

PRINCES STREET
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
1819 - 2019

2



Years
Anniversary Celebration



Ministers

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| John Alexander | 1819 - 1866 |
| George Slatyer Barrett | 1866 - 1911 |
| William Griffiths Jenkins | 1911 - 1924 |
| Cornelius T Rae | 1925 - 1941 |
| Sydney Myers | 1942 - 1970 |
| Donald Hilton | 1971 - 1987 |
| Jeffrey Plowman | 1987 - 1990 |
| Derek Gill | 1989 - 1997 |
| John Marsh | 2000 - 2005 |

Team Ministry

Since spring 2005 the four URC churches in Norwich have been sharing ministry. The team was extended later to include our churches at Wymondham, Wroxham & Hoveton and Mattishall. During this time Princes Street has had ministry mainly from the following ministers: -

| | |
|---------------|-------------|
| Kenneth Lynch | 2006 - 2009 |
| Alison Davis | 2007 - 2014 |
| Geoff Hewitt | 2011 – 2013 |
| John Potter | 2016 - |

We are also grateful for the help we have received from our special category Minister Team Leaders and our Church Related Community Worker

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| Chris Warner – Team Leader | 2005 - 2009 |
| Ian Fosten - Team leader | 2012 - 2018 |
| Liz Kam – CRCW | 2007 - 2014 |

The early years, people and buildings.

The Reverend John Alexander first came to Norwich as a student from Hoxton Theological College in **1817**. He so impressed a breakaway group from the Bishopgate Street Tabernacle that he was invited to become the first pastor of a proposed new Congregational Church when it opened in 1819.



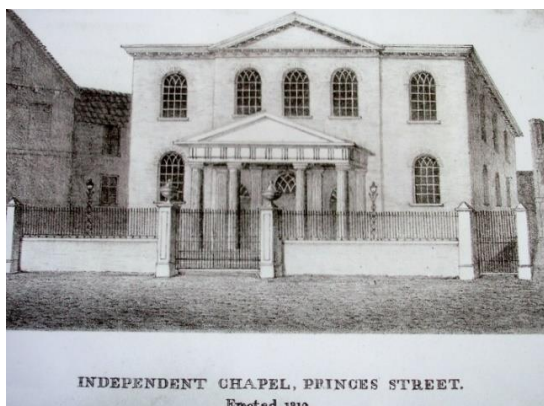
The Reverend John Alexander

In March **1819** The Reverend John Alexander laid the foundation stone for the new Chapel in Princes Street. On the 1st December 1819 the first service was held and the young pastor attracted a large following. The site for the church was on Hungate (now Princes Street) where a group of tenement houses were situated round a courtyard.

His preaching was regarded as inspirational and attracted a full house at every service. He formed strong friendships with the Bishops of Norwich and earned respect from the whole community.

In **1820** the church issued this declaration:

“We consider a Christian Church to be a congregation of believers voluntarily assembling together and submitting in all things to Jesus Christ their only Lord and Master. Such a Church we desire to become, recognising a Pastor and deacons as our only officers and asserting our exclusive right to make our own independent choice of minister to watch over us in the Lord and of deacons to attend to our temporal concerns.”



The original building of **1819** was a simple non-conformist style and cost £4,800.

In **1820** a Sunday school was established teaching the “3R’s” on two evenings a week in the church.

After a short time the flat roof of the original church building was found to be unsafe so alterations were carried out in **1828** funding for the repairs was assisted by donations from the Baptists at St. Mary’s Chapel and the Congregationalists at the Old Meeting House.

In **1861** a further building was built to the east for use as a school room.

The Reverend John Alexander was Minister for 47 years until the appointment of The Reverend George Slatyer Barrett as Minister in **1866**, he continued to attract large congregations.

The popularity of the church continued with large numbers attending and overcrowding becoming a problem for the 1000 worshippers. A decision was taken in **1868** to undertake a major rebuild and extension of the church sanctuary

The new neo-classical frontage was built 3 metres in front of the original, with the door flanked by columns of polished Aberdeen marble. The principle material for the frontage is moulded brick with some stone elements, including the carved text over the front door. The quality reflected the increasing prosperity and influence of many in the congregation. There is spectacular plasterwork on the ceiling and bold decorative ironwork round the balcony in an otherwise simple interior.



*The Reverend George
Slatyer Barrett*

In **1881** the Sunday school building, known as Boardman House after the renowned Norwich architect, Edward Boardman who designed it, was erected beside the chapel designed to accommodate 1000 children.

Developing the buildings

The pews inside the church were previously traditional box pews constructed for those who could afford to pay. There were basic benches at the rear of the church for other members of the congregation. Over time these were replaced with pitch pine pews with umbrella racks and in **1927** payment for pews was replaced by the freewill offering.

In **1969** a new link was created between the church and the lower floor of Boardman House, with doors and staircase providing access to the Church Rooms.



1977 saw the removal of some of the rear pews and the erection of a glass and timber screen to create a space called the Conversation Area.

The millennium project in **2000** installed glass doors at the entrance to the church enabling passers-by to see the interior of the church and allowing the congregation to be reminded of the world outside. The original oak doors were retained and stand in a permanently open position.

With changing styles of worship and a different relationship between preacher and congregation, the platform area was extended and the high level pulpit removed. This created ways to enrich worship by dramatisation for example. The panelling across the platform provides an appropriate background for worship, concerts and other activities. The arch gives a focus to a clearly visible illuminated cross.

The church sanctuary was used very successfully for concerts, music festivals, music exams and meetings. The lower floor of Boardman House consisted of several rooms which were used seven days a week for a wide range of community support, educational and recreational activities. The upper floors were used as office space.

In **2013** faced with an irreparable heating system in the Church and expensive maintenance and repair bills for Boardman House it was decided to sell this building which would then help finance

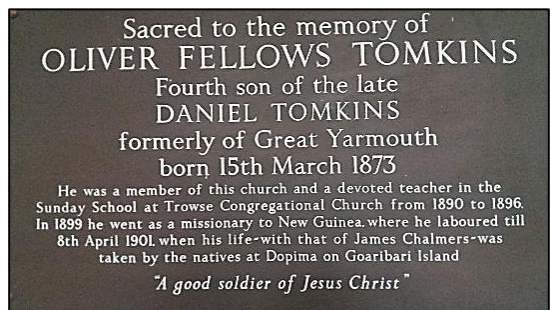
much needed renovation of the church building to create a more comfortable and flexible area. The church building closed to enable the renovations to take place. The pews were removed together with the condemned pew heating system which was replaced with underfloor heating and new flooring. A new kitchen was built at the side of the sanctuary. Church Cottage has been re-incorporated into the main building to provide two meeting rooms. The former Minister's Vestry is now the church office with another meeting room above.

The church building reopened in March **2015** as a place of worship and a space for community activities



Memorials

Around the interior of the church can be found a number of memorials, notably to The Reverend John Alexander, The Reverend George Barrett and The Reverend W Griffith Jenkins. Also included are Oliver Fellows Tomkins, a missionary in New Guinea, who was “taken by natives” and William Pigg who had an accident with a stage coach. In the porch there are memorials to those who died in the First World War.



The Father Willis Organ

Henry Willis (Father Willis), 1821 – 1901 was the greatest of the nineteenth century British organ builders; two sons and a grandson saw the firm well into the twentieth century.

When Henry was 14 he was apprenticed to John Gray (Later Gray and Davison). Even as a young apprentice he showed his ingenuity inventing his special manual and pedal couplers which he used in organs throughout his life.

After his apprenticeship Henry went to live in Cheltenham in Gloucestershire where he worked for William Evans, an organ builder who also kept a music shop. Here, Henry met with the composer, Samuel Sebastian Wesley, which led to the rebuilding of the Gloucester Cathedral organ in 1847. This marked the establishment of Willis as an independent organ builder. “It was my stepping stone to fame”, he boldly proclaimed in an interview published in the Musical Times journal in 1898; “the Swell down to double C, had twelve stops and a double Venetian front; the pianissimo was simply astounding. I received £400 for the job and I was presumptuous enough to marry”.

Such instruments as that built for the Great Exhibition of 1851 in the Crystal Palace, brought him fame, set the seal on his ability and revealed his qualities not only as a maker and voicer of organ pipes but also as an engineer and inventor. He was also a performer and was largely responsible for showing English organists of the latter part of the nineteenth century how to play the pedal organ. In fact, he played a separate pedal clavier at an important service at St. Paul’s Cathedral in 1872. Large organs,

also built by Willis in London, are in the Royal Albert Hall and Alexander Palace. Many cathedral organs were included in the hundreds he built or rebuilt, as well as organs for churches, concert halls and public halls in Britain.

The Origin of the Title "Father" Henry Willis

The Musical Times, in their edition dated 1 May 1898, presented an extra supplement of "a Portrait of Mr. Henry Willis, specially taken for this paper by Messrs. Russell and Sons." The final part of the article reads..."

"FATHER" WILLIS.

Two hundred years ago there lived in this country a great organ builder whose instruments were the glory of their maker. Two of his nephews were associated with him in his business. Partly to distinguish him from his younger relatives, but more especially as a mark of high appreciation of his great abilities and artistic worth, he was canonized (sic), so to speak, with the title "Father". His name is familiar enough in the history of organ building - Father Smith.

Henry Willis is also assisted by a younger generation, having two sons - Vincent and Henry - working with him, in whom he has great confidence and hopes. It is natural, therefore, that he, the greatest organ builder of the Victorian Era, will be called Father Willis."

Father Willis
Voicing a pipe



Picture: www.willis-organs.com

Princes Street

From 1860 to 1875, a harmonium was used and before that just a tuning fork. Henry Willis built the organ in the church in 1875. Something of a rarity in Norwich and Norfolk this was a two-manual and pedal tracker action instrument placed in the organ loft. In 1930 the action was changed to electric and a new Willis Stop Key console was placed underneath the pulpit. The console was moved in 1950 to the body of the church.

In 1985 the leather motors in the console were beyond repair. The Norwich firm of organ builders Hill, Norman and Beard replaced all the action between console and organ with a Christie Music Transmission System providing an electronic link with digital memory playback.

Bishop and Son, organ builders, of Ipswich, established in 1795 maintained the organ and were engaged to undertake repair work in early 2001 including re-leathering the main reservoir and general repairs to the pedals and trunking.

At this time there was an important addition to the Pedal Section – a deep sounding stop called ‘Orphicleide’ (16 foot pitch on Pedals) generously donated by a member of the congregation, Mr Bob Bunting. This distinctive stop is found on many Willis organs. ‘Orphicleide’ is essentially an English name and used almost exclusively by Willis in his many organs, including St. Paul’s Cathedral in London in the late nineteenth century and Liverpool Cathedral in 1925.



The Norfolk organ builders Richard Bower Ltd. have taken over the care of the organ since 2008.

Organ Specifications

Swell

| | |
|------------------|---------|
| Open Diapason | 8' |
| Lieblich Gedackt | 8' |
| Salicional | 8' |
| Vox Angelica | 8' |
| Germshorn | 4' |
| Piccolo | 2' |
| Mixture | 3 ranks |
| Contra Oboe | 16' |
| Cornopean | 8' |
| Tremolo | |
| Sub Octave | |
| Octave | |
| Unison off | |

Pedal

| | |
|----------------|--------|
| Open Bass | 16' |
| Bourbon | 16' |
| Quint | 10 2/3 |
| Principal | 8' |
| Flute | 8' |
| Octave Flute | 4' |
| Contra Oboe | 16' |
| Ophicleide | 16' |
| Swell to Pedal | |
| Swell to Pedal | 4' |
| Great to Pedal | |

Great

| | |
|------------------|-------|
| Lieblich Bordun | 16' |
| Open Diapason1 | 8' |
| Open Diapason2 | 8' |
| Claribel Flute | 8' |
| Dulciana | 8' |
| Principal | 4' |
| Flute Converts | 4' |
| Twelfth | 2 2/3 |
| Fifteenth | 2' |
| Tierce | 1 3/5 |
| Trumpet | 8' |
| Clarinet | 8' |
| Oboe (by piston) | 8' |

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Swell to Great | 16' |
| Swell to Great | |
| Swell to Great | 4' |



Mission

During the nineteenth century, Princes Street Church established a number of 'outposts' as part of its mission. These were at Pockthorpe (Silver Road), Mariners Lane, Thorpe (Thunder Lane), Trowse and later at Arminghall, Old Lakenham, Whitlingham, Kirby Bedon and Eaton. These developed in differing ways, some grew and became independent, others retained close dependence, while others dwindled and closed. In the 1950's we planted a new church at Ipswich Road.

The Church has been influential in the city, attracting people from all walks of life and a strong liberal membership, especially in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

From the beginning, Foreign and Colonial Missionary work was supported with meetings and financial contributions from the members.

Our current sense of mission is expressed through financial contributions to a quarterly good cause, for local and international needs. We regularly support the following local good causes; St. Martins Housing Trust, Commitment for Life and Norwich Open Christmas. For many years we have given support to St. James School in Zimbabwe also a Norwich Foodbank collection point is now well established. The welcome and support given by our staff and members to many from the wider community who use our premises has been an important element of our mission.

Today the church and church buildings are often used by charities both local and nationwide for meetings, training and

education, social functions, office space or as a support base for their workers as in the case of Street Presence.



St. James School in Zimbabwe

Princes Street Mission Statement:

Princes Street United Reformed Church seeks under God's guidance, to be a distinctive presence in Norwich City Centre. Through faithful worship, service and learning we endeavour to follow Christ as a church and in our lives. We also seek to share the love of Jesus with those who use and visit our building as well as our neighbours.

Worship & Looking Ahead

Worship in the United Reformed Church usually follows a familiar form, but varies in content rather than having a set liturgy. Christian festivals are celebrated, while other services may focus on issues of the day. The Bible always provides the inspiration, guide and teaching aid.

Music and singing are a vital part of worship. The enrichment provided by music often gives deeper meaning than can be achieved by words alone. Spirit and emotions are brought into play. Other arts such as dramatic presentations and visual images are employed, when appropriate, to reinforce the Christian theme.

Services are led by one of the Ministry Team, invited ministers, lay preachers or preachers from other denominations. The sacrament of Communion is open to everyone and celebrated usually on the first Sunday of each month.

Princes Street Church although undergoing changes structurally over the years to accommodate the requirements of a developing congregation and community has still retained its spiritual atmosphere and presence.

Groups now hire the Sanctuary for a range of activities from music concerts, classical and popular music choirs, seminars, meetings and social gatherings to dance and exercise classes. All groups say the same, that it is a wonderful atmosphere and surrounding for their activity with incredible acoustics to enhance the talents of those singing and playing.



Voice Project Travellers in Light concert 2018

The building since renovation has been recognised by being nominated for awards by many different associations as follows:

Norfolk Association of Architects Craftsmanship & Design Award – won.

Norwich Society Design Awards, Conservation Category – shortlisted.

Constructing Excellence Awards, Value Category – won.

Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors Awards, Community Benefit and Conservation Categories – shortlisted.

The Church continues to have a regular **Sunday Service** most weeks at 10.30 am although some Sundays the services will be shared with another of the United Reformed Churches. All services are followed by the opportunity to enjoy refreshments and catch-up with friends. There is a Traidcraft stall and an opportunity to purchase delicious products all for a good cause.

The Church **Community Lunch** is held monthly on the fourth Tuesday. This runs most of the year with a summer break in July and August. The **Tuesday Fellowship** group takes place after the Community Lunch.

The **Princes Street Guild** which has been running for some 30 years continues to meet once a month on the first Tuesday afternoon. Entertainment for both groups varies from talks and demonstrations to song and dance acts.

There is also **Princes Street Pics** showing popular films on the third Tuesday afternoon.

In addition to these regular activities the church also organises special breakfasts, lunches or teas to celebrate significant dates in the Christian calendar, plus concerts and other fundraising activities for local charities and good causes.

Details of services and church events can be found on the website www.princesstreeturc.org.uk, news and calendar page. If you require any further information or assistance there is a messaging facility on the map and contact page, or you can telephone 01603 627899.

On the 30th July 2016, The Reverend John Potter was inducted at a special service at Ipswich Road URC to be a Minister within the Norwich Area URC with special responsibility for Princes Street URC and Ipswich Road URC. John can be emailed via the above website contact page.

Princes Street URC 200th Anniversary Concert



University Choir Lille MUKO

The University Choir Lille MUKO is a classical choir based in Copenhagen. The choir is associated with the University of Copenhagen, where it frequently performs at official events. The church were delighted that they took part in our 200 year celebrations on the 13th July 2019. The concert was held free of charge with donations to charities BUILD, Hope into Action, and the church.



The Norwich Area URC

Princes Street is one of six United Reformed Churches in the Norwich area. Jessop Road URC has linked with St. Peter's Methodist and is now known as St. Peter's Jessop Road (URC/Methodist) and Mattishall closed in December 2016.



Ipswich Road URC

St. Peter's Jessop Road
(URC/Methodist)
photo Networknorwich



Trinity URC - photo
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Wroxham & Hoveton URC
photo wroxham.urb.org.uk



Fairland URC Wymondham
photo Fairland.urb.org.uk



The present Minister,
The Reverend John Potter



200th
Anniversary
Service





Charities and groups who use and support Princes Street URC





All Are Welcome

Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions.
All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where prophets speak,
and words are strong and true,
where all God's children dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness
and as symbol of God's grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus.
All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where love is found
in water, wine and wheat:
a banquet hall on holy ground
where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus,
is revealed in time and space;
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us.
All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where hands will reach
beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger
bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger.
All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter.
All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.