

Exploring creativity

Art and creativity play an important role at **The Gate** in Reading



Art is used in a variety of ways at The Gate, a Baptist church in Reading. From pictures painted during worship, art presented prominently in the church, hosting community art groups and art sessions for the congregation, and painting prophetic images in the street, art and creativity play an important role in the life of the church. When the church's pastor Yinka Oyekan was Baptist Union President last year, one of his focuses was art in evangelism. He encouraged people to tap into the creative energy in their community.

'There are no clear statistics as to how many people are artistic but many would say it would range from between 20 per cent to as high as 70 per cent. Whatever the actual figure, it's a large proportion of your community', he wrote on his Presidential website, adding that church member Jenny Whitfield and her team have created an artistic community within The Gate 'which has filled the church with new life and energy and has broadened our appeal'.

Jenny is a nursery teacher who, much to her surprise, felt God was calling her to paint at the front of the church.

"Painting is one way for people to build their own relationship with God and to explore their creativity.

"I grew up in a church that didn't value art or creativity. But I've learnt God wants the whole of me to be expressed. That's the gift God has given me, and I want to incorporate that, for God's glory.

I've found that pictures are powerful – they can speak to people in different ways.

And in every picture God has deepened my faith."



Photos courtesy of The Gate