



Norcliffe Chapel

Altrincham Road, Styal, Cheshire, SK9 4LH

Description of congregation

Norcliffe Chapel has a small and dedicated core congregation. It is popular for the seasonal celebratory services and for weddings and baptisms. It is located on the edge of the affluent commuter village of Styal and set within the larger site of historical significance of Quarry Bank Mill and Estate. This is owned by the National Trust, who also own and manage some property within the village. The village has a pub, a restaurant, a community shop and café, as well as a primary school and various sports clubs.

The Chapel holds monthly open afternoons during spring and summer that draw many visitors - often up to 120. There is a great deal of potential that a new minister may exploit. The Chapel Council has struggled to build upon these positive contacts to build a larger congregation. The core group has held a series of development days examining the reasons for this “gap” and reflecting on what has and has not worked in recent years. It has developed an outline strategy and wishes to find a minister willing to provide leadership in honing these positive steps into a strategy to build a congregation for the future of Norcliffe.

Who we are, history etc.

Norcliffe Chapel has recently acquired Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) status. The Chapel building itself is owned and maintained by the National Trust.

Originally a Baptist chapel, Norcliffe Chapel was founded in 1823 and was provided for the village by the Greg family, the owners of Quarry Bank Mill. It developed into a Unitarian Chapel during the 1830s and was substantially extended and improved in 1867. The Greg family were prominent members of the Unitarian church and are key figures in the industrial revolution. With many family monuments on the walls, it is commonly understood by visitors as the family Chapel of the Gregs in Styal.

National Trust own and run the Quarry Bank Mill, much of “the village” including the chapel and the surrounding attractive farm and woodland. In the past one minister rented one of the many National Trust cottages. The local National Trust management is keen to see the Chapel continue to be a living place of worship within what is one of their popular attractions in the region.

Current Service Pattern and resources available

Norcliffe Chapel is currently used only for Unitarian worship purposes. The internal layout fixed “as is” due to its historical importance (Grade 2 listed) and because the building is owned by the National Trust.

A small meeting room and kitchen are attached to the Chapel, but their use for public events is limited by size. There is an ambition to build an extension with modern kitchen and toilets, subject to funding and National Trust approval.

As an attractive building in a historic setting, the Chapel has been a popular wedding venue for many years. However, in recent years this has been impacted by the broadening options for weddings.

Although in the county of Cheshire East, the Chapel lies adjacent to the Greater Manchester boroughs of Stockport and Trafford, in which Unitarian congregations are minimal in relation to their population size. These boroughs offer a large residential population of mixed (though tending towards B and C) socio-economic groups within two or three miles of the Chapel, though public transport links (especially buses) are minimal.

The current service pattern is an evening service every Sunday (reduced to one per month during Covid-19 restrictions). The Chapel has experimented with a Sunday morning service with mixed results. From January 2021 we have trialled a monthly half hour Sunday service on Zoom at 3pm followed by discussion and socialising.

We hope to be able to soon return to holding regular services in Chapel and holding the 3pm service more regularly, with an aim to attract the many passers-by visiting the National Trust attractions in the village. The service is styled to show Unitarianism without assuming prior religious knowledge or custom.

The Chapel Council is very open to a new Minister's ideas and willingness to experiment with service timings and formats that may prove attractive in the pursuit of the goal of increasing the regular congregation.

Basis of Ministry

Ministry will be on a part time basis.

Hours and working patterns will be discussed during the recruitment process and can be influenced by initiatives for growth proposed by the candidate.

More hours for a planned period may be possible to permit the effective implementation of a development programme to build the congregation.

What the congregation seeks

Norcliffe Chapel seeks a minister who:

1. will work to grow the congregation in the first two years
2. has strong pastoral care skills and the ability to work with others, possibly forming a pastoral team with other chapel members
3. will work with the Council to formulate a programme for growth and has the leadership skills to put it into effect
4. has inspirational preaching skills
5. has the administrative skill and ability to arrange, conduct rites of passage services

We are seeking a minister with the vision to see the opportunities offered by our unique position and circumstances and who is willing to work with us in building a congregation from which the future leadership will be drawn.

Remuneration Package

0.5 full time, with the possibility of extending further, subject to congregation numbers and finances.

The stipend will be based on the GA recommended package.

Congregation(s) webpage

<https://www.ukunitarians.org.uk/styal/services.htm>

<https://www.facebook.com/NorcliffeChapelStyal>

Application process

Applicants should provide a detailed CV and link to a recorded service or address.

Candidates selected for interview will be asked to give a service at the Chapel and to prepare a short presentation for the interview panel.

Applications and CVs should be submitted to sbland@unitarian.org.uk

If candidates wish to discuss any aspect of the role prior to their application, they may speak to Geoff Levermore in confidence on 01625 525 010