



# Tower Hamlets Community Church (THCC)

*Reaching the Unreached in the Heart of East London*

## Who Tower Hamlets Community Church are:

Tower Hamlets Community Church is a Bible-believing, evangelical church that is part of the Assemblies of God movement. We are based in the incredibly diverse and vibrant East End of London, and have a thriving outreach programme. We are an intercultural and multigenerational Church. Over 150 people call THCC home and a remarkable 80 per cent of the adults are engaged in serving the community.

We meet as two congregations in two locations on a Sunday. Husk Community Centre in Limehouse and Lighthouse in Devons Road. The Lighthouse was formally an FIEC Church and is now in the process of becoming fully part of THCC. Additionally we have monthly services for Church With A Difference ( dementia friendly ) and Bengali Fellowship. These monthly services both take place at Lansbury Lodge, our hub in Ricardo Street Poplar where the Church offices are based and many of our midweek activities take place.

## Our Mission Field: Tower Hamlets and the Lansbury area

Statistically, the Lansbury area surrounding our church community centre is characterised by a poor, young, ethnically diverse population in which the majority religion is Islam. Unemployment is high, and the effects of the housing crisis are felt here in high levels of street homelessness and overcrowded family homes. Of course statistics don't tell the full story, but they help explain why we run the projects and programmes that we do.

- Tower Hamlets has the highest level of child poverty in England, and rates of new diagnosis for Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) are higher here than anywhere else in London, putting pressure on schools and families who are under-resourced to support these children.
- 2/3 local residents are from BAMER backgrounds, with 43% identifying as Muslim.

- Almost 1 in 5 local residents have an illness or disability which limits their daily activities, which is higher than the London average and particularly striking in an area with one of the youngest populations in Europe.
- In Contrast to this, Tower Hamlets is sandwiched between the twin financial districts of London, the City and Canary Wharf and has an ever growing population of affluent professionals.
- Tower Hamlets was once again the fastest growing population in the UK as identified by the 2021 Census.

Amidst these challenges, Tower Hamlets Community Church has been sharing the love of God in this place for decades, and we have seen first-hand the impact of the gospel on situations that may appear hopeless.

## THCC: Impacting Our Communities

Somewhat imperfectly, we love God, we love one another and we love our community. We at Tower Hamlets Community Church are an inter-cultural church that makes a real and true difference in our communities in our various locations

### Children and Youth Outreach

For children and their families we run two weekly Kids Klubs ( these have an emphasis on welcoming unchurched kids), parent and toddler groups ( one on the Isle of Dogs and one at Lansbury Lodge), and assemblies in local schools. Lansbury Lodge also hosts weekly youth nights, and we have regularly seen children growing up through our kids ministry and into the youth work.



### Weekly lunch



We run a weekly lunch club at Lansbury Lodge for a cross- section of the community which brings together elderly people who live in the sheltered accommodation next door, rough sleepers, adults with learning disabilities and seekers from the local

Bangladeshi community who come each week for the free food, friendship, connection and gospel message.

## Church With a Difference

For the past few years we have run Church With a Difference – a service aimed at people with dementia or learning difficulties, and this has opened doors for us to become a church that more fully reflects God's heart for those who are excluded. This has brought together a wide section of people who would not have been able to access church otherwise.

## Bengali Fellowship



We have a Bengali Fellowship made up of Bangladeshi background believers, many of whom have come to faith in Jesus out of Islam. This has been running for many years now with people attending the monthly get together as well as a weekly Bible Study in Bangla. At THCC we have a real heart for sharing the Gospel with Muslims and many of our congregation are actively involved in reaching out to the Muslim community.

## Homeless and Marginalised work

Our pastor was the founding Chair of GrowTH, an initiative by local churches responding to homelessness in the local area by creating a Night Shelter. Through the winter months, Lansbury Lodge has been used once a week, providing a warm bed, 2 hot meals, and as importantly, love and friendship for our guests. Over half of the guests go on from the shelter into other housing with the support of the GrowTH team. The Church also provides hot meals to take away on Wednesday for people on the streets, in hostels or otherwise in need. We are also privileged to have a drop in and housing First team from Spitalfields Crypt Trust operating out of our building helping those in housing need.



## the Common Space



In 2020 we took on use of a former London City Mission café and community space in Limehouse called Husk. We now use this building for services on Sunday morning as well as community activities and a Christianity Explored course. At the end of the Covid Lockdown we launched a community engagement project to help the community reconnect, called Common Space. This is a café session open to all and free of charge, where people from very diverse backgrounds come,

meet one another, play games, hang out and make new friends. It's also been a feeder into evangelistic programs at Husk such as Creative Space and Faith Space. The Common Space also was the launching point for 'What's The Story?', an evangelistic course connecting people to God's big story.

## Canaan Project

Lansbury Lodge provides office space for the Canaan Project, a local youth work charity, working with marginalised 11-19 year old young women in Tower Hamlets. It developed from the youth work of Tower Hamlets Community Church in 2005 and is a continuation of our vision, outreach, and mission to support the most vulnerable people in our local community. It remains a key part of our service to the local community



## Developing working class and minority leadership



3 of our 5 Leadership team were raised on low incomes on London council estates. One of our distinctives as a church is investing in raising up leaders from minority backgrounds and our senior team includes people from a black Caribbean and Bangladeshi Background.

## World Mission and Supporting the Wider Church

We have always seen our building as a place to steward for the kingdom rather than for our own use only and so have made it available free of charge to churches, parachurch organisations and for inter-church events. 20% of our senior pastor's time, and over 15% of our income as a church goes to overseas missions and to training and equipping other churches in the UK to reach their local communities with an emphasis on least reached groups. We work in partnership with churches and ministries in Bangladesh, Kosovo, Northern India and the Middle East. When evaluating mission partnerships, we look to support those reaching least reached peoples, as this aligns with our own mission here in Tower Hamlets and enables two-way working and learning.

## Continuing Story

THCC has over the years been a beacon of hope in a needy and rapidly changing community. We have sought to shape and be shaped by our local community as we live out the good news of Jesus with intentionality and passion. Bringing hope as we see God restore and change lives from across the whole of our diverse borough. Currently we are working towards planting a new congregation on the Isle of Dogs as we have identified a great need for Evangelical witness particularly amongst working class and Bangladeshi people in a rapidly growing community.

# Vision, Values and Statement of faith

## Vision and Values

### Our Dream is

- To see the kingdom of God come in power in Tower Hamlets and beyond.
- To see Jesus exalted and esteemed.
- To give every man, woman and child in Tower Hamlets the opportunity to hear, understand and respond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- To enable them to become part of a Church that exalts Jesus and that raises them up to fulfil their calling, purpose and destiny In Christ.
- To be a mission minded church that influences beyond our area.

### What is our Purpose as Tower Hamlets Community Church?

To shape a multi-cultural and multi-generational borough wide Church, that provides a real sense of belonging and develops people who have a commitment to deep and growing relationships with God, with one another and with our community.

### What does that look like?

- A Church that is Spirit filled and Biblically based.
- A Church that is impacting the community.
- An apostolic centre that pushes back boundaries, creates, innovates and shapes, both locally and further afield.
- A strong church, solidly grounded in our community.
- Intercultural - bringing people together and learning from each other

- Multi-generational - hearts that are connected across generation
- People from all social classes.
- Relevant and equipping.
- A Church where people know they belong.

## **Structure of THCC**

### **Main Leadership Team (MLT)**

Our Church is led by a Senior Pastor (Tony Uddin) who is a part of a leadership Team. They are the elders of the church This team is the decision making body of the Church, i.e. if there are decisions that have a wide impact across the Church, they will be made by this team. The team is led by Tony. They are responsible for setting the direction, vision and values of the Church.

The team is currently composed of Tony Uddin, Simon Kempson, Nikson Robinson, Caroline Millar, James Blake and Bex White

### **THCC Department Leads**

These people strengthen the management of a number of practical activities that are core to THCC.

- The practical organisation of Sunday mornings, including welcoming, set up, worship, and all aspects of children's work.
- The outreach ministries of Lansbury Lodge
- The centrally organised social and evangelistic activities.
- Link Groups
- Youth work.

Our heart in this is

- Facilitating communication between the Main Leadership Team and those bearing much of the practical responsibility for the running of the Church.
- Ensuring that those who carry direct responsibility for these activities input into the planning and strategy of the Church.
- Encouraging discussion and communication between those responsible for these various activities.
- Nurturing leaders so that they can be encouraged, equipped and developed.

As the leadership team develops the vision of the Church, it is essential that it understands how this impacts on those that are practically delivering much that the Church does. Our department leads shape the development of the Church. The other group providing leadership across THCC is the trustees. These have significant legal and financial responsibility for the Church. Their role is to ensure that the Church carries out its work to the highest standards and complies with all relevant legislation.

## Informal Leadership

For a variety of reasons we would expect there to be very capable leaders in THCC who are not part of any formal leadership group. Some of these leaders will have committed their energy to activities outside Church; for example, to their children or to their career. We would expect such people to have an active interest in the leadership of THCC and to contribute to it in informal ways.

Others of these leaders will be very active in Church life. One of the strengths of THCC is that a high proportion of the Church's ministries are developed outside of the formal leadership. Typically, this has been in the areas such as evangelism, prayer, social activity, community work and the creative arts. While we would encourage anyone leading in this way to engage in early and good communication with the Main Leadership, we would very much want to encourage activity of this nature and would only want to restrain it if we felt it conflicted with THCC's core values.

## One body, many parts

It is common in our society to value those that lead more than those that don't. In contrast, we believe that we are all equal before God regardless of the role we have in any human organisation. The challenge is to build a Church of many different, but equally valued parts.



For leaders, we expect the outward expression of this to be through servant-hearted leadership. Such leadership genuinely values people for who they are and not for what they do.

For all of us, the challenge is to have deep and honest relationships with one another so that Christ's love truly overwhelms any sense of one part of the body being more important than another.

## THCC Core Values

### 1. LOVING GOD

- **Bible Believing** – Strong on the essentials, valuing our differences
- **Prayerful** – Including God in our daily lives
- **Worshipping** – Vibrant worship that reflects our passion for God
- **Spirit-Filled** – Empowered to live for and like Jesus

### 2. LOVING OUR COMMUNITY

- **Outward Looking** – Reaching out to others.
- **Grounded in Our Community** – Shaped by, and shaping, the East End
- **Welcoming** – We just love people

### 3. LOVING EACH OTHER

- **Fusion** – Bringing different flavours of life together
- **Embracing** – Who you are is more important than what you do
- **Family** – A place to belong.
- **Caring** – Putting ourselves out for others

### 4. Journey

- **Putting People First.** We want to do things well, but people will always come first
- **Real and Honest** – We're not perfect, but we're working on it
- **Fun-Loving** – Enjoying our life together
- **Patient** - Changing our world takes time. We've seen great things here over the past 30 years and we're still working at it

# What does it mean to be a part of THCC?

## How do I join THCC?

THCC currently does not have a formal membership scheme. For us being a part of THCC involves far more than signing on the dotted line. We would consider someone a member of THCC if they fulfil the following:

- **A born again Christian.** This is a person who has put their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and has committed themselves to following Him.
- **Has chosen to make THCC their Church.** We believe that every Christian ought to be a part of a local Church where they are committed to relationships with others and submitted to that local body of believers.
- **Is committed to the Vision and Values of THCC.** We want people who call THCC their home to be dedicated to our vision and values.
- **Is Committed to our Statement of Faith.** We appreciate that people at THCC come from a wide variety of backgrounds but are agreed on the fundamentals of the Christian Faith.

## What does this mean in practice?

We would hope that everyone who is a member of THCC would be committed to the following:

- Living a life that is Holy and consistent with Biblical standards of conduct and integrity.
- Seeking to make disciples of Jesus in their day to day life.
- Being a part of one of our ministries so as to have an expression of service in the Church.
- Being a part of a small group that meets together to share life, fellowship, pray and encourage one another in evangelism. Our hope is that this would be one of our Life Groups.
- Be regular in attendance at our Sunday Services.
- Actively seek relationships and friendships with people who are different to themselves, those of a different background.
- Being faithful with regular, proportional financial giving to the Church.

# Statement of Faith

1. We Believe that the Bible (i.e. the Old and New Testaments excluding the Apocrypha) is the inspired Word of God, the infallible, all-sufficient rule for faith and practice. (2 Tim.3:15-16; 2 Pet.1:21).
2. We Believe in the unity of the one true and living God Who is the eternal, self-existent 'I AM', Who has also revealed Himself as one Being co-existing in three Persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Deut.6:4; Mark 12:29; Matt.28:19; 2 Cor.3:14).
3. We Believe in the virgin birth, sinless life, miraculous ministry, substitutionary atoning death, bodily resurrection, triumphant ascension and abiding intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ and in His personal, visible, bodily return in power and glory as the blessed hope of all believers. (Isa.7:14; Matt.1:23; Heb.7:26; 1 Pet.2:22; Acts 2:22, 10:38, 2 Cor.5:21; Heb. 9:12; Luke 24:39; 1 Cor.15:4; Acts 1:9; Eph.4:8-10; Rom.8:34; Heb.7:25; 1 Cor. 15:22-24,51-57; 1 Thess.4:13-18; Rev.20:1-6).
4. We Believe in the fall of man, who was created pure and upright, but fell by voluntary transgression. (Gen.1:26-31; 3:1-7; Rom.5:12-21).
5. We Believe in salvation through faith in Christ, Who, according to the Scriptures, died for our sins, was buried and was raised from the dead on the third day, and that through His blood we have redemption. (Titus 2:11;3:5-7; Rom.10:8-15, 1 Cor. 15:3-4.) This experience is also known as the new birth, and is an instantaneous and complete operation of the Holy Spirit upon initial faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. (John 3:5-6; James 1:18; 1 Pet.1:23; 1 John 5:1).
6. We Believe that all who have truly repented and believed in Christ as Lord and Saviour are commanded to be baptised by immersion in water. (Matt.28:19; Acts 10:47-48; Acts 2:38-39).
7. We Believe in the Holy Spirit as an endowment of the believer with power for service, a biblical evidence of which ( though not the only one) is speaking with other tongues. (Acts 2:4, 10:44-46, 11:14-16, 19:6; Isa.8:18).
8. We Believe in the operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of Christ in the Church today. (1Cor.12:4-11, 28; Eph. 4:7-16).
9. We Believe in holiness of life and conduct in obedience to the command of God. (1 Pet.1:14-16; Heb.12:14; 1 Thess.5:23; 1 John 2:6).
10. We Believe that deliverance from sickness, by divine healing, is provided for in the atonement. (Isa.53:4-5; Matt.8:16-17; James 5:13-16).
11. We Believe that all who have truly repented and believe in Christ as Lord and Saviour should regularly participate in Breaking of Bread. (Luke 22:14-20; 1 Cor. 11:20-34).

12. We Believe in the bodily resurrection of all men, the everlasting conscious bliss of all who truly believe in our Lord Jesus Christ and the everlasting conscious punishment of all whose names are not written in the book of life. (Dan. 12:2-3; John 5:28-29; 1 Cor. 15:22-24; Matt. 25:46; 2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 20:10-15).