

# SOUTHGATE church

## Bury St Edmunds



## Church Profile 2019

Southgate Church is a Local Ecumenical Partnership between the Church of England, The United Reformed Church and the Baptist Union of Great Britain

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Registered charity number 1115737

## **Overview**

Southgate Church is an evangelical church serving a local community of over 5000 people plus the three local schools and main hospital. To equip us, we seek to build spiritual maturity through our worship times, prayer, preaching, bible study house groups and outreach both to the local community and further afield. We have an expectation of sound biblical teaching grounded in the gospel message of the love of Christ freely available to all.

Our worship style is informal, using a mix of more modern and traditional songs.

We are a single congregation LEP with people from all church backgrounds and none. We have a single membership roll, open to all who are committed to Christ irrespective of denominational background, and who have been baptised, confirmed or received the rites of a recognised Christian denomination.

We are seeking a minister, man or woman, who will challenge, encourage, teach and equip us. This is a full time post, but we would consider applications from someone offering part time.

## **Introduction to Southgate Church**

The church serves the Nowton Neighbourhood, an area of mixed housing, local shops and amenities to the south of Bury St Edmunds.

We are a single congregation local Ecumenical Partnership between the Church of England, The United Reformed Church and the Baptist Union of Great Britain



We have a morning congregation, most of who come from the local vicinity, but drawn also from other parts of the town and the surrounding villages, of between 70 and 80 people, including a small group of children and young people.

The Church serves a catchment population of approximately 5000 people in a mixed socio-economic area which is now predominantly owner occupied. The largest bands of population are in the 60 – 69 year age range, followed by the 40- 49 year range.

### **Church House**



Church House, a modern detached, extended 4-bedroom property will be available as the residence for the minister in accordance with the denomination's 'manse' arrangements.

The property is a short walk from the Church and in the heart of the estate. It is close to Hardwick Heath and overlooks a

very pleasant open green.

The estate is served by a regular bus service to the town and towns further afield. The railway station on the outskirts of the town provides connections to London and other major towns and cities.



### **Bury St Edmunds**

Bury St Edmunds itself is a beautiful, historic market town in West Suffolk. The town played a vital part in the drawing up of the Magna Carta and the extensive Medieval Abbey was home to the shrine of King Edmund, making Bury an important place of pilgrimage, second only to Canterbury.



Nowadays there is plenty for people of all ages to do in Bury St Edmunds. As well as big high street brands there are many smaller independent shops in the town and a thriving market twice a week. At the end of

November, Bury hosts a Christmas market named the best in the country by Trip Advisor. Restaurants, cafes and tea rooms cater for all tastes and, as well as a big

multi-screen cinema, there is a smaller independent picture house. The Theatre Royal, owned by the National Trust is the UK's only remaining Regency theatre and offers a vibrant programme of events throughout the year. A more modern venue is the award-winning Apex, home to music events of all sorts. For 10 days every May, the Bury Festival brings performers of all genres to the town. The town is also home to the Greene King Brewery.

## **History of Southgate Church**

Work began on the Nowton Estate to the South of Bury St Edmunds in 1968 and as the houses and local facilities were being built, the Bury St Edmunds and District Council of Churches, (as it was then known), encouraged by the local authority decided to work ecumenically to provide a church for this new community. In 1970 a Church Army captain was appointed to oversee the development of a Christian witness and the first Christian activity was a Sunday School held in the local Hardwick Primary School. In the same building, the first Sunday morning service for Southgate Church was held on Pentecost Sunday 1974. We continue to celebrate the church's birthday every Pentecost.

When a Community Centre was built for the estate, local churches financed the provision of a church centre, attached to the main building. In 1979 the first ordained minister was appointed, jointly with the role of hospital chaplain, and by 1980 the congregation had grown to such an extent that morning services moved to the main hall of the Community Centre.

Southgate Church was formally established as an interdenominational Local Ecumenical Project (now Partnership) in 1978 with three partners, the Church of England, the United Reformed Church and the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

## **Southgate Today**

We have grown from our small beginnings in the local school and continue to use the Main Hall in the Community Centre for our Sunday morning worship, placing our church at the heart of the community, in a building with which many local residents are already familiar. We hope, therefore, that it is less daunting and challenging to pass through our doors than it might be in a more traditional building.

Other rooms in the Community Centre provide space for our Sunday Clubs for children and young people and rooms for prayer and ministry, before and after the service.

The Church Centre is well used throughout the week by a wide range of groups, for all ages, from toddlers to more senior citizens.



The church is a member of the Evangelical Alliance, with a vision to bring Christ to our Community. We actively support the work of Churches Together in Bury St Edmunds and District.

## **Church Facilities**



The Church Centre will comfortably sit 60 in a meeting but is too small for Sunday morning services, which are held in the larger 150 seat Community Centre. There is a purpose built baptistry, as well as a small kitchen, well used office space and an entrance lobby. Storage as always is an issue, but plans are currently in place to make improvements.

The Church Centre adjoins the Community Centre and there is easy access between the two. However, they can be physically separated when required, as the Church Centre has its own lockable entrances. The Church shares an office with the Community Centre, which is just inside the main entrance and is open four days a week.

The church centre is very close to local facilities including several shops, a post office, pub and take away food shops. We are next door to the local primary school and preschool and a ten-minute walk from West Suffolk Hospital. The area is served by regular buses to the town centre and other nearby towns.

### **Organisation**

The church is registered with the Charities Commission and is company limited by guarantee. It is supported and encouraged by the regional denominational heads, the LAG.

The governance arrangements of the Church have recently changed.

The Trustee Board will now consist of

The minister (if he /she wished to stand for election)

3 members of the leadership team

2 External trustees nominated by the Anglican Parish of St. Mary with St Peter, and Churches together in Bury.

6 trustees nominated and elected from the church membership, to include the treasurer and secretary to the board

Beneath this are several sub committees to include Operational / Finance / Leadership Team and possibly outreach and youth work. All subcommittees will have a trustee sitting as a member.

Currently full members' meetings, at which members are updated on future plans and participate in making key decisions, are held at least 4 times a year.

We currently have a membership role of 72 people of mixed denominational backgrounds, or none.

Besides the Minister, there are 2 paid members of staff. The full-time Family and Community worker co-ordinates and plays a key role in a wide range of activities throughout the week.

These include groups which meet in two local schools and the Pre School. This work is an important area of the Church's ministry. Full details of these activities can be found later in this document. The part time Administrator provides admin support to the Minister and to the Church, as required.

Southgate Church is entirely self-supporting financially, with its worshipping community responding at all times in the past to the challenges given to it. The Church has a policy of tithing 10% of the general giving including gift aid tax refunds. Gifts are directed to our supporting denominations, mission activities at home and abroad, and to national and local charities and community groups.

Under the leadership of our Treasurer, we have a team of four who administer our finances. The church has a good reserve of funds on deposit and owns the church house. Financially, our current challenge is to maintain a level of giving which fully supports the ongoing work of the church without eroding those good reserves. We will be happy to discuss finance when the time arises. A summary of finances can be found at the end of this document. Appendix 1.

The Sponsoring Body is Churches Together in Suffolk, which exists to give support and oversight to the interdenominational character of the Church. A Local Advisory Group (LAG) with local and regional representatives from each of the partner denominations meets with us regularly to offer support and advice.

Southgate Church Centre is held in trust under the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969.

## Our Services



Sunday morning services are held at 10:30a.m. and last about 75 minutes.

Congregation sizes vary, but are typically 70-80 people, exceeded on special occasions.

Most of the congregation is of retirement age, with many over 70 and, regrettably, only a few in the 20 – 40 age range. Around 10-12 young people attend Sunday Club every week.

There is a time of prayer for 30 minutes before the service and a dedicated team of people available to pray with members of the congregation, as needed, after the service.

The first Sunday is an all age worship service called Together on Sunday and is often led by our Family and Community worker. The third Sunday of the month is a Communion service.

The children and younger members of the congregation join the whole church family for the first 15 minutes of the service, this includes being a part of the Communion service, before going to age-appropriate groups.

Our worship style is informal, using a mix of more modern and traditional songs. We have a small worship group comprising singers, a two-year-old Roland electronic piano/keyboard, and most weeks a semi-acoustic guitar.

On the first Sunday of the month there is a Communion or Breaking of Bread service in the evening. This is often quite informal and includes an opportunity for Bible study and discussion.

A Breaking of Bread service is held most Thursday mornings in the Church Centre, beginning at 9.15am and lasting for about 30 minutes. This service is attended by a small but loyal congregation.



A Wednesday evening Prayer Meeting is held in the Church Centre every other week, beginning at 7.30pm. We would like to see this meeting better attended.



Currently there are also seven House Groups, which meet on alternate Wednesdays, in houses around the area plus a group that meets on Thursday afternoons. About 50 people regularly attend housegroups.

We have a biennial Church weekend at Sizewell Hall on the Suffolk Coast. This is an opportunity to deepen fellowships and friendships and receive teaching in a different way.

### **Mid-week Groups**

#### **CoffeeStop**

On Monday mornings between 10am and 12 noon the Church Centre is transformed into CoffeeStop. Drinks, home-made cakes and good company are readily available. Numbers attending vary, but probably 40-50 come through the doors including students from Riverwalk, a local special school, with their carers and those who are visiting the community centre for other activities such as the Zumba Classes or even the eye clinic.

Although no charge is made, many people make a donation, and this is given to charity. It takes a large team of volunteers, from both the Church and the wider community to run CoffeeStop.

There is a prayer request box for anyone who wishes to make use of it and there is a dedicated prayer team supporting CoffeeStop.

#### **Ladies' Thursday Group**

The group usually meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the month at 7.45pm in the Church Centre and is open for all ages. We have between 30 and 40 ladies at each meeting of whom about one third have no other church connection. The programme is very varied, and most meetings end with an epilogue or thought for the day.

#### **Friendship Club**

Southgate Church has a popular Friendship Club for people over 55, meeting on the first and third Thursdays of the month and attended by 40+ people.

Meetings are relaxed and varied, and activities include day trips, afternoon trips, meals out, visiting speakers and quiz and games afternoons. Many of those who attend have no other church connection and Friendship Club has proved a real blessing to many older members of the community who may not have many other opportunities for social interaction.

## **Children and Young People's Work**

### **Sunday Club and Liquid Sundae**



These are our Sunday Morning groups for children and young people. The group leaders use material published by Urban Saints to plan sessions which provide age appropriate bible teaching in a fun, meaningful and creative way.

We also have groups for children and young people throughout the week

### **SPOTS**

Our weekly, term time, Parents, Carers and Toddler group meets in the Church Centre on Wednesday mornings. The group has a very caring and supportive ethos and attracts families and childminders from the local community. The children play together and parents and carers take the opportunity to socialise with each other. The morning usually includes a craft time, snack time and a lively singing and story time. The group is run by a dedicated team of volunteers who have got to know the parents and carers well.

### **Youth Club**



Youth Club, for school years 5 to 7, meets in the Church Centre every Thursday evening in term time. They have a fun time of table tennis, pool, board games, crafts, challenges, tuck shop and activities. Each night has a theme into which Christian teaching is built. This lively age group ensures a fun and fast paced evening.

There is a trip each month which is always very eagerly anticipated. Some of the team that lead Youth Club are members of our older youth group, Liquid, and it is great to see these young people developing through these leadership positions.

### **Liquid**

Liquid is our group for school years 8 to 13 and meets, in term time, in the Church Centre on Monday evenings. Led by a small, but committed team, they have a great programme of themed evenings, Bible teaching, discussion and challenges. They have taken part in many charity and community projects and last summer won a "Go Make a Difference Award" for their work in running a free community cinema in the Community Centre during the summer holidays.



All of our youth and children's groups have teams that meet to plan, pray together, share ideas and support one another. Each group is further supported by a dedicated prayer team,

We have a popular, annual Summer **Holiday Club** for Primary Age school children which attracts approximately 40 children daily. In 2018, 60 different children attended and a team of 35 enthusiastic volunteers of all ages worked tirelessly to put this event on. On the final evening many of the children returned for an evening celebration for family and friends.

In recent years we have also held a Pancake Party on Shrove Tuesday, which is always very popular, and a Hearty Party on Valentine's Day to celebrate the love of God. At the end of October, we have an alternative Halloween event.

**Our work with children also takes us into our local schools.**

### **Wednesday Gang and Rock Solid**

We run two lunchtime clubs in Hardwick Primary School, which between them reach out to Years 2 – 6. 20+ of the younger age group come to Wednesday Gang for Bible teaching and craft activities. Rock Solid is led in partnership with Bury Christian Youth for years 5 and 6 and currently it is attended by, on average, 10 pupils.

Currently two separate teams of volunteers, mainly from Southgate Church visit two schools to bring Open the Book assemblies.

We have a small team who visit the local pre-school, fortnightly, to sing songs and share Bible Stories.

In the past, several members of the congregation have served as governors at Hardwick Primary School, helping to further the good relationship between Church and school.

### **Community Outreach**

We have recently started to host Messy Church and initial feedback is positive, so we are looking to continue with this.

There is a monthly service at a local sheltered housing complex, Stradbroke Court.

We have developed a strong **Flower Ministry**. This started with the flowers from the Sunday service being rearranged into smaller posies to be distributed to members of the congregation, either as a way of celebrating birthdays or anniversaries or as a show of support in difficult times, such as a bereavement.

Now the flower ministry has grown and small bouquets are distributed for the original reasons and additionally to welcome new people, as a show of thanks for work done or maybe to let people know that the church is thinking and praying for them. The flowers go to members of the congregation and those who attend our many groups. There is a dedicated prayer team who receive the names of those receiving flowers along with a few words explaining their circumstances.

The annual outreach events for the community, **Southgate's Got Christmas** and **Southgate's Got Easter** attract approximately 300 and 70 people respectively of all ages.

A wider outreach is our support of Faith in Action, in particular through the packing of boxes of clothing and other items which are sent to Malawi.

We actively support Christian Aid through the annual door to door collection plus other events throughout the year. Several Members of our church are involved in the work of our local Town Pastors and we also support Fair Trade and Tear Fund. We are registered as a Home for Good church, seeking to support families who adopt or foster.

In recent years members of the church have been involved in organising a number of large scale events with well-known Christian musicians and entertainers. These have been attended by 2000+people, from churches throughout the local area and raised funds for Chaplain in the Workplace. The current chaplain is a member of the church.

Each May Day, the Southgate Community Partnership organises a Fun Day and the church has supported this in various ways and been an important presence in the community.

We maintain contact with our local community through monthly pages in a commercial publication – Southgate Directory – which is delivered free to every home in our area.

### **Southgate Community Partnership**

Southgate Community Partnership (SCP) was founded in 2011 by the local Community Association and Southgate Church. Built by St Edmundsbury Borough Council in 1977, the ownership of the Community Centre was handed over to this new charity to be run in the interests of the local population. The Church played a pivotal role in establishing this new body providing four of its twelve trustees. The Church Administrator undertakes a similar role for the SCP under a separate contract, and both organisations share 'back office' facilities and costs to mutual advantage. We have made a major input of voluntary time into the SCP as we seek to widen the range of activities and services we provide to the local community.

**Strengths, Weaknesses and Opportunities.**

**Summary Table**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
A good welcome at the door Strong links with the community A wide range of midweek groups Well attended Housegroups A range of special outreach events Internal preachers and service leaders Flower Ministry Strong and gifted group of volunteers	Bringing people to faith Poorly attended corporate prayer Pastoral care An ageing congregation Worship Group would benefit from a wider range of instruments Our LEP links Other town churches may be perceived as meeting the needs of young families better.
<b>Opportunities still to be addressed</b>	
Meet the needs of the elderly Build on Community links Develop our links with the hospital.	

These points are further developed below:-

**Strengths**

- We have a large team of volunteers to ensure everyone receives a friendly welcome as they arrive.
- Strong links with the community.
- We have met in the Community Centre for over 30 years and have always been active in the community.
- A few years ago, the Church entered a 50% partnership in the ownership and management of the Community Centre, giving us even better links into the community and greater security of tenure of the building

- Our Family and Community Worker, is very active in the community, and has built excellent links with the school, pre-school and individuals. Through her work, she has consistently shown the love of Jesus practically to families and young people. As a result, the church is respected by and welcomed into local schools to lead assemblies and contribute to lessons and other activities, including Open The Book.
- Our part time Administrator, who is a Member of the church, also works as part time Community Centre Manager. She works out of an office in the Community Centre, thus further strengthening our links with the community.
- A wide range of midweek groups. CoffeeStop is a particularly valuable link to the community, although there is also a Senior Citizens group, a Ladies group, a parents, carers & Toddlers group, and three other children's and young people's groups. Many who attend are not regular church goers. (See sections on Mid-Week Groups and Children and Young People's work.)
- Well attended Housegroups. Our seven Housegroups meet at various times throughout the week and are attended by more than half of the congregation.
- A range of special outreach events. These include annual events like Holiday Club for the local children, Southgate's Got Christmas and Southgate's Got Easter for the community, and occasional concerts and events by well-known Christian entertainers. Southgate's Got Christmas has been attended by upwards of 300 people every year for the last 10 years.
- Internal preachers and service leaders. Many in the church are able and willing to lead services and preach and some are involved in a wider preaching role in the area.
- Flower Ministry. This is another valuable point of contact with church members and the wider community, for a range of occasions. (See section on Community Outreach.)
- A strong, gifted and experienced group of volunteers who make all these things happen, although we could always use more!

## Challenges

- Bringing people to faith. Although we have many contacts in the community, we are not so good at bringing those people through into faith or into the church. In the Purpose Driven Church model, we are good on the outer circles, and not so good on the inner ones. We have to question if we challenge people enough.
- Poorly attended corporate prayer meetings. Opportunities for corporate prayer include prayer before and after the service and a midweek prayer meeting, but these are not well attended or taken up.
- Pastoral care. We often think of pastoral care in terms of physical needs and forget the spiritual. We lack an effective system for the follow-up of newcomers who are outside the Housegroup system, and we are no longer covering even those with physical needs as well as we used to. We have identified the need for a new system or strategy for pastoral care.
- An ageing congregation. As our congregation ages we are finding ourselves stretched for people resources in certain areas. With hindsight, we have not been good at succession planning.
- The Worship Group would benefit from a wider range of instruments. Whilst our Worship Group is well organised and adventurous in tackling new worship songs, we have a limited range of instruments in comparison to many other churches of similar worship style.
- Our LEP links. As our changes in governance are implemented we will need to work on maintaining our identity as an LEP.
- We know that many Christian families, who live local to the church, choose to attend other town churches believing that these can better meet their needs.

## Opportunities still to be Addressed

- **We have specifically identified the needs of the elderly, both within our congregation and the wider community. We are actively exploring ways to address these needs more effectively.**
- Build on Community links. Our strong community links have always provided a wonderful opportunity for growth. To develop this opportunity, we need to address our weaknesses in bringing people from the periphery into faith.
- Develop our links with the hospital. We are the nearest church to the hospital, less than half a mile away. Many young professionals work at the hospital, some of whom are



Christians who could bring their gifts and talents to help us grow the church. Although some of our congregation work at the hospital, and many volunteer in different roles, we have never really pro-actively developed these links. A member of the congregation, who also works at the hospital, acts as a liaison between the church and the hospital chaplaincy. We are looking for new ways to extend and develop our working together.

### **What we require in a new minister**

#### Essential

- A passion for evangelism
- A heart for bringing people to faith and growing new Christians
- An effective Bible teacher who can apply the Bible's teaching to daily living
- Someone with an empathy for and understanding of working with the elderly
- An enabler to encourage the congregation to attract young families and help us grow
- Someone to develop our confidence and skills in inviting people to church events and talk to them about the gospel
- A good team worker with leadership skills

#### Desirable

- Develop more formal pastoral care arrangements
- Visibility in the Community
- Familiarity with IT skills, software and equipment

At a recent members' meeting to discuss the future ministry of the church the following observations were made: -

"We have a huge number of contacts and people involved in 'fringe activities'. Why can't we encourage them to join in our other church activities?"

"How can we reach out to those who work in the hospital..... Can we develop better links?"

"Can we do what we are doing, differently?...can we go deeper?.....we need to think creatively."

"Perhaps we need to dare to be different"

"Our minister does not need to be able to do everything. S/he will be part of a team with us."

"I'd like a minister who is a presence on the estate...easily identifiable with the church."

"The gospel message is paramount"

"The congregation needs to be filled so we can give to others"

We have a vision and passion for God's work in His church at Southgate.

Is God calling you to share in that vision, to refresh and develop it?

Can you equip us to equip our community?

Can you work with us, guide, encourage, teach and enable us?

## **Appendix 1**

Prior to the current interregnum church expenditure had exceeded income by around £20,000 per annum and we had been able to set deficit budgets for a number of years as there was significant cash held in reserves. The interregnum has now seen cash balances build up to a little over £130,000 at the end of March 2019. This is due in part to renting out church house but also a substantial legacy has been received.

Although church income is always difficult to predict, a five year forecast beginning on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 has been produced and based on maintaining expenditure at levels seen prior to the last interregnum, a deficit of around £25,000 is expected on an annual basis which means that this level of deficit can only be maintained over the medium term and by the Autumn of 2023 cash reserves will start to fall lower than we ought to allow them to.

If you have any questions on the financial state of the church, please feel free to ask.

## **Appendix 2**

Church website: [www.southgatechurch.org.uk](http://www.southgatechurch.org.uk)

Address: Heron Walk  
Bury St Edmunds  
Suffolk  
IP33 2QA

The Church Office is usually open weekdays, except Wednesdays, and is situated just inside the main entrance of Southgate Community Centre - address as above.

**Phone** 01284 703705

### **Churches Together in Bury St Edmunds and District**

Southgate Church is involved with Churches Together projects in the town.

<http://www.stedmundsburychurches.com>

### **Bury Christian Youth**

Christian schools-work charity based in and around Bury St Edmunds.

<http://www.bcy.org.uk>

### **Chaplain in the Workplace**

The current Chaplain is a member of Southgate Church.

<http://www.citw-burystedmunds.org.uk/>

### **Southgate Community Partnership**

[www.southgatecommunity.org.uk](http://www.southgatecommunity.org.uk)

### **Bury St Edmunds Tourist Office:**

[www.visit-burystedmunds.co.uk](http://www.visit-burystedmunds.co.uk)