

Church Profile



Introduction

Altrincham Baptist Church 'ABC' is a thriving Baptist Church in South Manchester. Our stated vision is:

"Be disciples, make disciples, reveal the kingdom of God."

This vision defines and guides us as we embrace a diverse congregation spanning all ages and an increasing number of nationalities and ethnicities. We are also a welcoming home for members of the LGBTQ+ community and for individuals and families seeking asylum. Our church life revolves around two closely situated buildings. One is a refurbished traditional church building, while the other, The Hub Community Centre, is leased from Trafford Council. It is our primary venue for extensive community engagement, operating as one of six 'community hubs' in close partnership with Trafford Council. Together, these buildings facilitate a vast array of activities, deeply engaging with a significant proportion of the local community. At ABC, we are full of stories and we love to share how God is actively working in and through us.

The church today

Currently the church is comprised of around 200 members, with many more people who would call ABC their church family but have not expressed this in formal membership. Our members are aged from their 20's to 90's although we are specifically beginning to engage with and attract those in their 20's and 30's, an area that continues to be of importance to us.

We have a strong volunteer base, who contribute significantly throughout the week, especially through activities at The Hub, but also serving on our Sunday service teams and youth and children's team. In 2023 we became an 'affirming church' following a year long period of discernment and we



**Inclusive
Church**

are now members of the Inclusive Church Network. Our statement of inclusion reads: "We welcome people of all ages, genders, ethnicities, gender identities, sexual orientations, physical and mental abilities, neuro-diversities, education, classes, economic status or political outlook. We welcome all people who are seeking to follow Jesus to participate in all areas of church life including baptism, communion, church membership, child dedication, leadership of mission, ministry and eldership. We also warmly receive same sex couples into our community to participate in all areas of church life."

Our church family life has also been enriched by those who have found a home amongst us from the neurodivergent and asylum seeking communities. We offer a variety of services from The Hub which asylum seekers can access, along with the invitation to take part in discipleship groups that are tailored to their needs, including Alpha (in Farsi) for those who are exploring faith. We are part of the Welcome Churches network, and actively find a new church family for our friends when they are moved to other parts of the country. We are a growing church seeing local people come to faith, as well as those living in the two adjacent hotels. In 2025 we have hosted seven baptism services with more than thirty people publicly declaring their faith in Jesus.

"I love the kindness, love and compassion of the people in our church"



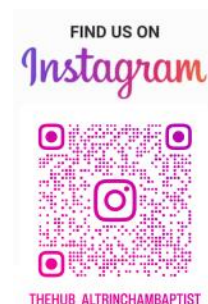
Our church embodies an evangelical and charismatic ethos, defined by our commitment to 'Word and Spirit,' and we strongly affirm the Baptist Union's Declaration of Principle. Our main Sunday services are held at 10:30am at our Hale Road building and are live-streamed on our [YouTube channel](#). Our worship journey has increasingly sought to create more space for

ministry in the Holy Spirit. Services begin with a time of vibrant worship, followed by family time together before children and young people head to their dedicated groups. The remainder of the service includes an extended time of prayer, teaching from the Bible, and a response time, usually concluding within 80 minutes. We are keen to further develop our prayer ministry, cultivating a dedicated prayer team to enhance this vital aspect of our church life.

Over the past year, we've seen an increase in individuals spontaneously connecting with our church. God is at work, drawing people to explore faith within our community. Over recent years our experience has taught us that we see God's blessing as we remove unnecessary barriers and value every person. Enhancing our welcoming and integration processes continues to be a key area of development for us.



We maintain an active presence on social media, where we share updates, reflections, service information, connecting with members and the wider community. These platforms serve as valuable tools for communication, outreach, and fostering a sense of community beyond our Sunday services.



Small groups are a vital part of our church community, fostering deep connections and long-lasting relationships among members. They also serve as a primary place of mutual pastoral care, where individuals find support. We regularly gather small group leaders for feedback and mutual encouragement, strengthening their support network.

Youth

Our committed volunteer youth team deliver a comprehensive program for young people, which includes Breakfast Club that runs alongside our Sunday service, a lively Youth Drop-In on Friday nights, and a Sunday evening discipleship group. Beyond our regular gatherings, we offer exciting residentials and Holiday Clubs, collaborate with other local ministries, and we currently provide a placements for a theological student intern. We believe in nurturing faith and fostering a sense of belonging for every child and young person in our church family. This is an area we are particularly keen to develop, as the number of families with children and young people attending has diminished in recent years, a noticeable impact since the pandemic.



"I like how ABC is so inclusive of all different ages, the opportunities it provides for the youth to grow and learn in the way best for us and how welcoming they are of people of any background."

Children & Families

Children and young people are truly at the heart of our vibrant church community. We have a full time Youth, Children and Families Lead who coordinates a wide range of engaging activities with the help of volunteers, from our Children's Church on Sundays to weekly Toddler groups and an after-school club for primary school aged children. We have specialist provision for children with additional needs, as well as a Home for Good

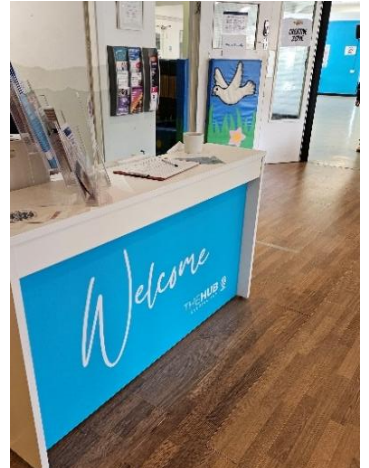


"I like church! We get to help with the grown-up service on Sundays. And the games at children's church are really fun! I loved when we went on a trip to the Monkey Forest"

support group 'Paddingtons' which supports families created through adoption and fostering. The vision of the youth and children's ministry is that all children and young people in our care would be *"rooted and established in love"* Eph 3:17.

The team also run annual events including a Summer Holiday Club and Christmas Nativity and Christingle services.

The Hub Community Centre



ABC runs The Hub, a vibrant community centre based in a large, council-owned property which the church holds on a long-term lease. The Hub is a hive of activities, broadly categorised as being either:

1. **Church-led:** including Toddler groups, Little Stars (for parents of children with additional needs), Youth work, After School Club. Our monthly 'Inclusion' Sunday service for those who are exploring Christian faith.
2. **Community Hub initiatives (in partnership with Trafford Council):** Such as ESOL classes, and weekly food based ministries, The Bread and Butter Thing, Community Meal, and Free Food Friday.
3. **Community Activities and Classes:** A diverse range from dance and singing classes, chess, and keep-fit, to knit and natter, art classes, and healthy hips and hearts sessions.
4. **Hirers:** The space is also utilised by various groups for parties, training companies, courses run by Trafford College, and organisations such as Bounceback Food.

A more detailed schedule of activities can be found [here](#). Each morning the staff team gather in The Hub to pray for the day ahead. The Hub also has a two-bedroom flat which is currently home to our caretaker and our youth intern. We are committed to ensuring that every visitor, organisation or hirer who enters The Hub feels genuinely welcomed and leaves grateful for their time with us. Our Community Café, open two days a week, further enhances this by providing a welcoming space for connection and community.



The pandemic, while initially challenging, became a catalyst for innovative mission. Responding to a request from Trafford Council, ABC transformed The Hub into one of the borough's six 'Response Hubs'. From here, we ran a vital food bank, organised shopping and prescription collections, made wellbeing calls to those



"I love my time volunteering at The Hub and helping the local community. Having bipolar means I need a well-balanced routine, and I can't think of anywhere I'd rather be – hopefully it's a win-win situation!"

shielding, and set up buddy-walking schemes for the isolated. This initiative proved so impactful that Trafford Council continued its funding, evolving these into permanent 'Community Hubs'. ABC now employs a dedicated team to run our Community Hub, including a Community Hub Lead, a Volunteer Coordinator, a Work Well Key Worker (supporting employment for those with health barriers), and a Changing Futures Key Worker (supporting individuals experiencing multiple disadvantages like homelessness, substance misuse and mental health issues).



"I have volunteered at The Hub for sixteen years. The people are so friendly. I love being able to sit in the sunshine in the courtyard. The people here led me to Christ and I was baptised three years ago."

We have significantly invested in The Hub building. Refurbishment of the large kitchen was just the first phase of a major overhaul. Recently we also secured funding in order to complete double-glazing on all windows and doors, install LED lighting throughout and have solar panels fitted, reducing electricity consumption by more than 70%.

Imagination and creativity

Imagination and creativity are woven into the very fabric of ABC's life, constantly finding expression in how we communicate biblical truth and share our vision. In 2019 we transformed our entire church interior into an immersive 'Narnia Experience,' inviting thousands of local schoolchildren and families on a magical journey through C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. This memorable event featured seven detailed stage sets, including a bustling station, Mr. Tumnus' cozy home, a thrilling sleigh ride, and the grand Cair Paravel, complete with a snow machine to truly transport our guests.



This spirit of innovative outreach continues annually, with Easter community events, engaging with the local community in the town centre by inviting them to write prayers for our prayer tree and prompting reflection with our graffiti wall.

Each Christmas, we co-host 'Carols in the Park' with a local Church of England church, St. George's. This typically draws crowds of 400+. Every year we also design, construct, and



install an 'Advent Trail' in a local park, where creatively presented 'stations' retell the Advent story to thousands. In these and countless other ways, we passionately employ all our resources to tell the story of Jesus and God's boundless love for people; this missional culture continues to define and inspire us. ABC maintains excellent relations with the other church denominations in the town. The church leaders meet together both formally and informally, pray for each other and seek to join up working together whenever practical. This non-partisan approach fosters a genuine love and shared sense of serving the people and bringing the kingdom of God in Altrincham.

Global Mission

Our church is deeply committed to global mission. We have a dedicated World Mission Team that meets regularly to pray for, and financially support, our partners and organisations in the worldwide mission field. In addition to regular giving, each year a portion of our Harvest and Christmas giving is designated to support selected mission organisations. We have a history of supporting our own church members who have served overseas through organisations like OMF and BMS World Mission. Additionally, we've extended support to groups such as Act4Africa, SAT-7, and Ugandaid, and are currently exploring ways to assist the Baptist churches in Israel in the midst of current events. Our passion is to see the gospel shared and lives transformed around the world, and our mission efforts are a vital expression of that commitment.



Leadership



We currently have eleven paid staff members, most of whom are part-time working across our two sites. These staff make up our Core Team, Admin Team, Community Hub Team, Assistant Treasurer and Caretaker. Volunteers are key to resourcing all our activities and we draw these wonderful people from both within and outside the church family.

The church is led by a Core Team and Eldership. The Core Team consists of Ashley Hardingham

(Lead Minister), Rachel Downey (Children and Families Lead), and Jenny Breton (Operations Lead). An Assistant Minister would normally complete the team. We currently have an eldership of ten which includes Ashley. An Assistant Minister would also sit on the Eldership. The elders also operate as charity trustees for ABC.

The Core Team and Elders work together closely and hold termly away days to spend greater time in prayer and discernment on significant issues. Similarly the staff team has termly days to have some fun and make space to think about longer term direction and planning. Indeed we like to celebrate. Marking birthdays and life stages the staff team work to support each other, enjoy being with each other and encourage each other to do their very best.

Our Community

Altrincham Baptist Church has been deeply embedded in the vibrant market town of Altrincham for more than 150 years. Altrincham is a vibrant market town eight miles southwest of Manchester. It has transformed into a highly desirable place to live, blending historic charm with modern appeal. Renowned for its independent food scene, excellent schools, and high 'liveability', Altrincham has developed attractive public spaces and fosters a lively social atmosphere, particularly around its bustling market. The town has a strong entrepreneurial spirit and a collective drive to maintain its high standards, leading to its



recognition as "Best Place to Live in England" by The Times Newspaper in both 2020 and 2021. Its excellent transport links, from the Altrincham Interchange has bus, tram, and rail services, which provide easy access to Manchester and beyond, while close proximity to motorways further facilitates travel.

"I like being part of ABC because it is inclusive to people of all ages and backgrounds"





The community of Altrincham largely attracts affluent professionals and families drawn by the quality of life and schools. This creates an aspirational environment. However, increasing ethnic diversity is clearly apparent through individuals and families seeking asylum, along with those relocating from Hong Kong and South Asian communities to work in tech industries. This mix results in a rich tapestry of established residents,

young professionals, and individuals with more complex needs.

Despite its affluence, Altrincham faces challenges. This includes the high cost of living, particularly housing, along with subtle tensions between the "new" and "old" Altrincham.

Pockets of need exist within specific estates or among certain demographic groups, such as the increasing number of asylum seekers. While many residents offer a warm welcome, concerns about the impact on local services and a sense of unease have also emerged. Altrincham Baptist Church actively works to bridge these divides, foster understanding, and provide practical support and welcome to all.



Our History

ABC has a long and remarkable history. (One of our members wrote a book about the first 35 years and it runs to 500 pages!) Altrincham Baptist Church was established in 1872 as a Baptist Mission with an independent spirit. Throughout its journey, the church has navigated the nuances of Baptist identity, maintaining its unique character while engaging with broader denominational movements, demonstrating a consistent commitment to its core mission and adapting its practices over time to serve the changing needs of the Altrincham community. A lot has happened since then as the church has grown and shifted its practices over time. As much as our forebears may find much of what we do now unrecognisable from their experience they will be very familiar with the things we believe – following Jesus, inviting others to follow him too, showing the kingdom of God to our community.



"The Church is the most loving and spiritual I have been a member of, and I've been a member of seven. Together, with the best outreach services I've ever been involved with, that makes it a Church that offers a complete Godly experience"

The church we wish to see

The journey towards becoming a truly inclusive church has been a significant and defining season for us. While this decision initially led to some people leaving the church, it has profoundly deepened our understanding and lived experience of welcome for all people. This commitment to radical inclusion has subsequently opened new doors for ministry. Our compassion for Ukrainian guests in 2022 naturally extended to engaging with individuals and families seeking asylum from other nations since then, particularly Iran, who are now residing in local hotels. (The story of this journey can be found in the book *Discerning Inclusion: how an evangelical church had the conversation about LGBT+ inclusion* published by Wipf & Stock). Change to our staff team challenged us to move beyond simply 'employing people to do the work' and has empowered congregational members to step into vital roles, creating a stronger sense of shared ownership and active participation across all areas of church life.



Understanding the need for renewed clarity and financial sustainability, our Elders embarked on an extensive, year-long consultation with church members and the staff team. This process was driven by a desire to discern God's specific priorities and purposes for us as a church, and to ensure we can continue to live out our calling responsibly within our means. The staff team is now growing again as giving is rising and some new staff are paid through grant income. As we look ahead, we are profoundly

grateful for God's faithfulness and the rich history of life and activity we have been part of. Our core vision, grounded in the Greatest Commandment and Great Commission, remains the bedrock of our calling. However, we sense God is inviting us into new expressions of church and mission for this coming season.

We are entering a new chapter with renewed energy and purpose. With hundreds of people engaging with our Hub Community Centre activities every week and a growing team of new staff members joining us since March 2025, particularly with our new Operations Lead and the expanding reach of our Trafford Community Hub, we feel poised for significant growth and impact.



The role of the Assistant Minister will be crucial in helping us navigate this new chapter, supporting the implementation of our strategic direction, and exploring these new expressions of church and mission in the coming years. We are prayerfully expectant and hopeful that God will provide the right person for His church to realise these aspirations.



"I like being part of ABC because it lives out the Gospel in the community and accepts a broad range of views on some non-doctrinal elements of Christian faith"



Some of our church family at a recent weekend away.