

Bromsgrove & Redditch Circuit of the Methodist Church

A short description of each of the churches of the Circuit

This document contains a short description of each of the Churches in the Bromsgrove & Redditch Circuit of the Methodist Church. Each church was invited to provide a description in their own words and in their own way. Thus, what follows is not uniform in its content and layout. We hope it provides a flavour of how each church sees itself. Further understanding of each church can be found on the Circuit website and on individual church websites and Facebook pages where they have them. The best way to get to know the church and congregations is by joining them in person for Sunday services and on other occasions where church members and the community gather.

Churches are listed in alphabetical order.

ALCESTER

Alcester Methodist Church

'an inclusive, welcoming community of faith: caring, learning, worshipping and serving together to share the good news of Christ'

Alcester is a small but friendly church. The membership is primarily elderly with an average congregation of 12-15 who are accepting of both traditional and informal worship. We have a monthly café style service and Local Arrangement services to which our wider church family are invited.

During the week, the building is used for various activities. Merry Wives (local women group) Tai chi classes and Alcoholics Anonymous are our outside users along with our own Tuesday Open Morning which has a regular attendance of 25 plus and a Bereavement Journey course which is run 3-4 times a year. Both the Open Morning and Bereavement Journey welcome many from the local community. There is also a small bible study which meets in a member's home on a weekly basis.

Recently we have begun a journey of improving our building after observations about internal and external doors, steps and an aging congregation. The first phase which was completed in April 2024, was to lower the worship area floor for better access and to give more room to the groups that meet in the building as our worship area is multi-functional. The second phase it to begin shortly with the porch extension and further cupboard storage.

Alcester is a Roman market town which is 8 miles south of Redditch that has grown considerably over the past 20 years. It has a good community spirit: there is always something going on and although it is a mainly affluent area there are pockets of deprivation. The church also plays a significant role in the town's active Churches Together group.

BROMSGROVE

Bromsgrove Methodist Church seeks to honour God in worship, prayer and service.

The medium size congregation worships mainly in a traditional manner with organ accompaniment and once a month the worship band lead the music. We have a worship team who lead local arrangement services in a variety of innovative ways. Housegroups, including one for the hard of hearing, are held regularly whilst Bible Study Groups meet at special times e.g. Lent. A Morning Prayer Broadcast is offered each day via the internet. Services are regularly recorded and broadcast. The church website contains information including a copy of the bimonthly FORUM magazine.

The foyer of the church houses the Welcome café which is open 4 mornings a week and on alternative Saturdays. Hot snacks, drinks and cakes are available and a chatty table is available for anyone who wishes to enjoy conversation in keeping with our designation as a Safe Space. Community Police Officers regularly attend to talk to anyone with concerns.

A variety of social events are organized by the Social and Fundraising committee e.g. Concerts and film nights.

A number of church and community groups use the premises throughout the week, catering for differing ages and needs.

The primary mission outreaches this year has focused on two new projects. A Ukrainian Café, serving traditional dishes and staffed by refugees, raises money to support children in the Ukraine. The Memory Changes Café has also been established to welcome those living with memory challenges and their carers.

CATSHILL

We are a friendly congregation made up of people who have lived in the village all of their lives, and those who have found a home here.

We have a big heart for community and outreach and have many groups as well as Sunday worship. For example, Busy Bee- crafting group, Rendezvous group - meet, learn and trips, a busy coffee shop, an eco-group, carers group, growing choirs, prayer, social and Aradhana bible study groups.

Our Church is a leading part of the village team that works to make Catshill a lovely place working alongside other ecumenical churches to support activities throughout the year. We are encouraged to talk Jesus to everyone we meet. We really enjoyed doing the Christmas Experience, hence a repeat this year - telling the story to local school children, our rainbows and brownies and congregation.

We are a sight loss friendly and sensory church with benefits for our oldest and youngest members particularly. We believe all are welcome and like to make everyone feel at home.

We support sustainability projects across the world as well as more local charities.

We are a connexionally minded church, active at a local, district and national level.

We sit in the café style for our worship, incorporating plants and our ongoing eco church ethos.

We enjoy many different types of worship, from band led mission praise services, to traditional worship, we like to be challenged by the lectionary with something to ponder throughout our week.

CRABBS CROSS

Crabbs Cross Methodist Church is based in a modern building from the 1980's, extended and refurbished in 2007 to comply with Disability Act legislation.

We are an older church family with a core membership of twenty-five and growing, with thirty or more average attendance at services.

There is a strong bond within the congregation, who are recognised as being welcoming both to worshippers and preachers. Over the years we have established an excellent pastoral visitors' system.

A community garden on land adjoining the church is maintained by the congregation with occasional gardening support from the community. It is planted with flowering plants, shrubs and fruit trees. There is seating and the public are encouraged to use the area for reflection and are welcome to pick the fruit. We have held several community garden parties and outdoor services in this space.

The church hosts several groups during the week. On Wednesday afternoons there is a Drop-In group for people with emotional and mental fragility, run by our outreach worker. This offers a range of activities including bingo, arts and crafts, music, cooking, picnics, theatre trips and seasonal short acts of worship.

On Thursdays we hold a Pop-in group for people to come for chat, tea and cake.

We are developing a quarterly outreach gathering with food to discuss "Big Questions" which relate to the Christian faith and spirituality in its broadest sense.

The church has two long-standing hirers, Redditch Choral Society and a Slimmers' World group. The Seventh-Day Adventist uses the building for services on Saturdays.

FOREST SPACE

When the Methodist Church adopted "God for All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth" to expand its commitment to be an inclusive, growing, evangelistic and justice-seeking Church, this Circuit responded in faith by saying 'Yes', but didn't know when, or where, or how. By 2023 answers had become clearer, and Peckwood Forest Space became one of the first Circuit-led NPNPs in the Connexion. The New Place for New People is located in the village of Rowney Green, 10 minutes' drive from Redditch. Its home is 19 acres of woodland which has been owned by the Methodist Church for 80 years. During that time it has been used as a holiday centre for young people (the work of the NPNP runs parallel to this ongoing work). It is overseen by a Pioneer Minister (currently a Methodist Presbyterian) together with a team of lay people. The emphasis in this ancient place is to glimpse God through nature, and to encourage everyone who comes to find space to tune in to creation, to one another, and to God. There are regular monthly gatherings: Seeds & Saplings

(our version of Muddy Church), Wandering & Wondering provides space and time for people to ... wander and wonder, and share a light lunch with conversation. Sunday Forest Church gatherings throughout the year mark solstices, equinoxes and other seasonal changes, and worship is influenced by Celtic liturgy including sharing around the campfire. The first eighteen months has brought new people into this fledgling community, friendships are forming, trust is growing, and God is very much present.

LICKEY END

ADDRESS: Lickey End Methodist Church, Alcester Road, Lickey End, Bromsgrove. B60 1JX

LOCATION: What used to be a village (before the building of estates) is now a 'suburb' of Bromsgrove, one mile from the town centre. It is a residential area, which is judged to be 'relatively affluent'.

The Church is the only worshipping community in the locality - the nearest are All Saints (C of E) one mile to the south in Bromsgrove, and Catshill Methodist Church one mile to the north.

The Church is in the middle of the Work Men's Club, 'The Forest' (an 'eatery'), the village shop (open 7 am to 9 pm) and two other shop outlets – one vacant at present and one a tanning shop.

The Community Defibrillator is on the wall of our building and is maintained by the Church.

THE CHURCH BUILDING: Worship area 33 ft x 18 ft, with a 'good' organ. 'Back Room' 20 ft x 20 ft.

Disabled/Ladies toilet, Gents toilet, kitchen 15ft x 9 ft. Entrance area/vestibule 15 ft x 12 ft. A secluded Church Garden 16 yards x 16 yards, with sheds and a covered 'story area.' Church car park for 12 to 15 cars (100 yards to the north by the M 42 island), and two spaces on the front of the building.

The building is 'let' on a one-year lease to a (commercial) Play Group, weekdays 8 am to 4.30 pm

THE CHURCH COMMUNITY: Regular worship varies between 10 and 16. There are 17 members, of whom 13 are 'active' in the Church – 3 members have recently moved away from the area (but have not yet transferred membership) and one is in residential care.

Of the active members: 30's (1) 70's (6) 80's (3) 90's (3). Three members live in the village, within walking distance of the building, with the others accessing by car.

We meet at 10 30 am on Sundays, with 'Specials' on Christmas Day morning, Harvest Festival etc.

Our Church Family is more comfortable with a traditional 'Methodist – type' service.

THE CHURCH AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY: A member organises a 'community meal' on the first Saturday of each month (between 25 and 40 attend). She also organises a 'Tea Coffee and Cake' afternoon on the third Saturday of the month (12 to 20 attend) both events are very successful.

There is a 'Christmas Tree Event' and plans to 'do' something during Easter time.

The mission of the Church is focussed on older people because most of our 'Family' are old (in years.)

We are not a 'closed-minded' group, so we are open to other ideas for Mission.

ROWNEY GREEN

Rowney Green Shared Church is located in a village in the north-east of Worcestershire. It is an LEP (Methodist/Anglican) which meets in the former 19th century Wesleyan Chapel and seats around 40 in pews. A Methodist Presbyterian has pastoral charge, but the congregation is made up of both Methodists and Anglicans. In recent years the distinction between denominations has become less important, and people see themselves as belonging to 'the chapel'. When Covid hit, the future was looking bleak for the chapel; the weekly congregation was dwindling, and post-Covid it was uncertain as to what the future might be. Finding people to hold office and take on necessary roles had proven difficult but the congregation had gathered on-line to worship, and there was a deep sense that the fellowship and worship of the chapel was too precious to lose. Not ready to close the chapel doors permanently, it was decided to trial monthly worship. The worship is traditional and sacramental, but informal and relaxed in its style and expression. Since that time the congregation has grown and there are, at the time of writing, over 20 worshippers gathering each month, including children. New families have joined the congregation and there have been baptisms. We believe that God is not finished with Rowney Green and the church community has committed to joining in with God in seeking to build more relationships in the village by opening the doors of the chapel for 'Saturday Chat-tea'. A place for small-talk to turn into soul-talk.

ST ANDREWS

St Andrew's Church

We aim to feed the community of Church Hill, physically, mentally and spiritually.

St Andrew's church, in the centre of Church Hill in Redditch, is a friendly and inclusive community church. We are eager to continue to engage with the wider community around the estate by serving others partly through food - with love, care and friendship.

The style of worship of our weekly service is a mix of modern and traditional and includes a monthly café style service. We also have a weekly prayer group. St Andrews's church opened in 1984. It has a multi-functioning main worship area with a screen fitted with a digital webcam, and two more rooms. Our small church congregation has members between 30s to 70s. We occasionally have children and children's activities are provided. In the future our mission plan is to renew and grow children's ministry and we will do this with the help of a Missional Enabler in 2025.

A variety of local community groups use the building, The church café 'Light Bites' is our ongoing part of mission and outreach initiative and is open on Wednesdays and Fridays. We support the Shoebox appeal and regularly contribute to the Food Bank.

St. Andrews is a member of Churches Together in Redditch and some of our members are in an ecumenical Puppetry group. Locally we also engage fortnightly with schools in Church Hill through Open the Book and support the Church Hill Big Local Partnership.

STUDLEY

Studley Methodist Church strives to love God, community, each other, through Worship, Learning, Service, Caring, and Mission.

Our weekly Sunday congregation of approx 17-20, values the richness of worship that is provided by the circuit ministers and local preachers.

A worship team regularly plans local arrangements.

Audio visual resources including screen and camera system allows the Sunday service to be live streamed via YouTube most Sundays.

Our weekly "Warm Welcome" outreach to the community provides a safe hub for folk to drop in for a coffee or stay the whole morning which finishes with a simple soup and bread lunch. On average over the last year there have been 12 people gathered weekly round the table with the focus being on friendship and care.

Pastoral care includes:

- Regular visiting/phone calls
- CAMEO group

As a member of Studley Churches Together we work collaboratively sharing:

- Week of prayer for Christian Unity
- Lent Courses,
- Walk of Witness,
- Christian Aid
- Remembrance Sunday
- At Community events

The Church Community Outreach Worker and Stewards Team has developed links with the wider community and are actively involved in:

- Hosting the quarterly Community Workers Network meeting.
- Working alongside Auntie Jenn Productions to host Community Christmas Meal and Pantomime
- Coordinating and hosting the Annual Christmas Tree Festival

We are proud of our Church building which forms:

- Sanctuary Space (including a kitchenette and disabled toilet)
- Community room and kitchen with outdoor courtyard space

The building is the home to:

- Arden Foodbank
- Studley Art Group
- Studley Community Choir

THE BRIDGE

The Bridge Church is a Methodist/Anglican Single Congregation LEP in the Headless Cross area of Redditch. The church is served by a Methodist Presbyterian and Anglican Priest who share the leadership and oversight of the church. The premises are spread over three buildings, a Victorian church (which is one of the more unusual and elaborately designed churches by Frederick Preedy), a modern and airy Church & Community Hall, and a former house, known as No. 71, which has been converted into a suite of offices. Worship at The Bridge is diverse rather than broad, led over a typical month by each of its clergy, the local lay Bridge Ministry Team and a Circuit Local Preacher. There is a mid-week Eucharist, and once a month a mid-week prayer and praise for Under 5s. The church anticipates reintroducing an alternative style of intergenerational worship to fill a gap left when its Café Church ceased to meet post-Covid. The mission and outreach of the church is extensive and draws people from both the surrounding area and across the town. On Thursday and Friday mornings the Charity Shop & Café not only raises money for charities but also provides a warm space for people to enjoy conversation and companionship. The Bridge Church is home to the 1st Redditch Boys' and Girls' Brigade Companies. A Quest Group meets fortnightly to help people with the challenge of loss and bereavement. The church enjoys a flourishing relationship with the local CoE First School. The premises are well used throughout the week by local community groups hiring the hall.