

St Andrew's United Reformed Church

London Road, Reading, RG41 3HA
Web: www.standrewsurcreading.org.uk

Church Profile

Part of URC Reading Group with Grange and Tilehurst United Reformed Churches

1. Reading and its people

Reading is a large, vibrant town, which is looking to achieve city status. Its Minster Church is over a thousand years old, and the town has a historical Abbey. It is a rich mixture of modern and ancient, with excellent shopping facilities and attractions - and the traffic problems to go with them. Reading offers a wide range of leisure activities to suit all tastes, including professional football at Reading Football club, rugby with London Irish and one of the country's top hockey clubs. The Olympic rowing venue at Dorney Lakes is close by, as is historic Windsor, Henley and Ascot.

Reading is a cosmopolitan town with a multicultural community gathered from around the world and attracted by the Thames Valley's growing Information Technology and Insurance Industries and its two Universities, Reading and Thames Valley.

Reading now spreads seamlessly into Wokingham to the East and into West Berkshire and is the centre of one of the most affluent areas of the country. There are good rail and road links to London, Birmingham, Southampton and Bristol and links with Heathrow and Gatwick make it easy for international travel. In the 2011 census, the Reading / Wokingham urban area population was recorded at 318,014.

2. St. Andrew's and the Community it serves

St Andrew's is situated about half a mile East of the Town Centre and next to the Royal Berkshire Hospital. Formed in the eighteen sixties, a church and halls was built on the present site a few years later. In 1972, St Andrew's current building was dedicated by the old Thames North province of the Presbyterian Church of England, and shortly after became St Andrew's United Reformed Church with the formation of the URC. Modern in construction with its worship room upstairs, the building has been continually upgraded to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and be fully accessible to all people.

In recent years, the local population profile changes have seen St Andrew's become much more multicultural, perhaps because of our Presbyterian background, with members and adherents from across Africa, Europe and the Caribbean and more recently from Nepal. We also are a host church for the Imani Lutheran Church and a small group from the German Lutheran Church. Today people from over 20 nations share in our worship and fellowship.

3. Ecumenical Scene

St Andrew's, is one of seven United Reformed Churches and Local Ecumenical Partnerships with URC participation in Reading, Park URC being another, but St Andrew's is the only URC church in Berkshire with a Presbyterian background.

St. Andrew's is represented at Synod (our past Joint Church Secretary now serves as Wessex Synod Clerk) and is active in our local Churches Together in Earley and East Reading (CTEER).

We have a particularly strong relationship with our local Methodist Church, Wesley Methodist, and have carried out a number of outreach initiatives to our local neighbourhood community. During the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations we hosted a Street Party where 500+ local people joined us for lunch, and our two joint living nativities have drawn large numbers of local people. This year, we are at final planning stage for another version of the community street party with the BIG LUNCH to be held on 6th July.

4. Who we are

St Andrew's is part of the URC Reading Group Pastorate with Grange and Tilehurst United Reformed Churches, which has a scoping of 1.5 ministers. Revd Robert Barthram is Minister and following the retirement of Revd. Richard Becher at the end of December 2013, the 50% scope (originally 75%) has yet to be declared. The Joint Group pastorate was formed in 2007 and the recent URC 'Better Together' initiative is very real to us as we have learned to work and share and grow together, but still retain our own very different identities. A Joint Pastorate working group represented by 3 elders from each church meets quarterly.

St Andrew's has 4 Church Meetings per annum and Elders meet bi-monthly, focusing primarily on Personalia and committee reports. We operate with a three committee structure each with their own specific remits; Pastoral Council, Organisational Board and Asset Stewards. Each Elder sits on one of the committee's together with members and in a number of cases adherents, and each Committee meets on the alternate month to the Elders Meeting. Within our fellowship, we have 4 lay preachers and have regular services where members of our African Church Community or Junior Church and others participate. We seek to be inclusive with our Young People and they are involved in the entry of the Bible, lighting our Peace Candle, uplifting the Offertory or on occasions with a Bible reading or prayer.

Welcoming visitors is important to us and we look to greet visitors and members as they come into church. We encourage member participation in our worship, either as part of the welcome teams, or on Vestry, Door Duty, bible reading or leading prayers or on one of the Coffee rota teams. It is also good to have some people with time to talk to those on their own.

We have been a fellowship willing to initiate outreach, and historically members established FAITH, a Christian charity supporting and witnessing to homeless people through a Sunday afternoon Drop in centre and today is based at St Saviours, a dedicated care centre for the homeless. Other members brought Berkshire's first ACCESS contact centre to St Andrew's following a visit Nottingham to see the concept of providing a safe, neutral meeting ground for the children and separated and divorced parents and families.

2013 was very exciting year, a year when our Vision to be at the heart of the local community, was part realised in the Hospital Community of the Royal Berks Hospital with the part time appointment of Revd Richard Becher as Hospital Chaplain. Regrettably, the pastoral care of patients, their families and RBH Trust staff could not be met in this 12 hour per week ministry and a full time chaplain has now been appointed. However, our support to the RBH continues to grow and now includes bi-annual Memorial Services, for the relatives and friends of those who have died, organised by the RBH Intensive Care team. Various support groups use our premises for their meetings, including Bladder Cancer, Prostate Cancer, Berkshire Diabetic and Safe Place, a Psychotherapy support group. The Blood Transfusion Service are also regular users and we are looking to formulate St Andrews LINK network to facilitate the various groups to meet and share issues and concerns and, we hope, become more involved in our church fellowship, rather than as simply a building user.

5. Local Church Life

Worship takes place on Sunday mornings in a single gathering, so that all come together in one, multicultural congregation, where there is a fundamental expectation of unity in Christ. The order of service is focussed around the reading of the scriptures and preaching of the Word, animated by prayers and hymns. Prayers are usually led by the Minister or worship leader, with many drawing on modern forms. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is observed eight times a year, including one evening service.

We have occasional all-age services where music, drama and visuals are used and hold monthly Evening services in Tyrell Court, a local Sheltered Housing unit.

Rejoice and Sing is our principle hymnbook, and we have the facility and licence to use the A/V for hymns and songs (the organist has Complete Mission Praise). Copies of the Good News Bible are available for congregational use.

Junior Church shares in the first part of the service, which includes including an all age slot and a suitable hymn or songs before they leave for their own groups. The "Roots" teaching material is used by the Junior Church, which has a relatively new rota of eight leaders and, in September, starts a group for older children / teenagers. Shared fellowship continues after the service when the congregation re-joins the Junior Church for coffee downstairs in the Lindisfarne Hall.

a) Numbers on Roll	Members		97
	Adherents		34
b) Changes over last 5 years	Additions	Profession of faith	1
		Transfer	9
	Losses	By death	10
		By transfer	0
		By removal from roll	0
c) Number of Members living	within 1 mile of church		3
	1 - 3 miles		34
	3 - 5 miles		27
	5-10 miles		26
	Over 10 miles		7
d) Number of Elders	Serving		15
	Non Serving		12
e) Junior Church	Number of Leaders (on Rotas)		10
	Young people 5 - 8 years		6
		9 - 12 years	5
		13 - 18 years	4
		19 - 25 years	0
f) Average Weekly attendance (including young people)			65 - 80

6. Organisations and Church Events

We seek to be a welcoming church community and have a wide range of Social events and Community related activities. We are a fair trade church and our well-stocked Traidcraft stall is available every week.

The Women's Guild meets fortnightly on Thursday afternoons from September to May and Open House meets monthly on a Thursday evening and is a meeting of general interest with speakers, and is open to everyone. Coffee mornings are held on the first Tuesday of the month throughout the year.

Our building is used by the Reading Scottish Pipe Band, who appeared in the London Olympic Closing Ceremony, on Monday evenings and the St. Andrew's Scottish Dancing Society, hold classes on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings.

Being such a gathered congregation, social events are a means of bringing us all together and extending a welcome to others. Events include a Burns Night Supper in January, this year raising over £1100 for church funds, a Church Picnic after morning worship in June which this year takes to Christ Church, Henley and a pleasant walk along the Thames. Quiz and skittle evenings are popular and our Church Christmas party is very traditional, but don't ask about the hockey game.

Our monthly Fellowship Lunch Club is an Ecumenical activity which has been running monthly for over 35 years, where lunch is prepared and served to around 35-40 older friends from 4 churches.

In the last few years, we have been much more outward facing, and involved in community based events.

2012 Events

- March - We revitalised and launched our website www.standrew'surcreading.org.uk
- May - **A Taste of Africa** buffet raising over £1300 for the Mama Darlene Children's home in Kenya
- June – **Queen's Jubilee Street Party** with Wesley Methodists – celebrated together with bunting and providing lunch for over 350 peopleand boy did it rain.
- July - **Torch Relay event** with Park URC and Wesley - hosted Worship Bus and two worship bands and where we provided tea and cakes for over 600 people, many visiting a church for the first time.
- October - **Voices4Africa Concert** raising over £400 for 4 African based charities
- December – Our first **Living Nativity** with Wesley Methodist as we travelled with Mary and Joseph and around 350 people on their special journey.
- During 2012 our website attracted a total of 1585 web-hits.

2013 Events

- May - **Revived Hymn Tour** with the Michael Roberts band from the USA. Fantastic evening of worship music.
- June - **Africa Day** – A celebration of African Culture and Food and attended by over 200 people with over £1200 raised for 4 charities in Africa.
- December – **Living Nativity 2** Again we relived the Christmas story, as we journeyed with Joseph and Mary on their special journey with Shepherds, Wise Men and Angels; a donkey and Shetland pony, goats and sheep and shared the good news with over 400 local people who joined us.
- During 2013 our website attracted 7,865 hits, an average of 600+ per month.

In May 2014, we will host the Reading launch of the film I.A.M, aimed at unchurched people and is looking to challenge local Churches Together groups and others to explore if this could be an opportunity to witness to the people of Reading. We are looking to formalise the St Andrew's Link to provide outreach to those Building User Organisations and their members and further local community outreach through the Big Lunch in July, an event for One World Week in October and a further Living Nativity on 21st December.

For 2015, we have already started planning for a trip to IONA and will encourage involvement from across the Joint Pastorate group.

7. Vision

In our mission, we seek to be at the heart of the local Community and provide joyful and thoughtful worship and to show God's love for everyone, in all we say and do.

We have reviewed our previous priorities and agree that while we have made progress in all the areas, they are still valid and in line with the URC's Vision 2012 planning for growth.

- Spiritual Development
- Identity - Building on our Presbyterian traditions
- Pastoral Care
- Church Growth of our multicultural fellowship
- Community Outreach in the local community and with Ecumenical partners
- Children's and Youth Work

As part of our ministry, we seek to follow the guiding principles of the URC's 5 MARKS of MISSION

- To proclaim the good news of the kingdom.
- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers.
- To respond to human need by loving service.
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society.
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, to sustain and renew the life on earth.

To provide guidance for a prospective Minister, the following Minister Specification is given but should not be regarded as too prescriptive: -

- a) An ability to encourage the Church to realise its goals for growth.
- b) The ability to work alongside and support the current full time Minister and Elders in developing the pastoral care of a gathered congregation.
- c) An ability to contribute to the growth of our multicultural congregation and help develop outreach opportunities.
- d) An ability to contribute significantly to the spiritual development of the whole church family, both adults and young people.
- e) A person who can lead good quality worship, encouraging others to become more involved in the worship.
- f) A person interested in Ecumenical outreach and developing links through the local Churches Together groups and others.

8. Resources

a) People St Andrew's has a good number of committed active members and adherents. We are a gathered multicultural Church, with members primarily from a Presbyterian background and drawn from some twenty nations. This diversity is very much a strength but as with many Churches, our membership profile is aging.

b) Building St Andrew's sits on a prominent position at the junction of London Road and Craven Road in Reading immediately adjacent to the Royal Berks Hospital. There is a small garden area to the front of the church, with a lawn and some flower beds, and to the rear of the church is the car park. There are three entrances to the building, the twin front doors and two single doors from the car park.

It is a modern building, designed to be multifunctional with a number of small meeting rooms, a large hall downstairs and a large worship room upstairs. The premises comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and are fully accessible to all people.

