

The Associate Scheme, St Helen's Bishopsgate

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The Associate Scheme is a 1-2 year apprenticeship programme designed to train full-time Bible teachers, whether church leaders, student workers, youth workers, women's workers, evangelists or missionaries.

As a church, we are committed to the glory of God and the advance of his kingdom. God has said he grows his kingdom through the power of his word (Mark 4, Matthew 13, 2 Timothy 2-4), and so godly Bible-teachers are a vital need.

The aim of the Associate Scheme is to develop the next generation of servant leaders. We are passionate about sending out godly men and women who will teach Jesus' word to his people and his world. We would love you to consider coming to London for a year or two of training with us.

For further information about how the Scheme works, including interviews with Associates and a video giving a glimpse of what goes on, please see our website link above.

How do you decide where to train?

Given the number of alternatives options now available for apprenticeships and training, the decision of where to go can seem bewildering. As a general rule, any 9:38 apprenticeship is an excellent way to test the water for full time ministry, but the style of training and range of ministry offered vary greatly. That means it is well worth asking what will best suit the person God has made you, making the most of your God-given gifts for a lifetime of ministry. Here are three choices to consider:

My local church vs moving elsewhere: there are great advantages in staying at your own church (if they have an apprenticeship set up). Existing relationships mean you can hit the ground running, not needing time to settle into a new church family. Your own pastor, if they know you well, may also be best placed to give you feedback and help to grow from day one. Either way, talking to your church leader is certainly the right first step when considering full-time ministry.

The advantages of moving elsewhere are that you may be able to try ministry focused in an area you particularly want to grow in; a larger scheme may be able to provide more training, or of higher quality; and learning to adjust to a

different church environment can be a great opportunity to grow, as well as a necessary skill for future ministry. Given all that, at St Helen's we aim to fill half of our places each year with those inside the church family, and half from outside.

In-house vs centralized teaching: centralized training schemes (whether an established course like Cornhill, or less formal apprenticeship training run by a group of local churches) have the advantage of being higher quality, by pooling resources and having dedicated teachers.

That said, in-house training benefits from being very closely tied to the ministry of the local church, and offers more chances for interaction and follow up during the week, maximizing the integration between study and service, theology and ministry. At St Helen's we are privileged to enjoy the best of both worlds, basing almost all of our training in-house, but with three experienced staff members dedicated full-time to teaching the Associates. The St Helen's church family is deeply committed to God's word being taught well, and their generous commitment enables us to train to a high standard within a local church context.

Church-based vs parachurch: for a number of students, a year with Relay, Crosslinks, Latinlink or another mission organization is a real possibility. Relay in particular can be a great opportunity to carry on university-based evangelism in a familiar context.

The downside of an apprenticeship based in a parachurch organization is simply the lack of seeing behind the scenes of a local church, and doing ministry in that God-given context. The church is God's master plan for the universe (Ephesians 3:10), and his strategy for the truth being upheld in the world (1 Timothy 3:14-16), so church-based apprenticeships have a real advantage. That said, at St Helen's a number of our ex-Associates did Relay first, before coming onto the Scheme, and a number go on to work with UCCF or mission agencies. Again, it will depend on the person with the particular gifts and opportunities God has given at this stage, which is something we discuss with applicants at interview.

The distinctive focus of our Scheme

The central distinctive of the Associate Scheme is our focus on the Bible. That may not sound like a distinctive, as surely every evangelical church is Bible-based in their training? But our training is not just based on the Bible, but focused on it – particularly on understanding it rightly, learning to read God's word for ourselves.

Our focus on the Bible can be seen by what we leave out. We don't teach Greek or Hebrew, we don't teach church history, we only teach a small amount of theology (in the systematic sense), we don't spend much time on different pastoral issues or ministry scenarios and how to address them, we only give a small amount of time to contemporary hot topics on the church scene. Why? Because we believe there is nothing more important than hearing God speak. Indeed, without hearing God clearly, all the other tasks of ministry are based on a shaky foundation.

Our Bible focus can also be seen by the time we devote to learning to read and rightly handle of God's word. As associates spend over 20 hours a week studying the Bible themselves in depth. After this personal study, their conclusions are then tested, debated and refined in group workshops, where together we work our way through individual Bible books. For many this is a highlight, and we certainly believe that it is key to the long-term health of the church. If you want to hear more how we train and why, please see our website.

In all this our aim is to equip Associates for a lifetime of feeding themselves and their congregations with the sweet truth of God. We believe further ministry experience will quickly help them pick up pastoral wisdom; Bible college can fill in the languages, church history and doctrine. But the priority skill is learning to read the Bible for themselves, to think and speak clearly and Biblically. Our hope is that Associates won't just learn 'the St Helen's line' on a particular topic, but will mine Scripture to find answers from God, growing their own convictions; we pray they won't just learn answers to the issues of today, but learn how to think critically and biblically, so they can answer the issues tomorrow will bring; and so we aim to give them not just content from the Bible, but the skills and attitudes to keep growing and being reformed by God long after they've left us.

All that means we don't offer the breadth of training that some apprenticeships do. After a year or two with us you won't have all the answers as to what the Bible says on various topics, or how to approach different issues in ministry. But it is our aim, hope, and prayer that you will know how to go about finding those answers in the Bible. And in five, ten years be reading it, applying it, and communicating it with increasing depth, clarity and conviction.

Who are we looking for?

As with any apprenticeship, we are looking for:

- Gospel hearted men and women who love God and the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ
- People committed to the Bible as God's word, believing it to be our supreme authority and eager to know how to study and teach it better
- People willing to serve and take on a variety of responsibilities and tasks around the church
- Those with the Christian maturity and gifts to teach the Bible in groups and one-to-one

Yet distinctive to the Associate Scheme are our two different entry points. Both share our commitment to thorough training in Bible-handling, but are pitched for people at different stages:

- The Foundation year is for recent graduates, who have relatively little experience of ministry, but real potential. Started in 2009, this enables us to take gifted people looking to take their first steps in gospel work after university, even if they haven't had a huge amount of training or involvement previously. The Foundation year is similar to many of the year 9:38 church apprenticeships, and can stand alone as taster for ministry whilst providing basic training. But we hope that many Foundation year Associates will choose to continue into the main scheme, either immediately or after a break, for further training in full time gospel work.
- The First Year is for those with a number of years of ministry experience. Many of these Associates will have worked in secular jobs, done previous apprenticeships, or already been heavily involved in church service. We have even had ministers after Bible college, looking for further training in practical ministry and Bible-handling.

The flexibility of these options means we can cater to, and appropriately stretch, a wide range of individuals. Applications are made to the Scheme centrally, and then the appropriate entry point is discussed at interview.

Some of the benefits of joining St Helen's

Large church, small church, city centre, rural, urban priority, suburban, Anglican, free: different types of church provide different experiences for their apprentices and suit different types of people. There are enormous advantages of being an apprentice at a large city-centre church like St Helen's:

- God has graciously given us a large ministry among people like students, recent graduates and internationals, and all these are ideal people for apprentices to minister to. This gives an opportunity to learn and practice basic ministry principles in a conducive environment before having to apply them to a wider variety of contexts.
- In his goodness, God has given us the resources and unity in the gospel which means we can do ministry to a very high standard and with a 100% focus on the thing that matters, the gospel. This means the ministry they will be involved with is an excellent model for apprentices as they learn how to do ministry. The large staff team also has a wealth of wisdom and breadth of experience from which to learn.
- Training alongside a team of likeminded peers is a real privilege. We have three year groups on the Associates scheme, with 8-12 people on each. These teams quickly form great friendships that can last a lifetime, and discover the huge blessing of being able to talk through issues that arise from their study or ministry. It is also an excellent opportunity to learn teamwork, appreciating others with different gifts, strengths and weaknesses.
- God has also graciously given us the resources to be able to invest heavily in training and discipling our apprentices over the last 11 years, and if you are thinking of being a full-time Bible teacher for the rest of your life then it is essential to be trained as well as possible so your ministry really does bring glory and praise to God.

Some of the drawbacks of joining St Helen's

There are significant disadvantages to being an apprentice in a church like St Helen's:

- The size of the church means some people find it intimidating initially. Friends are available in plenty, the problem is how to find them among the crowd.
- The ministry is not always typical of most other churches, so apprentices won't see as wide a range of ministry and won't learn what is and is not possible in a more 'normal' church.
- London is an inconvenient and exhausting place to live, with Associates having to commute a mile or two to church and often having to travel across town to meet people.

However, there are two perceived disadvantages about being an apprentice at a church like St Helen's that are not, in fact, true and need correcting:

- Many people think that because we have lots of resources there is less need and they would be better used in a less privileged church. We do have great resources, but we also have huge opportunities for the gospel, with many people coming wanting to hear about Jesus and to grow in their knowledge and love of him, and we badly need labourers to work in this harvest field with us or the opportunities will go to waste.

· Secondly, some people are concerned that because we are an Anglican church we only train people who want to go into ministry in the Church of England. In fact, St Helen's is not at all typical of most Anglican churches and a significant proportion of the congregation (and even some of the leadership) are more free church than Anglican. It is our great joy that denominational differences are never an issue and that many previous apprentices and staff now work in free churches. We see our task as training servant-leaders who will teach the Bible to God's church, regardless of which denomination or lack of denomination they profess.

To find out more about the ministry opportunities and training we provide, or to download an application form, please see our website: **Interviews begin from November.**

Pray for 9:38

The work of 9:38 won't happen if we don't commit it to our great God.

[Click for prayer points »](#)

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