

St. Matt's Church



St. Matt's is a lively, growing Church of England church situated in the High Brooms area of Tunbridge Wells. We believe God's message is vital for the world in which we live and we seek to present that message in a way that is appropriate to our community.

Our aim is to be a church that is open, warm and welcoming. We are informal and worship in a contemporary way that we hope makes sense today.

We are a community of people who want to follow Jesus and we seek to place discipleship at the heart of what we are about. Our mission statement "igniting passion for Jesus" expresses this emphasis on discipleship and what we want to be at the heart of church life. We want to grow in our love for Jesus and we want to help other people discover him for themselves.

Our Sunday service patterns have changed since the pandemic started in March 2020. On Sundays since March 2020, we have had just one service at 10am, either just online or a hybrid of online with limited capacity in church. Our 10am service is family orientated and includes a monthly all-age service. We have produced videos for our young people to watch each week, alongside the Sunday service, and our Children and Families Minister has been sending out videos and activities for our children.

You can view our Sunday services, youth videos, children's videos and more on our You Tube channel www.youtube.com/c/stmatts - do have a look to get an idea of what we are like!

Pre-Covid, we had 3 services on a Sunday, at 10am, 5pm and 7pm.

At the 10am service, a full youth and children's work programme took place every Sunday except at the monthly all age service.

Our 5pm service was in a more traditional format and served older members of the church family. Every Sunday we also had a gathering called Se7en (at 7pm), which included worship and teaching, and was geared towards young adults.

We are not yet sure when or how we will re-introduce the 5pm and 7pm services going forwards.

St. Matthew's High Brooms CE Primary School

St. Matt's is very involved in our local church primary school, with church members serving as governors and staff being involved in collective worship. Pre-Covid, the school regularly visited the church for class visits and church festivals, and we hope to return to this soon.

New Wine

St. Matt's is part of the New Wine Network of Churches and shares the values of renewal and mission at the heart of New Wine. We are also committed to working in partnership with other churches in the Southborough and Tunbridge Wells communities.

Tunbridge Wells is a large town in west Kent, about 40 miles south-east of central London. It is a generally affluent town, but has pockets of poorer areas. High Brooms is one of the less affluent areas and our church sees a mix of people from different cultures and backgrounds. During Covid the church has initiated a community Larder as a way of providing support for the more vulnerable members of our community. There is a main line train station in High Brooms, and you can get to central London in about 45 minutes. This attracts commuters to the area.

Children and Youth Ministry

St. Matt's has a long history of successful Children's and Youth Ministry with employed Youth and Children's Ministers serving as part of the staff team for 20 years. St. Matt's is a church of all ages and we count this a real blessing. We are committed to igniting a passion for Jesus in our youth and children and we actively seek for children and young people to be fully participative members of the body of Christ. We believe that children and young people can encounter and know God as a close friend from the very youngest of ages and therefore offer children's and youth programs that are packed full of fun and different ways for them to encounter and explore the Christian faith.

On Sunday mornings Pre-Covid, we averaged between 50 and 60 under 18 year olds. We had a wide range of groups and programmes for these young people. All children would start the morning in church worshipping with their parents and friends before leaving to go to their groups. We know that many of our children and young people have continued to engage with church with their families during the last year, although it is hard to know exactly how many watch the youth and children's videos each week online. Due to a small volunteer team, we were unable to offer Sunday groups on Zoom, but have managed to keep all our midweek groups going. We will inevitably have to work hard to draw all our children and young people back into church and to build relationships with them again.

Our Sunday groups pre-Covid were:

Shine is our group for 0-4 year olds, and has approximately 8 children on a Sunday. Parents sign in their child when they bring them from the service and sign them out again at the end. This group focuses on exploring faith in a multi-sensory way.

Glow is our group for school years R - 2. This group has an average of 10 children. They explore faith through games, craft and storytelling.

Bright is our group for children in school years 3-5 and has an average of 12 children on a Sunday morning. Bright involves games, worship, teaching, prayer ministry, craft and drama.

Encounter has approx. 15 young people on a Sunday and is our group for school years 6 -9. The group provides space for young people to explore faith through discussion, interactive teaching, prayer ministry and fun and games.

Engage is our group for school years 10-13 and has about 5 regular members. They spend time getting to know each other and God, through Bible study, discussion and games.

Engage has been meeting on zoom intermittently since September with a core group of 4 girls, and they have appreciated the connection and relationship.

Mid-Week Groups

Our mid-week groups cater for children and young people from church families and also non-church youth from the local community.

Deeper is for children in school years 3-5. Pre-Covid it would meet on Mondays at St. Matt's straight after school, but it has been running on Zoom since June 2020. Average attendance was 20 children - 50% of these are from the wider community and 50% are from church families. The church was set up with table tennis, football, table football, air hockey, a craft table and the Wii. During a session there is time for free play and structured team games. The vision for Deeper is to create a place where children can go deeper with their faith so we always have a time of worship, teaching and prayer.

Ignite used to meet on Wednesdays at St. Matt's from 6pm – 7:30pm for school years 6-13. Average attendance pre-covid was 15 – most of these are church young people and their friends.

The church is set up with table tennis, football, table football, air hockey, a craft table and the Wii. Ignite also includes a tuck shop, milkshake bar, pizza, outings and socials. From June 2020 to May 2021, Ignite has been meeting on Zoom on Wednesday evenings. Attendance has varied from 4 up to 15 young people per session. They have played games, done cooking together, quizzes, bingo, and had a short thought for the week. Since May 2021, we have managed to have some outside Ignite sessions using the local school field, and the young people have really enjoyed meeting up in person again and reconnecting.

Since our previous youth worker went on furlough in June 2020, our small volunteer team have been incredibly committed and have kept as much youth work going as they could. All our leaders and volunteers are checked in line with current child protection policies.

Facilities

The church has access to two separate hall spaces that are used for our Sunday children and youth ministries. Our main church building is used during the week for our children's and youth activities. Within the church are two offices, which provide working space for the Vicar, Administrator, Youth Minister and Children and Families Minister, enabling us to function as a supportive team.

For more information about St. Matt's, have a look at our website www.stmattschurch.org.uk, our Facebook page www.facebook.com/stmatthewshighbrooms and our You Tube channel www.youtube.com/c/stmatts