

Christchurch Baptist, WELWYN GARDEN CITY

Overview (Mini Profile)

Christchurch is a lively, biblically based, community-focussed church seeking to reach people who are not used to church and help them grow as disciples! Our dream is to see lives and communities throughout Welwyn Garden City transformed by God's love.

The Church is keen to appoint a pastor to share the pastoral responsibilities with the senior pastor & be an integral member of the Leadership Team. Someone who is:

- Gifted to bring organisational leadership to help a church implement its vision
- Experienced in a mid to large church
- A team player
- Able to enthuse & empower others
- Theologically trained
- Spiritually mature with leadership experience
- Experienced in working with youth and children

We currently operate from two sites, Parkway, the original church building, and Peartree, a refurbished office block, each about a 10 minute walk from the town centre. We welcome an average Sunday morning congregation of 280 children & adults across the two sites with a current membership of 196.

The congregation includes both families and many single people. Each age group is well-represented and there is a diverse ethnic mix.

Christchurch is committed to serving God within the local community. We have a good reputation for ministry with children, young people and senior citizens and we cooperate actively with other local churches. The local council are very positive about the work we do. We have a relational approach to overseas mission support. We are a silver Ecochurch with ambitions for gold.

Christchurch - Our 'Why?', Vision & Mission

- Christchurch exists because people matter to God [Luke 15]
- Our vision is to see lives and communities throughout Welwyn Garden City transformed by God's love
- That's why we want to introduce people to Jesus and help them grow as whole-life disciples

Vision 100

In Sept 2028, Christchurch will be 100 years old! As we work towards this milestone, we believe that God is calling us to be

A beacon of hope in Jesus' name

People who are **led by Jesus**, who **live like Jesus**, & **lead people to Jesus**.

This framework will guide our strategic priorities over the next 3-5 years and the pastor we appoint will play an essential role in helping this vision become reality.

Christchurch Values

There are 5 W.O.R.D.S. that sum up the things that we value in Christchurch – they are at the core of who we seek to be and how we do what we do. We call them our DNA, and *we try to maintain a healthy balance between all 5 of these essential ingredients of church life:*

WORSHIP: Christ-centred

When we gather, we want our worship to be Christ-centred, enabling people to encounter God through words, songs, prayers, images and actions – worship that is biblical, contemporary and accessible for those not used to church. This spills out into each day as we seek to live lives that honour Jesus!

OUTREACH: Outward-focussed

God commands us to go and reach out with his love – being prepared to demonstrate that love in practical ways and to tell of that love whenever we have the opportunity. Our focus is outward – to engage in mission with our neighbour along the street as well as across the world.

RELATIONSHIPS: Relationally strong

Every person matters, whatever their age or background, so building a sense of belonging and developing healthy relationships is core to how we function. We believe that life-change happens best in relationship with others – this includes gathering on a Sunday, and in small groups or twos and threes to pray and care for one another.

DISCIPLESHIP: Spiritually Growing

Our desire is to be a “next steps” community – where everyone takes steps to grow spiritually as a follower of Jesus! This includes being able to relate and apply the timeless truths of God’s Word to our workplaces or the tasks that fill our waking hours.

SERVING: Servant-hearted

It is important to us that everyone plays their part in serving others – identifying the unique ways God shapes each of us for ministry. We want to give generously... of our time, our abilities, our spiritual gifts and our financial resources to see God’s Kingdom come.

Sunday services

Sunday morning services begin at 9.30am at Parkway and at 10.30 at Peartree. The structure at both is the same beginning with an all-age together for 20 minutes, before the children and young people leave for their groups whilst those who remain have about 50 minutes or so of worship and teaching. There are several different bands, and a variety of people lead the worship. We have the same preacher at both sites, who joins the Peartree service part way through.

It is possible to access the Peartree morning services through BSL, and the deaf community within Christchurch is gradually increasing.

The Sunday morning service at Peartree is streamed live via our YouTube channel each week, and available afterwards for people to catch up with a service they have missed.

Once a month on a Sunday afternoon we have a Songs of Praise gathering in Parkway with tea, cake and hymns which has drawn a different congregation.

There are occasional Sunday evening gatherings for worship or prayer and healing.

Prayer & fellowship

We believe that small groups are an essential ingredient for healthy church life and an important building block of our pastoral care.

Weekly life groups meet in different homes across Welwyn Garden City and the neighbouring areas, and provide the chance for fellowship, mutual support, prayer and Bible study, and are attended by just under half the congregation.

Last June as an experiment we paused life groups to give the opportunity to build additional relationships. Over 150 people signed up for a wide range of activities from table tennis to dancing, bird walks to chess. We will be repeating this in 2025.

An early morning prayer meeting meets every Tuesday.

For men and women

A monthly Saturday morning men's breakfast attracts about 25 for food, a speaker and some discussion.

Sistersoul, for women, meets about once a term for a gathering with food and an external speaker, and runs occasional fun gatherings such as a Christmas craft evening.

Children & young people

As well as Sunday morning groups, many church-family teenagers in years 10 to 13 attend a small group on Sunday evening.

Youth work and children's work is resourced by a team of volunteers led by our Children & Families Ministry Leader (p/t) and our Youth Ministry Leader (a shared role with 'Young Life'). Both these individuals will report to the pastor appointed.

The Mix, a Friday night activity for years 7-9 with food and fun, attracts about 30 young people each week, about half of these have no other church contact.

An annual youth camp draws young people from all the groups together for a weekend in the spring.

Community outreach

The church buildings are used extensively throughout the week for church and community activities. In addition to the children's and young people's groups mentioned above, our regular activities include:

For Seniors

Harvesters meets in the afternoon every other Monday with a speaker or an activity.

Reachout is a chair-based exercise group every Tuesday and Thursday primarily attended by people who don't come to church.

I Picture This is a monthly Art appreciation class.

For Children

Parkway Crawlers and Peartree Tots provide a parent and toddler group session every Tuesday and Thursday morning in Parkway and Peartree respectively – both are popular with parents and carers from the local community.

Fun 4 Families is a monthly Saturday morning event for families with children aged 0-11.

Special events are run in addition through the year.

An independently run **pre-school** managed by one of our members operates out of the Parkway premises during the week.

For the wider community

Coffee and lunches are served in **Body & Soul** (a café style room at Parkway with a fully equipped kitchen) on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Staffed by volunteers, it is highly regarded locally for both quality of food and the warmth of the welcome and attracts both seniors and some parents of the pre-school children.

Peartree is open as a safe space on Tuesday afternoon for anyone who wants to drop by for a cup of tea and a listening ear under the heading **Christchurch Community Space**.

Community fun day – at least once a year one of the sites is open for a community fun day to which all are welcome. Food and refreshments are provided for free and various activities laid on. Over 300 attended a recent one at Parkway including the mayor, the local MP and various councillors.

Evangelism

Alpha courses are run on a regular basis for those who want to find out more about the Christian faith. We have also run shorter courses which feed into Alpha (Big Questions & Life Questions).

Sunday mornings are geared up to be accessible to those not used to church, and special events (including some specifically for men or women) give us opportunities to invite friends and neighbours.

Organisation

We are committed to the Baptist concept of government through the church meeting and meet at least quarterly.

There is an elected leadership team (trustees) of nine team leaders covering the various key activities of the church - arranged around the five key purposes of worship, outreach, relationships (fellowship), discipleship and serving, plus finance, property, administration and IT.

Interchurch relationships

We endeavour to play our part in the Baptist Union, sending delegates to national and local area conferences, and facilitate meetings of local leaders. We are committed to support the Baptist Home Mission Fund and BMS World Mission as well as other selected inter-denominational causes.

We are members of Baptists Together (BUGB) and the Evangelical Alliance.

We work in partnership with local churches with events such as an open-air Good Friday service.

We encourage and support our members in training for Christian service. From January 2025, a church member will work two and a half days as a Chaplain in a local prison, supported by a 3-year growth grant from the Central Baptist Association.

We have a relational model for overseas mission, and currently have church members on long term assignments. A number have also given short term service overseas (e.g. every three years or so since 2009 we have sent a mission team to Arequipa in Peru).

Church buildings and staff

Parkway

A main hall, built in 1939, is a multi-purpose room - it is carpeted, and accommodates up to 180 on moveable chairs. It is equipped with a baptistry, and a full PA system with sound desk, AV control desk (songs, videos and presentation software) and a 'loop' system for the hard-of-hearing. The building is licensed for Christian marriage.

Also, a café-style room, served by a kitchen, and the **Christchurch Community Centre (CCC)** provides a large hall which can be divided by a moveable soundproof partition. Other accommodation includes a meeting room and a quiet prayer room with seating for counselling and small group meetings.

Peartree

A former office block on Tewin Road which we purchased and repurposed in 2015 as a church & community centre. Downstairs there is the main sanctuary seating up to 240, a large cafe area and kitchen, the church office, and various meeting rooms. Upstairs are the staff offices, a youth space, a children's space and a meeting room. There is parking for 50 on site with an additional 50 spaces next door, through a reciprocal arrangement with the NHS headquarters. The building is registered as a place of worship and licensed for Christian marriage.

Staff

In addition to the two pastors, current staff include: Children & Families Ministry Leader, Youth Ministry Leader Worker (role shared with Young Life), Parish Nurse, Administrator and Caretaker. All the team members serve both sites.

Pastor's accommodation

We will rent a suitable property in Welwyn Garden City or provide a housing allowance as part of the remuneration package (including council tax and water rates).

Background information

History / information about the town

A Baptist congregation, affiliated to the Baptist Union, began to meet in Welwyn Garden City (WGC) in the late 1920s soon after the town was established. The Parkway church building was erected in 1939, on the town's main central avenue.

WGC now contains many professional families, with a number commuting into London. However, WGC also contains some of the most deprived wards in Hertfordshire, located in the newer social housing, mainly on the East side of the town. The Peartree site is located adjacent to this ward.

Today, Christchurch is a biblically based church, committed to being accessible to those not used to church and the development of spiritual and practical gifts. Membership is open to any who agree with our Statement of Faith and our covenant of relationships within the church family.

Recent history

The Senior Pastor started his ministry in Christchurch, Sept 2009, and as Christchurch grew the decision was made to hold two morning services at Parkway from January 2011 to provide space to welcome people wanting to explore the Christian faith and Christians moving into the area. As numbers continued to increase, and movement of people in-between services became more difficult, we sought to bring the two morning services together in a location off site.

In January 2013 we began meeting on Sunday mornings as one congregation in a rented former office block on Broadwater Road.

With numbers still growing the decision was made to establish two congregations but clearly still as one church. A congregation was planted back in Parkway and a new congregation was established at Peartree at the beginning of 2016. Since then, membership has increased from 140 to the current 196.