

Abbotsham Baptist Church
Annual Report for the year 2023
Charity Number 1191292

Registered Address – Greencliff Lane, Abbotsham, Bideford, Devon EX39 5AP

Trustees –

Mr G Williams, secretary

Mrs J Jones, treasurer

Mrs M Turner

Membership – There are currently 16 members. Regular Sunday Service attendance is between 25 and 32.

Principal purposes of the Church

- The advancement of the Christian faith according to the principles of the Baptist denomination.
- The advancement of Christian education and other Christian charitable purposes in the United Kingdom and other parts of the world.

The Trustees have read the Charity Commission guidance on public benefit, and are satisfied that the activities outlined below clearly demonstrate that the charity is providing a benefit to the public. It is the view of the Trustees that the Church continues to be a going concern, financially, spiritually and in terms of numbers attending regular services. There are some administrative vulnerabilities concerning back up for key functions especially in the areas of governance, administration, information technology and communication.

Church governance

The church has a formal constitution which conforms to the recommended constitution for Baptist churches who are in association with the Baptist Union of Great Britain. It is available from the church on request. Trustees, commonly called deacons, are elected by the church meeting which is the meeting of church members. The term of office for a trustee is three years. A trustee must be a church member. Anyone who is a regular attender of the church and confesses Jesus as their personal Saviour, according to traditional Baptist beliefs, is eligible to apply for membership. It is the church meeting which is the final authority in the church under Christ. The trustees are responsible for the day to day running of the church and are accountable to the church meeting. The Trustees are responsible in law for the decisions made by the church.

Services

Services take place every Sunday at 10:30 am. Holy Communion is celebrated on the third Sunday of the month. Services are led by members of our own fellowship and by a known and trusted small group of visiting speakers including some registered Baptist ministers.

The purpose of the annual report

The purpose of the annual report is to demonstrate how the church has been able to fulfil its aims and objectives as defined in the constitution over the course of the year.

The principal purpose of the church is the advancement of the Christian faith. This is achieved through regular worship, Bible teaching and learning, prayer, pastoral care of the congregation and providing opportunities for people to explore the Christian faith.

Worship and teaching

Sunday morning services are warm, relaxed times where everybody is valued. The services embrace people's personal circumstances, often include humour, are focused on Jesus and our relationship with him as well as thanksgiving and prayer for the needs of the world. There is plenty of time after services to develop relationships and when wanted to receive personal prayer or support. The main themes for the preaching/teaching during 2023 have been:

- o How scripture informs, enables and supports our relationship with God through prayer;
- o The kingdom of God as expressed in the Sermon on the Mount in Mathew's gospel;
- o The character and work of the Holy Spirit;
- o The teaching of Paul's letter to the Colossians;
- o The opening five chapters of John's gospel and the signs of the Messiah.

Regular Sunday attendance is usually between 25 and 32 people. As a fellowship we also place an emphasis on invitation and hospitality as a first way to include additional people into church life.

Midweek events

There is a monthly prayer meeting for the ministry of the church, the local community and wider needs in the world.

At the end of May 2023 a Home Group was started in Abbotsham village. The aim of the group is to provide a relaxed environment where those attending enjoy fellowship whilst learning more about the Christian faith, reflecting Acts 2 v 46 and 47. Meetings are held twice a month. The formal part is limited to 90 minutes and features singing hymns, sharing stories, delving into the scriptures and prayer. We have had 2 fellowship meals including sharing bread and wine. The number of people potentially attending has reached 12 and includes 4 who have never experienced a Christian Home Group before.

Partnership with Christian organisations and charities

Meanwhile, the church has through prayer, news updates and financial means continued to support both overseas and local Christian ministry partners. We rejoice to share in these forms of gospel outreach. Mission partners are: Baptist Home Mission, Baptist Missionary Society, Arab World Mission, Barnabas Aid, Christians Against Poverty, Counties and David Symons, the Fawzi family, Laura-Lee Lovering, MAF, Tim Derbyshire, Rehoboth and Wings South West. We financially support many of these partners. During the year we have had presentations from Rehoboth, a children's home in the Philippines; Laura-Lee Lovering a Baptist Missionary Society missionary based in Peru; Tim Derbyshire from Hope from Above who work with remote tribes; David Symons, an evangelist with Counties and Wings a local charity which principally educationally supports youth and adults in challenging circumstances.

Pastoral Care

We have the same Pastoral Care team as last year, consisting of 3 members. As a small Fellowship we all aim to look out for each other, but the Pastoral Care team are available to take the lead when needed. We continue to support our most elderly member, now 98 and living alone, with home visits and telephone/videocall contact, which is greatly appreciated.

Lifts are given to those who are unable to drive, and we support the use of a taxi when this is more appropriate. Birthday cards continue to be sent to all regular attendees, from the whole Fellowship, which are also appreciated. It has been another good year for the Church.

Safeguarding

This year we updated our Safeguarding policy to conform to the Baptist Union of Great Britain policy. The policy has been endorsed by the church meeting, each relevant person has received a copy of the policy along with the guidance document, Gateway to Level 2 Excellence in Safeguarding. Up-dated training for Safeguarding has been booked for early 2024.

First Aid has been reviewed. Two first aiders have undergone training. Two other members have attended resuscitation training.

Children and Youth

In 2022 the church did not have any young children in regular attendance. Currently two young people regularly attend church. One of these attended a Scripture Union Summer Camp with church support. We keep some contingency materials available for children. However, if we are told in advance about the attendance of any children to services specific provision will be made.

Communication

The principal form of communication with the fellowship outside of meetings has been through electronic methods. A weekly email newsletter is distributed which includes news about our own activities including services, news related to both local and international mission partners and a daily prayer diary the core of which is the Baptist Missionary Society prayer guide. The website is updated weekly with an audio of the last sermon and a copy of the weekly newsletter. Other information is added as appropriate. Special events are posted on the Abbotsham Village and Church Facebook pages.

Church premises

The chapel building is an 1852 listed building in a good state of repair. Our recent quinquennial survey showed the condition of the premises is good. Regular fire and electrical safety checks are made. Improved external lighting has made access in the winter months safer.

Trustees and Church Member meetings

The Trustees normally meet on a monthly basis to ensure the smooth administration of the church. Church Members' meetings are held quarterly, one of which is the Annual General Meeting. Church Member Meetings are held in person in the chapel.

Connections with local churches

We are involved with local church groupings to share area services, information, prayer and ministerial support. These are principally: Torridge Christian Network, Torridge Baptist Churches, North Devon Baptist Cluster Meetings, Mid and North Devon Rural Church Partnership.

Training

Pastoral Care - Two members of the Pastoral Care Team and a trustee attended a two day course on pastoral care through the South West Baptist Association, 'Prepare, Feed, and Sustain' Lay Leaders modular course.

First Aid – See Safeguarding

Finance – The Church Treasurer attended 'Keeping Simple Church Accounts' a course run by ACAT (Association of Church Accountants and Treasurers).

Church leadership – The Church Secretary attended: 'Prepare Feed and Sustain' training on Preaching Skills, Pastoral Care, Engaging with Contemporary Culture, Reading and Using the Bible: New Testament, Radical Discipleship in a changing world. The Church Secretary also attended the SWBA ministerial retreat.

Plans for 2024

In addition to continuing current practice, we plan to:

- o Further enhance midweek provision for prayer and Bible study including working with a small group of youth.
- o Complete safeguarding training for all those with responsibility to the relevant level and update all Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks.
- o Review and update policies and procedures for Health and Safety, Pastoral Care and Data Protection.
- o Investigate potential collaboration with St Helen's parish church.
- o Improve our digital communication.
- o Increase the team who can lead services.

Geoffrey Williams

(Signed)

Church Secretary on behalf of the Trustees

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