



Therfield Chapel

Church Profile

AFFILIATED TO THE EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP
OF CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES

Therfield, Royston, Hertfordshire SG8 9PZ
www.therfieldchapel.org

Therfield Chapel – Church Profile

1. Introduction

We are an evangelical Congregational church, situated in the small village of Therfield just south of Royston in North Hertfordshire. Most of our congregation comes from Royston, with the remainder from the towns and villages around – few of us live in Therfield itself.

We have seen significant changes over the last 5-6 years under the leadership of our departing Pastor, who we recruited to help us address a growing gap in the 20s and 30s age range. Our modernised building, music, and services have helped to achieve that aim, though some have found the changes more difficult to handle than others. The pandemic and consequent lock-downs have also changed the shape of our fellowship. We chose to open physically as soon and as much as we were legally allowed, and have continued live-streaming our services throughout. Amazingly we have seen some new people coming (both online and in person), but have also lost established members.

We have just over 40 official members and a further 50 people who we see regularly. Our in-person attendance is around 40, with a mix of members and those on the fringe. Many are still following us online, having got used to that through the lockdowns – as with other churches, this is one of our current challenges. We now have a good mix of age ranges and social backgrounds, although like many churches we have many more adult women than men.

Our current Pastor is returning to the USA in early 2022, hence we are looking for a new man to help us continue to build and disciple the younger end of our congregation, while also caring for the whole flock, and helping draw others to Christ.

2. Services and Events

Morning Services

Our Sunday morning starts with coffee and chat from around 10:15, with the service itself starting at 10:30. We have a good number of musicians who lead us in a time of worship, before our main prayers. The children then go upstairs for their Sunday school, which caters for ages 0-10. Our preaching ministry generally follows through a book consecutively, though we also run topical series from time to time. We try to make the sermons – which are typically 35-40 minutes – accessible to those on the outside looking in, as well as being challenging and edifying for believers.



Following the service, most people stay around for a considerable time, for both fellowship and individual ministry.

We have been live-streaming our services on **Facebook** since well before the pandemic, and many recordings are available on our **YouTube** channel, providing a good impression how they are run. We also make recordings available via our website and as podcasts, and use social media to alert people to their availability as well as for more general announcements.

Mid-week Groups

Since lock-down eased, we have been trying to (re-)establish several weekly homegroups, where we meet in smaller groups to discuss what we learned the previous Sunday, and / or share a time of prayer and fellowship. Most meet in person, with one still taking place on Zoom. Roughly 20 people attend a mid-week group regularly. As with Sunday mornings, encouraging people to attend has been more difficult since the lockdowns.

We also have a general prayer meeting every week, which is usually on Zoom but every month or two we gather in person at the Chapel. Attendance at the Zoom meeting is often just the Elders and Deacons, with more coming when we meet in person.

Little Blessings

We run a weekly toddler group at the Chapel on Monday mornings, this attracts 10-12 families, some from the village for whom this is their only contact with Chapel, and some from our fringe. The stories are always bible-based so we get an opportunity to introduce Christian topics, and to talk with the adults as well as the children.

“Fringe-Building” events

Before lock-down we were running occasional events to build up our fringe, and to provide a general social time. These are slowly starting up again. We have some links to the village school and pub, and with those in the village who run events such as the village fete. While we have been able to use these as a base for outreach (such as carol singing on the village green), we would like to develop these relationships further and have a greater presence within both the village and Royston.

Pastoral care

There is a lot of member-ministry here, where through individual relationships and our smaller groups pastoral issues are discussed and prayed through. Several of our Elders and Deacons are also involved in providing help and care, generally more on an as-needed basis than through regular pastoral visits.



3. History and Affiliation

Therfield Chapel was formed by a group of Protestant dissenters (the "Independents") in 1836, who were able to obtain land and construct our Church building in 1854. We were originally affiliated to the Congregational Union, but left when it became part of the more liberal United Reformed Church. We are now affiliated to the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches (EFCC).

In addition to our Church building and grounds, we own our own four-bedroomed Manse which is attached to the back of the Chapel, and have our own burial ground on the opposite side of the local primary school (which was originally built by the Chapel).

We are members of the Evangelical Alliance, and while we have close links with a number of local churches, we have chosen not to join the Churches Together group because of its ecumenical nature.

4. Administration

Elders

The church is set up under the leadership of Elders, whose role is to oversee the church under God, and are responsible for the teaching ministry and overall management of the church. Besides our Pastor (when in post), we currently have three Elders who serve for an indeterminate period. New Elders are usually appointed by the existing Elders from amongst the serving Deacons.

Deacons

Our Deacons are appointed by our members with Elder approval, and serve for three-year periods after which they may be re-elected for additional terms. We currently have three Deacons. In line with New Testament practice, the Deacons are responsible for more practical matters, although in practice, in a fellowship with limited numbers, the boundaries are somewhat blurred.

Legal structure

We are in the process of moving from a board of personal Trustees to a "Company Limited by Guarantee" structure, which will mean that the Elders and Deacons are the legal Trustees of the CLG, to which all members will belong.

Membership Structure

There is a formal membership roll, and members are accepted on the simple basis that they are Christians and accept the EFCC Basis of Faith. Each member has one vote.



Church Meetings

Church members currently meet every six months, to review the recent activities, finances, and future plans. As we change structure, we are likely to increase the frequency of regular meetings to encourage more involvement and to connect the “business” meetings more closely to our ministries.

As a Congregational Church, our members decide major issues like appointing a new Pastor, and major financial commitments. The Elders and Deacons are responsible for the majority of the normal running of the church.

Leaders Meetings

The Elders meet on Zoom every week, and are in frequent contact on WhatsApp too. Particularly while looking for a Pastor, we include the Deacons every month or so, when we meet in person if possible.

Funding

Our funding comes almost entirely from personal contributions from members and attendees, and most contributions are given via Gift-aid. We have healthy (but not vast) reserves, which are drawn on for exceptional maintenance work and events. Our aim is for our regular expenditure to be met by our regular income, which generally is the case.

5. Doctrinal Position and Distinctive Beliefs

We assent to the EFCC basis of faith, available here:
www.efcc.org.uk/basis-of-faith/

Our position on other issues is outlined below.

Baptism

Our leaders and most members subscribe to believers’ baptism; as we have no baptistery, we practice this by pouring, or by immersion using a neighbouring church’s facilities. As a Congregational Church we are bound by our heritage to also offer infant baptism should this ever be requested, and would use a sympathetic local minister to administer this.

Baptism of the Spirit

We believe that all Christians receive the Holy Spirit upon conversion and do not accept the so called ‘Second Blessing’ as being a doctrine supported in Scripture.



Belong, believe, become

We welcome everyone to our services regardless of the state of their personal lives – it is the sick who need a doctor. We want anyone to feel like they belong to our fellowship - but through relevant and engaging ministry we will challenge them to come to faith in Christ. As people are drawn closer to Him, the Holy Spirit will work to transform their lives, a process which lasts a lifetime and which we must encourage and help one another in.

Biblical inspiration

As the inspired Word of God, we believe studying the Bible should be inspiring for us. We seek to make our preaching interesting and relevant, explaining its original context and impact, and showing how it applies to our situation today. Turning God's word into something staid or boring is a travesty we seek to avoid!

Charismatic Gifts

The membership of Therfield Chapel comprises people of both charismatic and non-charismatic backgrounds. We are neither a cessationist church nor a visibly "Pentecostal" church. We affirm the freedom of individuals to practice such gifts but ask that they do so in a way that is neither divisive nor distracting to others in public worship. We do not base our unity around a particular understanding of spiritual gifts, but rather around the gospel of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Church Leadership

We acknowledge the valuable contribution of our many women members, several of whom serve as Deacons and lead various activities. However, we believe the Biblical pattern is one of male leadership, which reflects the relationship of Christ to His Church, and so our Pastor, Elders and preachers at our main services are all men.

Evangelism

We believe that all people need to know the saving grace of God in their lives, so we want to be effective witnesses to draw people to Christ. We observe that few if any will come to one-off events unless they already have contact with a Christian, and so we encourage people to build up relationships outside of the church, and through these to model Christ's love and share their faith. We also recognise the potential of social media to make initial contacts, with whom over time we can build up trust and draw them into our fellowship.

Marriage

We believe that God's pattern for marriage is that it should be between one man and one woman for one lifetime. We conduct Christian marriage services for those with a connection to the chapel.

