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"We are Anglicans and URC members working together to serve our community in the name of God."

Introduction

The Church in Warden Hill is a Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) between the congregations of the St. Christopher's Anglican Church and Warden Hill United Reformed Church.

St. Christopher's is a Parish Church in the parish of St. Philip & St. James Leckhampton (in the South Cheltenham Team Ministry), in the Cheltenham Deanery of the Diocese of Gloucester.

Warden Hill United Reformed Church is in partnership with the United Reformed Church in Cheltenham (URCiC) in the West Midland Synod.

The LEP was formed in 2010 following an 'engagement' of 4 years during which time both churches individually and together investigated the best way forward for a community church to serve the people of Warden Hill.

Many people would liken the current situation to a 'Village Church' primarily here to serve the community and proclaim God's Word to the local area.

Unlike many Cheltenham churches our congregation is drawn mainly from the estate and the surrounding area.



St. Christopher's



URC



Children from Warden Hill School
(painting Numbers for Sundial)



The Mayor opening the Sundial with
Children from Warden Hill School

The Area

Warden Hill is a residential suburb of the town of Cheltenham; the main estate was built in the early 1960s. There is a small centre with shops, a public house, a county primary school and one of Cheltenham's main secondary schools. An additional 100 homes were added in the late 1990s, and in the same development, but in the adjacent parish, an out of town supermarket, library, community centre and additional primary school.

The dominant building type is 2 storey houses and bungalows with a small number of 2 storey maisonettes and flats above the shops, in the centre.

The area has little or no industry and consequently the area is predominantly a dormitory for Cheltenham and its environs. That said many of the houses still have their original first occupant although at this time there are a large number of new families arriving, regenerating the area and producing the need for a younger level of local amenity.

There is little open space. Warden Hill, a grassy knoll, dominates the area. It is primarily fields used by locals for dog walking and gentle exercise whilst retaining an agricultural feel. Brizen Field, in the adjacent parish provides green playing space and there is a small central green space between the URC Church and the Public house, and small greens at road intersections

The Secondary school has large playing fields.

The shops, on the main through road, provide good local support with food, retail and service providers, and are rarely empty for long.

Brizen Field, has a Youth centre, which attracts youngsters from the estate and wider Cheltenham.

Part of the area was affected by the floods in 2007 and a flood alleviation project is underway.



Lincoln Avenue Looking toward St. C's



Shops

The Congregation

For many years there had been little communication between the two churches beyond occasional joint services and events, even though both drew the majority of their congregations from the estate whilst many other churches in the greater Cheltenham became centres for their specific brand of churchmanship.

In the early years of the 21st Century more communication started and led by the respective ministers the idea that some sharing might be possible with those 'across the road'! From January 2006 much more coming together became evident with a formal engagement between the two Churches, with a 'Declaration of intent', for an initial period of 2 years.

During 2007 there were a number of open meetings within each church. Eventually a survey, distributed to all regular members (and with a very high return rate). There was an almost unanimous decision to continue with the development of the LEP. This was formally put in place in January 2010. A sharing agreement exists for both buildings.

Main Sunday morning services, held alternately at each site, attract 75-80 people out of a combined church (Electoral roll and Church roll) of 120; the age range is large with approx 10% under 18 and 50% over 70. There is normally a choir (SATB), young peoples church, fair-trade and time to chat over coffee.

We are an active church reaching out into the community on a large number of fronts: play group, youth work (Cubs, Beavers and Brownies), after school club, parish lunches, home group, senior club, Mothers Union etc. For this years AGM we had a record 70 reports from groups within the church community.

The church supports a weekly news sheet, monthly magazine a web-site (www.tciwh.org.uk) and a 'facebook' group.



URC 50th Anniversary Service



Harvest Festival, All Age Service



Procession to URC after LEP Service

Facilities

During the original building of the estate, William Pye of Oxford, who built the estate gave the land for two separate churches, constructed only 200 metres apart, either side of the centre complex.

The United Reformed Church, originally Warden Hill Congregational Church, was founded as a daughter church of the Highbury Congregational church. The land allocated for the Anglican Congregation was designated for an ornate church similar in design and proportions to the mother church St. Philip and St. James Leckhampton. However a more multifunction building, designed as a Church Hall, was soon to occupy the site.

Both Churches have expanded their facilities over the years and now provide, on each site, church and two halls with kitchen facilities.

St. Christopher's underwent a major re-ordering in 2001 with a new frontage and the addition of a fleche. The church contains 10 Tom Denny Stained glass windows and the lightest ring of church bells in the world.

The URC celebrated 50 years in September 2010 and St. Christopher's will be 50 in July 2011.

The Halls at both units are extensively used by church groups, local and wider community.

Both buildings are relatively modern and with the help of dedicated maintenance teams, drawn from the congregation, are in very good order. We are currently investigating our 'green credentials' towards the possible installation, under the government and Diocesan scheme, of PV electric generation, as well as Eco-friendly purchasing. We actively re-cycle.

Neither church has a 'Churchyard' but both have car parks and there is ample parking in the adjacent residential areas.



St. C's Large Hall



URC Main Hall, cast of Panto 2008

Services

We have Sunday and mid-week services, as follows:

- **Sunday Morning Worship** alternates between our two buildings and the two worship traditions. There are children's activities, except on the First Sunday of the month, which is an all-age service.
- **Evening Worship** is held at St. Christopher's, including traditional language Communion, Choral Evensong, and occasional healing or Taizé services. We join with the other SCCs about once a quarter, for a group evening service.
- **Morning Prayer** is said at 8 am at St. Christopher's Monday to Friday, led by members of the congregation
- **Mid-week Communion** is offered on Tuesday mornings at St Christopher's, and there is also a Prayer Service at the URC on Tuesdays. Once a month these are combined.
- **Little Shepherds**, a service for pre-school children and their parents/carers, takes place on Wednesday mornings, led by a team of lay people.

In the last year, we have had the privilege of taking 6 baptisms and 6 funerals. On the Sunday before Valentine's Day, we held a special service in which couples were invited to renew their marriage vows.

The liturgy of each denomination is maintained for all services.



Conclusion

TCiWH is a new and developing LEP, with excellent lay leaders, responding to the needs of the local community.

One of the South Cheltenham Team Assistant Curates, Jacqui Hyde (a Self-Supporting Minister), has been primarily based with us since May 2011. She is in the third year of her curacy, so her deployment will be reviewed in Summer/Autumn 2012. Our current hope and expectation is that she will continue to minister here.

The local URC Minister is responsible for three churches in Cheltenham, and leads worship here approximately once a month, as well as providing other support.

In addition, the South Cheltenham Team Ministry and URCiC provide a wide variety of both lay and ordained ministry to assist with our services. There are also occasional joint services within each of these teams.

Aims

To respect our Declaration of Intent

To develop more within our community

To provide a church that welcomes all groups

To provide support to the community and the congregation.



Ann Johns, one of 3 Street Pastors



Warden Hill Beavers & Cubs