

## A brief history of Methodism in East Leake

### What is Methodism?

John Wesley (1703 – 1791), the founder of Methodism, was born on 17 June 1703 the 15th of 19 children of the Rev Samuel Wesley and his wife Susanna. He was born at the rectory at Epworth in Lincolnshire, something of a backwater in more than one senses of the word since it was located on the Isle of Axeholm and virtually surrounded by marshes

In common with many of the younger sons of clergy John and his brother Charles were privately educated and went to the University of Oxford. After successfully gaining his degree John Wesley was ordained deacon (at that time Oxford was only open to communicant members of the Anglican faith and was both staffed by Anglican clergy and its significant output was ordained clergy) in 1725 and was admitted to priesthood of the Church of England in 1728.

Whilst at Oxford he, and his brother Charles joined the Holy Club, a group of devout students and college staff who met with the intent of studying the Bible, having theological discussions, and above all instituting a regular cycle of daily prayer in addition to their regular attendances at church. So strict with the members of the Holy Club and careful to adhere to their principles that they were derisively called Methodists – a name which stuck.

In summary the characteristics of Methodism then, as now, are:

- A preference for what Wesley called "experimental" religion over orthodoxy – that is personal devotion and activity in addition to participation in communal religious rites.
- A personal relationship with God in detail.
- Embodying the "life of Christ" in mutually supporting Christian groups.
- The universal possibility of salvation.
- Church order and organisation to include both ordained and lay people.
- The action of the Holy Spirit in the common life of the Christian "comm – unity".
- A concern for the material as well as the spiritual welfare of the individual.

These characteristics are not unique to Methodism. In a sense Methodism represents an attitude to faith rather than unique pattern of beliefs.

When Wesley died at the age of 88 in 1791 it did not we take long for the Methodist Conference (the governing body of Methodism) to separate from the Anglican Church and establish its own arrangements. Wesley's organising capacity had provided all the necessary administrative and pastoral supporting arrangements.

## Methodism comes to East Leake

Once John Wesley had begun his practice of open-air preaching he began his prodigious travels around the country. It's estimated that he may have covered up to 5000 miles a year, travelling every day, and often preaching four or five times. Fairly early on in his travels, in 1741, Wesley came north through Leicester travelling onwards towards Nottingham. In 1770 on another of Wesley's journeys he was travelling in the opposite direction from Nottingham to Leicester. This time he specifically speaks of visiting the East Leake area. His Journal records:

*"Monday the 30th – I preached at Bingham, 10 miles from Nottingham. I really admired the exquisite stupidity of the people. They gaped and stared, while I was speaking of death and judgement, as if they had never heard of such things before. And they were not helped by two surly, ill-mannered Clergymen, who seem to be just as wise as themselves. The congregation at Hoton (spelt Hooton) in the evening was more noble, behaving with the utmost decency."*

He goes on to record that he went into Loughborough where he preached in the Marketplace the next day and established a new society there.

This was the background against which the first Methodist chapel was established in East Leake. When John Angrave and his wife Mary had become keen supporters of the Methodist movement in the Society formed in Loughborough in 1772 they were still within the scope of the Anglican Church. In 1798 the enclosure of the old mediaeval three field system of East Leake began. Larger more productive agricultural fields were created from the previous Midlands mediaeval three field system with landowners owning individual strips. (The remnants of this three field system can still be seen in the fields south of Potters Lane and that the very northern end of the village.) Although the Angraves lived at Hoton, they had rights to land holdings in East Leake. As the Enclosure took place so they received allocations of land and it was from these allocations that John Angrave gifted a plot of land to the Methodists for chapel. In doing so he was creating the first permanent building for a new church which was then in existence, and by becoming a trustee of the chapel he and his wife were throwing their lot in with the Methodist Church. Other branches of the Angrave family remained within Anglicanism and indeed subsequently became Rectors of the East Leake Parish Church.

Once it had been established the early Methodist Church grew rapidly. Estimated about 72,000 members of the date of Wesley's death by 1820 the number of Methodists had reached 200,000. But this rapid rate of growth was not without its difficulties, and the Methodist movement rapidly showed signs of fragmentation. By far the most significant early division came in 1807 with the establishment of the Primitive Methodist Church.

As Primitive Methodists there were a number of issues which divided them from their more middle-class brethren who came to be known as Wesleyan Methodists. The Primitive Methodist Church focused attention on the role of lay people, whilst the Wesleyans tended to place more reliance on the leadership of their Ministers.

Primitive Methodism stressed simplicity and lack of ornamentation in their chapels and their worship. Wesleyans drew much more on the Anglican tradition and their buildings were more ornate. Primitive Methodists concentrated their mission on the rural areas and the poor; the Wesleyans on the more affluent and influential urban classes. The Primitive Methodists were also much more strongly stressed the political implications of Christian discipleship. The Wesleyans were much more nervous about any kind of direct political engagement. It tended to be the Primitive Methodists who underpinned the development of the trade union movement later in the 19th century, though it should be noted that the Tolpuddle Martyrs of 1834 had three Wesleyan Methodist local preachers among their numbers.

In East Leake the Primitive Methodist movement developed as a result of the arrival of Elizabeth Garner and her husband in 1804. Her husband died in 1807, but her sons John, William, and James all became Presidents of the Primitive Methodist Conference in the middle years of the 19th century. Although originally Wesleyan herself (a point specifically noted in the commemorative plaque commissioned by the Wesleyan Church towards the end of the 19th century and now to be found in the current Methodist Church) Elizabeth seems to have come alongside the Primitive Methodist movement and they met at her house and a small chapel behind it from 1810 which had 67 seats. The role of the Garners were significant in Primitive Methodism, though the significant contribution of her sons was not directly relevant to Primitive Methodism within East Leake. Her sons were Presidents of the Primitive Methodists in 1859, 1861, 1864, and 1871, but much of their service and their role within the Primitive Methodist movement took place away from East Leake.

The rapid growth of Methodism and the population of East Leake seems to put pressure on the seating accommodation of the Wesleyan Methodist chapel. In 1827 the chapel was extended and a gallery inserted. It could now accommodate 120 and the cost was £80. The church was reopened its extended form on 2 December 1827. The extension was funded by subscriptions and by public collection. This covered £60 of the cost and the remainder would come from the repayment of debts incurred by the Victorian arrangement of pew rents. There was confidence in the church that there would be no difficulty in doing this as all the pews that were available to rent had been let – suggesting that a significant part of the accommodation was used on a regular basis.

### The Methodists before the First World War

In 1851 a Religious Census took place which gives as an invaluable snapshot of the state of Victorian churchgoing and religious observance in the mid-century immediately before the building of the new Methodist chapel. The census records East Leake as having a population of 1148. The Wesleyan Methodist Church had a morning congregation of 142 and an evening congregation of 200, with a Sunday School of 42. By comparison the East Leake Parish Church had the attendance of 300. There was also a Wesleyan Methodist Church at Costock with a morning attendance of 45 and evening attendance of 105; and a Wesleyan Church at West Leake which had an evening congregation of 55 which met at the house of William Mills.

The Victorian churches felt that there was much that could be done therefore to improve church attendance and numbers. Against that background that at a meeting in March 1862 attended by 200 to 250 people it was agreed that a new Methodist chapel should be constructed. By that time fundraising had already reached nearly £400 with a further £35 promised, suggesting that the project had been underway for some time. By August 1862 the foundation stone had been laid by Richard Angrave, one of the trustees of the Methodist Church. The estimated cost of construction was around £650 and by that time it was suggested that most of the money had already been raised – although a lot of it was by debt. The old Wesleyan Chapel was to become a schoolroom for the Sunday School. The role of trustees was perhaps typical of Wesleyan Methodism – three farmers, three hosiery manufacturers, a lace manufacturer, a seedsman and a butcher.

By 1863 the building had been finished. The whole project cost £933, of which £870 was the building – significantly more than the estimated cost of construction which is a feature of Methodist building projects that will occur again. The church had seating for 244, and the Wesleyan Methodists had a membership of 30. Methodism was now an established feature of the East Leake community.



At the local level in Victorian times the responsibility for running the individual church was divided amongst three main groups. The Church Stewards were responsible for maintaining public worship, the heating and lighting and provision of hymn books and materials, maintain pastoral oversight, and running the class system. The Sunday School Superintendent and teachers were responsible for organising and teaching in

the Sunday School for incidental costs of heating and lighting. The Trustees were legally responsible for the property, its improvement and maintenance, for any new building works that were undertaken, and for any long-term debts that were incurred in maintaining the church. With a division of responsibilities between three groups of people there are possibilities for misunderstandings. In particular the Trustees of a church were appointed through a legal process which was cumbersome to alter. The formal Trustees of a church could therefore remain unchanged for a number of years, whilst Church Stewards and Sunday School staff could be altered quite quickly and without any particularly formal procedure, other than that laid down by the Methodist Conference.

In 1891 Methodist Church in East Leake changed its Trustees from those who had been responsible for the building of the new chapel to a new group, who were something of a new broom and intended to "sweep clean". The new Trustees showed a similar range of occupations we would expect to see from a Wesleyan Church – two brickmakers, three farmers, a basket maker (one of the Mills family), schoolmaster, land agent, shoemaker, and a Poor Relief Officer. Most of the older Trustees stepped down, and this is the last we see of the connection with the church with the Angrave family. On assuming responsibilities they clearly were concerned about the current state and working of the Sunday School. While some repairs were carried out the Sunday School was closed temporarily, and the Trustees met in especially formed committee with the Sunday School staff to reorganise the Sunday School on "Methodist principles". The Sunday School reopened in February 1892. This was one of the few occasions when the division of responsibilities in Victoria Methodism appears to have created a problem.



*Main Street, East Leake.*

There are also a number of problems around the heating and lighting of the chapel. The Trustees held a number of special events and as a result were able to modify

the heating and fit two large central oil lamps and provide for a barrel of whale oil to run them. The trustees also improved by providing a large oil lamp to hang over the door – there was no other street lighting – by accepting a bequest from Mrs Mills in respect of her late husband to provide the lamp. Subsequently the Parish Council undertook to maintain and fuel the light on a regular basis and it remained the only street lighting East Leake for some time. (see photograph of Main St) Generally the church was improved and redecorated and minor repair work undertaken.

In 1881 the Primitive Methodist Church was still meeting at Costock Road having 22 members with pew rents of £16. However throughout the 1880s and 1890s level of pew rents for the Primitive Methodist Church steadily dropped, implying reductions in their membership and congregations from the high 30s in 1881 to single figures by the turn-of-the-century and with very low single figures by 1910. After this time nothing further is recorded, and it seems the Primitive Methodist Church closed.

The Trustees changed again in 1912 and made extensive repairs to the chapel, had it redecorated, and a new hot water system installed. Whilst this was going on the chapel was closed temporarily the services being held in the former chapel – now the schoolroom. In September 1912 the renovated chapel was reopened following Harvest Festival. The total cost had been £192, and £67 was still outstanding so the Trustees borrowed the money locally against a promissory note. During 1913 and 1914 additional fundraising enable the debt to be repaid. There was still work to be done – particularly on the heating system which had proved problematic for a number of years, but it was decided to defer this because of plans for the bigger project. Early in 1914 the Trustees agreed terms with the Long Eaton Cooperative Society who were purchasing one of the plots at the side of the church for a new store from Mrs Mary Moon, the widow of the farmer who had owned the plot. Eventually this became the Cooperative store until the new supermarket was built, and the old premises became the Co-operative Funeral Service. The agreement was to buy a plot of land at the back of the existing church, the funds for the purchase were to be raised by borrowing on a promissory note of the trustees. Shortly after this deal was agreed in July 1914 the Trustees approached the landowner on the other side of the church, Mr Pidcock, who agreed to sell an equivalent amount of land to provide a continuous plot at the rear of the church. The purchase of the first site from the Cooperative Society needed to be sent to London because in addition to Stamp Duty there was an additional tax to be paid on the betterment value of the land. The deal was finally completed and the deed of sale stamped on 4 August 1914 – the day Great Britain declared war on Germany which brought this country into the First World War. The deal with Mr Pidcock still remain to be completed but he agreed to accept a nominal deposit and have the deal completed within 12 months because of the peculiar circumstances following the "outbreak of hostilities". It's difficult to interpret this cryptically minuted phrase – it might indicate some uncertainty that the deal could be completed, but more likely it indicated the common thinking that "the war would be over by Christmas", and therefore the deal would go ahead once hostilities were ended. The deal was finally completed in May 1915 using funds borrowed on a further Trustees promissory note and the land was fenced off ready for subsequent use.

## Methodism In East Leake in the two World Wars

The shock effect of the First World War seems to be reflected in the organisation and functioning of the Methodist Church during this period and immediately afterwards. After the purchase of land from Mr Pidcock in 1915 there are no further records of any meetings or decisions until 1919, and even then there seems to have been indecision amongst the Trustees about taking action to remedy some of the immediate problems that they were facing in the heating and condition of the chapel. Meetings were held, and then adjourned without a decision being taken because of "abnormal conditions". It was not until 1920 that the Church seems to have regained some sense of purpose. At that point a later entry in Kelly's Directory suggests that the Church could seat 350, and it was recognised for marriages in the new registration arrangements. During this period the number of baptisms in the chapel slumped. In the period of the Great War there were only four, and throughout the whole of the 1920s only seven, compared to an average of 12 to 15 per decade prior to this.

In February 1920 the Trustees of the East Leake Wesleyan Methodist Church were asked by the East Leake War Memorial Committee if they would agree to the erection of a Roll of Honour in the chapel grounds. The Trustees unanimously gave their approval.



The Roll of Honour lists 125 men who served almost without exception in the Army and on the Western front. The sole exception was Lt Roadley who served in the Royal Flying Corps having transferred there from the South Staffordshire Regiment

The significant structural change that took place in Methodism during this period was the union of the various Methodist groups. Early in the 20th century, in 1907, a number of the smaller Methodist groups – the Independent Methodist and Bible Christians for example – had got together and decided that they would operate instead as a single grouping to be called the United Methodists. After the Great War the United Methodists, Primitive Methodists, and the Wesleyans began discussions about coming together as a single Methodist Church. There was doctrinally very little between them, but there were certain issues over Church governance and the traditional emphases on ministerial and lay leadership that need to be sorted out – particularly between the Primitives and Wesleyans. Yet in East Leake this change seems to have passed the Church by. There was no break or change in the membership of Trustees as might be expected when different congregations were brought together. Nor was there any change in the underlying the trust deed arrangements for East Leake Methodist Church. The clear conclusion is that no unification actually took place, probably because by the 1930s the Primitive Methodist Church congregation in East Leake had ceased to exist.

No attempt was made to move ahead with the project to sell the old chapel and build a new schoolroom that had been put on hold by the War. Instead throughout the 1920s only minor repair work and redecorating was undertaken, and for relatively modest levels of expenditure. During the 1920s and into the 1930s the Church began to show deficits in its accounts. From 1929 to 1936 the Church was consistently spending more than it was gaining in terms of income, largely because its income was dropping year by year. By 1934 the accumulated debt had got to a level where special fundraising events and personal gifts from Church members were being sought.

In 1937 the Trustees of the Methodist Church changed again. The old Trustees continued with the schoolroom project work throughout 1936 and into 1937 as it took a considerable amount of time to draw up and agree the new trust deed and have the legal requirements completed. Almost immediately financial difficulties arose. Estimates were obtained but as the work began it was realised that there had been a mistake by either the architect or the builder and further costs were inevitable. The Trustees began to cut corners in order to save money. A mound of earth which had been scraped off to level the site and left against the rear wall of the building plot should have been moved on the architect's advice, but the Trustees felt that they should not bear the extra expense and it was left there – where it remains to this day - even though the architect warned that it would give a possibility of damp occurring in the schoolroom (which in fact it did.) The building was constructed as a bare shell, without independent heating or internal toilets. It was only at the last minute it was agreed to extend the plumbing system to provide one external water tap.

When it was completed the new schoolroom cost £570, considerably more than the original estimate, but totally in line with the traditional pattern of new Church building for the Methodists! With the loan from the Chapel Aid Fund the total income raised was £589, though of this £276 was a result of personal loans need to be repaid as well as the Chapel Aid Fund loan. However the Church accounts were turning round and now a surplus was being achieved and income had begun to rise. As with all new groups of Trustees the 1937 group started to look at the condition of the chapel.



The Trustees decide to look at installing electric heating in the new schoolroom – the first indication from these records that electrical supply was available in East Leake. A schedule of repairs and redecoration for the chapel was agreed, and the chapel was closed temporarily whilst the work was done, with the congregation meeting in the village hall. Eventually the work was completed and it was agreed to reopen the chapel for public worship on Sunday, 10 September 1939 – exactly one week after the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, had made his radio announcement that "consequently, this country is at war with Germany."

Two posters from the Second World War perhaps typify the approach of the Methodist Church during this period. The first which has currently gained a popularity in our current difficult times was "Keep Calm and Carry on", which was prepared for release following the anticipated German invasion in 1940, but which was never actually issued. Nevertheless it seems to sum up an attitude of calm continuity. The other poster was "Make Do and Mend", and that seems to have been a theme of Methodist Church activity at least in respect of the buildings during the War. The Church declined to do what they consider to be unnecessary repairs, and when the boiler broke down in 1940 rather than try and replace it the Trustees bought some spare replacement parts from one of their number and "carried on". During the War period the finances of the Church continued to improve, largely as a result of reduced levels of expenditure, to the extent that by 1945 the Church had managed to repay all the outstanding debts on new schoolroom.

At the end of the War there was some changes in personnel as those who had continued in office throughout the War moved away from East Leake and newer, younger, members were appointed to Treasurership positions. What had been noticeable throughout the 1930s period and up to and including the Second World War was the increasing influence of women in the lay leadership of the Church. During the Victorian period the Trustees and stewards were universally men, and women who were active in the Church tended to serve through the Sunday School. With the change of Trustees in the 1930s women had become involved more directly as Trustees, though in the period when the new trustee arrangements were being finalised it was clear that the old Trustees invited some of those who will be the new Trustees, which included the women, to attend their meetings and take part in the discussions.

### Post War Methodists

With the end of the Second World War the documentary records of the Methodist Church come to an abrupt halt. Bits can be pieced together from ancillary documents, and from the annual accounts of the Church, but the minute books and other records are missing. From the accounts it seems that the period from 1946 through to the early 1960s was one of stability. There was very little variation at all in the annual turnover of the Church, the size of its collections, or its contribution to the Circuit system through the Assessment. There does not seem to have been any significant projects or developments. The overall structure of the church, and its internal arrangements to pews, pulpit, and organ remained substantially unchanged. Two things only stand out. First, in 1951, nearly 20 years after the new arrangements had been introduced to unite the Methodist Church groupings together, the Trustees

at East Leake decided to adopt the Model Deed from that unification, to replace the Wesleyan style Model Deed which they had adopted back in 1891! Second, in 1958 the Trustees changed, for the last time. In line with the practice of the new Trustees group they looked at some of the significant outstanding physical problems of the chapel. The heating had been an issue for many years – since the early 1920s attempts had been made to improve it. The Trustees in 1958 decided to get rid of the solid fuel system that had existed, and introduce electrical heating in the form of tubular radiators at pew level, and radiant heaters above. The Church and the Sunday School were both equipped at a cost of £408, with £100 being spent immediately as a down payment, and the rest spread over the following two years.

It was the rapid growth in the population of East Leake during the 1960s and 70s that created the greatest challenge to the Methodist Church. The impact can be seen in the record of baptisms. In the 1940s and 50s baptisms had averaged the same sort of rate has experienced in peacetime of around 15 or so per decade. In the 1960s the figure grew dramatically to 28 and in 1970s to 35 – the highest level it had ever been. But the influx of population, and the children that followed, also brought with it some challenges to the resource base of the Methodist Church. The pattern of the village had changed dramatically. From being a small and relatively stable community, with a significant number of "Methodist families" often spreading across the generations, it became a much more mobile and larger community, but one whose focus was often split. When people worked and lived in the same place, the focus tended to be on the local geographic community. As people lived in one place and worked in another so that communities became more functional and less geographic. Whilst the number of people who were members of the Methodist Church grew during this period to a maximum of around 50, from the long-term average of 30 in the times of the historically more stable community, Methodism on the whole was not increasing proportionately to the growth of local population. Such resources as the Church had were stretched more thinly, and those who were committed to the Methodist Church and its principles found themselves with increasing levels of personal commitment of time. Nationally, Methodism, along with many mainstream Churches, was in the period of steady decline. The numbers of Methodist nationally began to drift down from 800,000 in 1939 towards 500,000 in 1974. In part this was the lack of new people, following the blow to morale created by the First World War, to replace those who were dying. In part it recognised that the level of personal commitment to Christianity as opposed to social commitment to the Church had also been undermined. The 1960s which saw a highpoint in the modernist radical attitudes towards faith also served to undermine the confidence of many Christians in the mainstream Churches in the validity of their faith.

The post-Second World War generations improvement in economic circumstances, particularly from the 1960s onwards, created "lift and drift". In particular the opportunities afforded by increased further education would result in young people within the community finding their personal circumstances and prospects considerably improved, but they tended not to return to the communities in which they had been brought up and educated, because there was no longer the link between employment and where you lived. Society became socially and geographically much more mobile from the 1960s onwards, so young people brought up in East Leake moved away, and because of the type of local housing and the increased cost of housing through successive house price booms, they tended not to

be replaced by young people with a similar personal commitment to faith coming into the area. Increasingly East Leake saw a pattern developing whereby young people moved away, and it was older people who moved in – sometimes to be close to their family – and it was their commitment to Methodism that enabled the Church to renew its membership.

The overall situation therefore began to develop of a proportionately smaller older membership, with increasing levels of personal commitment, facing a situation of a very much larger community with whom they wish to communicate their presence and faith. Traditionally, the way the Church has often communicated is through the provision of personal help, companionship, and social activities. So it was with the rapid expansion of population in the 1960s and 70s. In 1965 a youth club was established at the Methodist Church – the ELKS (East Leake Klubs). It formed part of the wider Methodist Association of Youth Clubs (MAYC) which linked it into a national organisation, and to a number of supporting national and local activities. The membership grew rapidly to around 60, of whom 30 would attend on average. It met twice a week, and that was in addition to the LEA youth club that met in the pavilion on Costock Road. The youth club attended the national MAYC events, but also ran a number of local events – most famously a sponsored bike ride in 1969 to raise funds for a disco unit that got some press coverage. The leadership team expanded as the membership did. The youth club ran until 1975 when an unfortunate practical joke backfired badly, leading to the involvement of the police, and the club was closed and never reopened. There was also established a playgroup again with about 60 or so children attending, which split its location between the Methodist Church and the Costock Road pavilions. Two members of the Methodist Church were significant in starting it up and it ran at least into the early 1980s when changes to the Church arrangements brought to a premature halt its arrangements for meeting at the Methodist Church.

In 1979 the problems of East Leake Methodist Church – the state of the chapel, and the small and increasingly older membership, set against the growth of the village as a population centre – came to a head when the Loughborough Circuit decided to look at the future of Methodism in the village. A report commissioned from structural architects concluded that the style and nature of the building, though it had inherent difficulties, was not necessarily out of line with problems experienced in mid-Victorian buildings, but the principal difficulties were a result of poor maintenance.. The main problem appeared to be consistent damp getting into the building. This had been a long-term problem suddenly going back to the turn of the 20th century. The subsequent discovery of farm wells in the vicinity leads one to speculate of the possibility of such a well or spring line close to the eastern boundary of the Church which might have contributed significantly to these problems. As a result worship was cold, lacked warmth and involvement – it was not an encouraging environment into which new people could be invited.

Loughborough Circuit considered this. It concluded that given the significance of East Leake as a developing population centre the Methodist Church ought to be represented, and the East Leake Methodists should be supported. Now that the local Church had the support of the Loughborough Circuit in its continuation, plans began to be developed quickly around the project of building ancillary accommodation on to

the Schoolroom, and the demolition of the 1862 Chapel. The project moved forward during 1981/2. The plans were approved in detail at an estimated cost of £9000. The Church had £4300 in balances towards this, and contributions from Circuit, District, and Connexional level were being sought. A bequest in 1982 of £4950 came at just the right time. The building works began shortly after Easter 1982. Almost immediately the building scheme began to run late and the cost began to rise. Some materials were stolen and there was a delay while an insurance claim was made and paid. Finally, the building work was completed and the building was first used in April 1983, with the Church being open for the first time at a dedication service in July 1983. Church Council then proceeded to make arrangements for the demolition of the old building at a cost of £4000 (to include landscaping). Demolition took place during the last half of 1984 and during the first half of 1985 the landscaping of the grounds took place.



Immediately after the demolition of the 1862 chapel the East Leake Methodists were also faced with a unique situation. Hitherto there had been a specific Church building available for worship. Now they had a much smaller, more easily maintained building but it was multipurpose. Used as a Church on Sunday morning, it was available for other use during the week. There was a feeling within the Church Council that it was important to mark out the new building as a Church. There was some agitation to make sure that external lettering and a cross marked it out as a Church building from the street, and internally it was important to the congregation to have the sanctuary area clearly delineated by a large cross and Church furniture, albeit that this could be moved aside.

## Methodism in East Leake today

Although the Methodist congregation put a Church stamp on the multipurpose building, many of the underlying issues that they faced and had put on hold whilst the old schoolroom was being extended and the old chapel demolished, were still there and still needed resolution. The shortage of candidates to take the more senior roles of Steward, Treasurer, and Secretary still existed. Increasingly the Church began to operate with the minimum numbers possible, and well below the recommended levels without any realistic possibility that they would be rotated through individuals as the current administrative arrangements required. The overall financial position of the Methodist Church remained relatively weak after the fund-raising that had been necessary to achieve the transition from the old chapel.

Early in the 1990s a number of new families within the Methodist tradition moved into East Leake bringing with them children. As a result a new Sunday school was established, or rather a Junior Church. The congregation were pleased with this development, and backed it by a willingness to provide resources, extending to the building of the additional annex to provide a schoolroom, and changing worship arrangements to reflect Junior Church needs. During the 1990s and into the first decade of the new Millennium the Methodist Church experimented with a number of different forms of worship that were more closely adapted to the needs of the congregation. The next step after the Junior Church arrangement was establishment of family services where the children remained with their parents throughout and the pattern of the service was adapted in content and form to engage the children. The logical development from that was all age worship which tried to steer a difficult path between "dumbing down" for the children and failing to engage the adults, and pitching an act of worship which met adult requirements but which was boring and incomprehensible for children. These approaches towards inclusive worship formed part of the pattern at East Leake Methodist Church during the period of the 1990s when the Junior Church was operating effectively. As the children of the families became teenagers and moved into secondary schooling the demands of education, other interests, and the inevitable tendency towards independence meant that they increasingly were not present at the Junior Church. There was a short period when the Junior Church was working with children of families who were not associated with the Church, and it proved increasingly difficult to maintain their interest and level of concentration. When the impact of increasing child protection requirements demanded higher levels of staffing, it proved impossible within the resource base of the Church to get sufficient people in order to continue the Junior Church effectively and by the turn of the Millennium it had ceased to function.

During the 1990s and early part of this century East Leake Methodist Church seemed to get over its worries about operating out of the multipurpose building, and engaged more closely with the community. Most importantly, as it subsequently turned out, the Church began to be used by an increasing number of community groups across the whole spectrum of ages and interests – from the Brownies to lunch clubs for the elderly, and from religious meetings to art groups and keep fit. Use of the Church grew to such an extent that it is now in use every day of the week and almost every time of the day, with the sole exception of Friday which is utilised to clean the Church for weekend use. Although the Church did not set out to achieve it as a

policy, the practical outcome was one of sharing. Effectively the Church and the community groups that use the Church building share between them on the basis of their usage the costs of maintaining, heating and lighting and meeting the day-to-day costs. The Church congregation, as well as paying their share of the building costs, use their resources to pay for the costs of the Circuit Assessment which provided for the worship and pastoral arrangements of the congregation. This arrangement meant that the Church did not seek to make a profit from its community users, and the increasing strength of its financial position over the 1990s meant that it was both able to pay an increasing share of Circuit costs – more in line with its membership and position within the Circuit, and indeed getting to the level when it was proportionately more than this.

During the period the 1990s the Church finances had become more stable and a significant level of balances had been built up. The original thinking behind this was that the Church had had unnaturally low levels of expenditure on property throughout the decade as a result of the building work that had taken place in the mid-1980s, but the expectation was that at some stage more significant repairs would be needed beyond the normal day-to-day maintenance and funds would be required. This proved the case in the first years of the new Millennium. The flat roofs built with the extensions to the old schoolroom that created the new Church reached the end of their operational life and began to show signs of needing repair as they began to leak. Rather than do patch job the Church Council consider options to undertake a reroofing scheme for the whole of the Church to replace not only the flat roofs but also the older slate roof that had been installed when the schoolroom was built in the 1930s. Architects were engaged and plans were drawn up. Progress on this was painfully slow, partly because of the complexity of designing a new roof to fit a building retrospectively. After the plans had been approved in principle tenders were sought. These delays proved providential. Before tenderers could bid for the work the Church cleaner reported to the Stewards that superficial cracks which had appeared in the plasterwork were in fact much more significant. The use of tell-tales to assess the damage revealed a serious problem. The 1980s extensions had been built to 1980s building standards, and with only half the depth of foundations of the 1930s original schoolroom. Periods of alternating dry and wet weather had caused the substrata of the foundations to shift, and as a result the 1980s extensions were pulling away from the 1930s schoolroom and significant subsidence was occurring. With no insurance cover available to meet the cost, the Church faced a significant new bill for digging down underneath the foundations and underpinning them to prevent further subsidence. At the same time the building no longer met the required standards for disability use and access, and with an increasing number of community users it needed to be improved to meet modern standards.

Once again the Church faced a dilemma of whether to attempt to raise additional funds and undertake the work or to recognise the current limitations it faced within the community and close. It decided to attempt to do the work, but recognised that it lacked the financial capacity to service a significant level of debt, requiring it to finance the project by way of grant aid from number of bodies. Support at Circuit and Connexional level was available, and the Church could add to this the significant level of reserves that it had accumulated. Applications were made to a number of grant aiding bodies, and it was the extensive community use of the building which resulted in a significant number of those applications being successful so that the

costs of subsidence work and bringing the building up to meet current standards was wholly funded without incurring debt. However, as in all major building schemes in Methodism in East Leake across the years, the project ran into additional costs. One was the cost of remedying a farm well was found to be underneath the foundations of the 1980s extensions. Its existence had not been suspected, but it gave further credence to the possibility that a well or spring now under the garden but then in close proximity to the east wall of the 1862 chapel might have been as contributory factor to the persistent problem of damp in the chapel. A second was the need to make sure that emergency exits for disabled use were actually effective. The original planned exit, following a trial run by disabled member of the congregation, proved to be barely adequate, and further alterations needed to be made in order to secure a safe emergency exit. The cost overruns were met by running down still further the reserves of the Church so that the end of the project all available sources of finance, short of debt, had been utilised.