

# Sharing Our Story...

## Church at the Centre, Skelmersdale



**Rick Preston has been Minister at the Church in the Centre, Skelmersdale since 2012. Here he shares the story of an exciting building project and redevelopment that the church is embarking on, along with the challenges and frustrations of this too...**

“Built in the 1970s, the building is a bit of an eyesore, a building of its time, its like a maze inside, with too many steps! The vision was a good one, in a new town there should be a new type of church, one united church, and so the Anglican, Methodist, URC and Baptist Churches all collaborated in building a multi-purpose centre, to enable all the congregations of Skelmersdale to worship. From that early vision, the Church at the Centre was born, a united congregation, who worshipped and ministered from the Ecumenical Centre.

Over the years there mission and work from the centre has been varied, with the building used for community work, a base for charities, offices for community organisations as well as the constant presence of the worshipping community. But all that takes its toll on a building; today it might be best described as tired. Its design also means we have accessibility problems; we have 7 levels in a 3 story building! Yet it is still in use 7 days a week, open from 8.30 am until 9pm most days.

There is still a need in the community for the space and services we offer, for the congregation to meet, for the foodbank to operate, the café and charity shop, community groups etc. With the need for this ongoing mission in mind the trustees applied for and secured funding for a complete make-over. The process has taken several years of grant applications, numerous frustrations, several false starts and much loss of hair, but now the building work has finally started on the centre.

The builders arrived in January, covering half the building in hoardings, and beginning their work. The entire project will take 26 weeks with a new entrance lobby created, an extended chapel, new toilets in the basement, ground floor and 1st floor, a lift, kitchen refurbishment, new access to the main hall and a general sprucing up of the place. All being well the work will be completed late in June 2019 with the centre fully open by the end of July, and hopefully will once again be fit for the purpose of serving the churches and community of Skelmersdale.

It has always been the purpose that the centre should be used by everyone, not just to house the Church at the Centre, but we will continue to form the backbone of the worshipping community there. There are some exciting plans in the making, about how the building could be used, with new groups and organisations based here, as well as possibilities for new worshipping communities and resourcing existing ones in the town and beyond. We are currently looking at ways to make that happen, and looking at new exciting ways of being church, ourselves and together. The building will be fit for purpose, but God’s people must be too.

So watch this space, and let’s all get involved, in God’s Mission, wherever we are, and lets see God’s Kingdom grow.

**Home Mission: Supporting, equipping and enabling churches in God’s Mission**

