



## United Church Profile

**The United Church Winchester (UCW)** is a Methodist/URC local ecumenical partnership (LEP) in Winchester city-centre. Relationship with the city-centre and wider community in Winchester is important to us. We are active in Churches Together in Winchester. All members have dual membership of both denominations. Working collaboratively with both denominations is important to us. We are part of the Methodist Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey Circuit and the Wessex URC Synod. We align with the strategies and leadership of each and draw on their support and guidance.

**What are we most passionate about?** Expression of God's love through justice; peace; inclusivity; community engagement; mission activity; pastoral care for anyone who asks (members, those on the fringes/wider community); care for our environment. ***Our vision statement*** includes our vision and mission priorities. These align with and support strategic priorities of the Methodist Circuit. All are established / well underway rather than aspirational. Progress on development is monitored at each church meeting. Overall progress and direction are reviewed at each annual church meeting.

**Inclusivity.** As part of commitment to being inclusive, UCW aims to be a partner in Open Table Network within 12 months. We are registered for solemnisation of same-sex marriages and seek someone who would be comfortable supporting this and being willing to preside at same-sex marriages and blessings. We are a member of Inclusive Church Network.

**We are eco-conscious** in stewardship of our premises (e.g. energy use, current work on lighting). This is for us a deeper transformative experience, central in developing faith, worship and mission.

**In the context of the above, what qualities are important to us in our church leaders?**

- Collaborative leadership, valuing and engaging all styles, contributions and experiences of the UCW community. There is much to draw on. Teamwork with established 'enabling groups' that drive the work of the church. Drawing on both denominations. Ideally, experience of ecumenical partnership.
- Supporting development of engagement with the community. E.g. developing a sense of collective responsibility and mutual support (church members, users of premises, the wider community). This has begun with our successful 'People's Piano' initiative. Ideally, experience of city-centre ministry.
- Leadership that supports UCW's style and approach to worship (see below), including that it makes connections with the issues that we support.

-Leadership that continues to foster in each of us a confidence and conviction in the Christian values that inspire and sustain action, further developing us as an invitational church.

-Exploring with us the connections between faith, pastoral care, mission, social justice, invitation. Sometimes the people we most need to reach fall between the joins.

**Worship and what we mean in saying our worship is evangelical in outlook.** We try to make God's love real in the context of today's world and in our lived experience. We *invite* discipleship, taking the approach of listening, nurturing and encouraging, being led as well as leading, not insisting. Everyone is welcome and can be themselves, however they might describe their faith or lack of it. Worship embraces and welcomes a range of theological perspectives, including radical views. It is inclusive, does not lay down narrow, doctrinal demands, maintains clear commitment to live in the light of Jesus' example. It expresses and advocates UCW's ideals. It nurtures and encourages individual reflection and development of Christian faith as a clear foundation for action. Worship is relevant, engaging, enquiring, open to new ideas, encourages involvement and is attentive to the needs and questions of all. We use *Singing the Faith* and have a regular organist. Services include a midweek service and a Sunday online option, attracting maybe 20 devices (often with 2 participants).

**The age profile of the whole UCW community** reveals substantially greater numbers in older age groups. Roughly 1/3 over 80; half between ages 50 and 80; 1/8 between ages 14 and 49. (adherents and members, not all worshipping regularly). Around 50 people attend Sunday worship. There is vitality, vigour, spirit and significant contribution in the **older age group**, *not* representative of negative stereotypes sometimes wrongly attributed to 'older churches.' On regular Sunday evenings a group of 4-6 **young people** age 14-16 (mainly who have grown up in church families) meets for discussion and fellowship. In university holidays 3 others sometimes join. This group no longer attend worship regularly. They remain important at UCW, contributing ideas and, for example, art and music. We value and see the significance for the future in young people and children amongst us. We recognise too, competing needs of this group and that families and youth are a key focus at Christ Church, Winchester, where many young people in this city attend. We have a distinct offer, being willing to engage with difficult questions and having a mixed gender group. *We are optimistic that our wider commitment to inclusivity and community engagement, meeting people 'where they are, understanding their needs, will sustain UCW into the future.* Within this, we will continue to emphasise the value that older people bring, at the same time considering the interests of and attracting younger members of our church and children, young people and students in the local community.