



Loughborough Baptist Church

Loughborough is a busy town with a university and various manufacturing and service industries hosting a diverse population of people with different skills, abilities, backgrounds and ethnic origin.

The church occupies a town centre position with extensive premises most of which date from the 19th century but over the past thirty years have been refurbished to meet modern standards and requirements.

These two factors provide great opportunities for outreach, evangelism and serving the needs of the community.

We would wish to increase our effectiveness in witnessing to the community, serving their need, presenting people with the gospel and being an influence for good around us. We would therefore wish to continue our upkeep of the premises. We would hope that any leadership would be fully supportive of this aim and involved in its realisation.

The fellowship

The church has a membership of 160 people; a considerable number of which have been members for many years and, as with other fellowships, older people forming a significant proportion of the whole. Many of our retired members are extremely active in all areas of church life, but pastoral demands are considerable.

We have a number of families with children many of whom lead busy lives and find it a challenge to manage the traditional pattern of church life alongside their other commitments.

Many young people are connected with the church and its activities either through their families or the church's youth work. Recently a small number of university students have made an extremely helpful contribution valuing what we offer as a 'home from home' church rather than a specifically 'student' church.

The variety within our fellowship is reflected in a range of theological views, at every part of the theological spectrum, each tolerant of the others.

We are eager to explore ways of enabling all to be involved in church life and worship, particularly young, working families and would value a leadership which would stimulate such an exploration.

Worship

Attendance at Sunday worship does not reflect the large number of people who come onto our premises during the week. Two services are held each Sunday. Our morning service is currently the larger of the two and children are included in the first part, After which they attend a small but well staffed and lively Sunday School. Occasional family services are appreciated by the congregation **and we would hope to develop these.** Our evening service has become a traditional one although in the past the congregation have been open to different styles of worship **and we would wish to develop this in the future.** A monthly service at 4.00 pm has been introduced recently and has become very popular.

Those involved are keen to maintain this service. We maintain several music groups, have many members able and willing to share their gifts in the area of worship and there is multi media and sound equipment in the worship room.

We recognise that worship takes place at various times and in the different groups within our church but we would like to see the profile of Sunday worship raised and involvement in it recognised as central to church life.

Sunday School

The aim of the Sunday School is

“That the children and young people who come through the Sunday School will take away a broad understanding of Christianity that may influence them throughout their lives”.

We seek to achieve this by providing a safe and friendly atmosphere, with a committed staff team, which enables the children and young people to explore the truths of Christian teaching. We do this by planning sessions which include stories, activities, games and discussion which we hope will engage their interest.

We also seek to encourage the involvement of the children and young people in worship. We do this by using regular opportunities to demonstrate to the congregation some of what we have been doing in a particular week, and by being involved in planning services, which we have called “a morning with Sunday School”. This opportunity allows the whole church to be aware of what we do in Sunday School, but also more importantly to engage with the Sunday School in discovering Christianity and developing worship.

Hopes for the Future

- **We would like to have more children and young people coming to Sunday School, greater numbers tend to make it more enjoyable for everyone, and promotes greater interaction. This is particularly true for young people**
- **That the children and young people who come to the Sunday School will seek to make a Christian commitment.**
- **Strengthen our links with Activity Days; by working closer together we seek to encourage more children who come to activity days to come along on Sunday mornings.**
- **Develop the relationship between the Xplosion Group and Sunday School**
- **Work with the Leadership team to develop the Sunday Schools involvement in worship**
- **Innovative development of both training and teaching material.**

Bible Study and Prayer

Various opportunities are presented for Bible Study and developing our understanding of discipleship and include the following: the teaching ministry within worship, weekday meetings, Bible Study groups arranged during the year, Alpha Courses, Interdenominational study courses during Lent.

Morning prayers take place daily at the church, prayer and nurture groups meet in people's homes and periodic focused prayer meetings are held.

Numbers attending these are comparatively small but this does not necessarily reflect a lack of importance attached to these disciplines: many of our members have a rich and regular personal prayer life and study the Bible themselves on a regular basis.

A significant number of our members feel that we would benefit as a church from a more regular prayer and Bible Study programme and are making considerable efforts to bring this about. We would hope that any leadership would actively support such a vision.

Pastoral Care

We attach great importance to our pastoral care, particularly of our more elderly and vulnerable members.

The church fellowship is divided into pastoral groups each of which are administered by a pastoral leader. These leaders meet each month to share news and concerns; they also keep in contact with their group members and visit those in need regularly. Pastoral work has taken up a significant proportion of ministerial time and skill and has included home and hospital visits, visiting residential homes and talking with those who have problems, both within our own membership and those who come onto our premises during the day.

A review of how we deliver pastoral care may be undertaken in the near future. The level of pastoral care within our church makes heavy demands on the ministry and we would like to explore a model of ministry which enables the many other demands to be met within an overall framework of leadership.

Outreach

Our position in the town presents particular opportunities for outreach and Open Mornings at significant times of the year such as Harvest and Christmas help us to make contact with the people of the town. We have links with organisations working with the vulnerable and homeless and support their work in various ways, not least through our Lunch Break which is in itself a tool for outreach. The Men's Breakfast, Alpha Courses and many other activities reflect our enthusiasm for outreach and evangelism. A small team of people prepare posters and manage the website and all members share in advertising various functions and activities.

We would wish to continue and develop our outreach programme and would value leadership which would enable us to do this.

Finance

The church is fortunate in owning property but at present our weekly offerings do not cover our running expenses. Our Finance Team prepares an annual budget and oversees the management of this budget throughout the year. We choose to maintain our commitment of 12% of this offering to each of Home Mission and Baptist World Mission and 1% to the Bible Society, 25% in total .

Ideally we would wish to return to an earlier position where the daily running of the church and its activities was financed from its giving.

Links with others

We are pleased to be part of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and in association with the East Midlands Baptist Association.

As Baptists in this area have a great history going back to the eighteenth century. Members of the Baptist persuasion have been and still are active in the life of the town The church is an active member of the Loughborough Churches Partnership and the Soar Valley Prayer Partnership, a group of twelve local Baptist churches. We support Christian Aid enthusiastically and effectively. From its inception we have been represented on the Charnwood Racial Equality Council- now Human Rights and equalities, Charnwood. The Loughborough Council of Faith meets on our premises.

Appendix 1

Organisations and Structures

The deacons meet once a month and are elected by the members for a period of three years. The Church meeting is held once a month. There is a 'named' secretary and a treasurer who function as part of the Secretarial and Finance Teams respectively church office is open every morning to deal with administrative matters and to. The welcome those who come on to our premises

Church Teams

There are a number of teams within the church organisation which help to move our work forward. A deacon is a member of each team, often, but not always, as chair or convener. Membership of teams are ratified by deacons and the church meeting.

Teams meet regularly and a report or minutes are sent to the deacons' meeting where questions can be asked or attention drawn to certain matters.

Significant issues or events should always be confirmed at a deacons' and then members' meeting before arrangements are finalised and, where an event or an arrangement affects other teams or areas within the church, consultation should always take place.

It is useful if team conveners could meet perhaps once every twelve months to share ideas and to coordinate dates. Similarly it is helpful if once every twelve months, though not necessarily all together, teams offer a presentation to the members meeting outlining their aims and plans for the year ahead. There is then opportunity for comment and discussion and the work of the teams can be seen in relation to the overall aims of the church.

Aims of Teams

Children and Young People	To ensure the church operates good practice on all issues relating to children and young people. To give children a voice and to ensure that issues relating to children and young people are always included in major decisions made by the church.
Employment	To ensure the church operates good practice on all employment issues and to make recommendations to the church in this area.
Fellowship	To encourage fellowship across the church community, particularly across age groups and to appreciate each other's gifts and interests creating opportunities for these to be used for the good of all. To arrange events where these aims can be achieved and to include in these events a spiritual element, perhaps in the form of an epilogue.

Finance	To take an overview of the finances of the church and to plan how to meet the financial demands arising out of decisions made at church meeting regarding short and long term aims and projects.
Mission	<p>To co-ordinate and support the work of Baptist World Mission and Baptist Home Mission and to encourage the church to allocate at least one Sunday per year to the work of these organisations.</p> <p>To produce literature for distribution to homes and business premises in the town, outlining the work of the church.</p> <p>To liaise with the University Chaplain, and offer support to visiting Baptist Students.</p> <p>To plan Mission Events throughout the year including :- Events for Men , Alpha Courses, Music and Art Events and support Mission events planned by others e.g. Activity Days.</p> <p>To create an atmosphere within the Church where outreach and evangelism are a natural part of Church life and are involved in all Church activities.</p>
Pastoral	<p>To care for the needs and welfare of members of the church and wider congregation through visiting and other kinds of help where needed.</p> <p>This work includes that of the Seniors' Ministry to the elderly many of whom are housebound or in residential or nursing homes and unable to attend worship at church.</p>
Prayer and Nurture	To increase awareness of and involvement in the prayer life of the church and to encourage Christian learning within the fellowship.
Property	To be responsible for the regular maintenance of all fabric and to discuss the possible development of the premises in line with the aims of the church and the decisions of the church meeting.
Secretarial	To coordinate the spiritual, pastoral, organisational and administrative work of the church, recognising that these areas are often interdependent. Through close cooperation and the sharing of information and skills to maintain an overview which will enable the church to pursue its aims effectively.

Appendix 2

Church Organisations

We have within the church many and varied organisations. We asked them to outline their aims and their hopes for the future and the following is what they said:

ACTIVITY DAYS

Activity days are held three or four times a year, usually, but not always on a Sunday. Their aim is to make and maintain contact with families with young children both from within and outside the church fellowship. The programme for the day includes such activities as craft, drama, music, games and cooking and a theme running through the day is the basis for teaching about Christianity and the church. We have built up a good relationship with a significant number of families who enjoy and appreciate what the days offer and readily attend the short services held at the end of the session. We are constantly looking for new ways to make the day helpful and enjoyable; we hope to continue this development and to encourage families to see the church as supportive and a place where they can feel comfortable and at home.

BADMINTON

Badminton is a Wednesday afternoon club for ladies and men, meeting between 2.00pm and 4.00pm. There is plenty of exercise on the court and a break for a cup of tea and a biscuit. We pay a small subscription and provide our own footwear. Our aims are to provide healthy physical exercise and to keep us mentally alert. We welcome new members whether belonging to LBC or not. And those who belong take an interest and support church activities. In the future we would like to welcome a few new players who would soon feel one of a happy group.

CHURCH BAND

The church band, known affectionately as 'elastic band' because its size depended on the number of musicians available on each occasion. This has stopped at the moment due to students moving away and so causing a lack of musicians and technical back up. I would like to think that the band may be resurrected. Services with band input have brought a livelier, younger and more modern feel to worship.

B.W.F.

In view of the expected rise in the number of older people in the community, we think there should still be an afternoon meeting for those who do not wish to venture out in the evening.

We are a group which welcomes newcomers and offers support, friendship, love and hope for the future. Whether the present format remains the same, as a ladies only group, is open to discussion.

There is a need for the recently retired within the church to join our group and to become involved in its organisation. We see the Baptist Women's Fellowship as an opportunity for outreach, and that there are many outside of the church who would benefit from membership.

BWL

The Baptist Women's' League meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month. It is a small but friendly meeting where Christian fellowship and friendship are shared. Each evening opens with a time of worship and a variety of speakers, some with a religious theme, and some more secular in nature give interest to the evening. During the year we support charities either through our speakers or more directly. We hope that people enjoy the fellowship and find it helpful. We have welcomed new members' and visitors, both male and female to our meetings and would be very happy to increase our numbers.

CHOIR

The long tradition of good choral and organ music in support of worship, is much appreciated by the congregation and there is an expectation that this should continue. In recent years choir numbers have reduced and consequently the contribution of the choir in worship has been reduced. The organists continue to provide good quality accompaniments and interlude music.

As in many Churches recent years have provided a challenge for musical contributions to worship. Opportunity exists for a new leadership to take the pattern of worship music forward.

CONTACT CLUB

The main aim of the Contact Club is to offer everyone the opportunity to enjoy playing snooker in a Christian atmosphere of friendship and fellowship. Our hope for the future is to offer a welcome to those within and outside the church to join us and so increase our membership.

CREATIONS

A group of ladies with a common interest in craftwork. The group has been in existence for the past four years and is always ready to welcome others who would enjoy working together on craft projects.

The group meets on the third Tuesday of each month; and has a varied programme of activities including visiting speakers on craft related subjects.

We hope in the future to develop our craft skills and use them in the service of the church.

THE FOOTBALL TEAM

Loughborough Baptist Football Team, recently formed as an extra to the Youth Club, provides an additional outlet for young men of the church. The team plays '6 a side' football in the Loughborough League of the Pro Star League. They meet for training on Tuesday evenings and matches are normally played on Wednesday evenings, either at the Epinal Way Sports Ground on an all weather surface or indoors at the sports hall at Limehurst School. Team members enthusiastically manage their own affairs with the support of a number of senior members of the church. New members are always welcome.

LINK UP

Link Up is part of the church's outreach and meets once a month. We run a programme of different activities for adults with learning difficulties; our aim is to provide friendship for our members and respite for those who care for them. We hold two special services a year which are thoroughly enjoyed. Some of our members attend our regular services and are welcomed by the congregation. Our helpers are mostly elderly and we desperately need younger people to come along and help. This would also enable us to develop the organisation and possibly run a more suitable programme to attract younger people with learning difficulties

LUNCH BREAK

Lunch Break operates Monday to Friday serving good quality homemade café style food at a reasonable cost.

It is run by two paid staff who work on a job share basis, the rest of the staff are volunteers many of whom are church members and others friends of the church.

The ethos is to provide a place for people working or visiting the town centre, to eat in a friendly and peaceful atmosphere. It is an essential part of our town centre ministry and gives an opportunity for outreach and to support those in need. We provide food through a voucher scheme, in conjunction with 'The Bridge' a charity supporting the homeless.

Our aim for the future is to recruit more volunteers and continue to attract people into the church building during the week and provide a warm welcome to them.

LUNCH CLUB

The Lunch Club was formed in 1988 with the aim of providing, for a nominal charge, a cooked lunch. The Club meets twice a month on a Friday and is for the over 60's. Many older friends who are normally house-bound and living alone are able to attend. There are now 40 members of the club. It is a very happy club and the warm Christian Fellowship is much appreciated by those who attend and the meals continue to be of a high standard.

MONDAY NIGHTERS

The Monday Nighters was founded over forty years ago for the young mums of children in the Sunday School, many of whom were not church members. The aim of the group was friendship.

As the years have gone by, we have developed into a group of elderly ladies; although, for the past few years, men have been invited to our meetings. It is a meeting that is unlikely to attract younger members and everyone these days has many interests outside church.

Realistically, therefore, we expect that, in common with other such groups, we shall gradually lapse. Meanwhile, we shall continue to offer friendship to our existing members and welcome any new ones who may come along. Our aim is that, instead of trying to recruit new members, we keep our eyes open for individuals who would enjoy the fellowship we offer.

SUNDAY SINGERS

The Sunday Singers sing on the first Sunday in the month before the service. We are a group of people who like to sing together and make a regular commitment to that day. The music we choose is mostly from Mission Praise and we try to find songs that are appropriate to the theme for that day. We will join with the band if we are needed; we work well together.

XPLOSION

To maintain Christian contact with teenagers in the Church; to attract new teenagers to Christian contact and to provide a safe environment to support and challenge those youngsters as they mature.

YOUTH CLUB

To encourage children and young people to mature through the environment of a relaxed and welcoming club where they can feel at home. Using games and activities we encourage working together relating to other members and the leaders.

THE CHURCH BUS

The church owns, runs and maintains a sixteen seater minibus which is garaged on the premises. It is driven on a rota basis by suitably qualified volunteers and is used to transport some of the less able folk and those without transport to and from Sunday services and meetings of church organisations.

For the future, the value and use of the bus service to the church and wider community should be reassessed and, if thought appropriate, consideration given to replacing the ageing vehicle with a more modern one.

CAR PARK

The church has its own moderately sized car park, which, due to the town centre location, proves very popular. During weekday working hours some useful income is generated by the letting of a number of spaces to local businesses whilst at peak periods conflict of usage can occur unless entry is strictly controlled.

In the future, groups hiring rooms within the church will be informed that car parking is not available and a suitably robust barrier should be installed to control entry to authorised persons only.

Appendix 3

Use of Rooms

Our rooms are well used by both church and outside organisations .We would wish our letting to people from the community to be seen as an integral part of our mission, to nurture our relationships with them and encourage them to share in the life of the church

Church Organisations

- Mon: Rainbows
Brownies
Guides
Rangers
Monday Nighters (fortnightly)
Deacons (monthly)
Contact Club
- Tues: Baptist Women's Fellowship
Baptist Women's League
Creations (3rd Tuesday)
LBC Football Team
Lunchtime Concert (3rd Tuesday)
- Wed: Badminton
- Thurs: Church meeting (3rd Thursday)
- Fri: Lunch Club
Youth Club
Contact Club
Church Choir
Sunday Singers
- Sat: Link Up (1st Saturday)
Coffee Morning
- Mon – Fri Lunch Break

Other Groups

- Mon: Loughborough Amateur Operatic Society (LAOS)
- Wed: Ladies Choir
Weight Watchers
- Thurs: Clockwise Credit Union
LAOS
Action deafness and lip reading
Male Voice Choir
- Fri: Weight Watchers
- Sat: Coffee Morning
- Mon – Fri Mountsorrel Day Care Centre
- Loughborough Council of Faiths (quarterly) : Charnwood Toy Appeal (annually)

Appendix 4

INDABA

Every voice matters

During March and April 2009 members of the fellowship met in small groups to discuss our church – what we feel is important and in what direction our future lies. Each group reported back to the secretarial team and all the material was collated.

A full report was made available to everyone but the following paragraph sums up our hopes and prayers for the future and echoes our mission statement;

We want to make the most of our premises and our town centre position to be a large inclusive church, making contact with and serving the surrounding community, caring for old and young, providing for families and preaching the gospel by our words and actions. We need to be active outside the church as well as inside it.