

Profile of the church and the Local Area

The Good Shepherd Mission is an independent evangelical church in Bethnal Green, East London. Our Mission Statement is: “Loving Jesus, loving our neighbours, seeing lives transformed.”

We are a welcoming church community that meets together to know Jesus Christ better, to worship him, and to care for and encourage each other as we follow him. We reach out to the needs of our neighbours with practical help and the message of Jesus Christ, because we believe that our greatest need is met in Jesus, and knowing him changes everything.

Background to post

Our previous full-time leader left us in September 2013 after 31 years’ service. The leadership team and church subsequently took time to pause, review our activities, work through some theological issues, and seek God’s leading. We have been very aware of God’s faithfulness and blessing during this time and are now ready to appoint a new church leader who will play their part in the continuation of God’s purposes in the East End of London and beyond. The Good Shepherd Mission operates with a mixed leadership team, which we believe operates best when there is a balanced mix of men and women on the team. This team has responsibility for oversight of all the church’s activities, its direction and mission, and the use and management of all its resources. The members of the church leadership team hold responsibility as both church leaders and charity trustees. The new leader will also be part of a small male sub-set of that team with additional responsibility for overseeing the faithfulness of the church to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For this reason, we are looking to appoint a male leader to this position (see role and person specification document).

Brief history

The Good Shepherd Mission was built as a Ragged School in the 1870s, and work with children has been part of its outreach for most of the intervening years. The present church grew out of work with youth and children started in 1980 by volunteers from St. Helen’s Bishopsgate. Sunday afternoon meetings started in 1985, and following the growth in these, a weekly Sunday morning church meeting started in 1990.

Current church life and outreach

The church has approximately 70 adult members, with around 15 non-members attending regularly. The biggest age group is the 30s to 50s. Church backgrounds are broad and varied, with some people having no prior church involvement. There are approximately 35 children and young people.

We are a church that loves the word of God and believes in the absolute authority of scripture. We have a track record of faithful bible teaching and seek to apply this to our everyday lives to enable us to 'worship in spirit and truth' throughout the week. We meet together on Sunday mornings and in smaller groups during the week to experience God the Father through His Spirit, with the goal of bringing glory to the name of Jesus. Although the variety of church backgrounds within the membership is reflected in the team that leads Sunday morning services, there is a shared desire to grow in maturity in Holy Spirit led worship and in the use of the full range of spiritual gifts within the church body. Our approach to this is described as being 'open but careful'.

The church has a reputation for being welcoming and has been particularly strong in the area of pastoral care of members throughout the years.

Weekly prayer meetings and small groups have been part of the ongoing rhythm of church life. The small groups are currently in the process of being re-launched with an emphasis on outreach as well as discipleship. There are Friday and Sunday evening times of praise/ prayer (approximately monthly), occasional 24 hour prayer events and weeks of prayer and fasting.

The church is part of Tower Hamlets Evangelical Fellowship, a local network of evangelical churches, and we are affiliated to the Evangelical Alliance.

Over the years, we have sent and supported many church members in working in cross-cultural mission beyond East London.

Outreach

The church fellowship is active in the service of our surrounding community. An outreach strategy was agreed in 2013, which draws upon the 'Because Approach' framework. This considers outreach under 4 headings:

Relationship building - 'I know some Christians...'

Respect building - 'I respect the Christians I know...'

Relevance building - 'I see the relevance of the Christian life..'

Response building - 'I understand my need of Jesus as Lord...'

We've added:

Roots building - 'I see a need to develop my relationship with Jesus'

This framework guides our thinking about outreach priorities and evaluation. Our current mid-week outreach includes:

- An early years stay and play session for parents/carers and their children aged 0-4 years.
- Work with children, including:
 - A children's club for boys and girls aged 7-11years.
 - Assemblies in local primary schools.
- Work with youth, including:
 - A youth club and other group activities for boys and girls of secondary school age.
 - Helping young people at risk of social exclusion through mentoring work and a

- lunchtime club in local secondary schools.
- Joint youth events with other youth groups across the borough.
- Work with vulnerable adults, including:
 - Street outreach with Teen Challenge
 - A football project for homeless men in partnership with Ambassadors Football.
 - A winter night shelter in partnership with other local churches.
 - A monthly outreach service for homeless men and women.

Strengths of the church

The church has maintained its unity through a difficult past 18 months, due partly to a shared understanding of being united in Christ through the gospel of grace.

The standard of Bible teaching is generally high, with an emphasis on the importance of living out what is taught in our daily lives.

The high level of outreach activity for the size of the church points to a strong commitment and active involvement in service of a substantial number of church members.

The church has a reputation for being welcoming and providing good mutual pastoral support.

Some of the areas we see as in need of growth:

At the start of 2015 the Lord called us to focus on Prayer, Holiness and Mission. We believe we need to grow in all these areas. In addition, we have an awareness of the need to:

- Encourage effective discipleship in small groups
- Grow new leaders through discipleship, training and mentoring
- Help church members identify their spiritual gifts and grow to maturity in their use
- Be a growing church that plants a new church or churches through effective evangelism
- Help teenagers make the transition from youth groups to adult church
- Improve our communication within and outside the church body

Staff and Structures

Further details are given about the specific role of the new paid leader in the role and person specification document.

The GSM has a congregational form of church governance, so the leadership team sits under the authority of the church congregation. The congregation has the power and means to select and remove leaders as required. In this model, there is a shared responsibility for the leadership of the church. The new leader will not have authority over the other members of the leadership team.

The other paid staff are: a full-time outreach manager, a full-time adult outreach worker and a part-time (12 hours) adult outreach worker, a full-time youth worker, a part time (8 hours) early years worker and a sessional early years worker, a full-time administrator and a part-time (5 hours) admin support worker. The children's work is currently led by a part-time (about 8 hours) unpaid volunteer.

All Mission activities involve teams of staff and/or volunteers working together, and these teams provide valuable fellowship and support.

The paid leader and outreach manager are both part of the leadership team, serving as both church elders and charity trustees. Non-staff members of the leadership team are appointed by the membership at annual general meetings.

We encourage formal church membership as we see this as facilitating mutual accountability and clarifying pastoral responsibility.

Finance & stewardship

The church has been blessed through the generosity of its members and external funders over many years, and currently is in good financial health.

The Mission building has been substantially refurbished and expanded in phases over the past 30 years. It has a variety of spaces of different size which can be used flexibly. It includes a two bedroom flat which, for many years, has been let to church members involved in the work of the church. The Mission also has use of family-sized accommodation in the local area, which is available for the use of the paid leader.

The area

Tower Hamlets has the highest percentage of Muslim residents in England – 35 per cent compared with a national average of 5 per cent. Conversely, the borough has the lowest proportion of Christian residents in England: 27 per cent compared with a national average of 59 per cent.

However there are a growing number of vibrant churches across the borough. There are thriving evangelical parish churches and community churches in the area, a number having been planted by other churches in the past ten years.

Bethnal Green and Whitechapel is a vibrant, fast-changing area, with a history of the good (General Booth), the bad (the Kray twins) and the ugly (street riots in the summer of 2011). Nearby Spitalfields is the heart of the largest Bangladeshi community in the UK. This large Muslim community on our doorstep poses both a great spiritual challenge and opportunity.

Whitechapel is fast becoming an economic hub due to the presence of the recently re-built Royal London Hospital, several medical research laboratories, Queen Mary University and it will soon host a Crossrail station.

The Mission is located adjacent to the Liverpool St. railway line, half a mile from Brick Lane and the City of London. A large inter-war housing estate lies on the other side of the railway, which houses about 2,000 people mostly in social housing, the vast majority of whom are Bangladeshi. On the near side of the railway line lies a small local park and streets of terraced flats leading to Bethnal Green Road. New blocks of flats are being built on nearby former industrial sites.