



For adults, there are weekly Weight Watchers classes, a Fitness Club, Pilates, Tai Chi, Cocaine Anon, Trefoil Guild, Craft & Chatter and Keep Fit.

The National Trust and the Chislehurst Society use the church facilities for their regular meetings and the National Blood Services use the church as a collection point every six weeks.

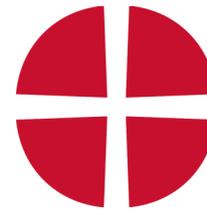
The use of the church for non-religious purposes strengthens the sense of community for the people of Chislehurst. It highlights the church's acceptance of people of other religions and those of no religion and shows that the church can bring people together.

Before writing this article, we were given the opportunity to meet some of the long standing members of the church who were attending one of the Thursday midday services. We were greeted with a warm welcome and discussed their belief that the church has transformed and grown since they first started attending.

There was unanimous agreement that there is now a far wider variety of clubs and places to try out new pastimes - it was evident that the church had brought a wonderful group of people together and continues to do this to the best of its ability.

We were astonished to find that some of the congregation had been attending the church for over fifty years! This showed us what an important part the church plays in the life of the people of the congregation. It can act as a second home; somewhere to mingle and meet new people with similar values. Watching everybody sitting together and having lunch is something we will not forget. Our visit confirmed for us how much of a stabilizing and nurturing effect the Chislehurst Methodist Church has on people's lives.

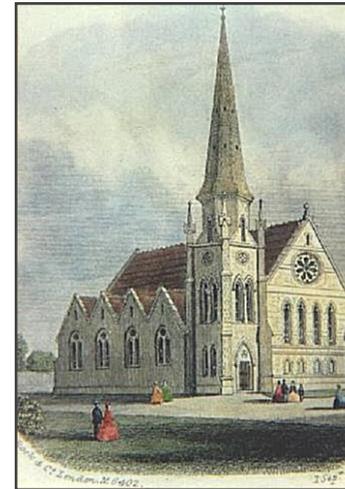
The people who come to worship are from many cultures and backgrounds. There is a sense that together they are on the same journey and together they open their doors to welcome so many more people of even greater diversity. This is a place where people can come and converse, connect, and rejoice in one another's company as well as finding a connection with God. The Chislehurst Methodist Church acts as a symbol of the love that binds everybody together in the community and so we celebrate its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary and encourage you to continue attending the church. If you have not yet visited, the family at the Church will welcome you with open arms.



# The Chislehurst Methodist Church 150 Year Anniversary

By Tara Tate and Lily Buttery, Farringtons School

The Chislehurst Methodist Church has been a focal point of the Chislehurst community for 150 years. The building has undergone many changes to meet the needs of the community, and this article pays tribute to the faithful congregation who have been stewards of this magnificent church.



The church was built in 1868-70 and the original construction cost was £5800.

The interior of the main church is typical of a Victorian gothic revival church paying homage to the early English period, as seen in the lancet style windows, carvings and decorative details found within the building. This style of church was designed to depict the world in microcosm and is littered with symbols of nature and the environment we all inhabit. The wooden panels, the stone carvings and the beautifully designed stained glass windows are a mix of Gothic Revival, Modernist and Victorian and Arts and Crafts styles.

There is no clear evidence as to who the architect of the Methodist church was as there are no original drawings, but comparison with other English churches of the same period suggest it is the work of Mr William Butterfield, a prolific English designer of churches and a member of the Ecclesiastical Society.



For members and visitors alike, one of the favourite aspects of the church is its beauty and architecture. There is a breath-taking relief behind the altar, portraying the Last Supper.

The Wesley Room was added in 1936 and was built as a Sunday School classroom. The Epworth Room, main hall and concourse were added during the 1960's and the dazzling glass roofed foyer, The Courtyard, joined the main hall and completed the church in 2011.

There have been some changes: the original church hall is now used as the church office and the pews in the main church were removed in 2011 to make way for some amazing changes. Chairs have replaced the pews, which has brought the congregation closer together. When the chairs are removed, a beautifully tiled floor is revealed.



One of the most appealing improvements to the church is the underfloor heating! Aside from the added warmth, the floor also has a labyrinth constructed out of the tiles on the floor. This was installed in 2011, making the Chislehurst Methodist Church the first, and to date, the only Methodist church in the UK to have a permanent indoor labyrinth.

Even though labyrinths originally date from long before the birth of Christ, they have been adopted by the Christian Church as a wonderful way of experiencing a shortened pilgrimage.

The pathway of the labyrinth in the Chislehurst Methodist Church is cream with terracotta walls and has an unusual

double track. This means that there is a clear way into the centre, and a clear way back out of the labyrinth. This journey to the centre and then out again represents a journey of connecting with our inner self, or with God, and then returning to the external world, with the gift of having had time to meditate or to pray along the way. The installation of the labyrinth gave rise to the motto of the Church: "Journeying with God".

There is a long line of Ministers who have served the congregation in Chislehurst. Reverend Duncan MacBean is the minister of the church and also the Superintendent Minister of the Orpington and Chislehurst Methodist Circuit. He is highly regarded by the members of the church and is a very caring man who devotes his time to the church and the people who go there.



The Chislehurst Methodist Church has been a pillar of strength in the community for 150 years and its nurturing, inclusive and caring presence has had a positive impact on the surrounding area. For instance, Farringtons School has had close ties with the church and, before there was a Chapel on the grounds of Farringtons School, the students would regularly walk to the Chislehurst Methodist Church for services and to pray and participate in the activities of the church. The church is only a five minute walk from Farringtons School and is located in the centre of Chislehurst, making it very accessible for the community.

Services are held on Sundays at 10:30am, and Junior Church, which runs concurrently with the service, gives children wonderful opportunities to develop their faith in fun and dynamic ways.

We spoke to Harrison from Farringtons School, who attends Junior Church regularly, and he spoke very highly of the church. He loves interacting with the Bible teachings which are discussed in the service: "it makes everything so much clearer and it's a lot of fun!" There is also a Messy Church which gathers once a month on a Saturday and a Boys' Brigade which Harrison highly recommends. Harrison told us it was a great place to make friends and to have fun!



Harrison's class mate, Jessica, interviewed Harrison about the Chislehurst Methodist Church to find out more about what it is like to attend and the similarities between it and our Farringtons chapel. Jessica decided that her favorite activities are singing the hymns and listening to the Bible stories. Jessica felt that she would love to visit the church herself, to see its beautiful stained glass windows in all the colours of the rainbow.

An additional community, the Fijian Methodist Fellowship, meet on the first two Sundays of every month and there are various other church groups that use the facilities during the week. The longest standing group is the Monday Focus group, who meet for lunch, outings and prayer.

This year, the Chislehurst Methodist Church will host the Annual World Day of Prayer on the 6<sup>th</sup> March. This event will bring many denominations together to pray, with a special focus this year on Zimbabwe.

For over 150 years, the church has welcomed the wider community. Most welcome are clubs designed for children as the church aspires to be a vital part of community life.

Who could have thought that a church could be a space in which people developed their interests and skills, such as: improving their badminton swing; expanding their strategic mindset with the Chislehurst Chess Club, or finding inner peace through a "Downward Dog" Yoga movement on a Thursday?

The Chislehurst Methodist Church has opened its doors to these groups and more.

Monkey Music; Diddi Dance; Academy of Dance; Baby Ballet; Baby Massage; Messy Play; Kumon; Lingo Tots (for French and Spanish); Ukranian School; Village Nursery; Performing Kids; Boys Brigade; Brownies; Guides and Rangers. All these groups for young people have made this church their meeting place, and families constantly come and go through the welcome glass doors of the Courtyard. More and more people, from all walks of life, are being drawn here to nurture their talents and enjoy themselves.