

TBC 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 125 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 Ministry Team Leader, who both joined us in 2015. They work alongside a Leadership Team elected

from the body of the church, currently comprising seven members who act as Elders, Deacons and charity Trustees. Recognising how big this task is, the Leadership Team is supported by a number of other Teams with specific areas of responsibility.

SUNDAY SERVICES

Sunday Mornings

We meet at 10.30 every Sunday morning in person and online. We value Spirit-led worship, teaching from the Bible and prayer ministry as we 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. Most weeks the children and young people are in the service for the first 15 minutes before going to their own groups. About once every six weeks we have an all age service with the children and young people in for the whole service – these services are generally about an hour long.

Sunday Evenings

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

On the first Sunday of the month we have "Immerse". This includes an extended period of worship, some brief teaching – usually geared towards moving in the gifts of the Holy Spirit and hearing God's voice and then time to receive prayer ministry. It's a relaxed and informal service with plenty of time and space for everyone to share what they believe God might be saying.

On the fourth Sunday of the month we have an evening communion service. This is rather more traditional and reflective in nature.

We also host a monthly youth service called Encounter, which is run by a group of churches for young people in the area. This also happens 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 the Well Being Café, Coffee and Bowls, our Food Hub, and Craft and Chatter. 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. 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 involved in a local networking group called SESSH (South East Southampton Support Hub) where we engage with agencies working in our locality. We meet regularly to share news and offer Community Networking Breakfasts to help introduce our community to local agencies. We also partner with local agencies offering addiction support, employment guidance, mental and emotional health signposting during our Wellbeing Café sessions. Our weekly Food Hub offers a café alongside and a monthly community lunch to help us build relationship with those who come along. 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 Thornhill

Community Library. When Thornhill Library was going to be closed down by the council, 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 three overseas mission partners around the world;

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, years R to 5 and years 6 to 10 youngsters. We host and help run a monthly youth service called Encounter, in partnership with a number of other local churches. We also run a mid-week "house group" type youth group in conjunction with two other churches for older young people.

We run a popular 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 60+ children and around 30 teenagers. Both of these groups draw in 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 10 or 12 families 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

We are fortunate to have a large, modern building with a good range of rooms of different sizes offering space and facilities for all kinds of church activities and outside groups who hire space here. Over the last couple of years we have been seeking God's leading over whether to extend the building further as a number of our ministries, especially on the community side, have started to outgrow their space.



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 urban deprivation and poverty 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 an independent ex-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 is one church within Harefield itself – a congregation plant from one of the larger city centre churches, and we partner with them and St James's church and other local Christians in an initiative called "Love Harefield". We also work together with Oasis, who run a number of community projects out of a re-purposed shop in the area.