

## About Magdalen Road Church

Some preliminary information about us for applicants.  
Much more detail about us, our church and our history  
can be found on our website [.www.mrc-oxford.org](http://www.mrc-oxford.org)

### Who are we?

Magdalen Road Church is a worshipping community in the heart of vibrant East Oxford, just off the Cowley Road. We are a welcoming and diverse church, with a history of bible teaching as well as a relaxed and informal atmosphere.

The culture at Magdalen Road is one of gospel warmth and generosity that has led to us being a church family strongly united around core gospel truths, and yet a breadth of individuals from varying church backgrounds and stories, that mean we are a diverse church family where people are valued.



### 1. Our Vision - The church we long to be

*We believe that God has brought us together to delight in him; displaying the glory of Jesus in the power of the Spirit, through word, service and community, to the peoples of East Oxford, Oxford and the world.*

By grace through faith, we are prayerfully committed to becoming a community of people who...

- **Love** Jesus Christ with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.
- **Build** up, care for and disciple people of all backgrounds through Christ-like relationships.
- **Reach** out to all the ethnically diverse peoples of East Oxford, Oxford and the world with the glorious gospel of Christ.
- Equip people for lives of Christ-honouring service and **send** them out to all the world.

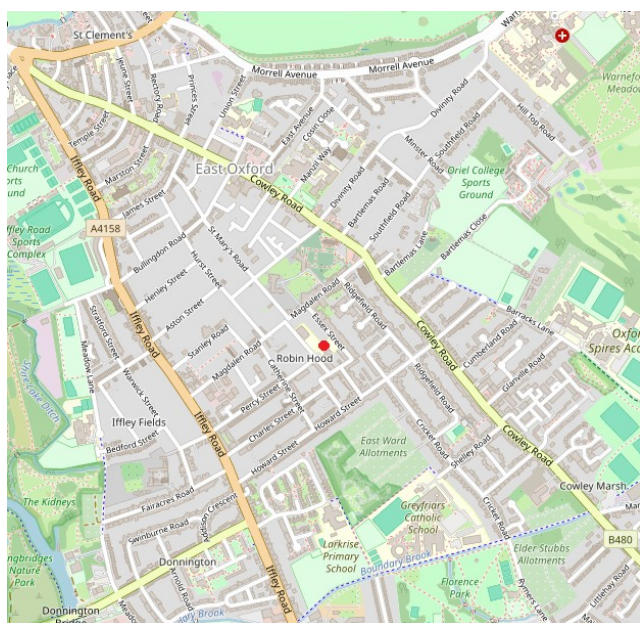


## 2. Our context

Magdalen Road Church (from here onwards, MRC) was originally sited on Magdalen Road, (pronounced: *Maudlin Road*) just a stone's throw from our current building in Hertford Street. The church has been at the heart of the community from 1879, when much of the surrounding area was still fields. So we have always been a geographically centred church as well as a gathered church of gospel believers, who come from across the city to join us.

### 2.1 Our neighbourhood

*...vibrant streets are filled with indie shops, live music and a community with bells on...*  
The Times, March 2023



#### Geography

Traditionally we have considered “our patch” as extending from **The Plain** down the **Iffley** and **Cowley Roads** as far as the old border of Oxford at Boundary Brook, together with all the roads adjoining. Naturally the streets nearer Magdalen Road (historically known as the “Robin Hood” area) are where we want to engage most with our neighbours.

#### People

About 20,500 people live in this patch, which is covered by the Oxford City Council wards of St Mary's, St Clement's and Donnington. You can access the census statistics for the individual wards [here](#) and for the slightly smaller **East Oxford** area [here](#).

#### Local Diversity

Our neighbourhood is home to people from many cultures and ethnicities. About 60% self-identify as white British – the other cultures well represented are South Asians (mainly of Pakistani heritage), people from mainland Europe together with smaller Black African, Asian and Middle Eastern communities. Many of these people run the shops and restaurants of the Cowley road, which makes for an interesting, multicultural experience.

28% are aged 20-24 – predominately these are students living in university and college owned accommodation as well as many shared houses and HMOs – because of this the neighbourhood is significantly better educated than the national average. But there are also surprising pockets of deprivation – 25% of children in Donnington ward are in low income families and the local food banks are very busy. Significantly for our ministry, 11% of the population describe themselves as Muslim.



## 2.2. Our congregation

Our congregation is also diverse, but does not necessarily reflect the diversity of the neighbourhood. About half live within walking distance of the church, the remainder live further afield, having either had historic links with the church or attracted by our particular theology or style of worship. Around 100 -120 attend the main Sunday service each week but a much larger number (200+) would be part of the church. We are a young church, with many families with small children (~40 under 16s ) Many of our members work in the health or social care sector, a significant number work for Christian charities and mission agencies. There are a handful of students and a number of academics.

MRC has been a member of FIEC for many years and subscribes, as a church, to the doctrinal basis and ethos statements that can be found [here](#). But many of our church family come from other traditions, either from churches in other countries or from other UK denominations. So on many secondary issues there will be a range of theological positions. We have a relatively high turnover of people attending our church – the average time someone is a member is around four years. This has implications for our ministry to our family and our mission to the neighbourhood.

## 3. Our Activities - and how it all works



### 3.1 What happens at Magdalen Road...?

There are a range of activities in our church which bring life to our vision as mentioned above. So we have teaching and preaching that build up our **love** for Jesus, small groups and training that **build** up our church family, events that we use to **reach** our community with the good news, and a mission encouragement group that supports those that we **send** elsewhere. Taking these areas in turn:

- a) Our teaching and preaching include our **Sunday Morning** and **Sunday Evening** services. **Prayer meetings** happen before each Sunday morning service, on the evening of the First Tuesday of each month and at special times of the year.
- b) Building up each other is a strong feature of our **Home groups** which meet weekly in various parts of the city. There is a system of **Pastoral care** by elders and others – we have recently launched a **women's pastoral care** team. Our **Children** and **Youth** have a teaching programme on a Sunday and the youth meet most Fridays in term time for fun and further fellowship. **Students** (attending either Oxford Brookes University or Oxford University) are a relatively small part of our church, with most Christian students attending churches in the centre of town. We aim to be especially welcoming to **International Students**, of which there are also large numbers in Oxford.
- c) The **Old Schoolhouse** is our base for mission and ministry in our local community. Through a separate charity, the Comfort Trust, church members run the **Sunflower groups** for Carers & Toddlers and for those with smaller babies. **Reel Life** is our film club which runs film and discussion evenings. From time to time, we will have a **Christianity Explored** course for those wanting to know more about our faith. Throughout the year there are also a number of one off events – Community day, Live Nativity, Easter Activities etc to help us build relationships and explain the gospel
- d) **Global engagement** is the focus of the **Barnabas** group. We want to be a blessing to the nations and to learn from them. We have regular services to focus on this where we often hear from our ministry partners; we have around 14 at the moment serving in a variety of contexts in the UK and around the world.



A lot more details on all these things can be found on our website.

We rejoice that God has often given us people with passion to run these activities, and that we can see his hand and blessing in what he has called us to do. MRC has many talented and gifted individuals who help lead us in ministry.

### **3.2 And what sometimes doesn't happen...**

But whilst we do rejoice, like many churches we often face challenges of capacity (complicated by high turnover of the congregation), difficulties in management of them by the core staff team, the elders, trustees and deacons and wisdom to know the priorities (e.g. between looking outwards and looking inwards). We often perceive ourselves to be time-poor, and not necessarily resource (money) rich enough to do all the things that God might be calling us to do. In some cases, there are long standing traditions (e.g. our live nativity event) that give continuity, in others it needs more courage to examine what things have run their course.

Some activities will depend on the availability of both leadership and a critical mass of numbers in the ministry - so for example, our student ministry and older youth groups may only happen sporadically.

## **4. Some particular challenges at this time**

### **4.1 Our outreach to the local community - the Old Schoolhouse**

In 1879 Magdalen Road Church constructed a chapel on Magdalen Road as a home for the church family and a base to love and serve our local community. In 2018, we had the incredible opportunity to buy our current building, the Old Schoolhouse, a beautiful old Victorian school, to continue that tradition of love and service and to witness in our local community to the love of Jesus. Several hundred people a week now pass through the building attending events organised by us – toddler groups, film nights, community days – or by others – choirs, art groups, exercise classes, teaching refugees, counselling.

The pastor and the elders will need to continue to guide the church's vision for the space and to encourage the building of relationships with these neighbours.

We have planning permission to redevelop the ground and first floor into a more flexible space for multiple church and community uses, and to build a new community hall alongside the existing building, big enough to accommodate our growing church family for regular worship, teaching, training and community service. This is a significant project which a range of volunteers within the church have been committed to, lifting the majority of the task from the eldership.

Our challenge is to keep our focus - God has given us this amazing resource for mission and ministry, and to be imaginative in the way that we use it. And not to be discouraged by the detail.



### **4.2 Multi-cultural Church**

We have a particular concern to love our diverse East Oxford neighbours well, and so for a number of years have sought to celebrate both the diversity within our church family, but also seek to get better at connecting with the wide range of people groups and cultures represented in our community. We have recently been blessed with a group of asylum seekers wanting to attend worship with us.

We have a number of individuals within the church with cross cultural experience and expertise to help facilitate this, but support and encouragement from the leadership team is a vital priority.

#### **4.3 Developing leadership**

The COVID pandemic, as in many churches, caused a reset in many activities and a relocation of some of the congregation. For a while, only paid staff were able to do many things, volunteers were perhaps lacking, or vulnerable. A couple of years later, we are now in a situation where we need more leadership, both formally as Elders, Deacons and Trustees and in the various teams that serve our church and reach out to our patch.

In particular our pastor and elders will need to encourage and develop the ministry of women in our church. As a matter of theological conviction, we have only male elders but the other offices are open to women and we want women to be represented and listened to in our decision making, and their leadership roles to be extended across many more aspects of church life.



### **5. The role of pastor**

As defined by our constitution, the pastor is not an employee but rather is appointed as an officer of the church. Because of this, there is little in the way of formal job description although we would normally draw up a memorandum of understanding to include such matters as remuneration, expected working times and so on. The pastor is appointed by the church membership at a church meeting.

The pastor is regarded as an Elder of the church, and as such shares with other Elders (paid or unpaid) the responsibility of being an under-shepherd in the care of the Christians in the Church.

We are looking to appoint a pastor with godly character, gifted in teaching and pastoral care, to lead the congregation in fulfilling our vision. In particular, as the elders take on the majority of preaching, we hope to appoint a gifted preacher who can regularly point us to Jesus, and train and encourage other bible teachers.

We are also looking for a pastor to lead us in the challenges we have articulated above. We expect that the successful candidate will live on the patch or as near to us as possible.

There is an occupational requirement for the post holder to be male and a Christian, fully aligned with MRC's statement of faith ([available on our website](#)). In addition, you will need to be able to declare wholehearted acceptance of the FIEC doctrinal basis and agreement with the FIEC ethos statements. ([both available here](#))

#### **5.1 Other paid staff**

We have had a long history as a church of having an assistant pastor, either as a training post (in the same style as an Anglican Curate) or as a more long term appointment. At the moment, we expect that the current Assistant Pastor will not remain in post beyond the summer of 2024.

We do currently have:

- An Old Schoolhouse administrator, (10 hours per week) who provides leadership for this aspect as well as practical day to day running of the building and liaising with the groups that use it;
- An office administrator (6 hours per week), providing a basic office function.

We envisage that, subject to the financial restraints we have, the new pastor will be able, with the other elders, to shape the future paid staff team.

## **6. Other information**

### **6.1 Finance**

We are grateful to our God for providing the resources we need to run the church. Many church members sacrificially support the church and income from the Old Schoolhouse makes a good contribution to the running costs of the building. For further details on our financial position, our annual report and accounts are available at the Charity Commission website [here](#).

### **Conclusion**

We are grateful that you have taken the time to consider applying for the position of Pastor at Magdalen Road Church. We pray for God's blessing on you as you take the next steps.



## APPENDIX A

A BIGGER MAP OF OUR AREA

