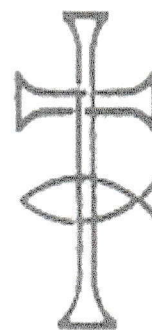


Paulerspury United Reformed Church



This Church was built in the year 1826.

It was started by the Minister from Towcester Congregational Church. (The building is now the Catholic Church in Meeting Lane, Towcester.)

At first the Minister used to come from Towcester Church to take the Services.

In the Autumn of 1841 Mr Buckingham was asked to preach in the evenings during the week. His services were acceptable, and everyone was excited about the success of the Chapel. In 1842 Mr Buckingham was asked to lead the Chapel.

A Sunday School was formed which had 40 – 50 children attending. By the following year there were 200 children. The congregation increased so the Chapel added two side balconies. The back balcony holding the Organ had already been built. The pulpit was increased in height to make it easier for the people upstairs to listen.

The land around the Church was consecrated as a burial ground in 1843.

On the 28th February 1844 the Chapel was made into a full Church. The Service was led by Rev. Hawkins from Towcester; Rev. Slye from Potterspury; Rev. Bull from Newport Pagnell and Rev. Wager from Stony Stratford.

Mr Buckingham was ordained as Minister of the Church on the 24th November 1847.

In 1850 the School-Room was added at a cost of £150 to cope with all the children. By the turn of the century there were 72 communicants, 159 Sunday School Children and 40 teachers.

Thank you for asking about the United Reformed Church and our own Church at Paulerspury. We would

like to tell you about the United Reformed tradition and the two Methodist Church buildings in Pury End.

On the sunny morning of October 5th 1972 this Church became a member of the United Reformed Church when most of the Congregational Churches in England and Wales and the Presbyterian Church in England and Wales joined together. On the 26th September 1981 they were joined by the Re-formed Association of Churches of Christ.

There used to be two Methodist Chapels in Pury End

The Wesleyan Methodist Chapel was on Lower Street and you can see the building on the right hand side. It stands parallel to the road and is identifiable by the windows. It closed in 1959 and is now used as a store.

The Primitive Methodist Chapel was at the Village end of Westey Road to the left of the bus shelter. It closed on the 9th July 1992 and has since been turned into a house.

The Non-conformist School

When the Village School was first built only those children who attended St James were allowed to go. The children from the three Chapels had their own School. It was called the Elizabeth Newman School and was sited near the Church Green between the two thatched houses. Once the children went to the main Village School the building was used as a Hall, called The Institute. This building was pulled down in the 1970's.

Today's United Reformed Church

In September 1991 a new Minister was appointed, her name the Rev'd Hazel Whitehead. She was married to a Minister and together they brought their three young children to this Pastorate of three Churches. Hazel was to build up the Churches at Potterspury and Yardley Gobion and to gently close the Church at Paulerspury which only had 5 faithful members left.

However, God had brought into His Church a Minister with considerable vision. Within 18 months she had made contact with all the Non-conformist families in the Village, most of whom went elsewhere to worship. One Sunday afternoon she gently put to the congregation of five the necessity of change if growth was to happen. She outlined her plans and waited. After a couple of minutes complete silence up spoke Peter Hugman, the oldest member of the congregation. He said "What have we to lose? Let's go for it. If this is what God wants so be it."

This meeting took place on Sunday 21st March 1993, and in the next six weeks eight adults, plus three Venture Scouts, washed, dusted, hoovered, painted, plastered, moved pews, and generally blitzed the building. We also did a mail-shot to our entire Village. During this time we still opened every Sunday afternoon for our quiet service, but our Minister was taken ill with what subsequently turned out to be secondary cancer.

We re-opened on Sunday May 9th at 9.30am. Hazel conducting a Family Service. New Hymn Books and new N.I.V. Bibles; participation during the service; drama; poetry and prose to re-enforce our understanding of God's word; children more than welcomed and catered for during the address; coffee after the service.

At the end of July our Minister Hazel died. Five days later, our oldest and oh so wise member, Peter, also died. At this point, we as a congregation could have given up. But Hazel had appointed a Presiding Elder and a Church Council. With the guidance of the Rev'd Roger Whitehead (Hazel's husband) and the Holy Spirit's help, we as an entire Church Family continued the re-growth.

We erected "God's Tent". A false roof suspended from the roof to the top of the balcony. We have been given an electric organ by Towcester Baptist Church. We put in a kitchen; had two beautiful crosses and a lectern made from one of the pews removed to give us space; The walls and roof were mended; the building was re-wired and central heating and new lights put in. The School-room which was derelict has been entirely re-done downstairs. We have a big "Pub" sign erected outside to show the world that we are here.

Outside, the graveyard around the Church has been cleared of rubble, weeds and brambles. You can now see the grave stones and an old path has been discovered under the grass and weeds. The Victorian heating system at the rear of the Church has been demolished as have various "toilets". A few years ago we bought a piece of land at the back of the Churchyard from the County Council. We knocked the wall down to give us access and planted a hedge between us and the paddock next door. This piece of land is to extend our graveyard but our Young People also use it for play. All of the exterior walls have now been re-pointed.

This has taken a great deal of hard work by the members but this has also helped to build a Church Family. Our hope is that everyone coming into our Church will feel the love and the warmth extended. Under the Umbrella of the United Reformed Church we have come from Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Methodist, Plymouth Brethren, Salvation Army and the faithful URC members. Together we form what we hope you will find is an exciting, caring and welcoming Church. As a Church Family we have come

together under the umbrella of the United Reformed Church. Grateful that the URC has a big enough heart to encompass us all, whilst giving us all the freedom to grow.

On the 21st February 1998, the Rev'd Sue Litchfield was ordained and inducted as Minister of this Church. John and Sue and their family have lived in Pury End since 1975. Sue re-started the Village Playgroup in 1979 after it was closed and also ran the local Scout Troop for many years and the Village Youth Club. Their three sons have all attended the Village School and Kingsbrook School. When Hazel died the Church sent Sue to train as a Minister. She is Non-Stipendiary (not paid) and until she retired also had a full time job.

Since 1993 there have been Funerals, weddings and wedding blessings and many Baptisms which are recorded on the Cradle Roll certificate hung on the wall.

In the year 2000 the quinquennial report showed that the rear wall of the Chapel had moved and the building was condemned. Having just replaced the roof there was literally no money in the bank. This is when you step out in faith knowing that if God wishes the Church to continue, He will help provide the money.

This little Church continues to grow, so we looked at further developing the Church building to help take it forward into the new century. To build the new wall both side balconies had to be removed and a solid floor put in. The wooden screen at the back of the Church was removed and the pews. The kitchen was moved into the School Room and a new disabled toilet was built in the front of the School Room. We also took the opportunity of having gas central heating installed.

At the end of 2010 the Chapel was re-plastered, painted and new lights installed.

The next stage, when money allows, will be to sort out the vestibule and have half glazed doors installed between the vestibule and the Chapel. Plus the frontage is to have a new wall with two entrances.

As a Church Family our Aim is to extend a welcome both to occasional visitors and to new members and within our Church to offer the facilities that allow everyone to travel along their Christian road of understanding, knowing that they are part of a Family which cares.