CASTLE EDEN METHODIST CIRCUIT ANNOUNCE PARTNERSHIP TO SAFEGUARD HORDEN METHODIST CHURCH FOR COMMUNITY USE.

Tuesday 9 April, 2024

Castle Eden Methodist Circuit has announced an innovative partnership to safeguard Horden Methodist Church for community use. The Circuit invites its congregation to attend weekly services at another church within the Circuit, enabling Ensemble ‘84 to use Horden Methodist Church as the base for its new groundbreaking theatre group.

Ensemble ‘84, led by Mark Dornford-May; renowned for his work with South African-based Isango Ensemble, will establish its base at Horden Methodist Church. This partnership marks a significant step towards realising Ensemble ‘84's vision of creating inclusive productions that reflect the diverse communities of County Durham and resonate with audiences worldwide.

Mark said, "Ensemble '84's decision to establish our base at Horden Methodist Church is rooted in our belief in the transformative power of community-driven art. Just as we witnessed in South Africa, where Isango Ensemble became a catalyst for change and empowerment, we see Horden Methodist Church as a beacon of possibility.

Ensemble ‘84 aims to ignite hope, spark dialogue, and cultivate a sense of belonging within the community. With the support of the Castle Eden Methodist Circuit, we look forward to embarking on this journey of artistic exploration and community collaboration. Our doors will soon be open, and we invite everyone to join us in this exciting adventure."

By welcoming Ensemble ‘84, Horden Methodist Church will retain its significance as a hub for community gatherings and special acts of worship, such as weddings and funerals.

In response to the partnership between Castle Eden Methodist Circuit and Ensemble ‘84, Reverend Bev Hollings, a Methodist minister, expressed her enthusiasm, stating:

“This partnership represents a significant milestone for Horden Methodist Church and the wider community. By welcoming Ensemble ‘84 into our space, we are supporting the arts and ensuring our church's continued use for generations. It will provide a secure base for the next generation's worshipping presence in Horden, where people can mark major Christian festivals such as Christmas and Easter and come for baptisms, weddings (including same-sex couples), and funerals.

We believe this collaboration will enrich our church community and offer opportunities for meaningful engagement with the broader community.”

The Castle Eden Circuit has already cultivated a similar successful partnership with Focus Easington at The Welcome Centre, which remains the home of Easington Colliery Methodist Church.. These initiatives reflect the Circuit's dedication to fostering meaningful connections and maximising its resources' potential to benefit its congregation and the wider community.

As Ensemble ’84 prepares to embark on its journey from Horden to stages around the globe, the Circuit invites its members and the community to support this exciting venture.

Ensemble ‘84 is one of eight Into the Light Programme initiatives in County Durham, which will drive long-lasting growth through creative collaboration. Over the next three years, it will cultivate talent, widen access to creative education, enhance skills, and break down barriers in the creative industries.

Into the Light is funded by The National Lottery through Arts Council England, The UK government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Durham University

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Redhills ClO

T. 01913868413
E. admin@redhillsdurham.org
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