



The Church in Binley Woods is a Single Congregation Baptist-Anglican Local Ecumenical Partnership

## The Church in Binley Woods

We were formed in 1987 because Christians living in Binley Woods responded to God's call to come together as one fellowship to worship God and serve the village. Some had links with St Bartholomew's in Binley, others with Meredith Road Baptist both of whom became LEP partners. These partner churches act as our 'critical friends' but do not have any formal involvement in the LEP's activities.

We do not own a church building. Our Sunday worship takes place in the Village Hall. Other activities also take place in the Village Hall, and in people's homes. For our Alpha course we met in a room in the local Rugby Club. We half-own our manse. The other half is owned by the Heart of England Baptist Association (HEBA) (see further information below).

We have a lively membership of 41 which includes 32 voting members. Our structure is unusual in both Anglican and Baptist circles but it enables us to be realistic, involving all members in discussion and requiring a high commitment from voters.

The heart of what we are about is to be God's worshipping family within Binley Woods. Our witness is to the Light of Jesus the Saviour that endures, that reveals God at work that breaks into dark times and difficult situations bringing hope and celebration.

## Minister

Prior to our current outgoing minister, the church has been led by a Baptist or Anglican ordained Minister. Our current minister is a Baptist Minister in Training, whose training comes to an end in July 2017, who feels God is now calling him to gain wider experience outside Binley Woods. Our Minister works with an elected Leadership Team of 3-5 members, with pastoral and ministerial oversight.

We are now seeking a full time evangelical minister from September 2017. When he told us of his plans for his next steps, our minister offered to us Jeremiah 29:7, encouraging us to seek a minister who will "Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile", to look for a Minister who will look outwards first, who will seek the peace and well-being of the village above all. This is an exciting word for us because it affirms our heart for the community in our village. So we are seeking a Minister who loves God and people, both church and community, who is guided by the Holy Spirit, who leads, encourages, grows people in their faith and their sense of mission, and into leadership.

# The exciting change in our Finances

For our first minister in 1988 the Church of England provided the finance for our manse and took ownership of it, with the arrangement that we paid for its upkeep and maintenance, plus a low rate of interest, increasing with inflation. This was excellent provision at the time though no longer such a good deal after nearly thirty years of increases.

The Church of England diocese also funded our first minister, an Anglican. Our second minister was a Baptist, and we had the benefit of a Home Mission Fund grant. Subsequently financial support was withdrawn some years ago by Anglican and Baptist Union sources, and the church undertook to employ its own minister. We were able to afford a half-stipend.

Two years ago we learnt, with mixed emotions of sadness and gratitude, that we were a significant beneficiary of the legacy of a member who had passed away. And during the last year we received an offer from HEBA to provide an interest-free loan to invest in half of the value of the Manse. These two sudden blessings enabled to buy the manse from the Church of England, resulting in a saving of the interest payments.

Through our prayers and a special Prayer and Praise evening in the village hall, we felt God calling us as church members to make our own contribution to his blessing. Through prayer and discussion we came to believe that the additional finances should be used for Ministry, in particular to extend the reach of the church into the community. The interest payment saving and the resulting pledges will enable us to employ a full time minister for five years.

These details are presented here because we are very excited about the opportunity this provides to call a Minister who will be a presence in the community and lead us in extending the reach of the church to seek the peace and well-being of the village above all.

## Members

We have a lively membership of 41 which includes 32 voting members. Over any month about 60 people worship with us, averaging about 40 each week, with 82% being local residents. In addition there are people who participate in other church activities such as Messy Church, who cannot get to us on a Sunday morning, and four housebound people who are regularly visited and made to feel part of the church.

Our membership roll includes a note of members' denominational allegiance, specified by each member. It currently stands at 12 Anglican, 10 Baptist and 19 'non-aligned'. Many members and attenders today have no history with either of our partner churches. However we consider it important to maintain links with both denominations formally and informally.

Our ages are heavily skewed to over 60, with only one or two children occasionally being brought on a Sunday morning. It is our heartfelt desire to see more families and children, to make the church 'family' complete. Likewise, there are eight men out of our 41 members, and 14 men out of the 60 who come on a Sunday morning over a period of time.

Beyond the statistics, our church family is open, friendly, welcoming, caring, and God-seeking.

# Our Sunday worship

We are blessed with a well-kept village hall for our Sunday services, and Sunday morning starts with setting up the hall.



There is a rota for this task, as for six other Sunday morning 'jobs' apart from service leader and preacher. There is a very wide participation on Sunday mornings. Forty people are on the rota for those ministries ranging from welcoming to prayer ministry. Of those 40, eight plus one other are on a rota for Junior Church in pairs, which is always prepared during term time in case there are children. And others help with the tea and coffee after the service and washing up.

Our membership includes four preachers with an additional three who also lead services, in addition to the minister. We have three musicians who play the keyboard. Sadly we no longer have other instrumentalists. The service leader leads through the whole service. We don't partition off a 'worship-time' led by musicians. This enables the music to be made part of the whole message of the service.

Our music is a mix of contemporary and traditional congregational singing (which does rule out more complicated solo-oriented songs written for performance by a band).

Prayerful thought is given to ensure that each denomination's rites and authorised practice are respected and included. We experience this as a blessing rather than a nuisance! The proper authority to preside at Anglican and Baptist Holy Communion is respected. We have Communion around twice a month, designated 'Anglican' or 'Baptist' according to the status of the person presiding. While our minister is a Baptist, in order to respect the Anglican side, we designate an 'Anglican' communion once every two months, and invite an Anglican ordained minister from outside the church to preside, and preach. In fact we have been blessed by their messages and by the connection this brings from outside our church.

We also invite outside speakers particularly from charities and events that we support financially and with prayer.

The variety of service leaders leads to a mix of different emphases in the services. We use a laptop and projector for song words (together with a hymn book), and the projector is sometimes used for other audio-visual input to the service.

After the service there is tea and coffee and much conversation. We have a 'flower ministry' where the flowers from the service are wrapped with a greeting card and delivered as a token of love from the church, to people, not necessarily church members, who will appreciate the thought.

The spiritual life of the church is strong with many mature, gifted Christians; several others are new to faith and some beginning their faith journeys.

We are a lively, welcoming, outward-looking church with a serious desire to serve the living God in the power of the Holy Spirit, and we are confident that His work done in His way will achieve His purposes.

## Community / Village involvement

Like many churches we are involved in all sorts of community led events and activities including the Neighbourhood Project, Youth Club, Parish Council, the Village Hall and our Primary School. Our witness in these groups is about befriending and being the Christ-like 'salt'.

We believe that earlier outreach such as, children's club and café church has sown Gospel seeds in the lives literally of hundreds in Binley Woods. We are currently seeking the Lord's blessing and the softening of hearts to the Gospel through over two dozen Prayer Walkers covering every road. The involvement of our church in the life Binley Woods, directly and indirectly is often welcomed and appreciated, and has opened the way for people to move closer to the reality of Jesus in their own lives.

Our community-oriented activities are: *Open Door*, a weekly lunch club for people living on their own, and a recently begun weekly *Stay and Play*. We also have community-oriented events such as the annual Act of Remembrance with Year 6 from the school around the village's memorial, and special services: Songs of Praise, an annual Memorial Service, and services at Christmas, Mothers' Day and Harvest.

Alongside this outreach we want to strengthen our ability to reach families and their children. During its 25 years our LEP has known a thriving youth and children's work; however mobility and aging has made us an older congregation who long to see younger families again. Our Messy Church is now in its second year and includes families from outside the Sunday congregation. We hope to increase its frequency beyond the current twice a term. Every summer we put on a children's Summer Holiday Club, led by the OM 'Lionheart' team with good support from the church.

We have a background of good relationships with the Primary School in Binley Woods. Several church people are volunteers hearing the children read, and one of our members is Chair of the school governors. There is opportunity for our minister to take up the welcome from the school to meet the staff and take assemblies.

The village groups are organising a Village Fun Day for June 2017, with which the church is participating.

## Church groups

We share a direct Christian message through our own groups and weekly Services. Church groups meeting in people's homes include fortnightly Bible Fellowship Groups and Women in Touch, a monthly get-together with food, faith and fellowship. There is a monthly Prayer Meeting, and a small group who meet to pray every week, praying through requests from church people and beyond and current local issues.



Binley Woods is also home to many other Christians who worship at 11 different churches in Coventry or Wolston, - at least 18 Christian households, including over 42 adults. We have contact and good relations with many, and prayerfully support their local witness.

There is also a Brethren congregation who have a small building near the ring /main road.

We share with St Margaret's Wolston in *ARISE*, a monthly Men's Breakfast meeting in Wolston which attracts men from many of these churches and men from their 'edges'.

We enjoy meals together. Several times a year we have lunch together in the village hall after the Sunday morning service. And we invite each other and guests to a New Year's Eve meal in a home followed by a short home-grown liturgy for the New Year!

## **Mission and Wider Giving support**

Income has always been tithed to support overseas mission, currently via CMS, and other causes with a connection through people in the church. In addition we give extra-giving support during the year to a local cause, which has been Coventry City Mission for several years.

People give generously, and many sacrificially.

## **Church government and structure**

The authority for decision making in the church is the Meeting of Church Members, with a minimum of three meetings a year, usually more. We have always had an ambitious quorum and voting requirement which is generally honoured by a high level of commitment by the members. We value our Church Meetings as spiritual events providing opportunity to hear God's message for our part in God's mission for Binley Woods. All of the church family is welcome at our meetings, though only 'voting members' may vote. We value our minister's enthusiasm for church meetings.

Our Leadership Team (full strength five, currently three members) works with the Minister on all aspects of church leadership – spiritual, pastoral, strategic, budgeting, mission, discipleship, fellowship, etc, and usually meets twice a month. Our treasurer is not a member of the Leadership Team, but invited to meetings where appropriate. The team includes members who have been leaders of the church for all of its 29 year life, and we are looking to develop new younger leaders.

A Pastoral Oversight group ensures that housebound members and others are visited,

The service leaders and preachers meet once or twice a year, led by the Minister, to discuss and plan Sunday services, sermon themes etc.

## **'Ecumenical' Matters**

When the church began there was much interest in the still new idea of different churches working together, with a large active Council leading initiatives across the Coventry region, and acting as Sponsoring Body for all ecumenical organisations such as ours. Over the last 15 years or so, this kind of working has become more 'normal' and our Sponsoring Body is

now effectively the Ecumenical Officer appointed by the ecumenical officers of the denominational bodies on Coventry. Nevertheless, The Church in Binley Woods wants to continue to honour our denominational heritage. Denominational churches have links into their denominational structures. Our links are through our Local Advisory Group (LAG), a small group consisting of the ministers of our two partner churches, a representative from each wider denomination, our own minister and two members. This group has been called together on an ad-hoc basis, most valuably when we have been searching for a new minister! Our Minister has the opportunity to belong to many Anglican and Baptist minister / clergy groups, but is not expected to overdo it.

Importantly for a Baptist-Anglican church, we have a single Baptism policy for church baptisms.

We make our own decisions on our contributions to the Baptist Home Mission Fund and Church of England Parish Share / Quota system appropriately, depending on the denomination of our minister, bearing in mind that in both cases the minister's stipend is funded entirely by The Church in Binley Woods.

[www.thechurchinbinleywoods.org.uk](http://www.thechurchinbinleywoods.org.uk)

