



## Exploring Church and Place

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

### What is the purpose of the study?

This project has been designed to explore how members of congregations relate to their church premises, and, by studying this, to better understand what 'church' means to those members.

The key questions will be:

1. Do members relate to 'church' as a *place* and if so in what way? For example, does the sense of place derive from memories and associations; or from the idea of creating a sacred or holy space; or from an aspiration to offer a focus for community engagement in a particular area?
2. Alternatively, is 'church' experienced independently of the building: more as a network or community of people who could gather anywhere?"

### Why have I been chosen?

Anyone who participates in the worshipping life of a church community in the Chester and Delamere Forest Methodist Circuit can participate in the study. The main element of the research will be 'focus group' conversations involving between three and eight members of the same local church. There is no need for church communities to restrict numbers. If more than eight members from a church want to participate, multiple focus groups will be organised. If fewer than three come forward from a church, the researcher will not be able to include members of that church in this study.

### Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether to volunteer for the study. The research model is based on all participants contributing freely and equally as individual members of a church community, rather than anyone representing that community or a sub-section of it. You may decide to withdraw at any point, without giving a reason, and to do so will not affect your participation in the life of the Methodist Church in any way at all.

### What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decide to volunteer, you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to complete and return the consent form by Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> December. The researcher from the University of Chester will then contact you, and will:

- Tell you how many participants have come forward from your church;
- Send you a short questionnaire to gather data about you and your involvement with your church;
- Invite you to a session in your church building at a time convenient to all participants, comprising:
  - a short presentation to introduce the topic (20 mins)
  - a tea / coffee break



- a conversation of no more than 90 mins facilitated by the researcher who will establish ground rules, ensure they are adhered to and move the conversation on to cover a range of topics. With your permission (and that of the others in the group), the meeting will be recorded as an audio sound track.

There will be a minimum of three and a maximum of eight people taking part in each of these sessions.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

There are no disadvantages or risks foreseen in taking part in the study.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

It is hoped that, through the reflection and conversation involved in this research, you will gain a clearer sense of what the 'church' that you belong to means to you, how you relate to it and how it might develop and grow.

**What if something goes wrong?**

If you wish to complain or have any concerns about any aspect of the way you have been approached or treated during the course of this study, please contact:

Professor Wayne Morris  
Director School of Humanities  
University of Chester  
Parkgate Road  
Chester  
CH1 4BJ  
[w.morris@chester.ac.uk](mailto:w.morris@chester.ac.uk)

**Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?**

All information which is collected about you during the course of the research, including the audio recording and transcript, will be kept strictly confidential so that only the researcher carrying out the research will have access to such information. All information will be held securely and in anonymised form.

**What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The results will be written up into a report which will be available to all those who share in the life of Chester and Delamere Forest Methodist Circuit and through other academic, church and community networks. Actual churches will not be identifiable through the report. Participant data will be anonymised throughout.

**Who is organising and funding the research?**

The research forms the dissertation phase of Andrew Herbert's Masters in Theology. His studies are funded by Wesley Methodist Church and by Chester and Delamere Forest Circuit. Staff from the department of Theology and Religious Studies in the School of Humanities at the University of Chester will supervise the study.

**Who may I contact for further information?**

If you would like more information about the research before you decide whether or not you would be willing to take part, please contact:

Andrew Herbert  
1427180@chester.ac.uk  
01244 323037  
07930 639246

**Thank you for your interest in this research.**