



**Press Handbook**

Introduction	Page 3
Contact information	Page 3
<b>Overview</b>	
Key facts	Page 4
What is there in common with other Christian churches?	Page 4
Why go to church?	Page 5
Moral standpoint	Page 5
<b>Serving God and the Community</b>	
Church services	Page 6
The benefits of prayer	Page 6
Charitable and outreach activities	Page 6
<b>Church attendance</b>	
Why go to church?	Page 9
What is different about this church?	Page 9
<b>The Church as a Business</b>	
Funding	Page 9
Policies	Page 10
Investors in people	Page 10
The Rainbow Theatre restoration	Page 10
Peckham HelpCentre	Page 11
<b>Exorcism and Healing</b>	
Exorcism	Page 11
Healing	Page 11
<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix I - Glossary of terms	Page 13
Appendix II - Statement of faith	Page 14

## A brief guide to the UCKG HelpCentre

### Introduction

This publication has been written as a definitive source of information about the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG HelpCentre) and its work in the UK. The content has been thoroughly checked for factual accuracy and may be used by journalists wishing to write about the church.

It covers the church's pastoral work in terms of charitable outreach and the spiritual support it provides, its organisation and management, role as a registered charity, key players, and the underlying theology which supports its belief system.

The UCKG HelpCentre believes in transparency and welcomes enquiries from anyone with a genuine interest in its work.

We update this guide from time to time as necessary. Further publications are available on a range of topics including the UCKG HelpCentre's approach to prayer, the Victory Youth Group and the church's Training Centres.

### Contact Information

Contact with the UCKG HelpCentre should be made via:

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## Overview

### Key facts

- The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG) was formed in 1977, in Brazil, following a successful evangelistic programme by the Canadian Pentecostal missionary Bishop Robert McAlister.
- The Pentecostal movement started 100 years ago in California and has roots in the Methodist movement in 19<sup>th</sup> century England. It is currently the fastest growing section of the Christian faith.
- Pentecostal churches place great emphasis on the Holy Spirit (which, according to the New Testament, came upon Jesus' disciples seven weeks after the crucifixion and resurrection that we commemorate at Easter). They believe that just as the Holy Spirit empowered the disciples at the first Pentecost, so it can empower and benefit people today.
- UCKG is an international Pentecostal church, active in over 100 countries.
- UCKG was established in the UK as a Christian spiritual HelpCentre and registered as a charity in 1995.
- The objectives of the UCKG HelpCentre are to
  - advance the Christian faith;
  - implement general charitable purposes. In practice it helps well-known charities. It also supports the Blood Pressure Association, prison authorities, detention centres, and local Job Centres.
- The UCKG HelpCentre has 27 HelpCentres in the UK including 16 in the Greater London and the southeast.
- It currently provides weekly meetings in various locations, from Bournemouth to Leeds. These operate from hired venues, are open just a few days a week and offer a smaller range of spiritual and outreach services than a HelpCentre.
- **The UCKG HelpCentre is funded almost entirely by charitable donations.**
- **The UCKG HelpCentre actively seeks converts. It promotes its work through a number of free publications, its website, television and radio broadcasts and the media.**

### What the UCKG HelpCentre has in common with other Christian churches

As shown in the UCKG HelpCentre's 16-point **Statement of Faith**, this church has much in common with other Christian denominations. The full Statement of Faith is given as Appendix II.

## Why go to this church?

The UCKG HelpCentre believes strongly in 'connecting directly to God without religion (i.e. formal religious ceremonies) getting in the way'. Man-made religious traditions and practices found in other Christian denominations are bypassed. This frees members to get close to God in an informal and relaxed environment where they can focus on what He is saying.

The UCKG HelpCentre does not add to or take away from the Bible but makes it relevant and applicable to modern day life, so that it is more meaningful for members and guests.

The church is highly adaptive, listening to and identifying the needs of its members. This, combined with the Pentecostal belief system, means that UCKG HelpCentre members are likely to get more from their church. They benefit from practical help and guidance through the church's many outreach activities as well as prayer, advice, and spiritual support.

## Moral standpoint

The UCKG HelpCentre does not forbid its members from any particular activities believing that free will – the option to choose for one's self – is God-given. However its attitudes are all based on Bible teaching.

- **Substance abuse including Class A and recreational drugs and smoking**  
The UCKG HelpCentre considers that drug abuse, and particularly use of Class A drugs is bad. It offers services to help people with substance abuse problems free themselves from their addictions. Although modern drugs weren't in use in Biblical times, the church considers that God wants us to look after our bodies (described as the temples of God).
- **Alcohol**  
The church does not feel it is a sin to have an occasional social drink however it discourages addiction, which is destructive of happiness, fulfilling lives and health. If anything the church is inclined to promote abstinence, as many people find it difficult to control alcohol usage.
- **Sex and marriage**  
The UCKG HelpCentre supports the traditional Christian teaching that marriage is an exclusive, life-long relationship between one man and one woman and is the proper environment for sex.

In regard to all of the above, the overarching view of the UCKG HelpCentre is that God loves each individual – whatever they do – but never the sin. The church promotes God's advice for living but it believes that ultimately, people have the divine right to choose how they live.

## Serving God and the Community

### Church services

The UCKG HelpCentre holds a minimum of four church services a day at its headquarters in the Rainbow Theatre, Finsbury Park, London N4, and all other HelpCentres.

Services differ from those in some other Christian churches in that prayers are not read. They are spoken aloud and are expected to come from the heart and be spontaneous, relevant for the moment, informal not intimidating, and easy to join in.

### The benefits of prayer

The UCKG HelpCentre clergy and members believe in the efficacy of prayer. However they acknowledge that it can be more effective for some people than others – this depends on the individual, their faith, and attitude towards God and prayer.

### Charitable and outreach activities

Activity	What it does	Who can benefit
24 Hour Helpline	The helpline provides advice and prayer on the end of the phone – 24/7 – from a team of trained and qualified pastors and assistants. It also makes referrals to other more specialised organisations.  The helpline number is 020 7686 6000.	Anyone. Calls range from people enquiring about services at the HelpCentre to distressed members of the community that need urgent emotional assistance.
Training Centre	The training centre provides IT training (CLAIT), English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), other careers and business related support services. New courses are added from time to time.	The courses are open to individuals of all ages and abilities, whether they are facing barriers to education and employment, have been out of education for some time, or need to rebuild their confidence and extend their skills.  Visit <a href="http://utc.uckg.org">utc.uckg.org</a> or call 020 7686 6013 for details of current and upcoming courses.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>What it does</b>	<b>Who can benefit</b>
Victory Youth Group (VYG)	<p>The VYG is the UCKG HelpCentre's youth ministry present in all HelpCentres throughout the UK. Twice-weekly meetings combine fun activities with practical teaching and spiritual development.</p> <p>Activities range from community service to music and testimony-led entertainment in HelpCentres and elsewhere, designed to lead young people away from drug abuse and crime.</p>	Helps young people of all ages to realise their full potential and provides them with stimulating, constructive alternatives to hanging about on the streets.
Lone Parents Group	<p>This group started as a subsection of the VYG to address the growing number of young single mothers, many of them hopeless of their future and ambitions due to the early pregnancy.</p> <p>The group provides support for single mothers with an emphasis on how they can make the most out of their lives.</p>	<p>Single girls from around 17 – 24 years of age, although both younger and older mothers currently participate and are welcome.</p> <p>Attendees do not have to be UCKG HelpCentre members or VYG members.</p>
Rescue of Dignity (ROD)	<p>The group provides support to prisoners throughout the UK both physically and spiritually through prison visits and regular letter writing.</p> <p>Families of inmates also take part of regular support sessions.</p>	Helps inmates to reflect on their spiritual life and provides support on release to help with their integration back into the community.
RAHAB (Removing All Hurt And Abuse) Group	<p>The group was setup to reach out to women who are victims of domestic violence and abuse. It helps women by giving them a chance to express themselves and by providing practical advice on how to rebuild their lives and their families.</p>	All women that are victims of domestic violence and abuse and others that are affected by someone else's victimisation.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>What it does</b>	<b>Who can benefit</b>
Patient Care Group	The group includes men and women that visit patients on a voluntary basis, either at their home or hospital, with the aim of helping to alleviate pain and suffering both spiritually and physically.	People in temporary or permanent care and especially those that in their moment of pain have no one close to give them support and comfort.
Caleb Group	Provides help and support for seniors through advice sessions and home help (e.g. shopping, house cleaning etc) plus social activities such as dinners, dances and outings.	Anyone aged 55 and over who may find themselves isolated or alone or for those who simply enjoy socialising.
English Teachers Group	This group was created to provide free English classes to speakers of other languages at times and in a way that is more relaxed than the professional course setup.	Men and women who perhaps have tried a professional course but failed and those who can't afford one.
Community and Charitable Events	Major community and charitable events and activities are organised at particular times to raise awareness and/or address pressing needs in society.  Past events have included clothes and brick-a-brack collections for homeless charities, female and male cancer awareness days, promotion of adult further education amongst others.	Anyone. Certain events will appeal to specific sections of society, and niche communities.
Blood Pressure Testing	Coinciding with the Blood Pressure Association's (BPA) National Blood Pressure Testing Week, the UCKG HelpCentre has been organising on a yearly basis, teams of volunteer nurses – some HelpCentre members others not – to setup testing stations at various of its HelpCentres providing blood pressure testing and advice to members of the community and passersby.	Anyone. The event is successful in engaging local community members, but often passersby and those working in the vicinity also attend.



## Church Attendance

### Why go to church?

Believers find support and comfort in their faith that does not seem to be available from any other source.

Although many people are happy to live in a highly secular environment, and church attendance in the UK is low, there would appear to be huge numbers searching for some sort of spirituality. The upsurge of New Age thinking and interest in alternative therapies that call for recognition of a Supreme Being, point in this direction, and there is no doubt that many people still turn to churches in times of severe personal difficulty.

Nonetheless, there are parts of the world – Africa is an excellent example – where Christianity is gaining many converts.

### What is different about this church?

The UCKG HelpCentre aims to enable people to get close to God in an informal and relaxed environment where they can focus on what He is saying. The focus is on connecting directly to God and not allowing formal religious ceremonies to get in the way, so services are markedly different from those of other Christian denominations.

The UCKG HelpCentre is committed to making the Bible relevant and applicable to modern day life, so that it is more meaningful for members.

Besides spiritual support and comfort, the church offers a range of practical support activities. It works hard to meet the needs of all age groups and walks of life, and does not shy away from challenging situations.

## The Church as a Business

### Funding

As a registered charity the UCKG HelpCentre operates within Charity Commission guidelines and regulations. Information on its turnover and asset base is published on the Charity Commission's website and full, audited accounts are available on request.

The church is predominantly funded by regular and one-off donations from members and individual sponsors, as with other churches. However members are under no obligation to make donations to the church.

UCKG Training Centres receive support from their local Learning and Skills Councils and other local funders, in some instances.

## Policies

The UCKG HelpCentre has a number of standard policies in place including a:

- Child Protection Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policies covering the Training Centre and the church's employees
- Health & Safety Policy.

A Pastoral Code of Conduct has also been established church-wide to ensure that all pastors adhere to operational and ethical regulations.

## Investors in People

The UCKG Training Centre in Finsbury Park was awarded Investors in People status in 2005, recognising the organisation's commitment to developing its staff to deliver a high standard of service. This was an important milestone for the centre, which provides IT and basic skills training, and careers guidance to people of all ages and abilities.

The assessors highlighted a number of key strengths including the enthusiasm and commitment of all staff to delivering training and their shared vision for the future of the Training Centre. The management was also praised for training and developing the staff.

## The Rainbow Theatre restoration

In 1996, the UCKG HelpCentre acquired the derelict Rainbow Theatre in Finsbury Park. The building met with all the church's structural and capacity requirements with the added benefit of being close to public transport. The UCKG HelpCentre then embarked on a multi-million pound fund-raising and restoration programme to return the Grade II\* listed 1930s cinema to its former glory. The renovation was completed after three years of hard work. Close cooperation with English Heritage ensured that the work respects the building's 1930s architecture.

More recently the Rainbow Theatre has seen significant development to enhance its key workers accommodation and office facilities.

## Peckham HelpCentre

In September 2007 the UCKG HelpCentre launched an appeal to raise £1.6 million by the end of the year to save its Peckham HelpCentre from closure. The 10-year lease had come to an end and the landlord, a property investor, wanted to redevelop the property with shops and flats above. The UCKG HelpCentre's options were to find alternative premises, accept a much smaller space within the new development for an unacceptably high rent, or buy the property.

Through a number of fundraising initiatives – chiefly the Ben Nevis challenge – and with just two weeks to go, the church hit its target and is now the proud owner of the property at 176 Rye Lane, Peckham.

The next challenge was to raise funds to refurbish the entire building by the end of 2008. The refurbishment included a brand new, fully equipped Youth Centre to provide training, encourage academic excellence, and promote sound life skills. IT courses will be available along with mentoring services, careers guidance, and leisure space and activities.

A Christmas Carols appeal last December provided the remaining funding needed for the completion of this project that is now due later this year.

## Exorcism and Healing

### Exorcism

Unlike some Christian churches including Roman Catholics and the Church of England, the UCKG HelpCentre does not practise exorcism. Instead, it offers deliverance services designed to pray for spiritual cleansing from all negativity, which often helps those attending to gain greater peace of mind.

### Healing

The UCKG HelpCentre does not claim to heal people but believes that God can heal through the power of faith. Its Tuesday healing services offer prayers for congregants who may be experiencing physical illness.

The church does not have specialist medical expertise so people who present themselves at church with an illness are ALWAYS advised to seek a medical diagnosis from their GP. Furthermore, anyone claiming to have been healed whilst attending a UCKG HelpCentre service is invariably referred to their doctor because the UCKG

HelpCentre only recognises healings that have been confirmed by a qualified medical practitioner.

There is, however, growing interest in the healing effects of prayer right across the Christian community. The Church of England in its report **A Time to Heal** (2000) encourages every parish church in the UK to adopt the ministry of healing\*.

\*Reference: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/782299.stm>

## Appendix I

### Glossary of Terms

Exorcism – a formal religious ceremony or ritual used with the intention of driving 'evil spirits' out of a person or place which is believed to be possessed by them.

Holy Trinity – defined in Christianity as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Pentecost – commemorates the gift of the Holy Spirit to the apostles of Jesus Christ on the seventh Sunday after Easter.

Protestant – a member or adherent of any denomination of the western Christian church that rejects papal authority and some fundamental Roman Catholic doctrines, and believes in justification by faith.

Soul – who you are, the person, what differentiates you from others, remains with you when you die.

Spirit – that which keeps you alive, your breath of life, what goes back to God when you die, belongs to God.

## Appendix II

### Statement of Faith

We believe in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments in their original writings as fully inspired by God and accept them as the Supreme and Final Authority for faith and life.

We believe in one God, eternally existing in three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We believe that Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born by the Virgin Mary and is true God and true Man.

We believe that God created man in His own image; that man sinned and thereby incurred the penalty of death, physical and spiritual; that all human beings inherit a sinful nature which causes actual transgression involving personal guilt.

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins, a substitution sacrifice according to the Scriptures and that all who believe in Him are justified on the ground of His shed blood.

We believe in the body of resurrection of the Lord Jesus, His ascension into heaven and His present life as our High Priest and Advocate.

We believe in the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory.

We believe that those who repent of their sins, receive the Lord Jesus Christ by faith and hold fast to Him are born again by the Holy Spirit and become children of God.

We believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, empowering believers for service, with accompanying supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit and in fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

We believe in the divinely ordained ministries of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher.

We believe in the resurrection of the just and the unjust, the eternal blessings of the redeemed, and the eternal banishment of those who have rejected salvation.

We believe that the one true Church consists of all those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit; that the local church on earth should take its character from this conception of the spiritual Church and therefore new birth and personal confession of the Christ are essential for church membership.

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ appointed two ordinances: baptism in water and the Lord's Supper, to be observed as acts of obedience and as a continual witness to the facts of the Christian faith; that baptism is the immersion of the

believer in water as a confession of the Lord Jesus in burial and resurrection and that the Lord's Supper is the partaking of the body and blood of our Saviour in remembrance of His sacrifice until He comes.

We believe that divine healing seen in the Old Testament and the New is an integral part of the Gospel.

We believe the Bible teaches that without holiness no man can see God.

We believe in sanctification as a definite, yet progressive work of grace, commencing at the time of the new birth and continuing until the end of one's life.