

WHITLEY METHODIST CHURCH PROFILE 2019



Location: Top Lane Whitley, Melksham, Wiltshire SN12 8QU

Shaw and Whitley are two adjacent residential villages mid-way between Melksham and Corsham.

The Parish Church is in Shaw and the Methodist Chapel in Whitley, a village with a population of about 1800 residents. There is a predominance of retired people, but also some whose families have left home and who are working, as well as families with younger children. The local primary school is in Shaw. Many people have lived in the village for most of their lives but increasingly people are moving in from further afield.

History of the chapel

The Methodist Society in Whitley dates back to the early 1820s although the present chapel was not built until 1867 (We celebrated our 150th year in July 2017).

The building is constructed of local stone, with the worship area taking a maximum of 50 people.

Our church has been extensively re modelled the first taking place internally in 1995 at that time the building comprised an entrance porch, worship area, small school room, kitchen and toilet. The chapel interior was refurbished again in 2010 with windows replaced and pews replaced by chairs, as well as some external re-pointing and drainage work.

In 2012 the west side of the church building was extended to incorporate a new vestry/meeting room with new internal access to the worship area, a disabled toilet and foyer. The school room has been refurbished with a new extended kitchen/cafe area with exterior access to the east of the building. The exterior area has been paved and a small memory garden developed.

2016 we purchased new lectern, pulpit, hymn boards and altar table.

Membership

Prior to 2009 our small membership of 7 was joined by the congregations of 2 other village chapels, which had closed. This took our membership to 19 and we continue to grow so that we now have a

Whitley Methodist Church 2019

regular attendance of around 25. It has been an extremely successful merger. Our members are late 50s to over 90. There are no children who attend regularly.



Worship area.

Church Life

- We hold a weekly Sunday morning service at 10.30 attended regularly by most or all the membership. We celebrate Holy Communion once a month. We have a Whitley Worship Group, and Worship Leader who organize and run our Local Arrangement Services. Once a year we hold a 'Light up a Life' bereavement service, usually around November Remembrance time.
- Several years ago the village churches in the old Mid Wilts Area started regular 6 weekly joint services – 'Villages Together' where we worship together in each other's churches in turn and when we can vary our usual more traditional worship style. These have proved very popular, and include a May join trip/day out together. The 'Villages Together' incorporate, Whitley, Seend and Bromham Methodist and until it's recent closure Chittoe Heath.
- There is a pastoral care system in place.
- We use Hymns and Psalms, Complete Mission Praise and Singing the Faith hymn books and are fortunate to have 2 organists among the members and 2 more from other churches who help us out when needed.
- We have an AV system of computer and projector for use in worship and a Hearing Loop system.
- Weddings, christenings and funerals are occasionally held in the church.
- A church AGM is held yearly with Church Council Meetings held twice a year, attended by all members. Extra meetings are held if necessary.
- Our church events/services etc. are advertised on our outside and inside notice boards and also entered into the local village 'Connect' magazine. We advertise any relevant events on our exterior notice board regarding the village and local area.

- We support the Melksham Food Bank, and run our own Tithing system which is organized by a Tithing Committee. Donations are usually awarded twice a year alternating between 'home' and 'abroad' charities. We also support other charities on a one off basis as and when there is a particular need.
- The Events (outreach) we run on a regular basis are:-
 - Weekly** - Tuesday Café.
 - Monthly** – Games Afternoon.
 Craft and Chat group.
 Book Swop and café.
 Several times a year we hold very popular skittles afternoons.

We are a church that tries to embrace change. Issues are always discussed fully with everyone so nobody feels excluded.

We see the main function of our church as a place where people can worship God and know that they will receive nurture and mutual support in their spiritual growth, rooted in the gospel message and Christian love. However, since our membership has grown we have made use of the different talents and interests that people have brought to us, to develop our outreach to the local community, which is a vital piece of God's work.

Our mission statement:

'Our mission is to provide Christian witness to the people of Whitley and adjacent villages, through relevant and accessible worship in a safe environment:-

- To develop our own faith through shared prayer and Bible Study.
- To reach out in love to those in the community who are in need of practical care and support.
- To draw people into the fellowship of the Church through outreach and social events.

Through this outreach and through social events we would hope to draw people into the fellowship of the church.'



Coffee shop and kitchen

Our present Church activities comprise a very popular monthly Book Swop which now attracts 80-90 people, who share in coffee and cake in our Cafe, with an age range from 4 to 94. We also run a monthly 'Craft and Chat' afternoon, where some items are knitted for various charities in the area, one that is particularly successful is our knitted patchwork blankets which are sent to Operation Orphan. The squares are knitted both by members of our congregation but also by many men and women in the village who attend our café and book swop events, at this time we have completed 28 single bed blankets. A monthly 'Games' afternoon is held where simple board games and computer games of various types are played with tea and cake enjoyed. The church Tuesday café is attracting non churchgoers from the village and from a very small beginning in 2012 it is now becoming a vibrant place for people to meet.

We should like to be able to expand our activities further and possibly develop a church choir that could be extended to the community. Currently we are applying for Eco Church status.



Knitted patchwork blankets.

Relationships with the community and other local churches

Our nearest neighbours are the Anglican churches at Shaw and Atworth. Currently we enjoy friendly relations with the Parish church and jointly produce a Christmas card which is sent to around 1300 homes in the local area via the village 'Connect' magazine. We also have connection with Holt United Reform Church helping at their monthly Book Swop, and Atworth Independent Church helping at their soup lunches and coffee mornings and attend Bible Study Groups, they in turn support our events.

Since our refurbishment the building is hired regularly by the Shaw and Whitley Gardening Club, Area Quiet Days, the local Railway enthusiasts group, Melksham Without Parish Council, the village Community Emergency Group with the Church being nominated as an emergency center should there be a need.

We are aware of the need to:-

- Offer the highest standards of worship that is inclusive, relevant and meaningful to all.
- Maintain the loving, caring and inclusive fellowship we enjoy as a congregation
- Maintain the building to the highest standards within our financial capability
- Constantly be aware of the needs of those in our community and although we are an 'older' congregation, seek ways of including younger people in our activities and worship.
- We are currently applying for Eco Church status.

What we would like from a minister for our chapel

The membership sees a minister primarily as a 'shepherd' and spiritual leader supporting and encouraging us along the Christian path – a spiritual mentor and confidante. We should like someone who is empathic, understanding and who has a commitment to pastoral work. We hope that he/she would offer us advice and support as we seek to grow our church and be active in helping us develop new ideas for ways to further God's work both through worship, outreach activities and ecumenical relationships.
