

Paper M6

General secretary
Local church closure

Church 2014
United
Church **Reformed**
Church Church 2014

Paper M6



General secretary: Local church closure

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	General secretary john.proctor@urc.org.uk
Action required	As resolution
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council notes the recent closure of Chapel End URC, and gives thanks to God for its worship, witness and service.
Alternative options to consider, if any	n/a

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To report a local church closure which was omitted from this year's Assembly papers.
Main points	Chapel End URC in West Midlands Synod has given credible witness from its foundation in 1807 until its closure early in 2014, and we may remember its work with gratitude and thanksgiving.
Previous relevant documents	n/a
Consultation has taken place with...	Synod clerk

Summary of Impact

Financial	n/a
External (e.g. ecumenical)	n/a

Local church closure

Chapel End URC, 1807-2014

1. Chapel End URC completed its witness as a village chapel that stood for honesty, kindness, and to *'do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God'* on 5 January 2014, after almost 210 years of ministering to the local populace that was fast growing up around this new church building in 1807. The congregation started meeting in an old barn, and they were mainly made up of friends and family of John Dagley, who was to become the first spiritual leader of Chapel End until he died in 1840.
2. This independent chapel was built for £200! It was an ambitious project, but it was felt by many local church ministers of the day that vice, immorality and other disgraceful practices meant that local people were in need of knowing who Jesus Christ was and that Salvation was at hand. The people in this growing hamlet were mainly ribbon weavers, but by the 1870s it had become a good-sized village, with its main employment in local coal mines.
3. Chapel has, over the years, known good and bad times. They have had fourteen ministers. The Revd J Stanley Bond (1940-1965) is fondly recalled, even today, by many of the older members. They have also known crisis and recovery in the membership, but for all this, this chapel has battled through. In the 1970s membership was over seventy, by 2014 it numbered just ten. It even survived some fifteen years without any full-time ministry, until their last minister came, the Revd David Yeo Poulton (2004-2014).
4. Chapel survived the bombing raids of the Second World War, but could not survive the bombshell of becoming Grade II Listed in 1994. At this time the church was due to be demolished and rebuilt to house Chapel End Methodist congregation and the existing URC congregation as an LEP in a modern church, but the listing put paid to that. Over the next twenty years, the cost of repairs rocketed, because it was a listed building. Finally the chapel closed because its utility bills were outstripping the income by £4 to £1, and the people simply could not afford to run or maintain their chapel any longer.
5. Some of the membership has gone to a variety of other churches within the locality, and some have followed the current minister to one of his other churches. However, once a month the congregation has decided to meet together, as a House Church to, *'do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God'*. The future for this group is knowing that God continues to walk with them. As we have often said since the decision to close, the church building is not the church, it is the people!

M6

United Reformed Church • Mission Council, November 2014