



Stockwood Free Church

(Baptist)

CHURCH PROFILE

The Situation

The Church at Stockwood is set in a well-defined residential neighbourhood of some 12,000 people on the outskirts of the City of Bristol bordering on the rural part of NorthEast Somerset. A large part of the district has been constructed since 1960, with a mixture of private housing, council housing, several elderly people's homes and some rented accommodation. There are two primary schools, two community centres, and a youth club, with a secondary school about 1.5 miles away. The shopping precinct with its library, post office and health centre is the focal point of the district. It incorporates a paved square that can be used for outdoor services and similar events.

The Church

We are a church that preaches Jesus Christ crucified, and we believe that our principal purpose is the advancement of the Christian faith by sharing that message. Our teaching is based upon our belief that the Bible is the inspired word of God. More detail of the church organisation is given in our formal constitution as a Baptist Church, which can be viewed via our web-site.¹

The name "Free Church" was a condition of the Church building being transferred to the Baptist Union by the City Mission who built it in 1963. In 53 years, as the only non-conformist church in the district, the Church here has developed into a loving fellowship with a warm welcome to everyone. We have members from a variety of denominational backgrounds, yet we maintain a Baptist tradition. Membership is open to all Christians who make a public confession of faith, but new believers are encouraged to be baptised before acceptance for membership. A majority of the elders and deacons must be baptised believers. We are part of the local Baptist Association, and have links with the other Baptist churches in South Bristol. We are a community based church with a heart to share the love of Jesus with those around us. As such we participate in community events and take every opportunity to work and witness in the neighbourhood. We liaise closely with the Anglican Church in Stockwood and actively work together whenever possible, to enable us to present a more effective witness in the neighbourhood.

All aspects of mission beyond Stockwood are also given a high priority. As a fellowship, we support BMS, Home Mission and TEAR Fund. We focus our BMS support by maintaining a strong link with missionaries in the field, currently Andy and Jutta Cowie. For the last 8 years, through Transform Europe Now (formerly Eurovangelism), we are supporting a Pastor working in Burlacu in Moldova, and we are endeavouring to encourage a close relationship with Pastor Andrei by the use of e-mails and Skype.

We currently have 62 active members involved in a wide range of activities. Sunday morning worship is well attended and we encourage families to come together by holding Adventurers and Youth Church, for 3 year olds to teenagers; and a crèche. Up to 70 adults attend morning worship, with many more for special occasions.

We aim to be a caring, welcoming church and enjoy worshipping together in a warm and friendly atmosphere, and encourage individuals to use their gifts in worship where appropriate. Leadership is viewed as a common responsibility with many members taking leadership roles, while our Pastor Lance Mason provides an overall lead for all of our activities. There are members of the congregation who have particular gifts in leading worship and we have encouraged others to participate wherever possible. We

¹ Website Stockwoodfreechurch.org

provide facilities for private as well as open prayer and vary the pattern of worship within a loose framework. We have many talented musicians within the fellowship, who enhance our worship greatly and take part in other events on a regular basis. We currently use songs from “Songs and Hymns of Fellowship”, augmented with new songs from other sources and more traditional hymns where appropriate. Electronic projection is used to show the words and is available to enhance worship in other ways. We have a reverent but informal approach to our worship and we value a sense of humour in our leadership. Our worship is always preceded by a prayer time which is open to all.

Our regular activities are set out below:

Monday	Δ Lunch Club (for over 60s)
Monday Evening	Ladies Circle (monthly) Puppet Practice (fortnightly).
Tuesday	Toddler Group (mothers and toddlers)
Monday Wednesday and Thursday	House Groups (for prayer and Bible Study) - Currently 3 groups, involving up to 25
Wednesday afternoon	Wednesday Fellowship
Friday Evening	Singing Group, Music Group, when practising for specific events. Banner Group Intercessory Prayer Meeting. (monthly)
Saturday Evening	Youth Group meetings twice a month

Other occasional activities include:

Holiday Club, usually annually, and other children’s activities on a regular basis.

Musical concerts, Fellowship Evenings/ lunches:– any excuse to have fun together!

Rainbows, Brownies, the South Bristol Fostering support group and other community based groups such as Link Age, Childminders and Stockwood Gardeners also use our premises.

We own a Manse which is let out when not required for housing a Pastor and his/ her family.

A formal report on our activities from our annual AGM can be found on our web-site.

The Challenge

Our fellowship reflects the demographic distribution of the neighbourhood, with the exception that there are fewer in the 20s and 30s age group, and this is leading to some reduction in children in the congregation on Sundays. There are opportunities within the area that are gradually being taken up at present. The schools are open to a Christian influence and there could be other opportunities to play a fuller part within the community if we had a more visible presence. We have an encouraging number of children and young people associated with the Church, but we do have the common problem of keeping some young people within the Church when they get to their early teens. Attracting new men into the Church is also an ongoing challenge.

It is important that we continue to work together as a team in order to spread the Word of God and to continue to serve the community.

Because of demand we need more space for our Adventurers and Youth Church. Cuts in the Bristol City Council Budget, have meant that fewer venues are available for meetings and other events and there has therefore been an increase in the requests for the use of our facilities. We have therefore embarked on the process to expand the Church premises by adding three more rooms to the side. This is an expensive process and the challenge is to raise sufficient funds to carry this out.