

Nelson Baptist Church, Lancs



Nelson Baptist Church was formed in the 1990s by the joining together of Carr Road Baptist Church and Woodlands Road Baptist Church. The church centre, on Woodlands road, has gradually developed further from being mainly used for weekly Sunday worship and bible study etc, into a meeting point hub for engaging with the wider local community.

Southfield ward, in which the church is situated, is one of the most deprived areas within Nelson, bringing with it all the challenges and complexities involved with working in this kind of area. Our local community are largely unemployed or in low paid work. The our local community is mostly made up of Muslim Asians with reducing numbers of indigenous white people. In recent years, we have also seen an influx of Eastern European economic migrants. As a church, we accept people as they are and seek, with God's help, to show them the vital difference that a life with Jesus at the centre can make.

Four years ago, Nelson Council approached the Baptist Church about the possibility of hosting and supporting a local residents' association. An initial supporting role has since developed into a fully integrated part of the Church life. Southfield Area Residents' Association, SARA for short, is a key part of our church community. Several fun days have been hosted, a Toddle into Church group is funded and two cafés have been established. These consist of a drop-in snack café on Tuesday and a full community meal on a Wednesdays that sees an average of 30 local residents enjoy a hearty meal a good dessert and hot drinks all for £3.

The Wednesday Community Café fits in well with the Church's developing ethos of Belonging, Believing and Becoming. This Christmas we were able to secure a gift of £300 from the ASDA foundation and so a celebratory Christmas meal saw a record 70 people enjoy a full Christmas dinner.

A key part of the Community make-up is that we are all equal before God so there are no reserved or special seats and helpers and clients all sit together in a foretaste of the heavenly banquet. Although we have experimented with youth clubs and Alpha courses, the Community Café has brought most new people into the fellowship of the church, three of whom have been baptised so far and others now attend bible studies and Ladies meetings as a result of coming along. We look forward to all God will do in our midst in 2016.



For your thoughts and prayers:

- Could your church host a community café or show hospitality to the local community in some way?
- Do the people you connect with feel like they can 'belong' before they 'believe and become' - what defines and affects 'belonging' in your church context?