

New Road Baptist Church Profile

Our profile flows from a many-stranded discernment process. As part of this - along with prayer and discussion in church and deacons' meetings - we asked newly formed church 'transition teams' to 're-imagine new ways of doing things in future'; asked Junior Church for their reflections; and sought insights through a survey and discernment day in which church partners were involved.

We are:

- a people on the move, strong in our determination to be the people of God in this place.
- a diverse congregation that welcomes many people from around the globe and with members drawn from all parts of Oxford and beyond.
- a congregation that is excited by Scripture as the story that forms us, eager to develop our discipleship and make the connection between faith and discipleship ever more practical.
- still thrilled and inspired by the radicalism and inclusivity of our church covenant (1780) with its openness to different theological viewpoints. Our covenant commits us to gather around the Word, not to retreat into ourselves but to know better how to reach out to the world.



We value inclusive and participatory worship which engages with the life of the city, is connected to what is happening in the world and is held within the framework of a rich liturgy.

We hold a world-view in which we expect to find the triune God present and at work in the lives of people both inside and outside the church. Guided by the Holy Spirit we believe that we are

called to tell the story of Jesus to those who do not know it. We hope also to discover more about our own faith as we listen to the stories of people from the background of every faith and none. We welcome those who express their gender in every way that reflects faithfulness in love.

Strategically located in the heart of Oxford, across the square from the newly reopened Westgate shopping centre, we aspire to be a place - and a community -where people connect with each other and with God and where relationships flourish. Our vision is to be a way station at a key gateway into the city for pilgrims of all sorts, from tourists, to students, to people whose lives are marred by conflict, to others living locally and looking for companions along the road. In this we seek to be more than a stopping place. We want to be a place of hospitality where 'regulars' and newcomers alike can be nourished and helped to deepen their spiritual journey.

Over the last ten years we have been helped to move in this direction by a risk-taking minister. Among examples:

- open regularly each week, Open Church is an expression of our mission, highly valued by visitors, including people 'on the margins' as a place of hospitality, friendship and mutual support. Moving forward we hope to incorporate more spiritual elements into Open Church provision.
- the church has been instrumental in establishing the Mint House, Oxford Centre for Restorative Practice. Now a charity in its own right, the Mint House is pioneering new approaches to repairing harm caused by conflicts. We remain active partners in the Mint House, which operates from our premises.
- a range of creative approaches (e.g. a labyrinth, 'Game of Life' and nativity scene that people could be part of) have helped us engage with people in Bonn Square.
- we share our premises with a number of valued partners, including two congregations (New Life Covenant Church and Trinity Church), Christian Aid, a therapy centre and personal support organisations.
- with our ecumenical partners, we undertake many common projects (homeless shelter; food bank; street pastors). Within the 'quartet' of central churches we worship together, do youth work together and share insights and understanding, on practical issues as well as issues of justice.
- we seek to be wise and generous stewards of our resources, managing to sustain ministry and maintain premises through a combination of member contributions and property lettings. Delivered in conjunction with the Southern Counties Baptist Association, our time-limited Charlton Living Legacy Fund supports innovative mission across the county.
- we also strive to look after each other pastorally, whether members of the congregation, those visiting or part of Open Church.

However, as a people on the move we know we have much further still to travel. We also recognise our challenges. Among these, our membership is both busy and ageing; our dispersed congregation hinders day-to-day contact; and - while a gift - our suite of buildings brings its own challenges and pressures. We are looking for a minister who can travel with us, helping us evolve and grow our vision, someone who is creative and outgoing and who can help us to be bold in radically re-imagining ways of being church whilst also being sensitive to our heritage, where we are and where we've come from.

We need a pioneer spirit who can see mission opportunities and help us seize them; someone to walk the Emmaus Road with us, to experience together the joy and the cost of following Jesus and, in the breaking of bread, learn how to live as his disciples in prophetic and risk-taking ways. This may involve a reshaping of mid-week and Sunday ministry.

We seek someone who can help us realize community as the body of Christ, deepening relationships, offering welcome, care and hospitality to friends and strangers alike. This will also involve helping us to nurture our pastoral care for each other and have a strong sense of fellowship and interconnectedness whether we are gathered or dispersed. We seek a minister who will help us to develop our ministry among children, students and

young families as well as inspiring and challenging all of us, young and old, to deepen our faith in a relevant and exciting way.

We also seek someone who can help us build deep and creative partnerships, sacred and secular, to respond to God's mission in the community, building on the developing partnerships that are already in place. This includes taking us in the direction of a more strategic and relational ecumenism, working closely with other churches in the city centre 'quartet'.



The church is enjoying thinking for itself! The ministry we seek will be enabling and facilitative - one that takes pleasure in recognising and drawing out gifts, and that holds us to account for using these in the service of the church. We are fortunate to have many people within the congregation, young and old, who are ready to share their gifts and talents to animate worship, including a number of trained ministers who readily share in the preaching. Drawing on these gifts, while taking us further in the direction of holistic, multi-sensory worship, will be an important part of the Minister's role. During our pastoral vacancy we have also sought to realise the vision of all-member ministry through members' involvement in themed 'transition teams' (including a worship team) looking at different aspects of church life. This approach has helped to unlock people's contributions and has potential to continue and evolve.

Some facts and figures

Membership and Congregation

The church had 65 members at 31 December 2016 (a decrease of one during the year). Some 70 different adults attend worship during the course of a month. The age profile of the core church community is approx:

Under 20 years	10
20 to 40 years	8
40 to 60 years	20
60 to 70 years	20
over 70 years	15

The congregation is drawn from a large area in and around Oxford. While Oxford is a University city, relatively few undergraduates worship with us currently. However, a few students (graduate and undergraduate) develop close ties with the church. Through our members we enjoy close ties with Regents Park College and with the Baptist Union. The congregation routinely includes visitors to Oxford from around the world - some staying a few weeks, some for a few years.

Staff and volunteers

The church enjoys the services of a part-time church administrator. We also employ a cleaner. Open Church is staffed by a small team of volunteers including some drawn from Open Church itself.

Premises



The church is located in central Oxford across the square from the shiny new Westgate centre - branded as a world class shopping and leisure destination - and close to Oxford's Castle quarter, in an area dominated by shops, offices and leisure facilities. Parking close by is problematic.

The church worked with the City Council around a decade ago to redevelop Bonn Square into an open, public space, removing the boundaries around the church garden and forecourt and now fronts directly onto Bonn Square. The church works with the City Council to manage the public space created



The church premises were redeveloped in the early 1980s around the historic chapel. They consist of two halls, two small rooms, a larger office, kitchen facilities, a vestry, office and various storerooms. The vestibule area next to the chapel leads into a mezzanine area (recently refurbished as a young people's "chill out" area) and to the first floor of 1 New Inn Hall Street (a listed building) currently used by the Mint House and other partners. The premises have a lift and two disabled access toilets. There is a tenanted flat on site.