

# Methodist Church Buildings

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## STATISTICAL RETURNS

INCLUDING SEATING ACCOMMODATION

AS AT

JULY 1st, 1940.

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## Preface.

The Methodist Conference assembled in Sheffield, July 1940, passed the following resolution :—

“ The Conference authorises the Chapel Committee during the present year, or as soon as possible, to provide suitable forms for obtaining returns of accommodation in all Methodist places of worship. It further directs that the results thus obtained shall be tabulated and presented by the Chapel Committee to the Conference as soon as practicable.”

This resolution was passed at the instance of the Rev. William C. Jackson, then General Secretary of the Department for Chapel Affairs. He called the attention of the Conference to the fact that while returns of this character had been made in the Wesleyan Methodist Church prior to union, there were no records applying to the other sections, nor had any returns been obtained since the union of Methodism in 1932.

As will be recalled, it was in the autumn of 1940 that the serious bombardment of London and many districts of the country developed. The toll of Chapels, schools and manses damaged and destroyed began to mount up. The situation thus created emphasised the desirability of obtaining records relating to Methodist property as at the Conference of 1940 before any extensive destruction took place. The great majority of the returns were completed when, on Whit-Sunday the following year, 1941, the Central Buildings, Manchester, including the Chapel Committee Offices, were seriously damaged. It was extremely fortunate that, owing to the precautions which had been taken with regard to all permanent documents, the returns which had been obtained were not destroyed. It was thus possible to go forward with a view to completing the work.

Much, however, remained to be done and the serious wartime limitations delayed both the completion of the figures and the necessary publication. It is with considerable satisfaction that, after this inevitable delay, the work planned at the Conference of 1940 has been carried to completion and there is, for the first time, an adequate record of the buildings of Methodism.

An examination of the returns will show that they cover more than the mere fact of accommodation. Endeavour has been made to show the character of the structure, the sort of seating provided in the place of worship and the extent of the buildings, including what are commonly in these days called the ancillary premises. Reference to the notes, which should be kept in mind in reading the tables, will show that an indication is also given of the previous association of each building before union, as to whether it has been damaged or not, and whether since 1940 the building has been sold.

Every possible endeavour has been made to secure accurate returns. In the case of the Ex-Wesleyan properties it was possible to check the figures with previous records in most cases. That was not possible with regard to buildings which previously belonged to other sections of Methodism. At the same time, we are satisfied that superintendents and local officials have co-operated to the fullest possible extent and have endeavoured to make accurate returns according to the requirements. Part of the delay in publication is due to the fact that in every case where there has been any doubt about a particular figure, and these cases have been considerable, the point has been referred back to the Superintendent Minister in order that it might be checked. This has involved a great mass of correspondence. It was important, however, to secure that the returns were made on a common basis and could, therefore, be properly used for comparative purposes. We are satisfied that while it is impossible to claim that the returns are free from error, they are certainly as accurate as careful work by local officials and the complete checking of the figures in the Chapel Office could secure.

It is necessary to point out that in using these tables the numbers and names of Circuits are in accordance with the way they are set out in the Minutes of Conference for 1940.

A difficulty not often realised is that quite a number of Chapels bear alternative names. As far as possible, every name in use has been incorporated, the alternatives being in brackets. It should, therefore, be possible to trace every building whatever may be the name commonly used regarding it.

The value of these returns is not only the records in respect of buildings in individual Circuits and Districts. The summary of the statistics found in the table at the end does reveal for the first time the significant figures in relation to the buildings of Methodism. There are many conclusions which may be drawn from this table. It is only necessary here to call attention to the impressive fact that the total seating accommodation in Methodist places of worship exceeds 3,500,000. This figure takes no account of the additional accommodation for varied purposes which is provided in Sunday Schools, Institutes, Clubs, and indeed all the ancillary premises. The number of Methodist places of worship in 1940 was 13,632. This indicates that the average number of sittings per Church was approximately 260. It would, however, not be wise to draw any final conclusions from this figure because a very real difference must exist between the large Churches of the town and the relatively small buildings which are required for village Methodism.

An enquiry made to the Chapel Office from time to time concerns the capital value of Methodist property. It is possible, of course, to arrive at a rough approximation on the basis of this statistical table, but any such approximation tends to be misleading. There

is no stable figure in respect of building costs which could be used as the basis for any calculation which would be of value. Further, the character of many of our older buildings would not be re-produced in newer buildings, and this affects considerably any estimate of their capital value in relation to modern use. For ourselves, therefore, we are always reluctant to approve any assessment for the reason that it is almost impossible to arrive at a figure which takes into full account all the relevant factors.

There are a number of people to whom our very grateful thanks are due. As already suggested, it would have been impossible to do this work without the careful help of Superintendent Ministers and their colleagues and local trust officials. Owing to delay and removals it has, in quite a few cases, been necessary to do the work more than once and we sympathise with those who have been called upon for this further service while, at the same time, we value their readiness to co-operate. We are sure Conference will appreciate the service rendered throughout the Connexion in order that these returns might be completed.

The work of compilation, checking, and analysis in the office of the Department for Chapel Affairs has been under the direction of Mr. William Shaw, General Managing Clerk, who has been associated with the Department for over twenty years. We cannot exaggerate our appreciation of the care and accuracy with which he has carried out this very exacting piece of work, which has been in addition to the normal activities of the office.

We are also greatly indebted to the courtesy and co-operation of the Printers, Messrs. Herald and Walker Ltd., who, in a time of difficulty, have made it possible for these statistical returns to be issued.

Finally, we are glad to pay a tribute once again to the Rev. William C. Jackson, who would have rejoiced greatly in seeing the completion of a piece of work in which he was so greatly interested. It was undertaken at his initiation and the completion of this work is itself a tribute to the leadership he exercised in Methodism for so long.

E. BENSON PERKINS,  
General Secretary.

ALBERT HEARN,  
Secretary.

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Central Buildings,  
Oldham Street,  
Manchester, 1.  
*June, 1947.*

## NOTES AND ABBREVIATIONS

The Numbers and Names of the Circuits are as in the Minutes of Conference, June, 1940.

Reference to the Circuits may be made by use of the Index at the end.

Within each Circuit the Preaching places appear as in order on the Circuit Plan.

### SECTION

- W — Wesleyan Methodist.
- P — Primitive Methodist.
- U — United Methodist.
- M — Methodist—erected since Union.

### STRUCTURE

- S — Stone.
- B — Brick.
- C — Concrete.
- W — Wood.
- I — Iron

### TYPE OF SEATING

- P — Pews.
- C — Chairs.
- F — Forms.

### NOTES IN FRONT OF NAMES

- S — Chapel sold since 1940.
- D — Chapel damaged by enemy action.

N.B.—Endeavour has been made to record every case of damage, excluding only cases of slight damage.

### RENTED PROPERTY

Indicates premises which do not belong to the Methodist Connexion, such as Day Schools, Cafés, rooms in houses and cottages on short leases, or rented a few hours weekly for Methodist worship.