

# Annual Report 2006/07

## Pirton Methodist Church

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**Charitable Status:** Pirton Methodist Church is not a registered charity; however, it does have charitable status. It is exempted from registration by Statutory Instrument 2002 Number 1598.

**Managing Trustees:** Revd Philip Turner (Minister), Ann Wilshere (Senior Church Steward), Barbara Bruce (Steward), Helen Hofton (Church Council Secretary), Diane Bailey, Ian Brackenbury (Treasurer), Vera Thrussell, Brian Burgess (Circuit Steward to August 2007) and Helen Dearn (Circuit Steward from September 2007).

## Aims

The Church exists to exercise the whole ministry of Christ. It does this through its Membership and larger church community, working closely with the North Hertfordshire Methodist Circuit and the Parish Church of St Mary's, Pirton.

## Priorities

Pirton Methodist Church is committed to the priority of the Methodist Church in Great Britain: To proclaim and affirm its conviction of God's love in Christ, for us and for all the world; and renew confidence in God's presence and action in the world and in the Church. The future of the Pirton Methodist Church is closely connected with forthcoming decisions regarding the use and repair of the chapel, hall and surrounding property. Pirton Methodist Church's Interim Vision Statement is to hold on to the chapel building and develop it as a place of wider worship and community use. It is acknowledged that decisions will need to be made and funds will need to be found to achieve this vision.

## Organisation

The Church Council has authority and oversight over the whole area of the ministry of the church, including the management of its property. The Church Council is constituted to unite those who hold responsibility in the church in one working community. All Managing Trustees are members of the Church Council and they welcome the contribution of Members and non-Members at meetings.

# Review of progress and achievements

## 1. Worship & Membership

Membership remains at 15. Between 15 and 20 people attend worship each week. In 2006/7 there were five funerals and no baptisms. Pirton Methodist Church continues to enjoy the variety of worship led by preachers planned by the North Herts Methodist Circuit.

## 2. Centenary

In 2006/7 has been the centenary year of the chapel building. Many successful celebratory village events have been held, including a Christmas Tree Festival, Bring and Sing, Shrove Tuesday Lunch in the Village Hall, a Strawberry Tea on the Village Green, a Birthday Tea Party and a special anniversary service at Pentecost. Plant, books and chapel preserves continue to be sold.

## 3. Social Group

This group meets monthly for people in sympathy with the chapel. Ideas emerge from the meetings and volunteers take on tasks of organizing and running events, adding £4,000 to building funds.

## 4. Hopes & Dreams

Early in the year Deacon Sheralee Ashby posed three questions:

- a. Where do you already see God working?
- b. What hopes has He laid on your heart for this Church?
- c. Is there anything stopping God working through us?

Responses are being recorded in the 'Hopes & Dreams' book.

## 5. Ecumenism

The Pirton Methodist/St Mary's Liaison Group continues to meet to foster good relationships and promote joint activities by the two village churches. Again, Lent Groups were well attended.

## 6. Child Protection

Self-disclosure forms have been completed by all keyholders and by everyone appointed to an office, duty and responsibility within the church. Consistent with health and safety good practice, we encourage no one to be on church premises alone.

## 7. Use of Property

In an effort to find a use for the disused Church Hall, the Managing Trustees appointed Barker Parry Town Planning as a consultant. Two main aspects of advice are worth highlighting.

- a. In deciding to hold on to the chapel building, the church community has not reduced the potential or the value of its property. To quote from the report,

*In effect it is one single open space lit by almost completely obscured stained glass windows. Even if a user for a space like this could be found the lack of outlook could cause problems and I suspect that you would have considerable difficulty in balancing a new user with the constraints imposed and thereby achieving a realistic value for the property. Furthermore, viewing the site as a whole does not really make matters easier in seeking a new use for the for the rear part of the site because even if the church moves out of the building it is still a listed structure in a Conservation Area which necessarily impinges upon the potential of the hall site. From a planning point of view I can, therefore, see no particular benefit in you considering disposal/vacating the entire site.*

- b. If it can be proved that there is insufficient demand for a community village facility of the size of the Church Hall and surrounding land, residential purposes (in keeping with the church architecture) are the most obvious best use.

As a result of this advice, an informal approach was made to the NHDC Listed Buildings Officer to seek an initial reaction for two almshouse-type dwellings sensitive to both the conservation area and the listed chapel building. In March correspondence was received advising that it would be very unlikely that residential development of the Church Hall and surrounding land would be granted planning permission due to conservation concerns. The Managing Trustees are seeking advice regarding its options.

## 8. Development of Property

Representatives of the Managing Trustees have met with three architects regarding how to address the significant weaknesses of the current state of the property, namely no running water, toilet or kitchen facilities. Representatives also met with Ian Serjeant (Conservation/Listed Buildings Office for the Methodist Church) and Ian Hume (Property Secretary for the Beds, Essex & Herts Methodist District). They each encouraged Pirton Methodist Church to wider its vision. With regards to property, the Managing Trustees agreed a three point brief:

- a. Enable a warm welcome and hospitality for regular worship and special events, in particular providing an accessible toilet, a food preparation area, a redesigned entrance and consideration of renewed roadside advertising

- b. Provide a comfortable and flexible space for worship and special events, in particular improve seating, lighting, heating and facilities for those with hearing difficulties.
- c. Enhance the internal visual appeal, in particular to reconsider worship focus potentially including situation of pulpit, communion rail and organ.

9. Maintenance & Risk Assessment

A quinquennial inspection was carried out in February 2007. The following recommendations were made:

- a. Urgently repair roof and plaster
- b. Redecorate south side window frame and repoint various areas of brickwork
- c. On going maintenance and provision of toilets and disabled access.

On behalf of Pirton Methodist Church Brian Burgess provided a Fire Risk Assessment free of charge. Three action points were raised:

- a. Testing of all portable electrical equipment annually
- b. Position escape rout signage over internal chapel door
- c. Display Employers Liability Insurance Certificate in front entrance.

A Property Maintenance Committee will address these issues.

10. Financial Summary

<b>INCOME</b>	£	<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	£
- Grant & Loan	20071	- Structural Repairs	19963
- Offerings & Tax Recovered <sup>1</sup>	8986	- Circuit Assessment	3560
- Fundraising	7331	- Loan Repayment	2,000
- Bank Interest	217	- Utilities	1197
		- General Repairs	880
		- Charitable Donations <sup>3</sup>	222
		- Other	484
<b>TOTAL<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>36605</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28,306</b>

<sup>1</sup> Gift Aid last year allowed Pirton Methodist Church to recover £1,337. Any tax payers who would like to gift aid their offerings are encouraged to fill out a simple gift aid form which is available from members of the Church council.

<sup>2</sup> Money in the bank on 31 August 2007 was £18,464 (of which £8,000 is a circuit loan repayable at £2,000 per annum over the next 4 years).

<sup>3</sup> An extra £738 of Charitable Donations were made (Christian Aid, World Mission, Home Mission, NCH and MHA) but paid after 31/08/07. Any suggestions for charitable donations for 2007/8 will be gratefully received.