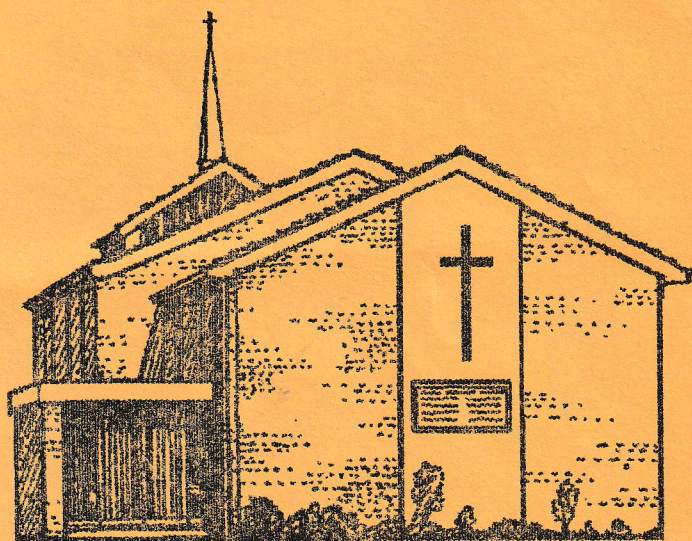




OF THE NEW BUILDING



CATSHILL

METHODIST CHURCH

1968 - 1993

OUR CHAPEL

As we prepare to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the opening of our church at Catshill it is good to reflect on what went on in our community to achieve our dream of a new suite of buildings to replace the old.

At the end of the Second World War in 1945 Catshill was a very different place from the one we recognise today; the new private and council housing estates were yet to be built and it was a true village community where everybody knew everybody else. The Methodist Church stood on what is now the car park, with a schoolroom alongside. The schoolroom was the original church building and was built in 1866 at a cost of £198. The church itself had been erected in 1910 and cost £884. There were no ancillary buildings, no vestry for visiting preachers, kitchen facilities were basic and toilet facilities primitive to say the least. However, there was within the church a tremendous Christian spirit, the church was alive and vital and as the young men returned from the war they were drawn into the day to day running of the fellowship and persuaded to serve on committees, the most vital being the Committee of Trustees.

A fund existed for rebuilding work, having been started by a donation from Mr O Bentley and added to by fêtes, jumble sales and bazaars, together with donations from many people. Eventually a decision was made to erect a new block at the rear of the church to serve as a ministers vestry with a larger room for committee meetings, etc. This was a time of shortages of building materials, when licences were required for timber, and

cement was in short supply. The cost of erection by local builders was too much for the funds available so the younger members of the Trustees decided to go ahead and build with the aid of voluntary labour only. Work commenced on Easter Saturday 1953 and took a year to complete. The building was demolished in 1981.

INTO THE 1960's

In 1958, a new Superintendent Minister was appointed to the Bromsgrove Circuit and the Rev J Kirkby proceeded to bring the Catshill Methodist Church organisation up to date. He introduced a leaders' meeting (now known as Church Council) and under his guidance a new Committee of Trustees was formed to take the Church into the 1960's.

Thoughts at this time were very much on possible future developments and a resolution dated 13th January 1958 stated that we make a fresh approach to the owner of the land at the rear of the church to try and get agreement on a purchase price. This was done with some success and a later meeting records that on the 19th February 1958 the land was purchased for £100. This was, without doubt, the finest move the Trustees ever made; the land they purchased now carries all of the church buildings including the new youth hall.

The church continued to thrive and in June 1959 the cottage immediately opposite was purchased for £500 and the rear garden converted into a much needed car park. It is worth noting that the cottage was sold in 1979 for £14,950 and made possible the purchase of the new Manse.

ADDITIONAL MINISTER

In 1961 a decision was made by all the members of Catshill Church to support the appointment of an additional Minister to the Bromsgrove Circuit, to be particularly responsible for Catshill and to reside in the village. In September of that year, the Rev W N J Hutchens and his wife and family came to the district and his influence, enthusiasm and sincerity started a movement which was to result in the rebuilding of our premises as we know them today.

A Family Service was started and the resultant increase in congregations and Sunday School scholars brought accommodation problems. These became so severe that in 1964 a 65ft x 21ft Banbury type building was erected and became known as the youth hall. It was sited in such a position that it would not interfere with other future development plans.

The building was opened by Miss D Pearson on the 31st August 1964 following a service of thanksgiving conducted by the Rev Norman Burns OBE, Superintendent of the London East End Seaman's Mission. The service commenced with hymn 410 "Come Ye that love the Lord, And let your joys be known", and never has it been sung with more enthusiasm. This building was demolished in 1991 to make way for our new youth hall.

FIRST MOVES

In June 1965 the Trustees made the first move in what was to be the erection of a completely new suite of buildings. Mr Donald G Cornfield, architect, had prepared some design drawings which the Rev W N J Hutchens had taken to the Department of Chapel Affairs in Manchester for comment and their encouraging response resulted in a resolution proposed by Mr R E Wagstaff that we raise £10,000, this being accepted unanimously. It is worth recording at this point the names of the Trustees:-

M Haywood, R E Wagstaff, S W Howard, J Stephens, G D Beckett, W E Rutter, T F Knight, P F Robinson, K C Wilkes, E Tovey, W D Robinson, B W Wilkes, D K Hember, A E Howard, G V Neal, A H Masters, R G Luckock, C Coates, H R Woodbury, B Rutter, F Haywood and R K Wilkes.

There followed a general church meeting to obtain the support of all the members and friends of the church and the fund raising commenced in earnest; waste paper collection, jumble sales, coffee mornings, sponsored walks, bazaars, auction sales, bargain shops, barbecues, you name it - we've done it! By April 1966, £2,008 had been raised, a splendid start.

REV TONY BULLOCK ARRIVES

In September 1966, Jim Hutchens moved to Taunton, but during his ministry at Catshill he had shown the way ahead and left us with a determination to succeed.

He was replaced by Rev Tony Bullock who was to see the church built during his ministry. He did much to strengthen the spiritual life of our church at a time when we were heavily involved in fund raising.

On the 25th February 1967, the Methodists' Department for Chapel Affairs advised that they would support a total scheme for a new church and ancillary buildings costing not more than £21,000. Towards this sum they would allocate £9,750 from the Joseph Rank Development Trusts and £1,250 from the Chapel Department; we could expect £2,600 from the Charford Trust but the balance of £8,400 was to be paid for by the Catshill Society and the debt cleared in three years. We had only £3,000 in the building fund but the decision to go ahead was unanimous.

Responsibilities for the scheme were delegated to various committees, a building committee to liaise with the architect and builders, an organ committee, and a ways and means committee to continue fund raising.

Some notable dates followed:-

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| 11.12.1967 | Demolition of the old schoolroom commenced. |
| 30.12.1967 | Mr O Bentley cut the first turf at a point where the Communion table now stands in the Chancel. |
| 2.3.1968 | Mr K C Wilkes performed the stone laying ceremony. The stone reads quite simply "Erected to the Glory of God" and a copy of the plans in a sealed packet was placed beneath the stone. |

14.6.1968

The old date stone from the schoolroom was placed beneath the Chancel floor.

THE OPENING AND DEDICATION

On Saturday, 19th October 1968, the Opening and Dedication Service commenced at 3pm. The new church was filled to capacity with an overflow congregation in the old church linked by a public address system. The church was opened by Mr S W Howard, dedicated by the Rev Tony Bullock and the sermon was preached by the Rev W N J Hutchens who had been such a key figure in recognising the need for new buildings.

The debt was cleared within the the stipulated three years and since then additional buildings have been added to cater for an ever growing community. Methodism came to Catshill in 1831 and we celebrate 162 years of devoted service.

THE FUTURE

The work of our Methodist Church at Catshill continues to go forward for the society has always thrived on challenge. Our facilities are second to none and make an ideal centre for active and meaningful fellowship in Catshill's expanding community, a base from which we can extend God's kingdom in this place. We have in Rev Fiona Spandler a new minister, together with members, prepared to carry on the good work. Our church is in good hands.

“ The future is bright if our hearts are right,
If our lives are in touch with God,
Let us journey on where Saints have trod,
Trusting always in His great might.”

Stan Howard

25 YEARS AGO - RECOLLECTIONS

On 19th October 1968 a dream became reality. Years of work on designs, plans and finances had been transformed into materials and craftsmanship and a building dedicated to the glory of God. Many prayers had been answered.

It was a great pleasure for Ruth and I to entertain Jim and Joyce Hutchens for that weekend, Jim having been instrumental in directing our thoughts towards the provision of a new church building.

The opening ceremony commenced with a new church completely full and an overflow congregation accommodated in the old church and linked by a public address system.

The pursuit of a common goal united us all in our task of building a new church for the worship of God and the service of the community.

Ron Wagstaff

V

