

8. The Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP)

In 1969 as the congregation at St Matthew's studied the course 'The People Next Door', the nearby Crowtrees Methodist Church was facing closure. The St Matthew's Parochial Church Council expressed its commitment to ecumenical co-operation 'wherever this is possible', and resolved, under the guidance of the Bishop of Wakefield, Revd. Eric Treacy, to offer the hospitality of their church 'either ecumenically or on a shared basis'. On the 23rd July 1970, under the leadership of the late Revd Canon Ian Knox, the vicar of St Matthew's, and the Revd Frank Smith, the Methodist Minister of Crowtrees Methodist Church, a 'shared building agreement' was drawn up, under the sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969, to enable the Methodists to use the parish church. This was one of the first such agreements to be made by the Methodists in the country and St Matthew's thereby became the first established parish church in England to be shared with Methodists ¹. In 1971 the two congregations began to hold a joint service of evensong tailored to suit both denominations rather than continuing to hold their own on alternate weeks. Further steps were made in the form of the jointly financed Parish Centre (see above) to be opened in 1971. A second Sharing Agreement was signed on the 5th August 1971 again under the sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969, to set down the terms under which the two congregations would use the Parish Centre.

Over the years each denomination used the same buildings and ran its own services and activities, with some sharing of events and services. A joint Communion Service at main festivals was a feature that gradually developed.

Services were held under a "shift system". On Sunday mornings, Anglicans held Holy Communion at 8 a.m. and Parish Communion at 9.30 a.m. As they left at the main door the Methodists entered by another door for morning service at 11.15 a.m. At first the Methodists held their own evening service at 4 p.m. but by 1973, both congregations were worshipping together at 6.30 p.m. A form of evening service had been agreed which either the Vicar or Minister led. Sidesmen and society stewards arranged between them who took the collection.²

By 1987 the two congregations were using the same door between morning services, the Methodists waiting until the Anglicans had left! As I waited to go in, I distinctly remember thinking how absurd this arrangement was for the Christian people of St Matthew's and Crowtrees.

In 1978 a Pageant to portray the history of Rastrick and St Matthew's was first performed in the Parish Centre. The Pageant was written by church member Jim Farrer and produced by Brian Spence and Janet Buck. The Pageant was repeated in 1988 (and later in 1998 and 2009). The text of the Pageant was published in a booklet prepared for 'Celebrating a Church in Rastrick for over 650 Years' in 2013 (see below).

¹ Dudley Akeroyd 'Grass Root Unity at Rastrick' see Appendix C

² Dudley Akeroyd 'Grass Root Unity at Rastrick' see Appendix C

On Wednesday 29th August 1984 St Matthew's welcomed a new Vicar in the person of the Revd David Nigel Calvin-Thomas. B.Sc., B.D. His Institution was performed by the Lord Bishop of Wakefield, the Rt Revd. Colin James M.A. and his Institution by the Archdeacon of Halifax, the Ven. J.R. Alford M.A.

In 1990, the two denominations signed a covenanted partnership and declaration of intent to 'share the riches of each tradition'. A constitution for the LEP was drawn up and in January 1991 an inauguration service and confirmation were led by the Bishop of Pontefract Rev Richard Hare, the chairman of the West Yorkshire Methodist District Kathleen Richardson and the Ecumenical officer for the West Yorkshire Ecumenical Council Lewis Burton.

1996 saw the Institution and Induction of the Revd Terry Swinhoe as Vicar of St Matthew's. The service took place on Thursday, 20th June 1996 at 7:30pm. The institution was carried out by Rt Revd John Finney, Bishop of Pontefract and the induction by the Ven. Richard Inwood, Archdeacon of Halifax.

A shared pattern of worship was established under Terry Swinhoe and Alan Baxter, the Methodist Minister, working together as a team.

In 1998 the Bicentenary of the Church was celebrated at a flower Festival held between the 19th April and the 3rd May. The celebrations opened on Sunday 19th April with a Joint Service with the Archdeacon of Halifax followed by the opening of the Flower Festival on Friday 24th April with music by students from Rastrick High School Ensemble. Organ recitals were performed by guest organists on Saturday 25th April and Sunday 26th April, when there was also further joint service. Then on Tuesday 28th April children from local schools and the Sunday Club took part in a Children's Service. To close the celebrations, the Pageant was performed, illustrating the history of Rastrick and St Matthew's, on Saturday 2nd May, and on the following Sunday 3rd May there was a Joint Service and Church Parade with the Bishop of Wakefield, the Rt Rev Nigel McCulloch and the chairman of the West Yorkshire Methodist District, the Rev Peter Whittaker.

The story of the growth of the two churches from 1969 towards LEP in the early years of the 21st century is told by John Mothersdale in his article 'Long Engagement - Happy Marriage' - see Appendix D.

In the Millennium year 2000 St Matthew's joined with the other three churches in Rastrick, St John's, Upper Edge Baptist and New Road Sunday School in celebrating 'Seeds of Hope'. A weeklong series of events when people from the churches and students from St John's Theological College Nottingham worked together to fulfil the stated aim of 'Ensuring that everyone in Rastrick knows about Seeds of Hope and about the four churches during the Millennium year when we celebrate Jesus Christ's 2000th birthday'. The events started at New Road Sunday School on Saturday 8th April with a commissioning service led by Dr. Stephanie Rybak, West Yorkshire Ecumenical Officer, and concluded on Sunday 16th April at St Matthew's at 6:30pm with 'Sunday Night Live at

St Matthew's at 6:30pm with 'Sunday Night Live at St Matthew's' - A lively look at the Christian Faith and a wonderful opportunity to give thanks for Seeds of Hope'.

In 2003 the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Archbishop of York, the President of the Methodist Conference amongst others signed a Covenant on behalf of Anglican Church and the Methodist Church in the form of interdependent Affirmations and Commitments. The text of the Covenant can be found in Appendix A1.

In 2004 the Anglicans and Methodists at St Matthew's finally came together as a single congregation with one church council. The new constitution introduced a common purse and a single council to run the church life. Now the church was a complete partnership. 'It's a marriage following a long engagement' said the vicar, Rev Terry Swinhoe.

On the Thursday 3rd February 2005 a Service was held in Church to celebrate the New Constitution of the Local Ecumenical Partnership. Present were the Rt Rev Tony Robinson, Bishop of Pontefract, the Rev Peter Whittaker Chair of West Yorkshire Methodist District, Dr Edmund Marshall the Bishop's Advisor for Ecumenical Affairs, the Rev Stephen Barnett Ecumenical Officer West Yorkshire Methodist District, Dr Stephanie Rybak County Ecumenical Officer West Yorkshire Ecumenical Council, the Rev Colin Vere Superintendent of the Brighouse Methodist Circuit, together with the Vicar Rev Terry Swinhoe and the Methodist Minister Rev Christine Jewitt.



From left to right : Bishop Tony, Revd Christine Jewitt, Revd Terry Swinhoe, Revd Peter Whittaker

A copy of the 2005 Constitution can be found in Appendix H1 'Declaration of Intent and Constitution of 2005'.

Ordained Local Ministry:

The neighbouring parishes of St Matthew and St John Rastrick (which were to be united as a single benefice in 2008), took part in the Wakefield Ministry Scheme Shared Ministry project from its outset. By 1980 St Matthew's had members of the congregation involved in bereavement support; lay people had taken part in worship and had given addresses during Lent. In 2012 St Matthew's had nominated pastoral visitors. Both St John's and St Matthew's had Core Groups which the incumbent of the united benefice described as 'invaluable in discerning and guiding the churches through mission initiatives'. At St Matthew's Stephen Hannam, then the headteacher of a Bradford primary school, was ordained Deacon on Sunday 3rd July 2005 by Rt Revd Stephen Platten, Bishop of Wakefield at the Cathedral Church of All Saints, Wakefield, when the Revd Jules Cave Berquist preached the Sermon. Stephen was ordained priest on Sunday 18th June 2006 by the Rt Revd Stephen Platten, when the Revd Canon Margaret Bradnum preached the sermon. Stephen subsequently shared his priestly ministry across the two parishes.³

At about the same time, members of the St Matthew's Church of England family became members of the Methodist Church and the Methodist family became part of the Parish Electoral Roll. The vicar became an accredited Methodist minister within the Brighouse Methodist Circuit, which was reorganised in September 2010 to become part of the Calderdale Circuit.

In May 2009 at Pentecost, the Old Saxon Preaching cross base was brought into use once more.



A wooden cross was inserted into the socle in the base and the Good News of Jesus Christ and the Gift of the Holy Spirit was declared to the assembled congregation of people from all of Rastrick by the Vicar Matthew Pollard and the Minister Steph Jenner.

³ Wakefield Diocese Celebrating 125 Years



Revd Matthew Pollard Vicar and Revd Steph Jenner, Minister



Pentecost 2009 - The service was organised by the Rastrick Group of Churches.

The year 2009 saw the fourth performance of the Pageant in Church. The uniformed organisations from church were joined by children from the Rastrick Independent School on the 26th and 27th June. The narrative had been brought up to date and was produced by Brian Spence and Iain Bedson. The narrators were Iain Bedson and Jean Campsall. More than 200 people attended the evening performances.

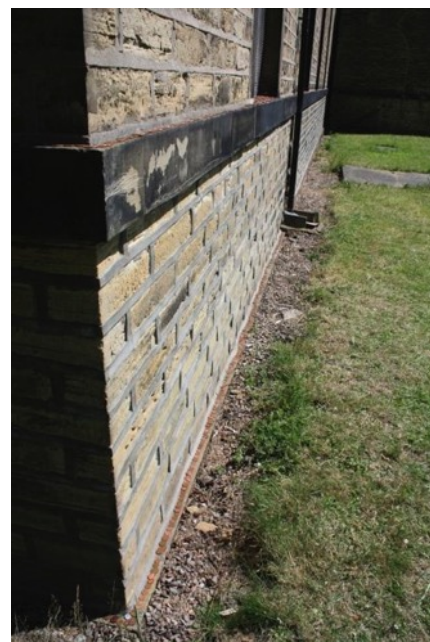
In May 2011, John and Esther Green visited Rastrick to renew their friendship with St Matthews and to tell us about their continuing work at Testimony Faith Homes in Eldoret, Kenya



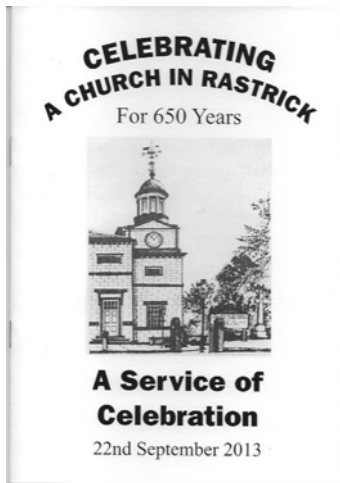
John and Esther Green (to the left of Revd Matthew Pollard)

The first **Review of the LEP** was conducted by our Sponsoring Body the West Yorkshire Ecumenical Council (WYEC) in November 2011. The Review covered Membership, Ministry and Leadership, Mission, Governance and Finance, and Relationships with WYEC. In their Report of November 2011-March 2012 WYEC made a number of recommendations which were addressed by an ECC sub-committee who subsequently reported back to ECC in January 2013.

On the 7th July 2013, the children and young people of the church including Rainbows, Brownies, Guides, Beavers, Cubs and Scouts joined together to create a 'Ring of Pennies around the church. In fact the ring went twice around the outside of the church on the ledges at head height. A total of £300 was raised to provide mosquito nets (£5 each) for the Parish of Nyakiswa in Mara, Tanzania.



The Ring of Pennies, July 2013



In September 2013 we celebrated '**A Church in Rastrick for 650 Years**'. On Saturday 21st September the church was open from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm with displays from all our local schools and local organisations. School choirs performed throughout the day and there was a concert in the evening.

On Sunday 22nd September at 10.00am, a Celebration Service was held with the Rt Revd. Tony Robinson, Bishop of Pontefract and St. Matthew's clergy.

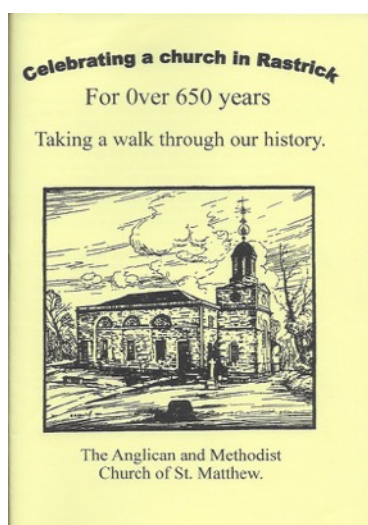


From left to right : Revd. Stephen Hannam, Revd. Barbara Lydon, Rt. Revd. Tony Robinson, Revd. Ian Coverdale

From Monday 23rd to Saturday 28th September the church was open from 10.00 am to 4.00pm for viewing floral decorations and displays from the schools and other organisations.



Celebrating 650 Years of Church in Rastrick



As part of the 650 years celebration, a booklet was published by Derek Hansord, Churchwarden, titled 'Celebrating a church in Rastrick for over 650 years - Taking a walk through our history'. The booklet contains the text of the Pageant (see above) and other recollections and memories from the early 1900s through the 1950s and 60s to the present day.

The Booklet is available in Church priced £2.00.

For many decades, the Parish of St Matthew had been part of the Diocese of Wakefield in the Church of England. The Diocese of Wakefield, together with the Dioceses of Bradford and Ripon were dissolved on 20 April 2014 by the creation of the new Diocese of Leeds, which in its early years had taken the name, 'Diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales'.

Sunday 6th July 2014 was an historic day in the life of St Matthew's when the Revd Marion Russell was inducted as Vicar of Rastrick for the Joint Benefice of St John the Divine and St Matthew, Rastrick. Marion was the first woman to be made **Vicar of Rastrick**. - a sign of changing times in the life of

the Church of England. A united service of welcome and induction was held at St Matthew's at 6:00pm led by the Bishop.

The day coincided with the Grand Départ of the Tour de France cycle race passing close to Rastrick, between Greetland, Ainley Top and Huddersfield. The event required many road closures and caused disruption to travel.

In October 2014 the Joint Implementation Commission of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant published its final Report on The Challenge of the Covenant: Uniting in Mission and Holiness. (See the 2003 Covenant above.)⁴

The Methodist Conference and the General Synod of the Church of England voted strongly in favour of three recommendations made by the Commission.

It is against this background, that the St Matthew's Rastrick LEP continued to grow.

The **10th anniversary of the LEP** was celebrated at a special service held on Sunday the 5th July 2015. Past vicars and ministers who had served at St Matthew's were invited to take part in the service, which was led by Bishop Jonathan of Huddersfield and Revd. Dr Roger Walton, Chair of the West Yorkshire District. See Appendix D1 for Order of Service.

As part of the service a new extension Roll Board, showing both Vicars and Ministers chronologically on the same board from 2004 to 2015 was blessed by the Bishop and the Methodist Chair of District. In addition, a Calligraphy display giving the names of Methodist ministers who had served St Matthews in the period from 1970 to 2004 during the early years of the partnership was also blessed.



New Extension Roll Board.



Calligraphy of Crowtrees Methodist Ministers

⁴ see <https://web.archive.org/web/20160519145548/http://www.anglican-methodist.org.uk/index.htm>

In June 2016 St Matthew's Church celebrated the **90th Birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II**, along with the rest of the country. An exhibition was put on in Church showing the changes that have taken place during the Queen's 90-year life. Displays were prepared by the Rastrick Local History Group, the Scouts, Brownies and Guides, the United Ladies Group, the Rastrick Branch of the Royal Air Force Association, and the Church Historian. Special flowers arrangements in red, white and blue decorated the church.

Although the weather was damp, outside games were arranged for children in the churchyard and a picnic tea was enjoyed in the Parish Centre.



Part of the Exhibition

On the Saturday evening a concert took place in Church featuring the Rastrick High School Brass Ensemble, the Rastrick Voices led by Pam Dimbleby and accompanied by Sally Cook, Phillip Tordoff M.A. ,F.R.C.O. provided organ music and a Tribute to the Two Ronnies (Barker and Corbett - favourites of the Queen) was given by Barry Osborne and Brian Spence. The programme included community singing by the audience including "Jerusalem" and "Land of Hope and Glory". A vote of thanks was given by Revd Marion Russell to Brian Spence who organised the concert and acted as compère for the evening.



The Rastrick Voices



Revd Marion thanks Brian Spence

On Sunday 12th June 2016 a United Benefice Parade service for St Matthew's and St John's was lead by the Revd Marion Russell with the address given by the Revd Stephen Hannam. The Service included Holy Communion.



"The Servant Queen"

All children and families received a copy of a booklet 'The Servant Queen and the King she serves' by Mark Greene & Catherine Butcher.

The church was open for visitors to view the exhibition on the Sunday afternoon and for the rest of the following week.

The Sponsoring Body of the L.E.P., WYEC closed on 31st December 2016. West Yorkshire Churches Together (WYCT) commenced on 1st January 2017 and continue to have oversight of the L.E.P.

In June 2017, the Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England and the Faith and Order Committee of the Methodist Church published a report called 'Mission and Ministry in Covenant'. Read more about the report here ⁵ and how the churches are

⁵ <https://anglican-methodist.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Mission-and-Ministry-in-Covenant.pdf>

engaging with it. Further information is available at <https://anglican-methodist.co.uk/mission-and-ministry-in-covenant/>

2018 saw major changes to the ministerial staffing within the LEP.

Revd. Mark Cheetham announced to the congregation in August 2018, that, as the result of rationalisation of staffing resources, Calderdale Circuit had decided that he would no longer be Methodist presbyter (minister) at St Matthew's after September 2018. His role would be undertaken by Revd. Marion, who was already an authorised Methodist presbyter, following her appointment as Vicar of Rastrick within the St Matthew's Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP). Methodist pastoral charge and legal responsibility for St. Matthew's would be held by the Circuit Superintendent, Revd Terry Keen, who would delegate that responsibility to Revd. Marion.

This change marked the end of dual Anglican and Methodist ministry at St. Matthew's within the Local Ecumenical Partnership, a pattern that had been established in 1991 (see above).

On Sunday the 15th September 2019, in the stunning surroundings of Ripon Cathedral our Vicar Revd Marion - now Revd Canon Marion - was one of six canons who were installed by Dean John, during a wonderful choral evensong. This was a great honour from Bishop Nick Baines of the Leeds Diocese, for Canon Marion and for the parishes of St Matthew and St John the Divine in Rastrick.



Revd Canon Marion Russell at her Installation in Ripon Cathedral 15th September 2019

Changes to Service Times March 2020

Following a year of consultation and discussions between the Vicar, the Church Councils of St Matthew's and St John's and the congregations, it was decided that from the 1st March 2020 the times of service on Sundays would be changed to allow the Vicar sufficient time to be present at all the Sunday services in the Rastrick Benefice.

The new service times at St Matthew's were to be:

Early morning Communion or Morning Worship at 7:45 a.m.

Main Worship consisting of Holy Communion,

All-age worship or Morning Worship, following the established pattern at 9:15 a.m.

The new service times were just becoming established on the first two Sundays in March, followed by a joint service on the 15th March held at St John's, as the last service in the Benefice led by the Revd Canon Marion Russell, when the new pattern was interrupted by the corona virus Covid-19 outbreak. Revd Marion formally left Rastrick on the 29th March 2020.

Corona Virus COVID-19 Pandemic 2020/21

The 2020 Covid-19 virus pandemic began in the city of Wuhan, China in December 2019. The virus quickly spread to Europe and on the 31st January 2020 the first case was reported in the UK in York. By the beginning of March 2020 more cases were being reported in the UK, and on the 16th March vulnerable groups of people with certain health conditions and all the over 70s were advised to self-isolate in their homes. On the 23rd March the Prime Minister announced a 'lock-down' on all movement of people, enforceable by law. We all had to adjust to a new pattern of life, with families and friends separated from each other. The technology of social media came into its own for those who had access to the internet.

Against this background the Church of England and the Methodist Church announced on the 17th March 2020 that public worship should be suspended until further notice. Church doors were locked and notices posted. Many parishioners felt greatly upset when they could not join in worship for the first time in their lives on morning of Sunday the 22nd March.

Baptisms and weddings could no longer be held and within a few days, even funeral services could no longer take place within the church building, with only close family attending interments or cremations.

However, Church remained open through telephone and the internet. Services were streamed from many churches throughout the country, often led by ministers and vicars in their homes. Although it was not possible for this to take place at St. Matthew's, being in interregnum, we did manage to mount prepared services on our website and Facebook pages.



The Weekly Newsletter continued to be published, and was distributed via email, by hand to those without internet access, and on the Church Facebook page and website.

Post on the Church Facebook Page

After 22 weeks St Matthew's reopened for worship on Sunday 16th August 2020, under COVID-19 restrictions - Seating at least 2m apart, compulsory wearing of face coverings, a one-way system for entry and exit, completion of Personal attendance details for NHS 'Test & Trace' and only wafers being offered at communion with one person at a time coming forward to receive. No communal singing of hymns was allowed, but individual solos were given by a member of the congregation and on one occasion by the worship leader!

Only one service was held on Sunday mornings at 9:15 a.m. with no mid-week service.

We had just begun to become accustomed to a new rhythm of worship when government announced Lockdown2, because numbers of Covid cases had begun to rise again with the return of schools and colleges, and the encouragement by government to re-open the economy with schemes such as 'Eat out to Help out'. All places of worship were closed as from the 8th November, Remembrance Sunday.

Remembrance Sunday was different from normal, with no young people in church and no precession to the Rastrick War memorial outside the Library. Instead Revd Stephen's service was mounted on the Church website, with hymns and the Last Post

and Reveille supplied from the online YouTube. The hymns included *Abide with me, Be still my soul, O God our help in ages past, and I vow to thee my country*. The service closed with the National Anthem. A post was placed on the St Matthew's Facebook page drawing attention to the service, which was also highlighted in the Weekly Newsletter.

On-line worship was continued each Sunday during the Lockdown.

St. Matthew's re-opened for Worship on Sunday the 6th December after the end of Lockdown2, although we like the rest of West Yorkshire were placed in Tier 3 Covid restrictions. The service of Holy Communion was led by the Bishop of Huddersfield the Rt Revd Jonathan Gibbs.

Bishop Jonathan was pleased to confirm that a new Vicar of Rastrick had been appointed - the Revd Michelle Petch, and that Revd Michelle would be licensed on the 23rd February 2021 at our sister church in the Benefice St John's, Rastrick.



Bishop Jonathan

Following the introduction of Lockdown3 in England by the UK government in early January 2021, the St Matthew's Church Council took the decision, with the support of the Diocese and the Circuit, to close St Matthew's for Sunday communal worship as from the 17th January 2021. Church would remain open for funerals and weddings, but with severe Covid restrictions - funerals were limited to 30 people and only six people could be present at weddings, and these could only take place in exceptional personal circumstances.

St Matthew's reopened for communal worship on Sunday 14th March 2021, Mothering Sunday. The Church Facebook page had this post :

'On Mothering Sunday the 14th March St Matthew's re-opens its doors for communal worship. Our new Vicar Revd Michelle Petch will celebrate Holy Communion. The service starts at 9:15 a.m. and will last about an hour.

We hope you will be able to join us, but if you don't feel comfortable yet with communal worship, we understand. If you are not able to join us because of ill-health or distance you will be able to find the service using this link <https://www.stmatthewsrastrick.org/482341945171.htm>

The Facebook page included this photo of Rastrick which shows St Matthew's in the right middle-distance.



North Rastrick from Toothill

A New Vicar in 2021

The new Vicar of Rastrick, Revd Michelle Diane Petch, was instituted by 'Zoom' - the new online face to face meeting software that had been invented in the U.S.A., and had swept around the globe during the COVID-19 pandemic - on the 23rd February 2021. Representatives from St Matthews and St John's were invited in addition to Bishop Jonathan, Archdeacon Anne (Dawtry) and Kathia Shoesmith, Interim Area Dean Brighouse and Elland.



Revd. Michelle Petch, Vicar of Rastrick

Revd. Michelle's institution was confirmed at a special service held in St John's Church, Rastrick later in the year.

At its meeting held on the 5th May 2021, the Calderdale Methodist Circuit 'noted the conclusions' put forward in a report from a joint working group of Circuit and St Matthew's representatives that 'the Anglican priest would be given Methodist pastoral charge at St Matthew's under their status as an Authorised Minister of the Methodist Church.' Hence the responsibility for pastoral charge changed slightly from that set down in September 2018, when Revd Mark Cheetham passed on his responsibility to Revd Terry Keen who subsequently delegated it to Revd Marion Russell (see above).

Revd Michelle received confirmation of her authorisation from the Methodist Conference to serve the Methodist Church as presbyter in August 2021.



Pentecost Praise at St Matthew's - Sunday 23rd May 2021

The Joint benefice of Rastrick held an outdoor service of praise in the churchyard on the Sunday afternoon at 4:00pm to celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit and the birthday of the Christian Church.



Everyone was encouraged to come wearing red, orange or yellow to represent the flames of the Holy Spirit, and to bring a chair, refreshments and an umbrella! The weather was quite overcast and blustery.



The St John's Music Group lead the singing and Revd Michelle even brought along a birthday cake!

The Final Chapter of the LEP

A Review of the operation of the St Matthew's LEP had been carried out by the West Yorkshire Ecumenical Council (WYEC) team in 2011 (See Section 8 above). The results of the Review were on the whole 'most encouraging'. In their summary, the team said that 'a significant amount of what we do and the way we do it falls into the category of 'Best Practice'.'

For several years following, the question of updating the Constitution for the LEP had been at the forefront of ECC thinking. The original version dated June 2004 had been left behind by subsequent events. However, there was a reluctance on the part of some members of ECC to consider a revision, since it would have to be made to follow the pattern set down by Churches Together in England and agreed with the Charity Commission. This would have entailed a major revision to the way in which the LEP was managed.

In January 2020 the update of the Constitution appeared to be making progress. Minutes of the January meeting of the ECC recorded the following:

7.5 Review of Constitution Update

Canon Marion reported that during the last year, she had been in touch with Archdeacon Anne (Dawtry), with Revd Terry Keen and with Revd Mark Cheetham (in his role of District Ecumenical Officer). The revised Constitution had been almost ready for 'signing off' when the Circuit had changed the Methodist minister presence at St Matthew's. As a result, Archdeacon Anne intends to engage in further discussions with the Diocesan Ecumenical Officer. Canon Marion added that there is an over-arching desire for the LEP Constitution to continue, which legally needs to be based on the Churches Together Model. She had been able to input practical details on behalf of St Matthew's, and the final version of the Constitution would be brought to ECC for approval.

It appeared that the withdrawal of the Methodist Minister for St Matthew's had had a significant impact on the process of revising the constitution.

It was noted later in 2020 in an exchange of emails between the Secretary and the Treasurer, that the Archdeacon and the Yorkshire West District Ecumenical officer were preparing a new constitution, without any input from the LEP. This lack of consultation with the LEP was felt to be undesirable. The disbandment of WYEC and its replacement with West Yorkshire Churches Together (WYCT) as sponsoring body for the Rastrick LEP had not helped.

In an email to the Vicar Revd Michelle in October 2021 the ECC secretary expressed the view: '*Officers of St Matthew's ECC are able and would very much like to contribute to the drafting of a new Constitution for our LEP (as we did for our current LEP Constitution). In fact we have done quite a lot of preparatory work during the interregnum and earlier, whilst Canon Marion was here.*' Discussion followed at the ECC meeting on the 10th November 2021 when it was minuted:

7. Review of Constitution

Revd Michelle reported that she had met with Archdeacon Anne and the Diocesan Ecumenical officer. She had received documentation including a copy of the Model Governing Document. She proposed a meeting with the Churchwardens and Steward to look at the proposals, and to draft a Vision Statement which would make the Constitution specific to St Matthew's.

Revd Michelle said she hoped to report back to the next ECC meeting.

Bob Young reminded Michelle that the Methodist Ecumenical officer Revd Graham Kent, should be consulted during the drafting of the Constitution.

This sounded promising, as if progress was at last being made.

However, by July 2023, the situation had changed. The minutes of the ECC meeting on the 19th July recorded:

5.1 Review of Constitution

Revd. Michelle said she would take the Constitution item as part of 'Vicar's Business' rather than later. She summarised the present situation saying that there was a meeting 'in the pipeline' between herself, the Archdeacon, the Revd Vicky Atkins and Ecumenical officers from the Diocese (when identified) and the Methodist Yorkshire West District. She acknowledged that a revised Constitution had been prepared in the past, by the previous Archdeacon and Canon Marion, but that the intention was to make a fresh start with a new team. Methodist Circuit issues would be taken into account.

The situation came to a head in 2024 after St Matthew's had received two generous bequests from former members of the church. At the March meeting of ECC it was recorded that:

'Treasurer Bob reminded the meeting that since our annual income was over £100,000 we need to register with the Charity Commission using an online process. Once approved, the target date for uploading documents including Annual Financial Statements and an up-to-date Constitution being October 2024. Hence the application date should be August 2024.

Dawn T. said that as far as she was aware, the preparation of the New Constitution is presently with Revd Michelle. A Mission Statement is also required.'

An up-to-date constitution was a pre-requisite for the registration with the Charity Commission. Timing for registration was uppermost in the minds of ECC members, and 'the clock was ticking'.

The 'bombshell' announcement in May 2024

For details of the Archdeacon's 'out of the blue' proposal for a 'Formal Declaration of Ecumenical Welcome' to replace the expected new Constitution, and the subsequent deliberations and meetings see Appendix F1 'Meetings to discuss the Termination of the LEP'.

Termination of the LEP and closure of St Matthew's Methodist Church

After months of discussions and meetings (see Appendix F1), ECC decided by secret ballot on the 11th June 2025 to terminate the Local Ecumenical Partnership. In July 2025 ECC passed the resolution:

St Matthew's Ecumenical Church Council request the agreement of the Bishop of Leeds and the Calderdale Methodist Circuit Meeting that the St Matthew's Local Ecumenical Partnership be dissolved.

They further ask Calderdale Methodist Circuit Meeting that St Matthew's Methodist Church (formerly known as Crowtrees Methodist Church) is given permission to cease to meet.

Approvals from Church Authorities

Approvals were subsequently given by the following:

Bishop of Leeds (by email to Vicar between 16 July and 3 September 2025)

Calderdale Circuit on 16th September 2025

Methodist District Policy Committee (ECC Mins 12 Nov 25 Item 6)

Methodist District Synod (held on 18 April 2026)

Reactions from the Congregation

The result of the decision to terminate the LEP was that several members of the congregation expressed great sadness that the Local Ecumenical Partnership should be dissolved, with the inevitable consequence that members would no longer be sharing worship and fellowship together. The opinion was also expressed that the views of the congregation delivered in the discussions and listening exercises seemed to have been in vain. Several members resigned from posts, and several moved to other churches.

Last Methodist Service of the LEP 16th November 2025

The last service, a service of Holy Communion, to be led by a Methodist minister was conducted on Sunday 16th November 2025 by Revd Nick Biggar, the recently appointed Superintendent of Calderdale Methodist Circuit and presbyter having responsibility of St Matthew's. Whilst the service was well-attended by 43 people, the mood was one of sadness.

Final Annual meeting of the LEP

The final Annual Meeting of the Local Ecumenical Partnership took place on Sunday 26th April 2026.

Extract for Notes of ECC Standing Committee 3 September 2025:

'Final meeting of ECC required to receive final accounts from 1 January 2026 to 31 April 2026 probably in June 2026 to allow time for examination of accounts.'