

# Upton Vale Church Profile



## 1. The Church

Upton Vale Baptist Church has existed at the heart of Torquay town centre for almost 150 years. The Church has built a reputation for good expository preaching and strong evangelical teaching under the leadership of a succession of high-profile, well-respected Baptist ministers. More recently it also has gained a reputation locally for lively and informal worship and a thriving children and youth ministry.

In the last five to seven years, Upton Vale has seen a steady influx of people new to both Christian faith and to church in any shape or form. Of the existing congregation, 38% have joined Upton Vale during this period and over 15% have only started attending in the past three years. Much of this growth has resulted from an ongoing Alpha programme and a very effective ministry to parents with pre school children

The fellowship now contains a broad mix of people that cover the entire discipleship spectrum and a major thrust of our ministry in the last three years has been to address the issue of the quality of discipleship within the life of the church. Our associate minister Dave Hibbin has discipleship as his primary role.

In order to accommodate our growing congregation we have implemented a pattern of two identical services on Sunday mornings each of which includes provision for children and youth. 500 - 600 people worship at Upton Vale on a typical Sunday Morning and the total worshipping community is estimated to be about 750 people of all ages. In addition we have regular contact with a several hundred more people through such activities as mother and toddlers, brigades, Alpha and the wide range of external groups that regularly use our premises. The age distribution of the congregation at the last census in December 2007 is shown below.

Table 1	Age	0-11	11-14	15-19	20-29	30-44	45-64	65-74	75-84	85+
	%	17.5	7.5	4.5	4.5	18.5	32	8	5	1.5

## 2. The Community

The prevailing stereotype of Torquay is of an attractive and somewhat refined seaside resort whose permanent residents are mostly wealthy and elderly – the jewel of the English Riviera! Whereas this may have been largely true fifty years ago, Torquay in 2008 is a very different place.

Torquay in South Devon has a population of 65000 and is set in a beautiful natural environment between Torbay on the English Channel and the foothills of Dartmoor. The three towns of Torquay, Paignton and Brixham make up the small unitary authority of Torbay which has a population of about 130000. Torquay is the largest of the towns and houses the Town Hall and Administrative offices as well as a large general hospital. Local government, health services and the tourist industry provide nearly 70% of employment a significant proportion of which is low paid, part time and seasonal.

Table 2 shows that the age profile of Torbay. Whereas the average age is quite high there are nevertheless nearly 30000 young people under 20 in the borough. There are 10 secondary schools with a total of about 9500 pupils. The congregation of Upton Vale is significantly younger than the population as a whole.

Table 2	Age	0-11	11-14	15-19	20-29	30-44	45-64	65-74	75-84	85+
	%	11.7	5.1	5.6	9.3	19.3	26.3	10.7	8.2	3.7

In common with most seaside towns Torquay has suffered serious economic decline in since the advent of the package holiday in the 1970's. Torbay is the 94<sup>th</sup> most deprived local authority (out of 354) in the country and includes three wards (including Tormuham where the church building is located) which are among the 10% most deprived in the country. Drug and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy and mental health are all significant social problems within Torquay.

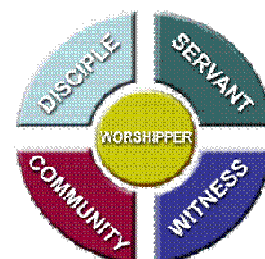
It is within this exciting and challenging environment that Upton Vale seeks to minister the love of Jesus.

### 3. Direction and Mission

**Note: This section 3 contains a paper which was released to the Church on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2009. We expect that it will be endorsed by the Church at our Vision Night on 2<sup>nd</sup> February.**

#### Our recent journey

We believe that we should serve God in five distinct ways. We call these our 'Five Identities' and they help us maintain a biblical balance in our church life. More information on our five identities and the adult Church programme can be found on our website at [www.uptonvale.org.uk](http://www.uptonvale.org.uk).



Over the last ten years, Upton Vale has seen a steady influx of people new to the Christian faith and to church. The Alpha course and our Mother and Toddler group (Morning Out) have been key routes/ways into the church. The fellowship now comprises a broad mix of people who cover the entire spectrum of spiritual maturity.

About five years ago, after prayerful consideration, the Leadership team sensed that they should address the issue of the quality of discipleship within the life of the church. This conviction resulted in the appointment in November 2004 of Dave Hibbin (who had been Associate Pastor since 1999) as Minister for Discipleship.

Thanks to the hard work, creativity and dedication of Dave and a small team, a strategy has been established; a number of resources and courses have been developed and implementation is well under way. We do not wish to loose the impetus and work will continue under the leadership of Andrew Green, ( Senior Pastor) and Julie Cubitt, (Discipleship Coordinator)

Building on the success of the discipleship initiative we now feel that as better equipped disciples we should also step outside the walls of the Church in evangelism and social action.

## Proposals

### a. A New Focus

#### Outside the Walls

At the end of August 2009 the Church Leadership Team took time out to consider the vision and direction of the Church for the next few years. One telling contribution was an article written by Nick Bye describing Torbay as a broken society in need of healing, a desperate community in need of hope. We believe that as Christians we cannot ignore these realities and that God is calling us to 'step outside the walls' of our church and 'be Christ' to our community. We had remarkable unanimity and togetherness of purpose, namely that:

- we step outside the walls of our church to engage with the community,
- we engage in practical action as well as loving proclamation,
- this should be a long-term perspective,
- we will partner with other agencies and churches to fulfill much of this vision.

*Outside the walls* is a metaphor rather than location. Sometimes we may be able to engage with the community on our premises but often we will need to go out into our community. *Outside the walls* means that

- we will try to meet people on their territory rather than ours,
- we will move out of our comfort zone, outside our comfortable ghettos,
- we will affirm and support one another when we are *scattered* in the world of work and leisure as well when we are *gathered* in Church.

We were encouraged by the enthusiastic response of the Church and are now continuing work to develop a plan for initial steps in this direction in 2010.

**Leading and developing this focus would be a key responsibility of the new Pastor.**

### b. A Mission Statement

'To build a community of Christ-followers who step outside the walls of the Church to show God's love'.

This mission should apply across the church to children and youth as well as to adults; to small groups as well as the congregation; to the scattered church as well as the gathered church.

### c. Three Next Steps

At the last Church meeting we broke into groups to discuss possible next steps. Loads of good and creative ideas emerged and having reviewed them we are proposing three initiatives for 2010 which will begin to make this new focus a reality.

## **(i) October Walk Out (OWO)**

### **An opportunity to go on short term mission in Torbay.**

The idea is to volunteer Upton Vale people and resources for the month of October to serve local charities who are serving the needy in our area. People in our congregation are already involved in many of these organisations and we hope that some of them will 'champion' this initiative within their charity.

We expect to identify a number of short term projects in our town and hope that several hundred UV people of all ages will volunteer to make up suitable teams. Many of the projects will be practical but we could also offer our skills and expertise and the use of our building and facilities.

In order to release time we are hoping that most Church Ministries will join in a project in place of their normal activities. We also hope that many people will be able to take a few days holiday during this period and that Children and Young People will devote a good part of their half term holiday to getting 'outside the walls'.

### **Next step:**

We would like to form a small steering group to take this initiative forward. If this initiative excites you and you feel you could help make it happen please let Phil know. We would also like to hear from those of you who are working or volunteering in a community organisation and feel that you could be our link.

## **(ii) Front Line**

The 'front-line' of Christian discipleship is not inside the Church but in our daily lives

- at home,
- at work
- at school
- in our neighbourhood
- in our leisure activities
- as we face national and global issues of poverty and injustice.

2010 will be a year in which we focus on helping each other become better disciples when we are on the '*frontline*'.

This help could include:

- training courses
- sermon series
- small group material
- slots in services
- outside speakers
- special interest groups

This initiative aims to build on the 'city' material that the Discipleship Team have developed for use in our small groups this term.

**Next step:** We would like to form a small steering group to take this initiative forward. If this initiative excites you and you feel you could help make it happen please let Phil know. We would also like to hear from those of you who are working or volunteering in a community organisation and feel that you could be our link.

### **(iii) Next generation**

**In our away days the CLT has begun to dream a big dream of transforming our community by influencing a whole generation of young people with the truths and values of the Christian faith.**

There are about 5000 primary and 6500 secondary school children in Torquay. If 20% of these could be reached then we believe a tipping point would have been reached which could affect a whole generation and have a major impact on social problems such as teenage pregnancy, underage drinking and drug abuse. It seems to us that if all the Churches worked in partnership with one another and with God such a transformation is possible. We also believe that UV could have a key role in catalysing action.

We do not have a detailed blueprint and recognise that there will need to be a lot of prayer, discussion and networking to get this off the ground. However we envisage that it could involve:

- Supporting and encouraging healthy family life through marriage, parenting, divorce recovery and financial planning courses.
- Church run Children and Youth Clubs that attract large numbers from outside the Church family.
- Supporting family friendly initiatives by other groups and agencies (Surestart, Council, Schools, other Churches).
- Supporting work in Schools (through LiNX, Christian Teachers and Governors etc).
- Supporting the Children and Youth Work of other Local Churches with training and by sharing resources.

In summary, we feel that this is God's vision for our church, but we need the confirmation of the Church Meeting. We see 2010 as the year we begin to develop a strategy and put plans in place. Joel and Nai will obviously need to be heavily involved and they are already fired up and enthusiastic.

**Next step:** We would like to form a small steering group to take this initiative forward. If this initiative excites you and you feel you could help make it happen please let Phil know