

Abingdon Community Church leadership changes FAQ

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Leadership

1. When will you start the process of appointing a new pastor?
2. Will there be a gap between Michael's depart and a new leader arriving?
3. Are we seeking to employ a full time or part time new leader?
4. How will this affect the leadership team and weekly church life? i.e. what should we expect?
5. Are we hoping to have 'elders' in Abingdon that will support and give oversight to the new leader?

The process of supporting Abingdon through this transition has already started. Our group of churches, Salt and Light Advance, have already established a support team who have been present in leadership team meetings, the church family meeting and many Sunday mornings. Currently the team consists of Andy O'Connell (Oxford), Mark Eley (Lifehouse), Neil and D Townsend (Wantage).

Along with this support there are also conversations happening about who God wants to put into the leadership of ACC. God has clearly been in the process of moving Michael and Kate to Michigan, we trust that he has a plan for ACC as well!

There are three phases of work for that support team:

Phase 1: Communication of the situation

Working with the Abingdon team, we are seeking to make sure that everyone in Abingdon Community Church is aware of the changes in leadership at Abingdon. This FAQ form part of that communication. This phase should now be complete, although this FAQ document will continue to be updated.

Phase 2: Setting up an interim team with good support

The team will work with the existing team (Phil and Rachel, Robin and Lisa, Michael and Kate while they remain here) to ensure that Abingdon CC will continue to move forwards as a church and that there is good support for the church and its team.

Phase 3: Navigating into the future

Although we would love to have all of the answers now, realistically some questions will remain until we have more clarity on who the new leader will be. The support team is starting to explore an idea or two for strengthening the Abingdon team over the coming months. The support team is also very keen to hear everyone perspective – spiritual and natural! – about the future of the church and leadership in the church. For example, across the group of churches there are some leaders who are full time as the church leader, and others are part time, we want to be open to whoever God is bringing in. Sometimes it's best to welcome someone to their first leadership role, sometimes God has lined up an leader with a diversity of experience.

We are in the practice of appointing elders over churches, and as Michael moves on that leaves a gap for ACC. This is an area that we hope will be filled in time, with input from the new church leader.

We recognise the Advance Apostolic Team as having authority and oversight over our church, and we are grateful for their increased apostolic oversight at this time.

Support team

6. What/who is the support team, and what is their role?

The 'support team' has been formed, by the Advance Apostolic Team, in consultation with the existing ACC leadership team, to provide additional support during this season of change. God seems to be speaking prophetically about purposefulness in this season of change, and we want to press into all that God wants in this season. The support team will help us do that.

Their role is

- Coaching/leading interim team
- Ensuring regular Sunday input (to help lead the church in interregnum, and into new purpose)
- Identifying future leader
- Supporting any changes needed in this season

The support team includes

Neil and D Townsend: Neil and D are the leaders of OpenGate, and have supported ACC for many years, first in Ed's tenure, and through various seasons since then. They have recently handed over the leadership of Wantage church to Paul and Francesca Gander, and are seeking God for His future call on their lives. Along with the changes in regions (including OpenGate) following the [2023 review of S&L Advance](#), these changes mean that Neil and D's role in supporting ACC beyond August is not clear. Neil and D are part of the [Advance interim team](#).

Mark Eley: Mark is [Pastor of Lifehouse Community Church](#), which operates in Bicester and Banbury, and villages in between. Over the last few years Lifehouse has had its own reset/reboot. His experience in Lifehouse, and also as a prophet and evangelist, make Mark a really good addition to the ACC support team. Mark (with his wife Katherine) is part of the [Advance interim team](#), and also supports the church plant in Cheltenham, so he brings a wide experience in helping churches missionally.

Andy O'Connell: Andy is one of the [Assistant Pastors in Oxford Community Church](#), where he is involved with training and discipleship, Sunday oversight and governance. He is also part of the [Advance interim team](#), the Cheltenham support team and has led on the support team for Lifehouse in the last few years. He is also a Trustee of Oxfordshire Community Churches, ACC's parent charity.

A pastoral equipping couple: We are also in discussion with a couple who lead another church, about them joining the support team to bring other gifts and another woman's involvement. They are very good pastorally, and especially good at equipping other pastors. We will say more when things are confirmed.

Assistant Pastor

7. Is Robin filling in the church leader role? How long will Robin be employed for?

Robin has joined staff as Assistant Pastor for 2 days a week, an agreement for 2 years. His role will be focused on pastoral care for the church. It is, however, clear from discussion with Robin and Lisa that they do not feel it is appropriate for them to lead the Abingdon team at this team, and we support them in that decision.

Finances

8. Presumably the extra contribution to open gate in our 2024 budget is to cover the support from Advance? How long will this last as an arrangement? (edited)
9. Will there be a fuller finance presentation with detail at some point?
10. Did the 2022/23 income of £103k include gift aid? If not, how much was it and where did it get spent?

The increased contribution from ACC was agreed in May, well in advance of the news from Michael and Kate. Contributions are calculated based on church size and income, so our increase was based on having a more affluent year compared to others. Whilst budget setting Wantage Community Church took on some of the increase which was due from ACC as there was agreement that the original figure would be hard for ACC to achieve.

The immediate current support that Salt and Light Advance is providing is part of being in our wider family; as we look to the future (past Michael's departure), we will need to understand how best to honour those who serve us in supporting the church through transition. [Paragraph edited for clarity 27/2/24]

More information on our church finances was sent out via email on 22nd January, if you have further questions please talk to Mark Wray. Michael and Rachel may also be able to answer some questions.

The process of budget setting for the financial year 1st September 2024 to 31st August 2025 will begin in March and as we get to that process it will be possible to be clearer on how things will work for that year. Our group of churches is in the process of reorganising the financial systems following the review and switching from regions to a single apostolic sphere, and the financial mechanics that go with that are being resolved at this time.

[Added 29/2/24] Some of you will be interested to know we have also been working on some governance/structural changes in charity arising from the 2023 Advance review. This 'deregionalisation' of Oxfordshire Community Churches, along with a principle to give more responsibility to local leadership teams, give significantly greater visibility of external commitments in the 2024/25 budget.

If you have further questions, please email rachel@abingdoncc.org.uk