

The late 20th century saw massive change

In 1976 the church took, what was then, a massive leap of faith. The vision was of a church at the centre of its community.

The Victorian building was split into two levels, retaining a main worship area upstairs.

There are several areas for community use throughout the week.

The building was rededicated in 1980 and has since been used by many church and community groups.



Late 20th Century

Today...

The church continues to be for the community seven days a week.

Worship is central to church life. Services are held on Sunday mornings at 11am with prayers taking place daily at 10am in the Chapel (Monday to Saturday).

We continue to celebrate weddings, baptisms and funerals.

We are now part of the URC Mid Cambs Mission Partnership - working together with URC churches in Fenstanton, St Neots and with Local Ecumenical Partnerships in Northstowe, Bar Hill, Cambourne and Loves Farm.

A Church at the centre of our Community!

Our building is used each day by a range of local organisations. Activities taking place include public meetings, concerts, craft fairs, WI exhibitions, fitness classes, singing groups, photographic club, children's groups, gardening groups, bowls club, poetry group, the local RSPB, several U3A groups, youth theatre, social groups, counselling, support groups and others.

21st Century

**The Free Church
(United Reformed)
St Ives**



**St Ives
Free Church
A Brief History**

**Serving God
Serving
Community**



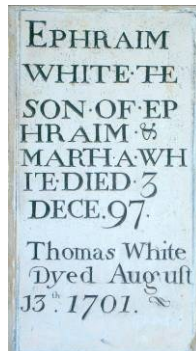
www.stivesfreechurch.org

In the beginning...



The Free Church has a proud history, tracing its roots back to the early 17th century. By the time Oliver Cromwell was living in the town, there was an active group of “non-conformists” meeting in people’s houses. Tookey’s coffee bar is named after the Rev Job Tookey, an early Puritan Clergyman.

In 1691 the non-conformists of St Ives received their licence to worship freely. The first meeting house was built on land belonging to Ephraim White. A tombstone, from this original chapel, is preserved in the current porch chapel.



Throughout the 18th century, the non-conformists continued to call their own ministers, though it was not until 1785 that their baptisms were given the same status as those of the Parish Church.

In 1811 a new and larger Independent Chapel was opened. The building still exists in Free Church Passage. It had seating for 600 people.

17th & 18th Century

The current building...

The current Gothic style building was opened for worship in 1864. It was deliberately built to be larger and more dominant than the Parish Church. It was intended that the spire be higher than that of its neighbour!



Potto Brown, the local miller from Houghton and non-conformist benefactor, donated much of the money needed for this venture.



Potto Brown Memorial at Houghton

It was at this time that the name of the church took the name “The Free Church”, recognising its independence from state funding and influence and also its union with the neighbouring Baptist Church.

19th Century

Into the 20th century...

With its dominant position in Market Hill, The Free Church continued to be the backdrop for much of the day-to-day life of the town like the weekly markets and annual Michaelmas Fair.

Special events such as the 1911 Coronation Tea were held in front of its imposing façade.

In 1942 the Primitive Methodist Chapel closed and the members decided to join with The Free Church.



Reverend John Ballard, Minister, 1948 to 1974

In 1972 the Congregation Union, of which the Free Church was a member, joined with the Presbyterian Church to become the United Reformed Church.



20th Century