

Come and See

A Visual Guide to Chislehurst Methodist Church

November 2011

Part 1 of 2

This document is the text of a two part document. Part two is a Photographic companion



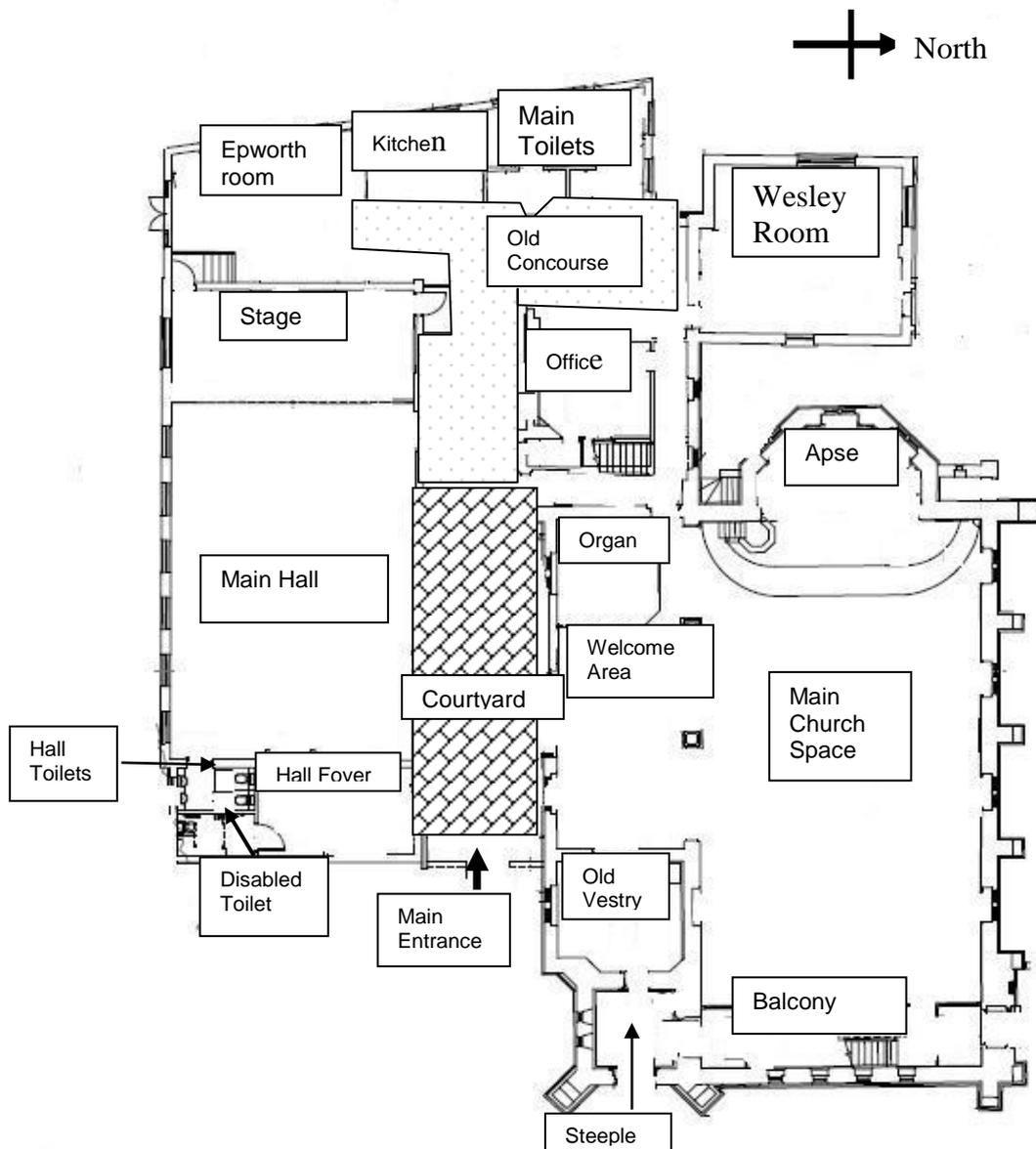
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1.0 Introduction to this guide

Having become involved in 2010 with the refurbishment of the church, spending many hours inside, I suddenly noticed it. This statement may seem odd. How could you miss a building as big as this? However, I hadn't noticed the beauty or the art that is all around the church. Once you start looking, you will find it full of beauty and a few surprises including far off landscapes, medieval and byzantine symbols, exotic flowers and even a dragon slayer.

I am an amateur at reading churches, the ideas and many of the symbols described have other meanings, I have chosen those which mean most to me. I would be delighted to receive comments and/or corrections via the church office and to hear any information the reader may have on our church as a whole or the art within it, so that we can enhance or correct this guide, which I hope you will enjoy reading as you look around this special place. This document is part 1 of 2, providing full text descriptions; part 2 of 2 is a photographic companion and includes photographic images of the key features discussed within this guide. The Map below is to help with the orientation of the premises as you read this guide.



1.1 Reading a Church

Churches are not just buildings. They don't just keep the wind out or the rain off. They are special places, full of spirituality and fellowship. The great medieval churches were built to inspire and create awe to ensure people believed they had a heavenly experience when in church. We read churches because they are veiled in allegory and symbols. In the early days of churches many people could not read, so symbols, carvings and pictures were used to tell stories from the bible or to explain theology such as the trinity.

What may be surprising to some people is the borrowing of symbols from other cultures, and the relation of symbols to faith, many of which are not of the bible or are pre-Christian. In Medieval churches it was commonplace to adopt or alter existing well established religious symbols and we use many of these today. It was common to use symbols that people understood and could see around them in everyday life, and there has been a tradition to relate messages of faith to signs of nature, using flowers, plants and fruits.

Some art and decoration in churches was to demonstrate power and ambition, but on the whole, the decoration was crafted out of a love of God and a deep faith. These craftsmen wove into the walls messages from the gospels and wrapped their buildings in prayer. Some of the art and decoration within the church can be used in a very personal way to focus the mind and aid reflection, but the church is ultimately a community space to be shared and loved by all.

1.2 General Description of the Church

Church was built in 1868-70 thanks to a groups of Methodists led by Moses Line, a successful local businessman, and included many other names of renown in Chislehurst. The construction of Chislehurst Methodist church began in 1868 and the main body of the church and steeple were completed in 1870. The original construction cost was £5800. To provide extra seating the gallery or balcony was built in 1881 and owing to the growth of the church what is now known as the welcome area (previously the side chapel) was completed in 1883, including the room now used as the crèche, formerly known as the old vestry. There was a plan in the 1880's to build an identical side extension on the north side, to give a cruciform ground plan, but lack of funds, prevented this.

We have no particular record to show when the original church halls, comprising the upstairs room and new vestry (currently the church office), were built, within engravings and contemporary accounts describing the building of the church, there is no mention of this part of the premises, so we assume it came later. We have estimated these to have been built circa 1900. The upstairs room, used to be known as the Tower Room. The upstairs room was used for lectures and as a classroom.

The Wesley room was added in 1936 and was primarily built to be a Sunday school class room. The Epworth room, main hall and concourse were added in the 1960's, following the sale and subsequent development of the sites of the manse and the Willow Grove Wesleyan School to raise the funds. The design and works to provide the remodelled concourse, Main Hall and associated ancillary rooms was led by Cyril Mitchell. The wonderful glass roofed foyer, named 'The Courtyard' joining the main hall and church was completed in 2011.

The inside of the church used to have a very traditional interior with wooden pews fixed to the floor. In 2011 the main church space was modernised under the leadership and vision of the Revd. Barbara Calvert, the minister, transforming it into a modern, multi-purpose worship and community space, with the Chislehurst prayer labyrinth set in the floor. The design of the refurbishments and remodelling of the church interior was largely carried out by members of the church. The new glazed entrance foyer completed in November 2001, known as the courtyard, was designed by Nigel Bird of Nigel Bird architects Ltd and as was the remodelling of the church the principal contractor/builder was Mid Kent Homes Ltd.

The church is classic Victorian gothic revival, in design. We cannot be entirely sure who the architect was as we don't have original drawings, but comparison with other English churches of the same period suggests it was William Butterfield. He was one of the most important high Victorian gothic architects, and was a prolific English designer of churches as well as a member of the ecclesiastical society. He designed many Methodist churches and those of other denominations and was often inspired by local materials in his design of churches. The influences of Augustus Pugin and William Morris can clearly be seen in the church interior, design and styling. The church windows have a mix of styles. The front (east) lancets are clearly gothic early English style, while the north, south and west wall windows have early English style plate tracery. The windows in the steeple are Venetian gothic style. The church also has a spoked wheel window on the front wall. The window glass designs are a mix of gothic revival, modernist and Victorian arts & crafts styles.

2.0 Outside - General

The external walls are made of random rubble, of local Kentish Ragstone, which was bedded with dry mortar. This gives the appearance of an old rural country parish church. Corners, window surrounds, copers and gables are made from limestone Ashlar cladding.

The main exterior roof is a traditional pitched roof, which was fully renovated and retiled in the late 1980's. The ceiling underneath, although simple, is a striking timber gambrel barrelled arch. The church although relatively modest in floor plan, has a magnificent high roof. Within the ceiling space there are steel ties in tension which stabilise the base of the roof and stop it putting adverse lateral pressure on the external walls. The roof is buttressed by the side chapel on the south wall and there are splayed buttresses along the north wall between each window and corner.

The apse (or chancel) is hipped onto the west wall of the church, giving the apse interior space the traditional separation from the main space (or nave) of the church. The apse is formed from five walls, three long walls and two short forming half of an octagon, and has a half domed roof. Around the back of the church, out of sight to most, is a little stone structure, directly abutting the Apse, which has a little arched door and roof and the remains of a small window and plumbing. We think this was probably the original church outside loo. Now it has the boiler flues coming out through it from the boiler house which is under the apse. On the apex of the main roof above the apse are two handsome carved finials, both of sharp gothic fleur de lys.

On the north wall, near the front of the building is the north door of the church, with its porch. Above the north porch there is a small, single, round window, inset with plate tracery with four smaller clear circular windows (inside, this is seen above the gallery). From the difference of the colour of the stone surround and the uncomfortable detail of the window interfacing with the porch, we believe this was probably added when the balcony was built.

The manse which was built in the late 1960's replaces the original Victorian manse that was built at the same time as the church. The original manse was a huge three storey town house complete with a stable for the minister's horse.

2.1 Outside - Front wall

The front wall is graced by four large clear lancet windows, and four small multicoloured windows. The pattern of four windows in a set is common in churches and is thought to be representative of the four gospels. The star attraction within the front wall is the large spoked wheel window (more details in main window section). The original main entrance is situated at the front at the base of the steeple. The door is set within a graceful gothic arch, and on each end of the arch is a carving of oak leaves and acorns. Oak symbols were often used in medieval churches as a symbol of God's strength and, in this context, symbolises the strength to be gained from entering within.

On photographs taken in the early 1900's, a decorative finial can be seen in the form of stone Celtic cross on the roof apex above the front wall. Sadly this has gone now.

2.2 Outside - South wall

The south wall of the church contains four large arch windows set with twin lancets. Two have highly detailed stained glass and two are clear. Three of them can be seen within the foyer and one remains outside, as it was originally. Above, and on the tops of the side chapel roof apexes, are carved trefoil finials.

Unseen by all but the pigeons are the remains of the six tall lancet windows of the original halls of circa 1900, although there are clues to these inside the church office, and within the foyer in the ceiling outside the gents toilet. On the outside and viewing from on top of the foyer roof, the tops of the limestone arch tracery can still be seen. Within the church office, part of one of the windows remains and there are two with mirrors. Glass bricks can be seen above the foyer roof and just below ceiling level in the foyer and church office, these mark the position of the original arched windows, these also outline of the old hall south wall.

Within the old foyer area and opposite the doors into the main hall, you can see the original arched entrance doorway into the old halls. On the upstairs hall, near the roof, directly above the side chapel (you will need to look through the courtyard (glazed entrance foyer) glass roof to see it), is a tiny door. This covers a chimney vent which leads from a fireplace in the present church office.

2.3 Steeple

The steeple standing at 25m tall is striking; but it is not a bell tower. Originally Christianity was a small underground movement which met in secrecy due to oppression. Knowing what time to meet was important. Christians gathered for worship at sunrise and sunset, which were the only two times of the day that people could be sure of prior to the mass availability of clocks. Eventually Christianity became a major religion and Christians wanted to worship at different times. Ringing of the church bells was to let people know it was time for church. We no longer need the bells to tell us the time, but bell towers evolved into steeples. As you think about our steeple, pause and consider those people of faith around the world, who still suffer from oppression due to their beliefs and have to meet in secrecy.

The steeple seems almost separate from the main church standing like a giant watching over it. The steeple starts with a square base and builds in layers up to the octagonal spire. There are four mini spires, set above the four splayed buttresses which stabilise the whole tower. In ecclesiastical design, sets of four are often representative of the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Architecturally, the spire is known as a Victorian gothic broach spire.

In sacred geometry, the octagon represents resurrection and rebirth, because Christ rose from the grave 8 days after entry into Jerusalem. Thus octagons became symbols of baptism, the spiritual rebirth of a person, and many baptismal fonts are octagonal. It is no surprise therefore, that the base of our octagonal spire hosts the original doors to the church, and by passing under and within, you are symbolically reborn as you enter the church.

Wrapped around the spire is a border of carved stone trefoils. The trefoil is an ancient symbol and in Christianity its use represents the trinity. The four square mini spires have carved triquetra recessed into their faces and carved trefoils. The triquetra is also used in Christian architecture as a symbol of the trinity and is associated with celtic art.

In each corner of the mini spires there are stone carved gargoyles comprising fruit, leaf and flower carvings. Similar carvings of plants and flowers can be seen in the walls at the base of the window arches and the capitals in the columns between the twin arch windows. The stone detailing around the steeple is also very practical, as although decorative these flower gargoyles and other carvings, stringers and mouldings assist with the shedding of water. The carvings include thistle flowers, shamrocks, grapes, roses, palm leaves, fern leaves, wild roses, grapes and vine leaves, among others.

The steeple has on each side a twin arch window, a circular quatrefoil window and a single arch window at the top under the main spire.

3.1 Inside – The Halls & Foyer

Inside, the church buildings are a warren of rooms. The fantastic glazed entrance foyer, 'the courtyard', completed in 2011, forms the main entrance to the whole premises. The glazed foyer forms a modern atrium where you can feel the presence of nature indoors with views to the sky, and out through the glass front wall to the Chislehurst commons woods. On your right as you enter is the original south wall of the church, helping to illustrate how tradition and modernity can coexist and strengthen each other in the context of the whole new foyer space. Look up above the doors at the end of the glazed foyer to the gable end wall and you will see a small circular window in the form of the Methodist logo.

There are two sets of doors leading from the glazed foyer and an opening (a further set of doors is planned in the opening) connecting to the concourse. One set leads to a corridor servicing the main hall and the disabled toilet facilities and the other set leads into the church. Within and adjoining the concourse are the toilets, kitchen, access to the hall, two meeting rooms known as the Epworth room and the Wesley room and the church office. Off the concourse is the church office and via either the arched door way or the corridor next to the Wesley room are the stairs to the upper hall built circa 1900.

The original halls we believe were built around 1900 and sat just off centre of the side chapel, connected to the main church with a door near the organ. From the outside the old halls look as though they were built the same as the main church; however closer inspection shows they are brick built and externally clad in Kentish ragstone to match the rest of the church. Although the original 1900 upstairs hall (formerly known as the Tower room) is obvious, the original downstairs hall area is less so, but it is all still there. If you look for the signs, you can see its outline. Coming through into the rear concourse from the glazed courtyard, immediately to your right you will see an arched door way, which was once the external door into the old halls. Next to this you can see what used to be an external window, in coloured glass, which was (and still is) the window of the original inside loo from the early 1900's.

Further along this wall you can see a window into the church office. This is one of three tall lancets that formed one of two large arched windows, each comprising three tall lancet windows that must have flooded the old halls with light. Within what is currently the church office and was formerly the new vestry, you can see the outlines of the three lancet windows, one still glazed and two with mirrors, noting glass bricks above. Standing with your right shoulder towards the gents toilet door, you can see three sets of glass bricks just below the ceiling line, these mark the position of the other three lancets making up the second large arch window, and also the southern wall.

To the left of the door to the gent's toilet, is another clue marking the outline of the original halls, there is a short wall that comes out from the toilet wall. This is where the old external wall was cut out to create an opening and extend the concourse. Between this short length of wall and the gents toilet door, the wall runs diagonally, this marks the position of a disused fireplace.

If you go out the back door of the concourse onto the church patio, turn around and look immediately up, you can see original rear wall of the old halls. From above the roof of the concourse, the tops of the two large arched windows, and the remains of the three lancets windows can still be seen, above the concourse roof level. The north wall of the old halls can be seen clearly along with its remaining tall lancets in the rear corridor to the church.

3.2 Inside – The Church

The inside of the main church is typical of a Victorian gothic revival church, with homage to the early English period (1200's to 1300's). Lancet style windows are unique to this period in history, as are some of the carvings, mouldings and decorative details used within the church. Gothic churches were designed to represent the world in microcosm and were full of signs of nature and the world around us. The gothic revival went hand in hand with the "arts and crafts movement" which was immersed in naturalistic design, and this is most evident in the windows, wood and stone carvings around the church.

From the early days Methodist preaching, has had a tradition of bringing the outside in. Methodist preachers started preaching outdoors because the established church would not allow them to preach. Soon as the evangelistic movement grew only the outdoors could cope with the great crowds. The outdoor tradition continued when Methodists started building their own places of worship. Within the main church the idea of bringing nature in can be clearly seen in the windows and decoration around the church.

The internal walls are made of squared Kentish Ragstone rubble, built in courses, with limestone Ashlar cladding on corners, borders and arch details. The main area of the church, also known as the nave, is a large open space. In 2011 the space was remodelled, removing the pews, to make an open worship and community space. The term "nave" is derived from the Latin "navis" meaning ship; this space is the ship that carries the congregation on their journey. The church has no separations, such as a rood screen, showing that all are equal under God and that we all worship together.

The floor is tiled, and within the main area is a tiled labyrinth, which is used for reflective prayer and spiritual meditation. The labyrinth was completed in 2011.

The ceiling is formed from a simple but stunning timber gambrel barrelled ceiling over the main church area that at its apex is 12.5m from finished floor level (which is half the height of the steeple). Noting the arched ceiling sits above the area traditionally known as the nave, and is reminiscent of the hull of a ship. The side chapel area, now the welcome area of the church, which is formed from three arches, has three mini gambrel ceilings matching the main ceiling.

The gambrel ceiling is made up of a double pitched ceiling and is not a true arch or barrel. Note the four huge but graceful oak arched ceiling beams which terminate between the windows on the north wall and the arches in the side chapel on carved stone brackets.

The apse (or chancel) is within the half domed recess at the west end of the church. Traditionally in many churches, there would be an altar in this space, whereas in Methodist tradition there is a simple wooden communion table symbolising the table Jesus broke bread at with the disciples at the last supper. The Apse is framed with a large stone equilateral pointed arch, which has two ornate capitals forming brackets to the limestone carved rere-arch, set within the main arch. The Apse is decorated with beautifully ornate stone mouldings, mosaic tiling, decorative biblical plaques and a stunning Romanesque reredos stone carving of the last supper.

The balcony built in 1881 to provide more seating is situated at the east end of the nave (main church area). The balcony is an entirely timber structure, cantilevered off the walls and the timber and stained glass screen.

The side chapel area built in 1883 contains the organ built in the same year and is now used as the church welcome area. It is framed by three tall centred equilateral arches. These are sprung off the main church walls and supported with two red sandstone columns. The red sandstone columns which support the arch spandrels are topped with exquisite carved limestone capitals. The church foundation stone is set within the eastern column. The inscription on the foundation stone reads "This stone was laid April 21 1869 by Sir Francis Lycett Kt.". This stone was originally on the outside of the church, prior to the building of the side chapel and was incorporated into one of the columns.

The side chapel was most recently adapted when the new glazed foyer was built. The side chapel is now a place of welcome on entering the church via the new glazed doors, which were completed in 2011. A fantastic addition to the side chapel is the Icon commissioned and completed in 2011, which was gifted to the church in memoriam.

An old friend which returned into the church after many years of absence is the original Victorian baptism font. This has sat in the entrance vestibule for many years, due to subsidence issues, but has been brought back into the church and placed within the new entrance area. It is symbolic that the font is at the entrance to the church, as in baptism we symbolically enter into the church.

The church has a number of stained glass windows and, with the exception of those in the apse, all have been provided by the family and friends of the persons dedicated below each. The only original stained glass is the four small trefoil arched windows on the front (east) wall the windows in the apse. All others were originally plain glass.

Forming a border around all the ceilings within the church is a carved trefoil pattern symbolising the Trinity, of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. This shape is seen around the interface of the ceiling and walls. The trefoil symbol also appears throughout the main windows and within the small windows, within the door frames under the balcony.

There is two trefoil decorative borders formed from stone mouldings running around the whole church, one above the plastered section of the walls and the other in line with the bottom of the main windows. The trefoil borders on the wall comprise a repetitive pattern of the trefoil symbol. Inset within the trefoil are three ivy leaves and an ivy flower. Ivy was used commonly in medieval churches to symbolise the evergreen and everlasting, never fading nature of God's love. As it clings tightly to the object to which it is connected, ivy was also used to represent fidelity or faithfulness.

There is a decorative moulding running on the main church area (nave) walls, just level with the base of the spring of the arches on the windows. This moulding is known as a diaper, a device used in gothic architecture to decorate plain walls. It is usually a pattern of leaves or flowers, normally worked into squares or lozenges and with a pattern of four leaves or petals, as it is here. The leaves used here are bay (Laurel Nobilis) leaves. These were used by the Romans as a symbol of victory and triumph. Christian tradition has used the bay leaf in churches to symbolise Christ's triumph over death and his resurrection. The bay leaf can be used to symbolise eternal life, as even when cut its leaves remain green. This moulding is also used extensively around the apse.

On the walls at the junction with the ceiling is a border running all around the main church and apse, comprising square tiles forming a pattern and an inset star, stone moulding. This is a playfully detailed eight pointed star set within a quatrefoil, often used as a symbol of the four evangelists, with circles and trefoils within its points. Stars were used within ceilings in gothic churches to remind us of the celestial and heavenly nature of God. An eight pointed star (and similarly, the octagonal spire) is used to represent renewal and rebirth with Christ.

Off the side chapel is the old vestry, built as part of side chapel extension in 1883. This is used as the crèche on Sundays and as a meeting room. Note the gothic style arch doorway, with the original doors still in place. Glass was added to them in 2011. Through the quirky square trefoil arched doorway in the old vestry, access can be gained to the original church entry vestibule directly under the steeple.

From either of the doors under the balcony or via the old vestry you can get access to the original church entry vestibule. Note the geometric tiled floor and the decorative glazed doors into the church. This space has two simple plain lattice glazed lancet windows, and with the simple painted walls. It is reminiscent of a monk's cell and is a great place for quiet private reflection and prayer.

Adjacent and above the balcony on the south wall is an arched window recess lined with smooth limestone. This is the only arched window where the recess is lined, which makes it the odd one out, consider also, the out of line stonework courses, it is clear that this has been filled in at some point. This provokes a question, which is; was the steeple planned as part of the church when they first started building it? With this question in mind, consider also that the doors from the entrance vestibule into the corridor under the balcony are in the form of external doors, noting the holes for locks and bolts can be seen although they have been filled. It is possible that when the build for the church started they did not plan to add a steeple and this was added during the construction of the church as more funds became available.

Along the wall from the filled in arch, is a second dummy arched window. This one matches the size and recess of those on the north wall, it looks as though it was built at the same time as the side chapel extension, including the old vestry, as the masonry courses are continuous.

Starting within the apse and extending approximately 4.5m from the apse arch is the raised platform or stage that serves as the platform from which the minister or preacher will present. The raised stage area has been extended a number of times. The original stone platform and stone steps are still in place under the new timber stage completed in 2011. The current stage area also has a ramp which makes it fully accessible to mobility impaired users, maintaining the commitment to being a fully inclusive church.

4.0 Windows

The church is blessed with some elegant and beautiful windows which are the star attractions of the main church space, being both well designed and highly crafted.

Originally all the windows were clear lead diamond lattice glass with the exception of those in the apse. The windows on the side chapel, north wall and wheel window were all provided by family and friends in memory of former members of the church. We don't have exact dates for each window, and dates are largely based on the dedications:

- The stained glass windows in the apse are original from 1870.
- Following this, the window nearest the apse on the north wall, was put in circa 1875. This window is dedicated to John Chubb.
- The window just to the right of the centre of the north wall is dedicated to Pricilla Jane Hogue and was installed circa 1880.
- The right hand window in the side chapel (south wall) was dedicated to Mary Perry and was installed circa 1882.
- The window just to the left of the centre of the north wall is dedicated to Thomas Percival Bunting and was installed circa 1886.
- The window nearest the balcony on the north wall was dedicated to Moses Line and was installed circa 1897.
- The left hand window in the side chapel is dedicated to the wife and daughter of a former minister of the church, Reverend J Cartwright Adlard and was installed in 1935.
- The spoked wheel window in the east wall (front wall) is dedicated by the Norman family to their daughter Myra Norman and her grandmother Anne Keeble and was installed in 1955.

Within and around the church there is more stained glass much of which is original to the time that part of the church was completed. These consist of simple coloured mosaics, or geometric shapes, although still with their own simple charm and beauty. Examples include the lower windows on the front wall, those in the corridor between the organ door and the Wesley room, the old loo window in the new vestry (seen from the concourse), the screen that supports the balcony and the doors in the balcony area.

4.1 Wheel Window

High on the east wall is the splendid rose window in the style of a spoked wheel window. The window shape and tracery is original to the church as at 1870, the current glass was installed in 1955. Wheel windows have a simple tracery of spokes radiating from a central oculus and were popular during the Romanesque period and Gothic Italy. It is easy to see the wheel style in the tracery from the outside; it looks almost like a wagon wheel. Note there is a little mirror on the front pew up on the balcony to help look at the rose window.

The glass was designed by local artist Margaret Cowell. The panels depict the life and story of Jesus with the following scenes:

1. The nativity
2. The good shepherd
3. The wise virgins
4. A little child shall lead them
5. The ascension
6. The watch at the sepulchre
7. The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them
8. Children of the Gospels: raising of Jairus daughter

In the centre roundel is the spirit of God ascending like a dove. Surrounding the central roundel are eight angels 7 with musical instruments playing in praise of the Lord and the eighth bowing in adoration, and surrounding are the stars of light: "*praise ye all his angles and praise him all ye stars of light*", from Psalm 148. Within the outermost corner of each panel from the centre are white lily flowers symbolising purity.

Explaining these panels further:

4.1.1 The Nativity

Within this panel, you can see Mary mother of Jesus, cradling baby Jesus in her arms, while standing in the byre in Bethlehem, standing on a floor covered in straw, to the side of her you can see a manger with blanket. To her left is a cow. To the right of the panel is the little donkey that carried her to Bethlehem. The angel in the corner of the panel is praising God, playing what looks like a violin.

4.1.2 The good shepherd

Within this panel is shown a shepherd with a halo, surrounded by a flock of three sheep, set in a forest glade. The angel is praising God, playing what looks like a mandolin. The Good Shepherd is a metaphor for Jesus.

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who doesn't own the sheep, sees the wolf coming, leaves the sheep, and flees. The wolf snatches the sheep, and scatters them. The hired hand flees because he is a hired hand, and doesn't care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. (John 10:11ff)

4.1.3 The wise virgins

The theme of this window is to ready yourself and prepare for Christ's return.

At that time, the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' 'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. Later the others also came. 'Lord, Lord,' they said, 'open the door for us!' But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I don't know you.' Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour. (Matthew 25.1-13)

The angel in this panel is playing what looks like a type of trumpet or horn.

4.1.4 A little child shall lead them

This panel shows a small child, with various animals. In the top left is a bear and in the top right is a sheep dog; the boy is stroking a sheep and near him is a lamb; in the bottom left is a wolf. This symbolises Isaiah's prophecy of peace on earth following the return of the messiah.

The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. (Isaiah 11:6)

The angel in the panel is playing a harp.

4.1.5 The ascension

The panel shows an image of Jesus in flowing white robes, with swirling cloud and blue sky behind him, appearing to be floating above the land, as if travelling heavenwards. This panel shows the Ascension of Jesus as he is taken up to heaven in his resurrected body, in the presence of eleven of his apostles, occurring 40 days after the resurrection.

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1.9-11)

The angel in this panel is bowing in praise.

4.1.6 The watch at the sepulchre

This panel shows three women, one of whom is kneeling, including Mary Magdalene and Mary mother of James and Salome coming to the tomb of Jesus to anoint his body from Mathew 28: 1 to 4. To the right of the panel is the angel in white robes telling the women of Jesus' resurrection; to the top left of the picture, is the hill of Golgotha and a crucifixion cross can be seen on the skyline. (Compare this with the scene in the 2011 Icon on the wall in the welcome area.)

The angel in this panel is a golden harp.

4.1.7 The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them

This panel shows lush vegetation, with fruiting trees around a waterfall and river, with flying birds and water fowl. This panel symbolises the coming of the messiah and the goodness he will bring.

The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. (Isaiah 35:1)

The angel in this panel is playing a flat drum or timbrel.

4.1.8 Children of the Gospels: raising of Jairus daughter

The record of the daughter of Jairus from Mark 5:21–43 is the story of a man who asks Jesus to heal his daughter. However, his daughter is dying, but as Jesus stops to help another woman, the daughter dies before he can get to the house. Jesus continues to the house and brings her back to life, or in his own words, awakens her. This panel shows a young woman in a house, standing, and what looks like a man and children celebrating outside. The angel in this panel is blowing a long trumpet. This parable, as demonstrated in this window, tells of the power and compassion of Jesus and that we must have faith in him.

4.2 North Wall Windows

There are five windows on the north wall, four twin lancets with roundels and one circular window above the gallery. The twin lancets are set within plate tracery and set within and pointed equilateral arch window, including a small roundel. These windows were completed in the Victorian era, but are typical in style to early English period of gothic architecture.

All of the windows on the north wall show strong Victorian “arts and crafts movement” influence, focusing on natural organic forms and images, within geometric patterns.

A full description of each window follows:

4.2.1 The Chubb window

Situated on the far left of the north wall is the Chubb window. This window is a memorial to John Chubb who died two years after the church was opened, and copies medieval style in the design and illustrations. The windows have two large oval panels in the centre of each lancet, with a scrolling message. The message across the windows reads “Thou upholdest me in mine integrity and settest me before thy face for ever”. The message comes from Psalm 41:12 of the 1769 King James Bible.

The lancets are further decorated by a geometric flower repetitive pattern border around the outside of each window. The main decoration is a grape vine of red and black grapes, interwoven around geometric curved square shapes. Note the detail on the leaves and tendrils. Unfortunately, the two lancets have lost some lustre and have faded in places.

The vine represents Jesus and is a symbol that dates back to the first century. It shows the relationship of God and his people as related in John 15:5, *“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing”*. The grapes in this context symbolize Jesus as the true vine, *“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener” (John 15:1)*

The roundel above shows a white dove. The dove is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. The dove is the only shape ever given to the Holy Spirit. It is one of the few symbols that have retained both its appearance and its meaning from the beginning of Christianity to the present day, *“The dove appeared at Jesus’ baptism where it descended from Heaven and rested upon him” (John 1:32)*. Note the artistry in the detailing of the doves feathers. The dove is surrounded by very colourful concentric circles, flower patterns, and a border of small quatrefoils.

4.2.3 The Bunting Window

The Bunting window is the second from the left on the north wall. This window has stunning images of flowers and a small roundel showing an angel. The windows hold a rose bush and passion flower vine; each of these is set within a medieval gothic style canopy. This window was made by Powell Bros. of Leeds, England. This window is probably the most beautiful in the church, and their signature is in the corner. An article publicising the commission was in "*Building News 20 Aug 1886*".

At the base of each canopy is the monogram Ihc, which is a very old symbol, dating back to the first century. Ihc or Ihs is the abbreviation of the Greek name Jesus (Iesous). Note that the monogram is displayed within an arch symbolic of the entry to heaven.

Both the Passion flower vine and the rose bush are shown as emerging from the root, as three distinct vines/limbs, symbolising the unity of the trinity, three in one. In early Christian teachings, plants were often used in this way, to teach the trinity, i.e. three branches, but all one plant. A famous case of this is the legend of St Patrick, where he used the shamrock clover to demonstrate the trinity. Note also the likeness of the shamrock to the trefoil symbol that adorns all areas of the church. Note the trefoil pattern border along the base of each window.

The red roses in the rose bush, used in this context together with the passion flower, symbolise the martyrdom of Jesus. Look carefully at the rose bush: the rose leaves are almost real looking, for realism some are shown wilting; note the rose hips and overall detailing and beauty of this window. The lower section is backed with a translucent white holographic spiral pattern to catch the light. Similarly the upper section is backed with a blue pattern of trefoils in the form of an interwoven vine. The rose may also be a reference to the prophecy of Isaiah, from Isaiah 35:1, *The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.*

The scriptural message written on the scrolls on each window are from left to right: "*Behold that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the lord*" and "*yea thou shalt see thy children's children and peace upon Israel*", from *Psalms 128, verses 4 and 6*. The meanings are "those who have true faith in God shall be blessed" and is a warning to those who worship worldly goods, and that "when the messiah comes again there shall be peace on earth for eternity", respectively. The roundel window shows an angel holding a banner. The message reads "*The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion*", *Psalm 128: 5*.

The right hand window is filled with a stunning almost three dimensional illustration of a passion flower vine. Note the delicate leaf, passion fruit details and vine tendrils. As with the rose bush, some of the leaves are shown as wilting. The passion flowers look as if they are coming out of the glass towards you. The background is the same as the rose, with the same holographic white and blue patterned backgrounds.

The passion flower is named after the Passion of Jesus on the cross. Spanish Jesuit missionaries in the 1600's discovered the plant in South America and connected its various parts to Jesus' crucifixion;

- The numerous filaments radiating from the centre of the flower represent the crown of thorns.
- The ten petals symbolize the ten apostles who were faithful to Him.
- The three stigma symbolize the three nails used to hold Jesus to the cross.
- The five anthers symbolize the five wounds Jesus received.

(Note that the passion flower is also within the central window in the apse and the left hand arch carved capital of the apse arch).

Looking closer at both windows, there are spring flowers and plants growing beside the roots of each of the two main flowers. Within the rose window, there are Forget me nots and a Wood anemone, and immediately to the left of the rose root are Shamrock clover. Spring flowers are often used as symbols of Easter and the resurrection.

The "Forget me not" is an ancient symbol of remembrance, for loved ones lost. When looking at this small beautiful flower, please reflect and remember those special to us who have been lost.

Next to the root of the passion flower are violet flowers, daffodil, shamrocks and three leafed buttercup clover. The violet, a small, lowly flower, is symbolic of humility. The violet symbolizes Jesus, the very Son of God, who humbled Himself and made Himself of no reputation by becoming a man.

The daffodil or narcissus symbolizes selflessness and the triumph of divine love. The symbolism in Christian circles is a reversal of tradition taken from a Greek legend. It tells the tale of a young man named Narcissus who fell vainly in love with his own image. One day, while viewing his reflection in a pond, he tried to embrace his own image. He fell into the water and drowned. After his death, his body became the narcissus flower.

The daffodil is strongly associated with Easter as an abundant spring flower. There is some Christian tradition that says that the daffodil bloomed profusely during the resurrection in the Middle East, and as a flower which dies down to nothing and returns each year, it is potent symbol of the resurrection.

At the base of the rose window, there are monochrome flowers, including daisies and the pointed bell flowers of deadly nightshade. Within the base of the passion flower window, there are dandelions, lotus flower and reeds.

The roundel window shows an angel holding a scriptural banner. The message reads "*The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion*" (Psalm 128: 5). The angel is identified as Gabriel, by his white cloak and his remarkable multi coloured wings.

4.2.3 The Hogue window

The Hogue window is just to the right of the centre of the north wall. This window is largely decorated with floral themed geometric grisaille patterning. It was produced by Powell Brothers of Leeds; an article publicising the commission was in "*The Builder 7 Aug 1880*". There are three oval frames within the window. The upper and lower have the monogram for Christ, "Ihc" within, and are decorated with vine leaves, symbolising Jesus Christ the one true vine. One of the monograms is in a duller glass, and the image is not so good, suggesting a replacement through damage. The two central ovals are filled with lily flowers and a message banner in each. The banners read, "The Lord is my shepherd" from Psalm 23 and "My sheep hear my voice" from John 10: 27. This window is connected to the shepherd panel in the rose window.

The lily, as those shown in the windows, begins life as a brown dead-looking bulb that we plant in the ground. In the spring a green shoot bursts from the bulb and pushes its way upward through the ground and continues to grow. Finally, a beautiful white flower blooms on the lily stem. The lily reminds us that Jesus was given new life at Easter and is no longer in the tomb. The lily in these windows reminds us that because Jesus lived, died, and was resurrected, we too can have new life if we choose. This symbolism is also the reason it is associated as a funeral flower, symbolising that the person has moved on to heaven and eternal life.

The roundel window shows a lamb. The lamb is most frequently used to represent Jesus Christ (John 1:29). In this sense it is referred to as the *Agnus Dei*, which is Latin for "Lamb of God". Its occurrence ranges from almost the earliest days of Christianity, throughout all the intervening centuries, down to the present time. The lamb is portrayed in many ways: with a halo; in a victory wreath; carrying a banner of victory; seated on a book with seven seals; or standing on a hill as he is here. Note the bold colours and floral patterns filling the space: behind the lamb is a bright shining sun; the lamb is standing on a grassed hill; shamrock clover is seen standing tall within the grass as a symbol of the trinity. Around the window is a beautiful flower border. Note also the inner border featuring trefoil and Fleur de Lys.

4.2.4 The Moses Line window

It is believed that the Moses Line window is dedicated both to Moses Line a hard working member of the church, and also to children. Moses was known particularly for the work he did with children in the church. There is duality within this window, with the symbols representing Christian teachings and also children. Similar to the Hogue window, the window has a large oval central panel with a scrolling message in each of the twin lancets. The scrolling messages read; "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" from Mathew 3:2 and "on earth peace goodwill to men" from Luke 2:14.

The scrolls are wrapped around pomegranate tree limbs. The pomegranate is used to symbolise God's church. The seeds are symbols of the believers and the red juice is used to represent the blood of the Christ shed for us. The pomegranate is thought also to represent the Church, because of the inner unity of the countless seeds in one and the same fruit.

The windows are framed with a border, made of rectangular coloured tiles, interlaced with a stained glass fleuron. Fleurons are flower stylised shapes or motifs, popular in gothic architecture. This one is a four leaved or petal floral shape, in looks like four fleur de lys. There are carvings within the base of the pulpit and along the front of the balcony parapet just above head height that match this style. This detail is also seen in the windows within the apse.

The main lancets comprise five geometric shapes set within an overall background of white glass which is woven with an organic vine like pattern of golden trefoils or shamrocks. The top and bottom panels are on first impression random shapes, arranged in a panel. Closure inspection shows that these are filled with ecclesiastical architectural shapes - trefoils, triquetra, fleur de liys - set around a quatrefoil, and within the quatrefoil are three concentric circles, with a square over lapping, suggesting 3 in 1. All of these shapes can be used to represent Christian symbols as discussed in earlier parts of this document; here they are used to fill space.

The panel second from bottom on each panel has a Greek letter within, set within an oval frame. The letters are "Alpha and Omega". Its meaning is found in the fact that alpha (Α) and omega (Ω) are respectively the first and last letters of the Classical (Ionic) Greek alphabet, from the book of revelation 22:13, "*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.*" This represents the eternal nature of God.

Above the pomegranate panels on both windows are two angels in the form of seraphim; these are shown as young children's faces, surrounded by wings. Within Christian theology, the seraphim occupy the highest rank of angels and are the direct caretakers of God's throne. First impressions suggest the faces on the seraphim's are identical, but they are different. They are shown as a head and wings demonstrating a pure spirit glowing with love and intelligence, in which all that is bodily is put away, and only the head, the seat of soul, and the wings are the attribute of spirit and swiftness. Remembering that these windows are dedicated to children, the use of children's faces in the seraphim seems fitting. It is also fitting that with the symbolism of seraphim being the highest of all, it shows God's love for the children of the world.

The roundel above the twin lancets shows a curious symbol. The window shows a golden crown with wings. On closer inspection, the crown is a jewelled gold band, with golden filigree limbs woven to make a crown similar to a bishop's mitre including what looks like lappets hanging down within the crown. Wings within heraldic symbolism generally suggest the celestial. This symbol is probably meant to represent Jesus Christ King of Kings, King over all earth.

However, having trawled images and records from churches, I have found no other example of this in an English church window. The nearest thing I have encountered in England is the badge of the RAF. There is an example of a winged crown in the Australian Hall of Memory, which is the Australian national war memorial, within a window themed around the personal qualities of the Australian people. The Winged Crown denotes "reward of knowledge from inquiry". It is also worth reflecting that you have to open your mind and heart to let the Lord Jesus Christ in to your life.

There are some references of this symbol in former byzantine churches in Turkey. The Sassanid empires of what is now Syria of AD 200, were ruled by an emperor known as the king of kings, who would have worn a winged crown. The remnant of the Sassanid culture is seen in the Zoroastrian faith which still uses this symbol. His crown would have been shaped like a turban or mitre. The first mitres were more like turbans and most probably originated from the Byzantine church. The wings denoted his celestial god-given right to rule over the word. It is believed this symbol was absorbed into Byzantine Christian art, with clear relation to Jesus Christ King of Kings.

Please use this window as a devotional station to pray for children around the world who are in need of love and protection, whilst you consider the symbolism within.

4.3 Side Chapel Windows

The side chapel, now used as the church entrance area direct from the glazed foyer, has three windows, which can all be seen from within the glazed entrance foyer. Two stunning stained glass windows and one clear diamond lattice window, all of twin lancet style windows set in plate tracery, with a small roundel, set within a great arched window. The clear glass window is hiding behind the organ.

- The left hand window in the side chapel is dedicated to the wife and daughter of a former minister of the church, Reverend J Cartwright Adlard and was installed in 1935.
- The right hand window in the side chapel (south wall) was dedicated to Mary Perry and was installed circa 1882 and was designed and made by Powell Bros, Leeds (note that it is signed in the corner).

4.3.1 Adlard Window

The Cartwright Adlard window comprises two women. The woman in the left hand window is Mary mother of Jesus, who can be identified, as she is typically shown in blue dress and often holding a lily. The lily in this context is used to represent chastity and purity, representative of the Virgin Birth.

Mary the mother of Jesus is shown within a medieval stylised canopy; above the shoulder of Mary, either side of the canopy, is a landscape, which appears to be of Jerusalem. It is very apt that we have a Mother in this place in the church, as the door to the left of the window is for the room used as a crèche on Sundays. Above the canopy is a scrolling message "*Blessed art thou among women*" from Luke 1:42.

The woman within the right window is also Mary, holding an alabaster jar of myrrh, for the anointing of Jesus. Please note also that she is overlooking the Icon where she is also shown, and one of the panels within the rose window on the front wall, also shows her. She is also shown standing within a medieval styled canopy, and either side of her shoulder, there is a landscape, which is of the Garden of Gethsemane from the Mount of Olives. Above the canopy is a scrolling message "The house was filled with the odour", from John 12:3.

In both windows the dedication is within the glass at the bottom of each window and a monogram of the initials of the persons remembered is superimposed within a gothic arch. The arch is used to symbolise the gates of heaven and eternal life through Christ. The arch is styled as an ogee style arch externally with the trefoil arch within; the arch is shown with a chequer board type tiled floor, with two pillars each side of the arch.

Within each of these windows, the two small landscape panels either side of the two women, when joined together, make a single continuous landscape. Note that in the Mary mother of Jesus window she is shown with her eyes wide open and face orientated towards us, showing an openness in her expression, whereas the other Mary is shown looking down and away from us suggesting humility in her expression.

Above both of these is a roundel window, showing a cross within a crown, demonstrating the divine authority of Jesus. Radiating out from the cross is divine light shown as flame red light, clouds and stars. The cross itself is made of bright golden light emanating from the centre. The cross and crown was also a symbol used by the Knights Templar.

That a cross and a crown should be imposed on one another is a paradox. The cross was known as an instrument of death. Yet, through Jesus' death and resurrection on the cross, he became victorious over death, and we are made inheritors of God's Kingdom. "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death even death on a cross. Therefore, God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, in the glory of God the Father." (Phil 2: 5-12)

4.3.2 Beatitudes Window

The right hand window in the side chapel features a style known as grisaille, there are six scriptural scrolls, showing the beatitudes, from Mathew 5: 3 to 10:

- *Blessed are the poor in spirit*
- *Blessed are they that mourn*
- *Blessed are the meek*
- *Blessed at the merciful*
- *Blessed are pure in heart*
- *Blessed are the peacemakers*

The Beatitudes are a set of teachings by Jesus that appear in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. The term beatitude comes from the Latin adjective beatus which means happy, fortunate, or blissful. The teachings are expressed as eight blessings in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, although only six are shown in the window. Together, the Beatitudes present a new set of Christian ideals that focus on love and humility rather than force and exaction. They echo the highest ideals of the teachings of Jesus on mercy, spirituality and compassion.

The roundel window has a central monogram "XPC"; this is from ancient Greek and is the first three letters of the Greek word, Christ. Looking closer, the red infill behind the monogram is filled with vine leaves, together with the red colour. This is symbolic of the wine shared at the last supper, representing the blood of Christ. Below the monogram is a white rose. The rose has been a common Christian symbol since the 1200s. It may be used to represent the Messianic promise, the nativity of Christ, the virgin Mary (her rose is white for purity), or martyrdom (a red rose). It is used often in Gothic architecture. This is styled like a Tudor period white rose of York (noting the glass is from Yorkshire).

Within one of the main lancets is a piece of glass that does not fit, possibly a homemade repair, it has a few letters on it, which is the give away that it is not meant to be there. See if you can find it.

4.4 Apse Windows

The Apse windows are original to the date the church opened, the two outer windows are elegant geometric grisaille patterned windows, and above each there is a monogrammed trefoil window, XPS and IHS, meaning Christ and Jesus, respectively from the Greek words for both. The trefoil windows are shown with the three leaves of the trefoil, with the name of Christ within a circle which sits through and joins these up, symbolising the unity of the trinity as three in one.

The central window, has a small roundel window at the top. This shows an angel, probably representative of Gabriel, holding a banner "God is love" from John 4:16.

The two lancets are decorated with a mix of geometric shapes and flowers; the left window has a grape vine and in the right passion flowers. The windows unfortunately are quite faded in parts and hard to read, but we can just make them out: the scriptural scrolls say "come unto me all that labour and are heavy and I will give you rest", Mathew 11:28. The other lancet panel reads "greater love hath no man that lay he may lay down his life for his friends".

For further description on the symbolism of the passion flower and grape vine, refer to the north wall windows section and in particular the Chubb and Bunting windows, but note that within the apse the passion flower and the grape vine are also represented within the carved stone capitals at the base of the arch that forms the opening into the apse.

5.0 Wall Plaques

Around the church there are a number of decorative wall plaques, all of which are in memoriam to former members of the church. These are generally dedications from friends and family.

On the west wall to the right of the apse opening is a memorial plaque for the Great War, World War 1, remembering those from this church and all who gave their life in time of war.

The war memorial plaque is made of marble, inset with the three panels. The outer two text panels give the dedication and the names of those lost in the war. Note the mix of regiments, Army, Navy, US Navy and Canadian. This plaque has two ornate shields at the top helping frame the central panel. The first shield is a St George's cross and the second shows the royal standard of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Below and between the shields is a colourful tiled image of St George, in full armour, kneeling in prayer.

St George's sword represents the Word of God: "*the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*", Ephesians 6:17; "*For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword*", Hebrews 4:12. His shield on his back represents faith and truth: "*Above all, taking the shield of faith, where with ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked*", Ephesians 6:16, and "*His truth shall be thy shield and buckler*", Psalms 91:4

Working clockwise around the walls onto the north wall, the next plaque remembers former church members who lost their life in the Second World War. Note the simple inscription above their names "*These too were faithful unto death*".

While viewing these two particular memorials in this corner of the church; please pause and remember all those who have suffered through war, whether given selflessly in defence and aid of others, or those who have had to bear loss of loved ones, or those who have had to suffer pain, terror and hardship and those caught up in the affects of war with no choice.

Under the balcony, on the wall at the foot of the stairs, is a simple framed dedication to members of the church who served and survived WW1. Note the diverse and important roles these people carried out in a time of terrible trial, from pilots to hospital ships.

The next plaque on the north wall is dedicated to members of the Vanner family, noting in particular their key role in establishing and building the church we see today. This plaque is very colourful, set within coloured marble frame, inset with decorative forms of lilies and anemone, which are formed of mother of pearl and ceramic mosaic, which catch the light as the sun moves around the building. Noting the anemone flower is also represented in the window to the left of this plaque.

The last plaque on the north wall near to the balcony is dedicated to Mary Calvert Holdsworth, who was a Christian missionary who worked for twelve years in Mysore India and returned home due to illness. Her husband Rev. W. W. Holdsworth became minister of this church in 1901 to 1904.

The Holdsworth Memorial hospital, popularly known as the "Mission Hospital", is a 325 bed hospital situated in the historic city of Mysore. The hospital was built between 1904 and 1906 by Rev. George Sawday and his friends in memory of Mary Calvert Holdsworth who with her husband Rev. W. W. Holdsworth helped the people of Mysore before and during the 10 years of a plague epidemic. The hospital maintains a modern infrastructure that provides a broad spectrum of curative and preventive health care services at an affordable cost.

On the south wall to the right of the balcony underneath the dummy window is a memorial plaque to Lord Hayter Chubb and his wife, erected in memoriam by his family. Lord Chubb was a key benefactor of the church; his father is remembered within the Chubb window on the north wall.

By the organ door, on the west wall of the church next to the pulpit, is a memorial to three ladies who or whose families left legacies to the church in order to complete renovation works to the church in 1970. This plaque also remembers their deep faith and service to the church.

Within the original entrance vestibule, above the door into the old vestry (crèche area), is a simple wooden plaque dedicated to William Jolly, who for 47 years was the caretaker and loved this church.

There is a small bronze plaque outside on the front wall of the church, in memory of a long term member and faithful servant of the church, Violet Walden, with a simple inscription "always in our thoughts". The flower bed directly in front of the front wall was made in her memory and is lovingly kept to this day.

6.0 Column Carvings

The large arch that frames the apse space has a carved stone capital bracket at the base of each side of the arch. On each, there are two clear forms and symbols, all of which are organic plant or flower forms.

Within the carvings at the left hand side of the arch are passion flowers and oak leaves. The lower section of the capital forming a carved organic V shape is formed of passion flower leaves and flowers. For a full explanation of the symbolism of passion flowers see the description of the Bunting window on the north wall. The passion flower is used to symbolise the passion of Christ. Here it is used to remind us of the suffering that Jesus took upon himself for humankind.

Within the right hand arch capital carvings: there are ivy leaves, grapes and wheat. The lower section of the capital forming a carved organic V shape is formed of a mix of grapes, vine leaves and wheat sheaves. The wheat sheaves and grapes represent the bread and wine of the last supper, which is the gift Jesus gave to us to celebrate as a church together and remember him during Holy Communion.

The upper section on each of these capitals has a different symbol, the left hand capital has oak leaf and acorn carvings, and the right hand capital has ivy leaf. The oak leaves and acorn symbolise strength from the mighty oak tree, which has provided the timbers which built the great cathedrals and buildings of this country. The ivy leaves symbolise evergreen, everlasting stability of Gods love. Together they symbolise the stability and strength we can have in our life through Jesus Christ.

The two columns holding up the side chapel arches have delicate and ornate carved capitals at their top, below the spandrel of the arches. They have a similarity but they are different. The column nearest the organ is decorated with palm leaves, often used to symbolise the triumph of Jesus as he entered Jerusalem and people waved palm leaves to celebrate his entry.

“The next day the great crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord – the King of Israel!” John 12:12-13.

The column nearest the old vestry is decorated with fern leaves; the fern symbolizes solitude, humility and sincerity. The fern hides itself in the woods and reveals its splendours only to those who earnestly seek it out. The fern can also be used as an Easter symbol, as it dies down every year and returns in the spring.

7.0 Furniture

On first impressions you may think there are no pews, but if you look under the balcony and up the stairs and onto balcony there are still some there. On the rear most pews some of the original prayer kneeling boards can be seen. In 2010 the pews were removed to make way for the remodelling and refurbishment of the church. The church space can now be used for many purposes; not least new and innovative ways of sharing or taking worship.

The key furniture within the church is the lectern, pulpit, communion table and the two fonts.

The pulpit provides a useful vantage point for the preacher and prior to the installation of the state of the art digital sound system, it was an important position so that the preacher could project their voice across the congregation as well as be seen. Now with the extended stage area, the preachers have far more visibility and more freedom to express themselves, in different ways and still be seen and heard by the congregation.

The pulpit is interestingly carved and carries two notable motifs each inscribed in Greek, the language of The New Testament. The uppermost combines the Greek Letters IHS, the first 3 capital letters of the name of Jesus. The lower of the two entwines the letters alpha and omega, ΑΩ, and finds its origin in the verses from the book of Revelation.

Revelation 1:8: "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

Revelation 21:6: And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the fountain of the water of life without payment".

Revelation 22:13: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

The pulpit is further carved with Romanesque style acanthus leaves around the top and decorated with gothic style fleuron's along the base. The pulpit is octagonal in plan.

The panels either side of those with the Greek letter monograms have geometric patterns set within recessed circles: on the panel facing the congregation are trefoil and quatrefoil symbols, each with a centre circle tying each petal/circle back into one shape. These shapes are also present within the panel facing the apse at the back of pulpit.

On the right hand side of the panel with the monograms is a similar panel to the two others, only the trefoil and quatrefoil shapes are not joined together.

The quatrefoil is an ancient symbol of good luck, e.g. the four leaved clover. It is a Celtic symbol representing "the wheel of being," as well as a Christian symbol of the cross. It is particularly evident in Gothic architecture. It is described as a tracery constructed with four equal foils (leaves). Note we have quatrefoil windows on the steeple and the quatrefoil symbol appears within the star symbol along the tops of the walls inside and within various windows.

In historic Christian symbols, the four petals of the quatrefoil are used to represent the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The quatrefoil can also be interpreted as a cross. The upper foil can remind us of God the Creator, the two side foils of God as Spirit and Jesus Christ, and the bottom foil can represent the church at the foot of the cross. The circle through the centre is to remind us of the eternal nature of God, as like a circle there is no end. The trefoils representing the trinity are carved similarly with the circle reminding us that God is eternal.

The wooden lectern was carved by George Chubb, son of John Chubb who is remembered in the Chubb window. George Chubb was the first Baron Hayter of Chiselhurst (he refused to spell it Chislehurst) and lived to 98, having been a member of Chislehurst Methodist Church for 78 years. It has a very intricate carving suggesting both the Garden of Eden and the True Vine. The main panel is set within a representation of a mock Gothic arch, decorated at the bottom with quatrefoils and in the corners. Within the arch an apple tree is carved, with one fallen apple. Above the mock arch is a grape vine, representative of the blood and Christ the true vine.

The apple is being used to symbolise sin; the connection seems to stem from the Latin words malum meaning "apple" and malus meaning "sin." These words share the same root which probably led to the apple's connection with the fruit that was eaten by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The eating of the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil brought sin into the world for all humankind, though the fruit is not actually named in Genesis.

A recent addition to the furnishing in the church is the octagonal wooden font, a memorial gift, designed and crafted by the son of one of our members. It

bears the ancient Christian symbol of the fish. The octagonal shape is symbolic of the rebirth, as discussed previously.

Within the apse is a large wooden table made by a member of the church. The table is decorated with dog tooth carvings under the top, forming a border around the top; under this are carved trefoils. Dog tooth carvings are an ancient architectural pattern in an ornament found in the mouldings of medieval work of the commencement of the 12th century, which is thought to have been introduced by the Crusaders from the East.

This table is of course the communion table, in Methodist tradition there being no altar. This table is a representation of the simple kitchen or inn table that Jesus and his disciples might have had the last supper sat around. This is the communion table where the church gathers as a family to share the meal of bread and wine, which is done as Jesus taught in remembrance and celebration of him.

Note the brass cross sitting on the table with its stepped base. This is a Latin Cross mounted on three steps, sometimes called a Cavalry Cross. Calvaria (Latin), also known as Golgotha (Aramaic), was the name of a small mound outside Jerusalem's gate and means "the place of a skull" because it was a place of intense suffering. This was where the crucifixion of Christ took place. Traditional symbolism for the steps is that the three steps leading up to the cross represent the mound at Calvary or, more often, in descending order they represent Faith, based upon Hope, based upon Love.

Over in the side chapel is the original church baptism font, brought back into the main church in 2011 after over 20 years under the steeple (as the old church stage floor would not hold it). Note it is supported by three legs, each in a different stone symbolic of the Trinity; note the lid with celtic style cross. This has been restored to its rightful place at the entrance to the church. Baptism fonts are traditionally at the entrance to a church, as it is on baptism we sacramentally join the Church.

8.0 Balcony & Doors

The balcony, built in 1881 to provide more seating, is a wholly timber construction, cantilevered from the front wall of the church and off the glazed screen. The balcony and the doors forming the entry vestibules to the north door and to the area under the steeple are all decorated with handsome timber frame work and coloured glass. The balcony structure contains the last pews still in the church, including some of the original prayer kneeling boards.

The main screen in the balcony is formed from glazed gothic trefoil shaped windows, formed of a geometric panel of coloured diamond and quatrefoil shapes. Within the doors frames under the balcony all are decorated with fine coloured glass windows, and above the doors are roundels, with quatrefoils set within circles, with a trefoil window in the centre. The frame either side of the doors, has two little lancets with a quatrefoil above. Although these windows do not share the detailing and the main wall windows in the church, they have a simple beauty and are highly crafted. The windows and glass within the balcony and doors all have an organic form and are a pastiche of gothic design. Note the gothic trefoil arches within the banister along the stairs and within the support to the stair landing. The stair banister/side has the same carved pattern as the pulpit stairs.

On both sides of the screen are delicate carvings of leaves in small panels. The front parapet of the balcony is decorated with carved gothic styled fleurons, which appears initially as a flower with four petals but a closer look identifies the petals as 4 fleur de lys. The screen and balcony front are finished in a gothic style.

Within the adjacent window the same fleuron design can be seen. The front of the balcony is decorated with billet style mouldings, of alternating cylindrical bars along the base between the fleurons. The front parapet of the balcony is formed of tracery, carved out with a row of gothic lancet arches, and above these are a row of quatrefoils. The doorways within the balcony have dummy decorative columns either side; these are octagonal in section and have acanthus leaf decoration. Above the door openings and leading down to the columns is a triangle with cinquefoil flower type tracery within, giving the impression of forming a triangular arched doorway.

The balcony gives a bird's eye view of the church and is a great place to experience the spirit of the church. Note there is a little mirror on the front pew to help look at the rose window.

The doors into the original entrance vestibule area are similar to but different from the balcony. These have rounded trefoil windows, and they have a double floral pattern in the doors. These doors also give a clue to the fact the balcony was not original, due to their difference. They also suggest that these were in place before the steeple was in use as an entrance, as we can see the doors are thick and braced as you would expect an external door and the lock spaces have been filled.

9.0 The Organ

The organ is situated within one of the three arched spaces within the old side chapel and just about fits. It is hard to believe this wonderful machine the size of a small room is such a spectacular instrument.

Forster and Andrews of Hull, Yorkshire, built the church organ and installed it in 1883, which is the year the side chapel area was completed. The organ has 1600 pipes, many of them ornately painted. In antiquity it was pumped by hand bellows but today it has a powerful electric blower, living under the stairs to the upstairs hall.

Forster and Andrews was formed by James Alderson Forster (1818–1886) and Joseph King Andrews (1820–1896), who had been employees of the London organ builder J. C. Bishop. They opened the business that bore their name in Hull in 1843. The business developed and became one of the most successful of the North of England organ builder.

The British institute of organ studies, website (as of November 2011) noted that the cost of the organ was £210 when first built. It was originally installed as a two manual organ by Forster & Andrews. The organ was then altered and expanded in 1900 by Forster & Andrews of Hull, it was given a major overhaul and refurbishment in 1923 by Hill, Norman & Beard of London and an electric blower was added at this time. It was again refurbished and overhauled in 1990 (c) by F.H. Browne of Canterbury

A member of the church called George Watto provided the man-power for the bellows for many years as a member of the congregation. George was an African who was allegedly rescued from a group of Portuguese slave traders by Dr. David Livingstone. He was one of 6 boys thought to have been brought Dr. Livingstone's body home to England. He settled in Chislehurst where he worked for the Vanner family.

The organ is of cathedral standard and the technical specification is immense, with 1600 pipes designed to model the tone and sounds of a whole orchestra, the list of tones/notes and ranges included within its range, include: violin, cello, clarinet, flautino, Oboe, Cornopean, Piccolo, flute, to name just a few. The British Institute of Organ Studies, list the organ as being of important national significance and have included it within their register of historic Organs.

10 Apse Last Supper Freeze and Wall panels

In the apse, a beautiful stone reredos of the last supper, with the Ten Commandments to the right and the Apostles Creed with The Lord's Prayer to the left, portrays the last supper with Jesus and the twelve disciples. The walls are further decorated with the bay leave diaper moulding as discussed earlier. Please note the delicate fleur de lys in the bottom corners. The last supper freeze has a panel either side: the left hand panel is decorated with carvings of wheat and the right hand is decorated with grape vine, symbolising the bread and wine of the last supper. Note that the background behind the last supper scene is decorated with a geometric pattern very similar to the grisaille style pattern in the two side windows above.

The freeze is a classic representation of the last supper. Jesus is shown standing at the centre of the table talking or preaching to the guests gathered around the table. A loaf of bread and a wine goblet can be seen in front of him, awaiting him to share with his guests.

The apostles are not all easily identifiable, but Judas is easiest to find, when you think through the story of Easter. On the far right, almost sitting on his own is a man, holding what looks like a purse; he is also looking away from the rest of the guests round the table as if he is uncomfortable in their company. This is clearly Judas Iscariot.

John the evangelist is also easy to find, when you know what you are looking for. In the Bible, John was the "beloved disciple" to whom Jesus entrusted the care of his mother Mary from the cross. Tradition says he outlived the other apostles and therefore we assume was the youngest. He is usually shown as a very young (often effeminate) man in depictions of the Last Supper and other biblical scenes, but often as an old man when he appears alone.

In this scene Jesus has just announced the events that lead to his crucifixion, and clearly the apostles are shocked and are seeking assurance from each other following this revelation. All are either looking to Jesus or are referring with each other for support, with the exception of Judas Iscariot.

11.0 Icon

The Icon was commissioned and written for the church in 2011, in memory of Jenny West, a much loved member of the church, by her husband Philip. The icon was written by iconographer, Ann Welch, of Oare, Kent. Sunflowers are included within the icon as these were a favourite of Jenny West.

There is a small Plaque to right of the Icon with the scriptural reference:

“When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene and Mary Mother of James and Salome brought Spices so that they might go and anoint him”, Mark 16:1.

The icon shows the event on the Sunday following the crucifixion of Jesus, when the women came to anoint his body with myrrh as he lay in his tomb. Mary is shown carrying an alabaster jar with the myrrh, typically in art, and this is how we identify her.

Jerusalem can be seen in the background and the cave that formed the tomb is shown as open. The funereal shroud is shown as a white cloth lying on the ground and emerging from the cave as though it has been cast off. The guards are shown asleep in the bottom right.

In front of the cave is a white robed angel, who is proclaiming to the women that Jesus Christ was risen and left the tomb empty.

“When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you. "Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.” Mark 16. 1-8

Noting this scene is depicted in the rose window and Mary Magdalene is shown holding a jar of Myrrh in the window to the right of the Icon.

12.0 Labyrinth

The Labyrinth represents a journey reconnecting with our inner self or God and back again out into the world. Labyrinths have long been used as meditation and prayer tool. Labyrinths were a feature of many medieval churches, most famously Chartres Cathedral in France, though their origins go back much further, long before the birth of Christ. They were adopted by the church to be used as shortened pilgrimages.

The church has a 7.5 metre circular labyrinth set in tiles into the floor of the main body of the church. The design is based on a fountain in the Qasr al-Azm Palace in Damascus.

Chislehurst Methodist Church installed the labyrinth in 2011 and it is the first and to date the only Methodist Church in the UK to have a permanent indoor labyrinth.

Known as The Chislehurst Labyrinth, the pathway is cream with terracotta walls. It is unusual in that the pathway is a double track, meaning that you complete your own journey without having to cross or step out of the way of anyone else.

The design for The Chislehurst Labyrinth was created by Jeff Seward, a world expert on Labyrinths, and installed by Andrew Wiggins and his team from The Labyrinth Builders of Canterbury, with coordination of the installation by Jacqui Hicks from the Church.

More detail and information on the history of The Chislehurst Labyrinth, how to walk and use the labyrinth is available in other publications produced by the church. There are also regular workshops, prayer and meditation sessions to assist you should you wish to use it or view it. Please ask in the church office for further details.

13.0 Energy Efficiency

The Church was originally heated with coal boilers and open fires. The lighting was originally provided by gas lights, the pipes and valves, for these can still be seen on the walls in the church. It was in 1903 that the church got electric lighting.

From 2009 to 2011, major refurbishment and remodelling was undertaken to improve the church facilities. This work has continued. The upper hall and main hall, were double glazed, the other downstairs halls area and concourse are double glazed to help insulate and keep heat in. The main and upper hall roofs have been insulated. Within the church, the huge front windows have secondary glazing to assist against heat loss through this wall. The church roof was insulated in 2015

The kitchen, small halls/meeting rooms and all the new toilets have had energy efficient lighting; the toilets have motion sensitive switches, to ensure the lights don't get left on. Where possible throughout the church, energy efficient lighting has been fitted. The main church lighting system, was renewed: the spot lights are now (2018) low energy LED lamps, the main lights in the church hanging in the chandeliers are fitted with super energy efficient and very long life white LED lights. The lighting system within the church is zoned and flexible so that only those lights needed should be on, rather than light the whole church up. We now use less than a 20% of the electricity we used before within the main church.

The new toilets were all fitted with low volume flushing cisterns to save water, and the drains repaired to ensure these work.

The halls and church have had new energy efficient condenser gas boilers, which also give off less green house gas as they re-breathe much of the exhaust fumes and re-use some of the gas which is wasted on conventional boilers, making them up to 40% more efficient than conventional boilers. Rather than fit one large boiler we have four, which run in a series. It is more efficient to have a small boiler working at full capacity than it is to have a large boiler working at only partial capacity. The church and the new glazed foyer had under floor heating installed in 2011, which is as much as 50% more efficient than radiator style heating.

With the under floor heating system, 100mm thick heat reflective insulation boarding has been laid throughout the floor, in the church and foyer, under the in floor heating.

14.0 References and Thanks

The Legal bit

I have used many sources of reference and many different media, not least, spending time with friends within the church, bouncing ideas around and gleaning opinions. I have used text and references directly and paraphrased within the body of the document, where others have explained something better than I can. It is fair to say very little of the document is original to me and I have collected ideas and theories together and presented them in a style I hope is easy to read and will help you to appreciate our church.

This document is not for profit and is for the educational use of members and visitors to the Chislehurst Methodist Church only with the sole aim of describing our church to appreciate the artistry and hard work by many over the generations who have contributed to the fabric of the building and the messages of faith and Christianity within.

This document or part of, must not be sold, copied, reproduced or referenced, without consent from the Church, in case of breach of copyright of the information, work and quotes within.

If on reading this guide, you have query on correctness or an alternative view or explanation please do not hesitate to contact me via the church office.

Thanks

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Many Thanks, Thomas G Cowie.

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I have used the following texts and websites, throughout this document, many thanks to all these hard working people for the work they have done and for the inspiration they give:

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The Methodist Church



The church is within a conservation area and as with many church buildings the cost of maintaining this beautiful church continues to spiral beyond the means of the local congregation.

Some benefit derives from the letting of ancillary rooms and the hall and the use of the church itself, but the cost of repairs and maintenance is very high indeed.

*“We have transformed a private place of worship
into a public sacred space.”*

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