

The Welcome Church Profile

‘Christ-centred, growing for His glory’

Introduction

The Welcome Church (*‘Welcome’*) was established in the 1960s as The Welcome Evangelical Church. It is located at one end of the High Street, and has a prominent site adjacent to a much used central road junction. Our church body is made up of people of all ages, with a mixture of church and non-church backgrounds. The church was started by a small body of people from the Brethren background, but has since grown in its diversity, including representatives from 15 countries. We are an independent church, but are enriched by Christians from various denominational traditions. Our name reflects how we seek to demonstrate a warm welcome to newcomers.

We follow Jesus, and our desire is to share His love with each other and with others in the community around us. Welcome members are actively involved in various community activities, directly impacting the lives of those outside the church. Although we are an independent evangelical church, our foundation is in the Word of God, as shared to us through the Bible, and through the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We work with other like-minded churches within the town, occasionally work together on outreach projects and are affiliated to Evangelical Alliance (EA). Having grown steadily since its inception, church numbers have stabilised and now fluctuate moderately each year.

Our Town

Witney is an expanding market town in West Oxfordshire, on the edge of the Cotswolds and only twelve miles from Oxford. With a population of over 28,000 (2011 census, with ongoing housebuilding since then), Witney has historically been associated with blanket manufacturing and the woollen trade since the mid-17th century. Although these industries have now faded away, the charm of this town remains. It has a good choice of primary and secondary schools. There is a multi-screen cinema, golf resort and also a community leisure centre. The town also has a wealth of supermarkets, shops and restaurants and is the base for the local authority, the West Oxfordshire District Council.

Basis of our faith

Our faith is very important to us. Please refer to our Declaration of Faith for further details (*‘We believe’* on our website).

Church Membership

Our congregation are encouraged to become members of the church to enable them to fully participate in the whole of church life, and to show our commitment to each other. Of the 145 people listed on our church database, 77 are church members.

Sunday Services

Sundays are an opportunity for us all to meet together as a fellowship to worship the Lord, to pray and to hear the Word of God through expository teaching. Our services are open to all. Communion is shared every week, mainly during the evening services, but once a month it is shared at the morning family service.

Our typical morning service begins with a period of family worship where we will sing a mixture of modern songs and hymns, followed by a short time of prayer led from the front. This then leads onto a sermon delivered by an Elder or a guest speaker (these can be listened to on our website), whilst the younger children go out for their classes and crèche. We always end the morning service with an

opportunity for people to receive personal prayer, and welcome everyone to join us afterwards for tea and coffee – this is a great opportunity for newcomers to get to know us better. Our morning services are attended by around 100 - 150 people.

Our evening services tend to be a smaller gathering, and a quieter more reflective service. Typically, the service consists of a time of worship with traditional hymns and an occasional modern song, a time of prayer, and a sermon. Most times there will be communion. Evening services normally vary in number from 20 – 40 people.

Growing in God

Outside of the Sunday Services, there are six Welcome groups (home groups) which meet on a weekly basis at different times in the week, to study the Bible in small groups. Around 45 people are actively involved in our home groups. Prayer meetings are also held on a weekly basis in various formats, and there is also a monthly mid-week open worship night.

Local Community Engagement

People from Welcome are actively involved in numerous outreach activities in the church and around the town. Welcome provides a fully accredited counselling support service to the Witney area, and has a bespoke counselling room at the church to facilitate this activity. The service is affiliated to the Association of Christian Counsellors and is staffed and run by qualified counsellors. Our Youth Pastor was heavily involved in the establishment and growth of this work. The church also runs:

- A regular 'Mums and Toddlers' group which is well attended;
- A bi-weekly 'club' for people with learning disabilities, and
- A monthly 'Coffee and Chat' afternoon meeting for senior citizens.

As a church, we also support the debt counselling work and poverty action of *Christians Against Poverty* (CAP) and *Besom* in the local community, as well as some members being involved in *Street Pastors* and *Late Night Cafe* work at the weekends.

Numerous other opportunities are provided for socialising and fellowship including: Ladies' Time Out, Men's events (football, golf, breakfasts, karting), Ladies' Bible Study, 24hr prayer, regular midweek prayer meetings, offsite services held at a local residential home, and various other activities during the year. We also host an annual family BBQ and film nights where many people who do not attend church will come with their families.

Youth and Children

Supporting and enabling young people and children to grow in their faith has always been an important characteristic of The Welcome Church. We have a full time Youth Pastor who oversees all areas of youth ministry and a junior church team led by a ministry team leader planning and overseeing all aspects of the ministry for children. On a Sunday morning, we provide targeted teaching for children aged 3 – 16 and then work specifically with our older teenagers at other times. Our youth and children's work includes a summer holiday club, children's days out, trips to Reboot (junior apologetics), trips to annual weekends away, trips to Soul Survivor in the Summer, involvement in local community projects (we believe it is essential to put our faith into action) and teaming up with other organisations for a canoeing/kayaking weekend. Young people are an integral part of the church family.

Bible Teaching and Spiritual Care

The Pastor and Elders lead the planning and delivery of the Bible teaching and preaching program, in addition to actively engaging in the Spiritual care of all who attend the church, which is an essential part of the Spiritual growth of The Welcome Church family.

Pastoral Care

We have an active Pastoral Care Team who meet monthly and aim to ensure that no one goes unnoticed, that everyone receives an appropriate level of care and that no one should be left without

a person to whom they can turn in times of need (Acts 6:1-7). The team work with the Pastor/Elders to build a caring community by providing the highest possible quality of pastoral support which includes emotional and practical support at times of need. An email prayer chain has seen many answers to prayer over the years, aided by the development of technology which enables an immediate response to pray.

Mission

Over the years, a significant number of our church have taken the step towards full-time ministry work with mission organisations around the world. We actively support these and other organisations with prayer and financial support. Our intention at Welcome is to actively encourage people of all ages to consider getting involved in world mission.

Our employees

The Pastor and Youth Pastor are both full-time, permanent positions within the church. There is also a part-time cleaner. All other activities are carried out on a voluntary basis by the members of the fellowship. Our Pastor retired in March 2018, after 25 years of service to our church.

Leadership

We have a team of seven Elders who oversee the general life of the church and seek God's guidance for our church vision. There is a separate board of Trustees who administer the Welcome Evangelical Church Trust. In addition, we have a number of Ministry Team Leaders (MTLs), each overseen by an Elder, covering various practical aspects and other ministries within the church. These include Worship, Pastoral Care, Buildings, Communications, Prayer, Finance, Mission, Evangelism, and Youth. We are actively seeking to increase the number of MTLs to strengthen the group as a whole. Over ninety people are currently actively involved in some kind of ministry or support activity within the church and seeking to glorify God so that we can grow, both spiritually and in numbers, if the Lord wills.

For further information about The Welcome Church please explore our website or contact the Church via careers@thewelcomechurch.org.uk

Further information:

Website: www.thewelcomechurch.org.uk,

Facebook: [Facebook.com/thewelcomechurch](https://www.facebook.com/thewelcomechurch)