

Over the years both churches flourished, but in 1932 Methodist Union took place and the titles of Primitive and Wesleyan became history - but because of their strengths both continued to meet separately. However, both congregations came together gradually in the late 1960s and early 1970s when Playclose moved from the Swindon Circuit to join with Upper Square in the Brinkworth and Wootton Bassett Circuit.

Purton Methodist Church was formed in 1973 after a process which included both congregations merging, renovating the Church building in the Playclose for all future use, and closing the church in Hoggs Lane (now a house).

We continue to meet here after 167 years of Methodism in Purton.

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Purton Methodist Church today

Like most organisations today, Purton Methodist Church has to have its mission statement as required by central Methodism. Ours is: - **“to Pray, Praise and Proclaim the love of God”** and this we do by

- worshipping together,
- encouraging one another,
- witnessing to the community, and
- serving the community.

Some ways in which we do this include

- Services
- Prayer
- Children and Youth Work
- Fellowship
- Study Groups
- Lunches
- Charity Fund Raising
- Coffee and Chat
- etc, etc,

and so many of these we now combine with St Mary's, again showing our commitment to the LEP.

Our Minister is **Rev Steve Cullis**, who lives in Wootton Bassett, and has responsibility for Purton Methodist Church, and also the Methodist Churches in Wootton Bassett and Braydon - all part of the Upper Thames Methodist Circuit. Our Youth Worker is **Beth Trendell**, who lives in Purton, and works with all these churches. Her employment is funded by these churches, together with St Mary's.

Our membership currently numbers 23, with many other 'adherents', and our Sunday morning service averages around 24.

We welcome any others who would like to join with us.

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Purton Churches Together

In 1974, Rev Anthony Keast (Methodist) and Rev Roy Blake (Anglican) both moved to Purton and they led the initiative for both Purton Methodist and St Mary's congregations to start to work together for the first time.

This has developed over many years with a confidence on both sides to explore options and to take chances with new ventures. The result was the decision to form a Local Ecumenical Partnership between the two churches, with the official recognition being the signing of a Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) Covenant in 1999 when Rev Roger Faulkner was the Methodist Minister and Rev Brian Fessey was the Anglican Vicar.

This Covenant commits both churches

to seek to work together .. even though .. together we cannot foresee the form it will eventually take

- a commitment we continue to explore.

Copies of this Covenant can be seen in both churches.

Some of the initiatives that have been developed are

- United Services
- Coffee and Chat
- United Junior Church
- Pram Service
- Youth work – Rock Solid, and Granite
- Purton Magazine (now run separately from the churches)
- Joint Confirmation
- Bible study groups
- Prayer groups and prayer chain
- Christian Aid
- Lent Lunches and groups
- etc, etc

In 2010, the Methodist Minister is Rev Steve Cullis, and there has been an inter-regnum at the Anglican Church since January 2010.

The staff meet regularly, and we also have a Partnership Enabling Group (PEG) from both churches which meets several times each year – all to discuss the ongoing work of the two churches within the village and our outreach to other areas in the world.

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And what of the future?

Our mission statement includes '....

**we value our traditions and heritage but also wish to explore new ways,
so as to be relevant in our modern society
(keeping the best of the old but introducing the best of the new).**

Our LEP Covenant includes

'..we confess our Faith in One God ..guiding His Church, the Body of Christ, into all truth.'

***With the world changing so quickly in so many ways,
we trust God to lead us forward
as we know that He has the answer.***

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Our regular events are:-

Sunday	10.30am 10.30am 6.00pm	Service United Junior Church Holy Communion Service - once a month as advertised	at Junior School Lower Hall
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Wednesday	10.00am - noon	Coffee and Chat	at Silver Threads Hall
Wednesday	2.30pm	Methodist Women's Fellowship - once a month	at Hooks Hill
Wednesday	6.30 – 8.00pm	Rock Solid (youth club for years ??)	

Thursday	2.30pm	Pram Service	
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Friday	7.30 – 9.00pm	Granite (youth club for years 7 – 9) - alternate weeks	at Purton Youth Club
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also regular group meetings for Prayer and Bible Study
..... and other events through out the year

**Further details from
Minister – Rev Steve Cullis (tel 01793 853197) or members of the congregation**
