

BAR HILL CHURCH

A L O C A L E C U M E N I C A L P A R T N E R S H I P
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Bar Hill Church Profile 2011

Summary

Bar Hill Church is the only church in the heart of a modern village near Cambridge. It is a Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) of five founding denominations: the Baptist Union, the Church of England, the Methodist Church, the United Reformed Church and the Society of Friends. Its worship hall and meetings rooms are modern and well-maintained. The Church has excellent links with other community agencies, as seen in the last section of this profile.

Our mission statement is “As servants of Christ, we commit ourselves to worship, work and witness together in his name to establish his kingdom in our village and beyond.”

We seek a minister who would, together with the leadership team, nurture and develop the spiritual life of the congregation – to equip them for works of service in daily life, and encourage them to share stories of God’s work in their lives. We would welcome a significant emphasis on Bible-based preaching and teaching, and the development of mentoring of newer Christians and the youth. The minister should galvanize existing plans to appoint a student youth worker.

The minister should be able to relate well across all age-ranges and be an encourager/enabler, able to work in a team and support lay ministry. We would expect the minister to be a person of prayer who lives their life on biblical principles, willing to be guided by the Holy Spirit.

Below we aim to provide you with descriptions of the village and the Church that are detailed and honest. These are followed by more detailed outlines of where we see God leading us and what that may require of a minister. The profile ends with feedback from a questionnaire to community stakeholders.

Website: <http://www.barhillchurch.org.uk/>



Bar Hill

Bar Hill is a modern village of about 5,200 people, located 7 miles north-west of Cambridge along the A14, just after the end of the M11. It was built over a period of about 25 years from the mid-1960s to help accommodate the fast growing population of South Cambridgeshire. A similar venture has been completed in Cambourne, and another is planned at Northstowe, both just a few miles from Bar Hill.

When the village was first settled, it had a large proportion of young families, but this is now changing. The proportion of children in the village’s population is now about the same as the national average, and the primary school has experienced a significant decline in the numbers on roll, although there are signs that this trend is now reversing. The proportion of over-60s is somewhat lower than the national average. In common with the rest of South Cambridgeshire, the proportion of ethnic minorities in the population is small. There is rather less council housing/housing association property than the national average, and a high proportion of adults are in work, many of them in Cambridge. The community is middling rather than particularly affluent by the standards of South Cambridgeshire.

The village has various social facilities: a primary school (with about 270 children), a health centre, a dentist, a library that contains a post office, a social club, a pub, and one church (of which more below). Close to the Church at the centre of the village are two large playing fields, tennis courts, a children's playground and an all-weather 5-a-side pitch. There is an active football project for schoolchildren.

The entrance to the village is dominated by a large Tesco Extra store and its car park, which is bounded by a small set of shops (e.g. Next, Costa, Carphone Warehouse). On the edge of the village there is a Menzies hotel and golf course. The village also has a small industrial estate, including some distribution warehouses. The crime rate in the village is low, but there are cases of petty vandalism and other anti-social behaviour. The village is well served by buses and roads.

The primary school has a good reputation. Most children aged 11-16 from the village attend Swavesey Village College, which is highly regarded in a recent assessment of state schools. Some choose to attend St Bede's (a Christian state comprehensive school in Cambridge). The standard of post-secondary education in the Cambridge area is high.

Church Life

The Church sees itself as a community, desiring to be open to God and to those around. This finds expression in a number of ways. For instance, there are a number of regular activities organised by Church members, yet attended and respected by many in the community who would not regard themselves as aligned to the Church. These include two annual events that each involve a significant proportion of the congregation – the summer Holiday Club (a week-long event for up to 100 primary school age children, including one shared lunch for their families and a well-attended round-up service) and 'Holiday at Home' (which welcomes up to 60 senior citizens to participate in art, craft and musical activities, over three full days at Easter time). The Church also hosts a weekly art group whose members have recently produced a display to adorn the Church for a wedding, and produce designs for the front of our annual card of Christmas services, delivered to each house in the village. Members of the congregation were instrumental in setting up the Community Market, a forum for people to buy and sell locally-produced goods that generate income for village organisations. The Church is often a venue for concerts and quizzes and in the past has staged productions of *Joseph and his Technicolor Dreamcoat* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. During the previous incumbency a Memorial Garden was established at the centre of the village. This was a joint project between the Church and the Parish Council (both donating land), based on designs generated by children of the Year 6 Citizenship Group at the School.

Sunday morning services follow a pattern of traditions and styles, richly resourced by material from our sponsoring denominations, in a two-month cycle. With one united congregation, the idea is that everybody comes, regardless of what sort of service it is, and differences about 'denominational' matters are rare. Communion services take place on the 1st Sunday (Anglican or Methodist) and 3rd Sunday (URC or Baptist) of each month. The fourth Sunday is the most informal and usually all-age, perhaps involving different 'stations' of activity around the worship space. We also provide communion on the 2nd Sunday at 8.00 a.m. and the 4th Sunday at 6.30 p.m., and monthly on the 4th Wednesday at 10.00 a.m., using formats that match the liturgical style. A number of senior citizens receive home communion, a ministry shared between lay and ordained individuals.

The Church has a regular congregation of about 80-90 adults (mostly later middle-age into retirement age) and up to 5 children on a Sunday morning. Church members come from a variety of church traditions, denominational and non-denominational. Scripture has an important role in the services and worship includes modern songs and traditional hymns, led by a music group including guitar and piano. The music is planned each term in advance, linked to themes in the Common Lectionary. Digital projection facilities are used routinely, with sheets available for the hard-of-seeing. Prophetic words and pictures are occasionally

shared during services, after consultation with those leading the service. There are times of prayer in the Church before each 10.00 a.m. service, and prayer ministry after the service is encouraged. At this time, drinks and Traidcraft goods and a bookstall are also available at the back of the worship area. We have quieter evening services which are regularly attended by a small group of up to 10-12 people. Once per month there is a youth-oriented worship service, engaging with recent approaches to music and worship.

During the previous incumbency a number of individuals and families chose to move to other churches in the Cambridge area, although several young people from these families are still linked to the Church by participation in our youth programme. Whilst this 'took the wind out of our sails' for a while, shoots of new growth have arisen from work with the senior fellowship and with young families. One such initiative is 'Family Fun' - a service aimed at pre-school-age children and their families (currently 4- 5 families), held on the 2nd Sunday of the month at 3.00 p.m.. Another point of contact for young families during the week is our 'Under Ones' group, which meets mid-week for those seeking friendship and support with their very small children.

There is a significant ministry of the Church to local elderly residents. Central to this is the weekly 'Knit and Natter' group that regularly attracts 40 attendees, including a good number from the sheltered housing next door to the Church. Members and associates of Knit and Natter enjoy a wide variety of trips and events throughout the year, and are invited to the annual 'Holiday at Home' event. There is an outreach activity called the 'Coffee Stop', meeting in the village library from 10.00 a.m. to 12 noon on Wednesdays, that attracts about a dozen people each week.

We consider small groups an essential part of the spiritual and pastoral life of the Church. About 60 adults are involved in small groups which meet fortnightly for Bible study and prayer. The course material is usually selected by the Church Council together with the small group coordinator and is sometimes linked to a sermon series.

Bar Hill Church operates a regular giving plan for those who wish to contribute regularly, especially in a tax-efficient way. However, for the past 2 years, our income has not covered our expenditure, and money is currently being drawn from reserves for this purpose. Our budgeted regular giving for 2011 was £57,000 plus another £42,000 from tax recovery, lettings and miscellaneous. Against this total income of £99,000 our planned expenditure was £126,000 plus the annual cost of our Youth Worker. Designated reserves are held to pay for our Youth Worker (post currently vacant) but the gap between income and other expenditure is met from our non-designated reserves. Should this gap continue, the non-designated reserves will effectively be depleted within 2 years. To directly address this issue with the goal of achieving a balanced budget, during the interregnum the Church Council is leading a campaign for members to review financial giving.

The Church has a practice of giving away 10% of the committed regular giving of its members. We currently contribute to the support of a BMS missionary in Tunisia and a couple working in Papua New Guinea with Wycliffe Bible Translators. Each year we invite nominations from the congregation in support of other charities, to make up the total. We aim to keep aware of the wider issues of the gospel and justice outside of Bar Hill – for instance, at particular services, special collections are made for a local night shelter or victim support agency. A good number of members carry out the annual Christian Aid collection, covering the whole village.

For the youth associated with our Church there is a varied programme of activities, usually one per week. These include a monthly social, a youth-oriented worship service and monthly 'Cell' groups (attended by about 20 young people), or one-off activities involving sports, meals or trips. Although youth attendance at our services is patchy, recently 8 or 9 have been willing to enlist for specific rotas relating to the Sunday morning service (e.g. sound desk/projector, crèche etc.). There is good youth participation at our annual

Holiday Club and Holiday at Home events. In August 2011, 10 of our young people attended the 'Soul Survivor' Festival in Somerset. In October 2011, 23 young people attended a weekend away, organised by the Church and subsidized by their own fundraising. At both events they were mentored by visiting youth workers who had previously been youth in the Church themselves.

The Church complex consists of two buildings. The largest is a modern worship hall adjoined by an office/vestry, and an entry lobby that leads to a small meeting room ('TNT' room), toilets and a small kitchen. Above the lobby a gallery room (containing a photocopier, files and informal seating area) is accessed by external stairs. Sited next door, the original church building (the 'Octagon') is linked to a large, well-equipped kitchen, a spacious meetings room, toilets and a paved garden area. The buildings are used by a variety of different external hirers during the week, both commercial (e.g. Exercise, Dance and Karate classes) and non-commercial (e.g. Uniformed organisations, Pre-School, Happy Hours senior citizens club).

The minister is employed full time, and paid at the rate set by their denomination. Expenses incurred in the course of exercising their ministry are covered. The minister (and any family) would occupy a modern four-bedroomed house, situated 10-12 minutes' walk from the Church in one of the residential roads (Stonefield). The house is adjoined by an office with external access. The property has a spacious garden and external garage.

In the past, Bar Hill has had male and female ministers, married and single, mostly (as it turned out) drawn from the Anglican tradition. The term of appointment has traditionally been viewed as 5 years, with extensions subject to mutual agreement between the minister and the membership, being ratified by the Church Meeting. Two of our previous ministers have stayed 10 years. We have hosted numerous students from Anglican (Ridley Hall) and URC (Westminster) theological colleges in Cambridge.

Church leadership and structures

There is a strong tradition of every-member ministry at Bar Hill, evident in the leadership structures we have in place.

Church Meeting

Every two months, there is a meeting for all church members (regularly attended by about 45 members from a current total of 105). This is the main decision-making body that elects the Church Council and the Area Coordinators, approves the annual budget, and votes to call a new minister. In addition to business matters, the Church Meeting also provides an opportunity for vision to be shared: Usually, the minister would be expected to report, together with at least one each of the area coordinators and denominational representatives, in providing updates to the membership.

Church Council

The Church's executive leadership body is the Church Council, a body of 7 people (including the minister, Chair of the Church Meeting, Secretary and Treasurer) that generally meet every 2-3 weeks. It is authorized by the Church Meeting to provide direction in practical/financial matters as well as spiritual matters – seeking to discern the leading of the Holy Spirit in all areas of the Church's life and role within the village.

Wider Leadership Team

The ministry undertaken by lay people in the church is largely overseen by 8 area coordinators, covering: Pastoral Care, Children, Youth, Senior Fellowship, Music, Publicity, Small Groups, Events. Together with the Church Council, they form the wider leadership team, that meets about once per term. An overview of the objectives and activities of the wider leadership team can be seen from the Mission Action Plan (copy attached).

The congregation currently includes a number of people with ordained and lay ministerial training, and supports three currently in lay ministry training with the URC. Several are involved in leading services, and have contributed to small group study material.

Church Centre Manager

We see our buildings as an important part of our Church's mission, so we employ a Church Centre Manager to work 18 hours per week. This person is the main point of formal contact of the Church with local agencies, and report to the minister/church council contact. Work involves the administration of the daily property matters (bookings, cleaning etc.) and coordinating conferences for outside hirers. The manager works in the Church Office/Vestry adjoining the main worship hall.

Matters concerning upkeep of the property are dealt with by a small committee that includes a member of the Church Council and the Church Centre Manager.

Local Advisory Group

As a Local Ecumenical Partnership, the Church is supported by a Local Advisory Group made up of the County Ecumenical Officer and senior clergy from the sponsoring denominations, together with two representatives from Bar Hill Church and the minister. The LAG meets three times a year. Although it does not have a high profile in the daily life of the Church, the LAG is there to provide the minister with supportive counsel from outside the immediate church family. It also provides a link into the local expression of support networks of the sponsoring denominations.

Where God may be leading us:

It would be fair to say the church membership is good at 'being real' with one another, and of accepting one another's differences. We recognize that our depth of concern for those within the congregation, and beyond our walls, is an important hallmark of the Kingdom of God that we wish to maintain and develop.

Members of the Church contribute significantly to the life of the community, yet there is clearly more to be done to take steps that may lead others to share our faith in Jesus. Although much good is done quietly by folk behind the scenes, we should be more prepared 'to give an account to all who ask the reason for the hope we have'. We need to learn to confidently share the stories of God's work in our lives.

In seeking to attract new people, we recognize the need to alter our expectations of traditional attendance at a Sunday morning service. Whilst wishing to retain a sense of unity, we acknowledge that other activities at different times may provide equally valid settings for expressions of faith and church-life. We feel we should try to adapt accordingly, aware of the tensions this may incur.

Despite a strong conviction of the importance of children's and youth work, the congregation currently finds it difficult to provide enough leaders for these activities. This may in part reflect the demographics of the congregation, which currently contains very few young adults and young families. However, given the willingness of the membership to recently raise funds towards supporting a youth worker, our excellent relationship with the School and our regular links with young families through the monthly 'Family Fun' event, there is a lot of scope for this to develop if guided correctly.

We recognize that God's work in and through us begins with prayer, and we are open to further developing expressions of prayer in our individual and corporate lives.

Perceived requirements for a future minister:

Overall, we would consider a key priority of our future minister as one of seeking, in collaboration with the leadership team, to nurture and develop the spiritual life of the congregation by leading in worship, prayer and the ministry of the word, and in so doing to stir and equip them for works of service in daily life.

The minister should be able to relate well across all age-ranges and be an encourager/enabler, able to work in a team and support lay ministry. We would expect the minister to be a person of prayer who lives their life on biblical principles, willing to be guided by the Holy Spirit.

The congregation would welcome a significant emphasis on Bible-based preaching and teaching, and for mentoring and discipleship to be developed, especially for newer Christians and the youth.

Building on our links with agencies such as the Centre for Youth Ministry at Ridley Hall, it is hoped that the minister would quickly galvanize the process of attracting a suitable student youth worker.

In addition, building on our strong relations with other community bodies, we would expect the minister to bring fresh vision to, and facilitate, the Church's outreach to the village. We need to be encouraged to share the stories of God's work in our lives, at a personal level, with our friends and neighbours.

We are open to the minister's guidance and affirmation in extending our view of 'church' beyond traditional attendance at the Sunday service, and to their leadership in exploring fresh expressions of church.

We would expect the minister to perform some functions of the official face of the Church, such as involvement in school assemblies, officiating at weddings and funerals, and to take a share of pastoral visits and home communions. Within the church, the minister would be required to deal with issues of church discipline that occasionally arise.

Whatever denomination the minister is drawn from, whilst in post they are recognized as a minister in each of the sponsoring denominations. As such they are required to be flexible where certain practices cross denominational boundaries. For instance, if infant baptism is requested, the minister would have to be willing to allow the service to proceed, even if they did not preside. They would also be expected to make themselves known to, and maintain links with, the partner denominations (e.g. the Anglican Chapter, the Methodist Circuit, etc.).

We recognize that the future minister will not be super-human! As a Church we would aim to embrace them into the life of the community, and adapt to their strengths and weaknesses. By means of the current structures – the Church Council, Area Coordinators and Church Centre Manager- we would expect to give them adequate support concerning the delivery of services, coordination of areas of ministry, and administration of the property.

Messages from Community Stakeholders to the Future Minister of Bar Hill Church

In September of 2011, the Church asked a variety of community stakeholders for any messages they would like to send to a future minister of Bar Hill Church. Transcripts of those responding are shown below:

Little Acorns Pre-School (One of the two Preschools in the village)

We would like the new minister to have some involvement with the Pre-school. We feel that it is important for the Pre-school to have links with the Church. We would like the children to know who the minister is, and to have visited the Church during their time with us.

Starship Children's Centre (Local authority funded and part of the national SureStart program)

To support families in this area, it is important that agencies work in partnership. We would welcome the new minister's involvement with our centre and outreach work.

Bar Hill Community Primary School

Bar Hill is a very strong community and the Church and school are both at the heart of the village. I hope you will work closely with us in all aspects and that we can provide mutual support. Our values are respect, love, honesty and kindness and they underpin all that we do. We believe in helping children become good citizens and would like to work jointly with you on this.

Bar Hill Parish Council

Bar Hill does not dwell on past issues, and a forward-thinking minister can take this community into the future with compassion and confidence with the help of like-minded people who live in the village.

Social Club

On behalf of Bar Hill Sports and Social Club, welcome to Bar Hill. Feel free to pop in and see us.

Happy Hours (Senior Citizen's Club that uses the Church premises)

Welcome – we want a village community that is a mix of all ages and nations (as we have more and more immigrants in Bar Hill). [We would like the new minister to be...] someone mature who can bring all together.

Royal British Legion

[The future minister...] ideally would be family-oriented as Bar Hill Church is.

Bar Hill Community Market (The market is held monthly on Church premises)

[We would like the future minister...] to be pro-active in Bar Hill, bringing ethical and social values to the community as a whole.