

Being a Student at Holy Trinity

Hidden away beyond Lidl, beneath the shadow of the Buarth hill, Holy Trinity occupies a low-key but unique and very special place in Aberystwyth – and in my time as a student in the town. I first attended a Sunday morning service at HT a couple of weeks into my Fresher's semester. From the moment I stepped through the door I was made to feel welcome, not in an overbearing or intimidating way but in a way that made me feel immediately accepted and included. By the next weekend I already felt a part of the congregation and that this was 'my church'. Four years later, I've left Aberystwyth, but the HT community is still very important to me. Many former students remain regularly in touch, both with the church and with each other.

The Monday evening Bible study student group is a friendly, informal and intellectually stimulating way to start the week ... and with some top notch grub! Typically meetings started with sharing a hearty and delicious (really delicious!) meal, and were followed by a casual chat over tea or coffee. We would then read an extract from the Bible and consider the historic and theological context of the passage, before discussing and debating our own interpretations and thoughts about it. The conversations were always open-minded, free-thinking and often ended up in unexpected places. Everyone could participate as much or as little as they were comfortable with, and no prior knowledge of the biblical texts was required. We were all at different stages and learned from each other. Sometimes the Bible study group would focus in depth on a particular book for a number of weeks, such as the Psalms or the book of Revelation, while at other times someone would request a particular passage for the next meeting.

HT students gather for food and social chat at other times as well, including for the popular and much anticipated annual end-of-year barbecue. The whole congregation also gathered for meals (notice a recurring theme?) at special occasions throughout the year.

HT is a relatively small church community, which allows for easy-going and personal relationships between the students, the ministry and congregation members. Many close and treasured inter-generational friendships have developed between students, families and older members of the church, with students gaining invaluable connections within the local town community and receiving practical help and support in times of crisis – such as when I was evacuated in the 2014 storms, which made the national news! For me the full inclusion of students in the life of the church – including decision making – is HT's greatest strength. I sometimes led intercessory prayers or read Scripture, while other students sang in the choir or assisted in the food bank collections. HT students socialized together on nights out or were also involved in witnessing for Christ with other churches or Christian groups at the university.

Worship at HT is mainstream Anglican with an emphasis on the an updated version of the Book of Common Prayer, the sacrament of the Eucharist and prayerful reflection, but students from all over the world and all sorts of denominational backgrounds – as well as those who are new to the Christian faith and interested non-believers – have attended the church and been warmly welcomed and felt included. I was sometimes away on hiking trips on Sunday mornings, and in those weeks I would instead attend either the Sunday evening or Wednesday morning services. While most students go to the main Sunday morning service at 11 am, I would also recommend trying these smaller and more meditative options as well.

I am so blessed to have been a student at HT. I was challenged and inspired by the preaching, made some great friends and was nurtured in my faith by a wonderful community throughout my years of study, partying and personal development ... and beyond. Whether you are new or returning to this beautiful, crazy town, you will always be welcome at Holy Trinity!