

Re-Opening of AMC Community Centre

Saturday 11th July 2009



Photo: Maurice Cousins

David Lidington MP (3rd from left) with Rev. Alison Tomlin and members of the Project Steering Group.

After its £1 million revamp, **Aylesbury Methodist Church's Community Centre** in Buckingham Street was re-opened on Saturday 11th July by David Lidington MP. "This is the first time I have been asked to stand in for Sir Terry Wogan" he said. Sir Terry was unable to attend but instead will be doing a fund-raising

'An Evening with Wogan' at the church on Friday 2nd October.

In his address to the packed congregation, David Lidington spoke of the deceptive impression that people had about the constituency being well-heeled and comfortable. Whilst on average this might be true the figures concealed many families and individuals in desperate need of the sort of help on offer at community centres such as this.

The church's minister **Rev. David Jenkins** said, "The opening event was both an ending and a beginning; the completion of an immense building project and the start of highly significant community building. It was a particular privilege for us to have someone of David Lidington's high calibre as an inspirational and encouraging speaker to open the centre for us."

The building now offers nine meeting venues for three to three hundred at affordable rates for charities and community groups. Thirty groups used the premises before work began and many new groups have since been attracted. These cater for, amongst others, the homeless, the deaf, the autistic, those with learning difficulties, mental health, drug or alcohol problems as well as providing recreational activities for others.

Commenting on the centre, **BBC Three Counties** radio presenter **Ian Pearce** said, "I have to say, what a transformation. The community centre in the back looks fantastic." He broadcast extracts from the service on his **Sunday 'Melting Pot' programme**. As well as the congregational singing, much commented on by both David Lidington and the High Sheriff, Mr Allan Westray, it included a celebratory piano piece 'A Joyful March' composed and played by David Jenkins. There was an interview with former youth member Edward Bernstone, newly graduated from the Royal Academy of Music after his spine-tingling rendition of 'All good gifts around us' from Godspell. Other interviews were with the Project Chairman Peter Farmer who had thanked everyone for all their efforts in delivering the project on time and within budget and Michele Challenger who leads the church's outreach within the community.

The re-dedication service of the centre was the last official engagement of **Rev Alison Tomlin** as Chair of the Northampton District of the Methodist Church of which Aylesbury is a part. At the previous week's Methodist Conference, Alison was voted President Designate of the Methodist Conference.



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David Lidington MP officially re-opens the centre watched by Community Centre Project Chair, Peter Farmer.



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Some of the distinguished guests at the community centre re-opening and rededication service.

From left to right, Cllr Freda Roberts MBE, Rev. Alison Tomlin, Dr Shanti Edwards, Dr David Lidington MP, The High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire (Mr Allan Westray), Cllr Bill Chapple OBE, Cllr Sue Chapple, Rev Dr Peter Lemmon, Mrs Chris Lemmon, Rev barrie Heafford and Mrs Margaret Heafford