

## BEACON CHURCH, WHITCHURCH, PROFILE

Much basic information about The Beacon Church, Whitchurch, is available on our website at [www.tbcw.org](http://www.tbcw.org)

### WHITCHURCH TOWN

Whitchurch is reputed to be the oldest continually occupied town in Shropshire dating back to AD 70 when it was known as Mediolanum and provided an overnight resting place for Roman soldiers marching between Shrewsbury and Chester.

Whitchurch is now a thriving market town with a population of around 10,000 and is currently said to be the fastest growing town in Shropshire. The town has many small independent shops as well as several major national stores and supermarkets. There are numerous coffee shops and eating facilities, as well as many clubs, organisations, societies, and sports groups providing for a wide range of interests.

The town benefits from regular train services being on the main line from Cardiff to Manchester. Trains to Crewe provide connections to London (less than 2 hours). There are also local buses to Shrewsbury, Chester, Wrexham and Nantwich.

### Schools.

Sir John Talbot's School provides education for 11 – 18 year olds in a mixed setting. Whitchurch Primary and Junior Schools similarly provide mixed education. There are smaller primary/junior schools in many of the surrounding villages as well as an independent Primary school on the outskirts of the town.

Information concerning the town and its facilities is available on the town website at [www.whitchurch.info](http://www.whitchurch.info)

### CHURCH HISTORY.

The town has a rich Christian heritage – it was actually renamed “Whitchurch” after the Norman Church was built here with White Stone. **Matthew Henry** whose “Complete Commentary to the Bible” - written in 1710 but still in everyday use lived here from the age of five, and, preached his first sermon just a few yards away from the Civic Centre in Dodington in a church built by his father's congregation known as the “**dissenters' chapel**”. This was destroyed by High Church rioters in July 1715!

1712 **St Alkmund's Church** - the wonderful big Anglican church building that dominates the town was built on the site of the previous 'white church' and in 1750 the **Wesleyan Methodist** congregation began to meet in Claypit St. John Wesley preached there on 5 occasions between 1762 and 1781. The **United Reformed** was opened in 1778 and **Reginald Heber** the great Hymn writer started school here in Whitchurch in 1791. Heber's hymn ***Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty*** — was considered by Tennyson to be one of the finest hymns ever written.

The **Baptist, Catholic and Methodist** churches were opened in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the start of **Park Avenue Evangelical Church** and finally **Whitchurch Christian Fellowship** – whose amalgamation with a group from Barnabas church in Shrewsbury would form the foundations for the Beacon Church.

There are currently four churches serving the town: Anglican, Catholic, Methodist and ourselves. We work together through Churches Together in Whitchurch and undertake a number of activities together each year.

## **BEACON CHURCH**

Beacon Church was planted from Barnabas Community Church in Shrewsbury ten years ago. Our Sunday service is held at the Civic Centre in the heart of the High Street and smaller meetings are held in our offices which are situated near-by as well as homes of various church members situated across the town.

Church membership currently stands at just over 50. A normal Sunday will see a congregation of around 70 including children and young people.

We operate a system of weekly Connect Groups – small groups of 6 – 10 people meeting in individual homes for fellowship, worship, teaching and prayer.

The three Elders have a deep desire to expand and extend our work among children and young people, not only within the church but in local schools and the community as a whole. Hence our desire to employ a suitably trained / qualified person to lead this project.

Our hope is that this person will not work in isolation but will be an organic part of the leadership structure of Beacon, and have the character, chemistry and vision to help influence and shape the church as we go forward into the future.

## **CHILDREN/ YOUTH WORK**

**Our vision** is that the children and young people of Whitchurch should all have the opportunity to hear the truth about Jesus; to learn about His saving grace and His love for each of them; and that they should be able to make a decision for Him without fear. We want to provide a place where children and young people can feel safe, valued and respected.

**Our Aims and Objectives:** These are to:

- engage children at an early age and keep them engaged as they grow to adulthood
- work with other churches to have a presence in every school in town
- reach unreached children with the gospel
- provide stimulating activities for young people within the church
- include children and young people in worship
- ensure safety and wellbeing
- recruit, train and support volunteers to work alongside the Youth Worker

We currently have a small Sunday School (children go to their own groups part way through our Sunday service) and operate a crèche when appropriate. Our older youth remain in the service roughly alternate weeks and go to their own group on other Sundays.

BEA Club is an after-school club for 7 to 11 year olds and meets weekly (in term time) at our offices catering for around 20 children most of whom are 'un-churched'. Numbers are limited by the available space.

A group of young people (currently 10-12 in number) meets as BYG (Beacon Youth Group) on a Friday evening. At present they meet in the leaders home, but are looking to move to a more spacious facility.

Discussion has taken place around how we could enlarge Bea Club and provide continuity and transition through Bea Club to BYG. This would involve providing "Bea Club" for ages 5- 9, creating an intermediate group "Transform" for school year 5 – 8" (aged 10-13) and keeping BYG for school years 9 - 13 (age 14-18).

The Primary and Junior schools are Church of England schools and there is a close relationship between them. The Rector of the local Anglican church goes to the schools most weeks, and there are end of term and special event services at the Anglican church. There is, however, the opportunity of providing targeted groups or facilities within both schools, an example of which would be an "open-the-book" team going into schools.

Christian input into the senior school has been more of a challenge. We do feel however, that in consultation with the school, we might offer targeted support to help them meet their statutory Ofsted requirements. We have in mind help and mentoring in respect of self-esteem, anger management, family breakdown etc. John Procktor who heads the "Shropshire Youth Network" has recently offered use of the GSUS LIVE bus schools tour for the autumn of 2019. We have also had use of a cage football facility which we have been using in the Whitchurch "Party in the Park" event in June.

Twice a year we hold a town wide event that regularly attract hundreds of children. For the last seven or eight years we have arranged to host a Saltmine Theatre Company Christmas show in the Civic Centre. Another regular activity is our "Easter Extravaganza" designed to provide family in the Market Hall adjacent to the Civic Centre.

Obviously there are literally hundreds of children and young people in Whitchurch who have no connection to a church and for whom we have no strategy. What a challenge!!

We believe God has been preparing the right person with the heart and faith to see the seed of the gospel sown amongst the children and youth of this town, and then nurtured and tendered with prayer love and discipleship so that one day there might come forth a rich harvest to the glory of Jesus.

The Elders - April 2018