

CHURCH PROFILE

WHO WE ARE

Thornhill Baptist Church is a community of ordinary people where everyone is welcome: the old and the young; the got-it-together and the battered-and-

bruised by life; the convinced Christian and the unsure explorer. Together we are getting to know God better and learning to love Him and our neighbours better too.

OUR CHURCH COMMUNITY

TBC has met on this site since 1950 and the current church community has around 100 members plus a number of regular attendees with a reasonable representation across the ages. Attendance on a Sunday morning is around 100.

We are located on the main road which separates the two large estates of Thornhill and Harefield and see both of these as the patch which we are called to serve. Our congregation comes from both estates as well as other local suburbs of Southampton and Hedge End.

OUR LEADERSHIP

We currently have two ministers: Astrid Vaswani our Community Minister and her husband Paul, our Youth, Children's and Family Minister, who both joined us in 2015. Since the departure of our last

Senior Minister in 2017 Paul has been acting as leader of the ministry team. They work alongside a Leadership Team elected from the body of the church, currently comprising five Deacons.

SUNDAY SERVICES

Sunday Mornings

We meet at 10.30 every Sunday morning. We focus on worshipping together, teaching from the bible and time to pray and respond to God. We don't want services to be going through the motions – we believe in a powerful God who meets with us, speaks to us, answers prayers and changes us... and that's what we expect to happen when we gather together!

Morning services usually last about an hour and a quarter and finish with coffee, tea and time to chat. About once every six weeks we have an all age service with the children and young people in for the whole service – these are shorter, we aim for about an hour. Other weeks there are youth and children's groups in parallel with the morning service. For those who are exploring faith or who prefer a discussion based format we have a group called "Dialogue" which people go out to half way through the service.

Sunday Evenings

We currently have two very different styles of evening service...

On the first and third Sundays of the month at 6.30 we have "Refresh". The emphasis is on encountering God, usually with an extended period of contemporary worship, times of testimony and opportunities to listen to God and receive prayer ministry. It's a very relaxed and informal time together with no teaching as such but plenty of time and space for everyone to share what they believe God might be saying.

On the fourth Sunday of the month at 6.30 we have an evening communion service. This is rather more traditional and reflective in nature and takes place in the lounge room at the rear of the building.

We also host a monthly youth service called Encounter, which is run by a group of churches for young people in the area. This happens at 7.30pm on the fourth Sunday of the month.

VISION

Our vision statement says this:

*Ordinary people, making an extraordinary God known.
Come as you are. Join in. Be transformed.*

Ordinary people

Because we are. We want to be free of the baggage of pretension. We are not special, elite or holier than thou; this is a family where anyone can feel at home.

We want to tell the stories of our extraordinary God in everyday language so they can impact every person's life.

Making known

We want TBC to be a safe place where anyone can ask any question and explore faith at their own pace.

We want TBC to be a dangerous place where Jesus is proclaimed as the one and only way to reconnect with God.

We want everyone in our church family to have a contagious, uncontainable faith and the confidence to share it.

We want to be creative and dynamic in making Jesus known.

An extraordinary God

We want to be the kind of church where you can't escape the fact that God is extraordinary! We want to know the presence and power of his Holy Spirit as a normal part of church life.

We want to be naturally supernatural.

Come as you are

We want to be a place where everyone that walks through the door knows that they are welcome, valued and accepted as they are. No exceptions.

We want to communicate, structure our activities and conduct our worship in ways that reinforce this welcome at every turn.

We want people to have the opportunity to belong, really belong, before they are sure whether they believe.

Join in

We believe that church is not a spectator sport. Everyone has a contribution to make, gifts to use, areas where we are called to serve each other and our community, and creativity to contribute. We value them all.

We believe that the Christian life is a shared journey and we want every member of our church family to belong to a small group where we can share life, encourage faith and support one another.

Be transformed

When we meet with God we *expect* to come away changed. We want our preaching, our worship, our small groups and our pastoral care to be pregnant with that anticipation. We will not settle for going through the motions of faith, we will not be satisfied with being the same people today that we were yesterday.

REGULAR ACTIVITIES

TBC has an active membership with a large percentage of the congregation engaging in the life of the church. Our bi-monthly Church Meetings are attended by around a third of the membership.

The church has a strong small group programme with around 100 people belonging to small groups. These meet in both the daytime and the evening, for discipleship, friendship, prayer and study.

There are many other groups that run in the week including Coffee and Bowls, Women's Fellowship, and Blank Canvas (an art and craft group). In addition to this, to further our links with the wider community, our premises are also used by a range of local organisations offering additional activities for local people e.g. Slimming World, Singing for the Brain, and a Stroke Support Group.

MISSION

We aim to be hands-on in our local community. Over the last few years we have been actively involved in Thornhill Community Voices, a monthly forum for individuals and agencies engaged in that community. We have partnered with a national benefits and debt advice service, Frontline, and run a local branch of that service within our building. We also have a very active presence in the Thornhill Library, which was to be closed down by the council until Astrid founded a charity to keep it running as a community library.

TBC has many other active links with external groups both in the UK and internationally including;

- supporting and volunteering in clothing and food banks with Southampton City Mission;
- some of our members are Street Pastors in Southampton;
- Love Thornhill and Love Harefield – community outreach partnerships with other local churches;
- Stroke Group supporting those recovering from this serious condition;
- support of BU Home Mission and the BMS World Mission, including being linked with the Judkins Family developing church plants in France and the Neves (our previous Senior Minister and her husband) serving God in India;
- working twice year with churches and an evangelist in Moldova;
- supporting the work of health professionals in Ghana through visits and training.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Our youth and children's work includes a number of strands:

On a Sunday morning we have three groups catering for pre-school, primary school and secondary school aged youngsters. Sunday evenings we run socials for the young people after some Refresh services and also a monthly youth service called Encounter, which we run in partnership with a number of other local churches. We also run two mid-week youth house groups.

We run a well subscribed toddler group on a Thursday which brings in a good number of parents from our local community.

On Friday evenings we have open children's and youth clubs which regularly see 45-50 children and close to 30 teenagers. Both of these groups draw in both children and young people whose families are part of the church and others for whom Friday night is their only point of contact with us.

We run a monthly Messy Church congregation, which is a thriving all age community with around 60 people meeting each month to explore what it means to follow Jesus through stories, crafts, games and sung worship. We finish each Messy morning with a shared lunch.

THE CHURCH BUILDING

In 2008 TBC underwent an extensive redevelopment - we now have a wonderful suite of rooms that can be adapted for numerous uses. These rooms include 4 offices, a youth 'snug', a fully fitted catering kitchen and four halls of varying sizes. The main worship room is a flexible space, fully carpeted with under-floor heating, comfortable chairs, adaptable lighting, a modern P.A system and multi-media facilities.



COMMUNITY PROFILE

Southampton in General

Southampton is a major city on the south coast of the UK, with a population of around 260,000 people. We have a rich heritage, particularly in relation to seafaring. Like most cities Southampton has a number of distinct areas, each with their own community characteristics and issues. Southampton has all the advantages of a modern UK city, including two universities and good transport links. However, it also has many of the problems associated with large urban areas, including high levels of deprivation in some areas – not least Thornhill and Harefield.

Surrounding the Church

TBC is situated in the east of the city, on one of the busy main roads into the city centre. The church building is within a stretch of private middle income housing close to two parades of local shops.

Either side of the main road are the estates of Thornhill and Harefield, which are a mixture of council and former council houses. Both estates have issues relating to anti-social behaviour and urban poverty.

The Thornhill area had, up until 2010, a New Deal for the Community regeneration project in place which established a number of community groups and

carried out improvements to the community infrastructure. There is a settled core to the population of Thornhill, but with many people also moving in and out. Thornhill has two other churches, St. Christopher's, an Anglican church, and a Vineyard fellowship. TBC has good relationships with both of these churches and have together formed Love Thornhill as a vehicle for joint prayer and outreach. There are four primary schools: Kanes Hill, Hightown, Thornhill and Springwell Special School.

The Harefield area has not had the level of regeneration that Thornhill has in the last few years, but areas within it are being redeveloped. There are problems with community cohesion in an area that does not have, apart from the schools, a natural community gathering point. There is one primary school, Harefield, that TBC has had a good long term relationship with, and the area's secondary school is Woodlands Community College, whose intake comes from both Thornhill and Harefield. There are no churches within Harefield itself, but we partner with St James's church and other local Christians in an initiative called "Love Harefield", taking on various community projects together. We also work together with the "Big Local" community project, a lottery funded community program in Harefield.