

Welcome

As people of faith who inhabit the good news of Jesus in the present, we are nonetheless shaped by the faithful community who handed that news on to us.

Heritage is part of our mission because it is in our roots. Our strength is found from it, as surely as a tree stands open to the elements only because of its firm anchoring in the ground.

Our emphasis on heritage is therefore no sentimental or nostalgic indulgence. Rather, in connecting with and celebrating our story, in learning and relishing it, we are compelled to live open to the same renewing, recreating and loving God who upheld our ancestors, who sustains us now, and who opens the future before us.

We are the story-keepers, the holders of the gospel in this present age, and this is our story of faith.

“Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what our ancestors were commended for. Yet none of them received what had been promised, for God had planned something better – only together with us are they made perfect. Therefore, since we are surrounded by this great cloud of witnesses who have gone before us, let us throw off all that hinders, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

(from Hebrews chapter 11 and 12)

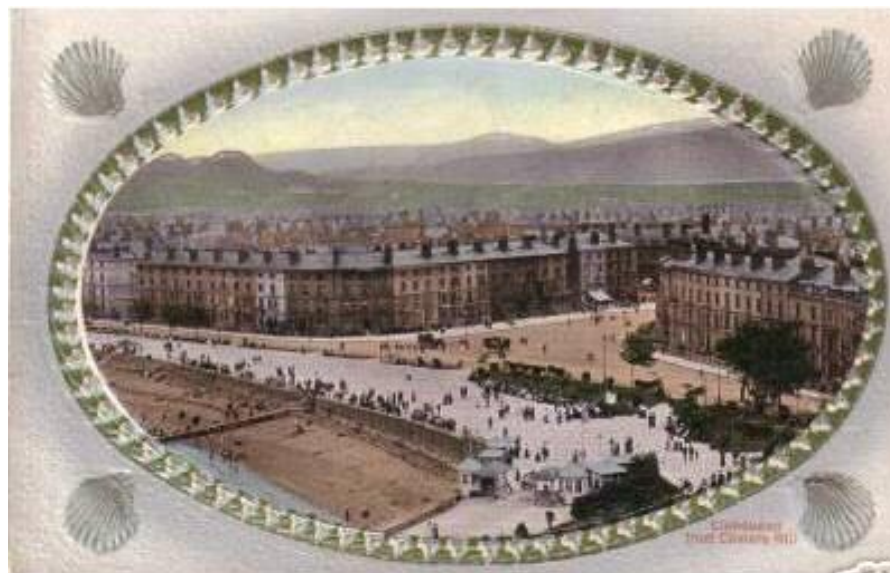
The Town of Llandudno



The name Llandudno – “Church of St. Tudno” – is a constant reminder of the close association, existing from ancient times, between the locality and Christianity. In 1866, when St John’s opened, the total resident population of Llandudno, both Welsh and English, was little more than 2,500, increasing in the summer by no more than 7,000 or 8,000 visitors.

An article in the Liverpool Mercury in May 1849 described Llandudno as being “seldom visited by the tourist, and hence its beauties have been enjoyed by comparatively few This can only be accounted for by the fact that this romantic and picturesque locality is nearly unknown.”

But growth and development were characteristic of the atmosphere of the time. Within the span of half a generation the district sprang from being a small, neglected village to a flourishing town.



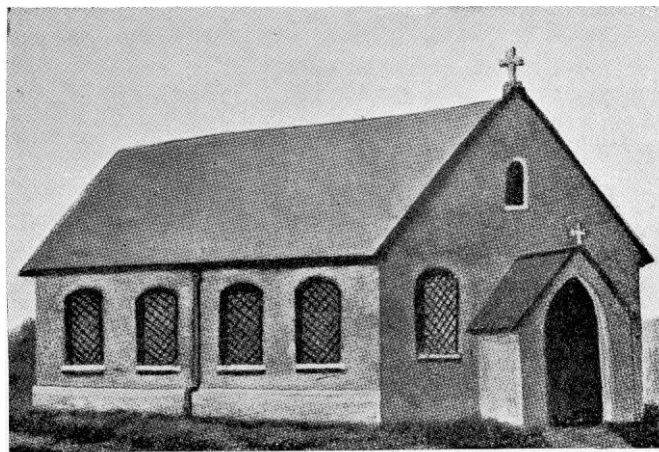
The Beginnings of St. John's

St John's Methodist Church was part of the expansion of the town, which included the building of many new churches.

The pioneering of Methodism in Llandudno was done by Rev. E. Crump who was appointed in 1859 to the Carnarvon and Bangor Circuit. Having heard of the need for Methodist services in Llandudno, he investigated the possibilities and found that he was not the first in the field. Already a Captain Vivian, a Cornish Local Preacher working in the Great Orme copper mine, was holding a society class. Here was the nucleus from which English Methodism in Llandudno was to develop.

Crump and the local society pioneered a plan for a church building, a temporary structure, which was all that their immediate resources could provide. This would suffice for their needs at the moment and would give a breathing-space during which a more far-reaching policy could be devised and funds could be raised to meet it.

For this purpose they sought the co-operation of the Mostyn Estate which was responsible for fostering the development of the town to very high standards. Understandably therefore, they were not supportive of the temporary structure, but eventually a compromise was reached whereby a small temporary chapel could be erected, and at the end of the three years it was to be demolished and replaced by a permanent structure. On 15th July 1861 the contract for the temporary chapel was signed. Less than six weeks later, on 25th August, the building on Lloyd Street was completed and opened for worship. The total cost of the structure and of two hundred chairs was £260:10/7d.



THE FIRST TEMPORARY CHURCH AT LLANDUDNO
Photo from a Drawing Made by J. S. Cornaby in his 83rd year

The Current Building



How were the funds to be raised to build a more permanent structure? The local society was fortunate in that the Methodist Church at country level (the Connexion) was waking up to the importance of providing facilities for Methodist worship in the holiday resorts. In 1861 Conference, the governing body of the Methodist Church, decided to “consider the position of Methodism in some of the principal sea-bathing and watering places in the kingdom” and decided to make aid grants to stimulate mission in such places.

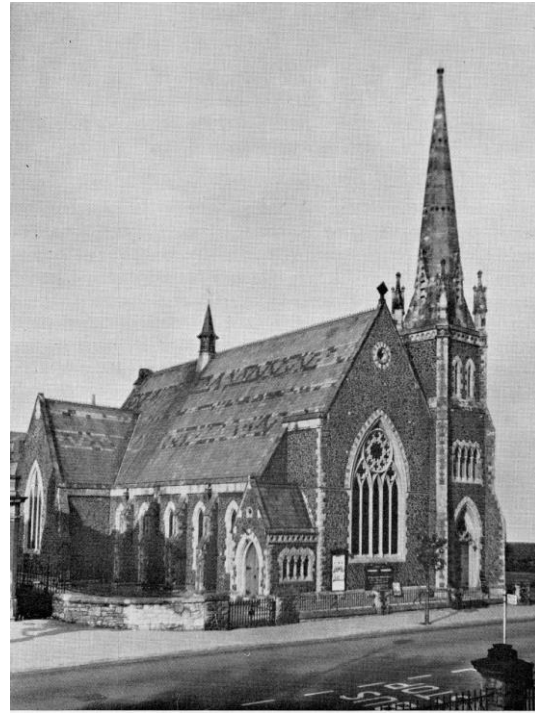


As a result, a grant of £1,000 was made to Llandudno Wesleyan Methodists from the wonderfully named “Watering Places Fund.” And in 1864, under the ministerial direction of Rev F. Payne, the following decision was made, “This meeting recommends the erection of a New Chapel at Llandudno as soon as the subscription lists will permit and approves of the site selected for that purpose situated in Mostyn Street, Llandudno.”

The Chapel was opened on 27th September 1866 at a total cost of church and minister’s manse (home) of £5,642:10/9d. The funds to pay for the building (and the later Sunday School) came from many subscribers as well as other fund-raising activities. How a church membership of only thirty three managed to shoulder the responsibility for what then was an enormous sum of money we can only imagine. It shows enormous courage and vision.



Architectural Style



The theological influence of the Oxford Movement in the Church of England found architectural expression from the middle of the nineteenth century in the work of Pugin and others, who advocated the “purification” of ecclesiastical architecture, in the form of a return to the style of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Gothic Revival.

This had its effect on Methodism – in 1850 F J Jobson, an architect working for the Methodist Church, published his account of Chapel & School Architecture, in which he expounded the view that a chapel should “look” like a chapel, i.e. it should use Gothic architecture, as opposed to Roman or Grecian architecture which had previously been in vogue.

In the third quarter of the nineteenth century there was a rush of new buildings, of which almost all of the English Methodist ones used Gothic style. In the hands of some expert architects this style became more sophisticated and elegant as the century progressed.

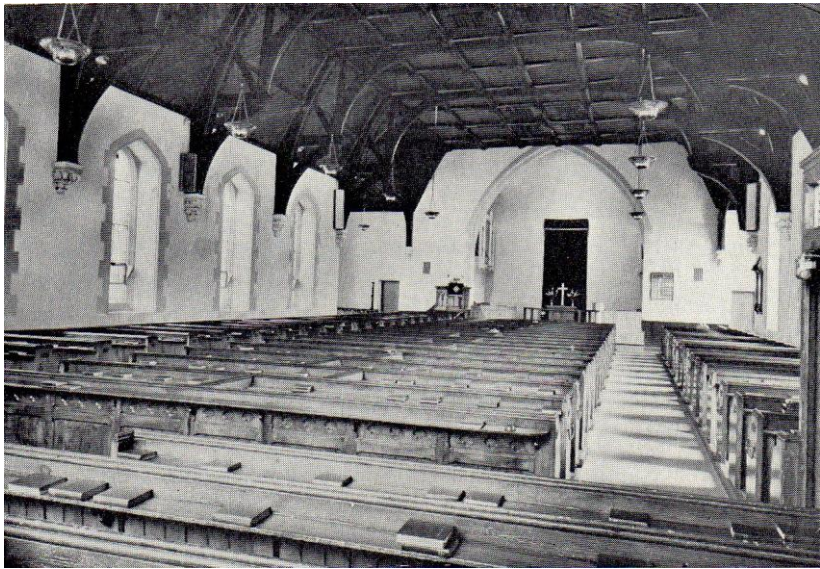
Sometimes similar designs were copied from one chapel to another. St John’s, Llandudno of 1866 and Queen’s Road, Aberystwyth of 1869 shared the details of a corner tower with lancet windows (tall narrow windows with a pointed arch at the top) and a tall spire, and a dominant gable with a large multi-light arched window.

The magnificent hammer-beam roof was added in 1877, covering over the original barrel ceiling. It seems that this alteration was made so soon after the building was completed because of problems with the acoustics - “a talkative demon” that “whispered in the rafters” and “haunted the preacher.”



Moslyn Street, Llandudno

ORIGINAL MANSE AT ST JOHN'S.



Restoration

For over a century St John's had served the needs of both residents and holiday-makers, but by the 1970s the building needed serious restoration to secure its future.

One option was to demolish the building and have a joint new development with a store, the store being on the ground floor and the church on the upper (churches in Wrexham and Blackpool had undertaken similar schemes.)

There was much controversy in the town, culminating in a public enquiry in 1977. The church had been grade II listed in 1976, and a decision was taken to keep the listing and restore the church. This was the decision of the public enquiry, but of course the responsibility for the restoration lay entirely with the church... Fund-raising and management of the project became a major issue.

When Rev Donald Ryan, the new minister, arrived he found a church in some disarray: the building itself was run-down, damp and patched up, and the congregation were in distress following the controversy of the previous few years. At his first meeting someone stood up to demand that he get the building's listing removed so they could knock it down. Donald's reply was simple – his job was to work with the church to make it what it was supposed to be, a mission centre for God.

The restoration scheme went ahead, taking most of the 1980s to complete phase by phase:

The slate roof was replaced (the original dual colour patterning could not be retained due to the quality of the slate), the outside walls re-pointed, the tower and spire renovated, and the Mostyn Street window (at the back of the church) was replaced (it had for many years been held in place by a steel girder across the upper part to prevent it falling out.) New buildings were also created for offices, meeting rooms, kitchen, church hall, etc. This was paid for by leasing some land to Marks & Spencer.

The inside of the church was completely remodelled: the walls were relined, the floor was raised, the heating system changed, the lighting upgraded and carpeting added. Three slim windows in the chancel had been blocked up in the 1940s, and these were reopened, with a new design by Rev Ryan to integrate them as a single entity. They depict an empty cross symbolising the resurrection of Jesus, red to symbolise the presence of the Spirit, and with shafts of gold radiating from the cross to represent the kingship of God and Christ. The two birds are an eagle, the symbol of St John the Evangelist, and a dove, the symbol of the Holy Spirit. Two new windows in the transepts were also created – a Wesley window commemorating the founder of the Methodist Church, and another depicting Jesus commissioning the disciple Peter. Finally, the organ was re-positioned and restored.



Then



Now



St John's Today

St John's is a church at the heart of its community, the town of Llandudno. Its context makes plain its calling to serve and reach the residents and holiday-makers for Christ. We do this through various means, including:

Worship

Our worship is always focused on welcoming visitors, of which we have thousands during the season, many returning year after year.

On special occasions we hold particular forms of worship catering for holiday-makers, such as our Summer Praise evening worship, with guest musicians from around the area.

And on Llandudno's Extravaganza weekend we join the throngs and take worship to the street, appearing on the community stage for a crowd-pulling sing-along of well-known hymns and attention-grabbing word for the day.

Open Church

We open our church as much as we can, to enable passers-by to enjoy its wonderful atmosphere and to take time out for contemplation, prayer and reflection. There is always someone on hand to listen should anyone need to talk or be supported in prayer. Information on aspects of the Christian faith is available, and candles are provided for those who find encouragement through this form of prayer.

We also put on special exhibitions and services at Christian festival times during the year: Christmas, Easter and Harvest in particular.

Coffee Mornings

Our coffee mornings every Friday (and Tuesdays too during the summer) are legendary, not only for the delicious and varied homemade cakes we provide, but also for the welcome on offer and the opportunity to talk with people willing to listen and pause for a chat.

Work with those in distressed circumstances

Every town has homeless people and others in distressed circumstances, not always obvious, but always there. And Llandudno is no exception. We work with other churches in the town centre to provide a managed system of lunch provision every day of the week. We also contribute to a local food share scheme, and act as sign-posters for those needing more support. We are also a distribution point for local Big Issue sellers.

Healing and Wholeness

Not everyone wants to come to church on a Sunday, and some find traditional Sunday-based church intimidating. We offer a service every Thursday at 1:45pm for those seeking prayers for healing in a calm, quiet and non-intimidating atmosphere. The service is short and simple, people come and go as they wish, they pray in the pews or come to the front. It is all for the individual to determine their level of involvement. But the offer of prayer is always there for any who need it.

Young Families

We have an especial focus on work with young families. We run several sessions a week for toddlers and their parents or carers plus a once a month "Messy Church" for families who want to introduce their children to the faith but who need a more flexible and hands-on approach than traditional Sunday worship. And when we say messy, we mean messy...children love it! And there's food too – how can anyone not love it?

Concerts

St John's is well-known for its male voice choir concerts which run from May to October every year, at least twice a week. These are enjoyed by thousands of holiday-makers every year, many returning time and time again.

The Future

What does the future hold for this church? No one can know precisely, but this we do know. We plan to be right here, at the heart of this town, as long as God wants us to be, proclaiming the message of the gospel to all who pass by or enter this place. And we will continue to be open to the movement of the Spirit, calling us forward to embrace whatever is needed to undertake that mission on behalf of Christ.

“Let us build a house where love is found...
Let us build a house where prophets speak...
Let us build a house where all are heard...
Let us build a house where hands will reach beyond the wood and stone...

All are welcome in this place.”

(Hymn by Marty Haugen)