

The Scarborough Review
Church opens up with new Glass Doors
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A Scarborough church has spent thousands of pounds on making it look more welcoming.

South Cliff Methodist Church is a vibrant worshipping community on the south side of town.

It is in use most days for church and community activities.

It is the only church in town with a pocket watch embedded in the tower, as requested by a generous, if eccentric, stargazer from Falsgrave, who focused his telescope on it.

Although the detail on the watch face has faded, a white circle can still be seen in the stonework, high up.

The church has an elderly, traditional congregation which makes full use of modern technology in its worship and publicity; it has a website and Facebook page.

In common with most churches, it has suffered from a decline in attendance.

“As we addressed this, it became clear that a huge obstacle was that the building was somewhat unwelcoming”, explains Rev Peter Cross.

Thousands of vehicles pass the church each day and many are held up right outside the door as they queue for the Ramshill traffic lights.

Hundreds of pedestrians pass each week. But should any have glanced at the church, they would have been met with solid, rather dreary looking oak doors with iron fittings which seemed to say Keep Out!

“They were so heavy that it took two people to open them”, Peter says. “The church council felt it would be a huge step forward if we could make our appearance more welcoming and try and convey the message: Come in, something interesting is happening here!”

It was decided to remove the austere and forbidding oak doors and replace them with a glass portal, at the same time redecorating the entrance lobby to create a warm welcoming feel.



The North Yorkshire Coast Methodist Circuit coughed up £22,000. It was enough to upgrade the doors and make other improvements such as changing the lobby lighting, upgrading audio-visual equipment and installing spotlights in the church for use in summer concerts.

However, the council refused permission to remove the doors, which had to be left in place. They have been fixed in an open position behind the new glass doors.

The project took several months to complete and finishing touches have still to be applied.

Peter concludes: "We are not so naïve as to think this will rebuild our congregation overnight. When people come in they must find acceptance and welcome and that depends on us, and not the bricks and mortar of the building, but we have taken the first step in trying to reach out".

Music has been performed at the church for many years. Scarborough Community Choir holds weekly rehearsals in the church hall. The church's men-only singing group, Tenor XI, is popular locally and, despite its title, has always been prepared to consider new members.

The summer concerts, from May until September, are a well-established part of the local musical scene. They run alongside a fortnightly do-it-yourself concert programme (September-May) which enables budding and experienced artistes to perform in front of a sympathetic and encouraging audience.

A course will begin in the church hall at 10:30am on 3 May. It is for anyone who is interested in singing but unable to read music. To enrol or obtain further information, ring Malcolm Peart on 377861 or email him at mrandapeart@btinternet.com.

Words and photo by Dave Barry