



Is it in a Forest?

It can be, but not necessarily. You can actually hold a Forest Church Session anywhere (our training was, in part, in a car park!). At the moment, we will be hosting it in community gardens, but we hope to expand to offer other sites as time goes on. We stuck with the name because many people understand the concept of 'Forest School' and 'nature church' would be a bit of a mouthful!

Is it suitable for people with different abilities or for who movement might be restricted in some way?

Absolutely. We really don't want there to be any barriers to coming along. There are spaces to sit, the paths are accessible to most parts of the garden. We recognise that everyone's needs are different, though, so feel free to contact Lorraine Jones if there is something more specific you would like to discuss. You can contact her on 07850 631168. The Church buildings we go to afterwards are fully accessible.

Will it take place in all weathers?

There is something special about walking or sitting and listening to the rain, isn't there? We embrace the weather in all its glory, so we do suggest you dress appropriately! We will have some waterproof ponchos and some golf umbrellas for rain if we get caught out, but do come prepared for needing suncream and wellies in the same day! As a general rule, the National Trust will only close if there are 50mph winds, so we are adopting that attitude. The Haxby and Acomb Community Gardens do have a shelter, so we can use those if required. We will adapt our activities if need be, though, or finish a little early and decamp back to the Church for a hot drink!

Is it suitable for children?

It is suitable for all ages and abilities. People will enter the activities as they wish to or are able to and they will be designed to be flexible. We have brightly coloured rope to define the space so the children know the boundaries where they are allowed to roam. They do, of course, remain their 'grown up's' responsibility while they are in a Forest Church session. Haxby Garden has a pond and both Acomb and Heworth gardens are next to a main road, so parents will need to be aware of the usual dangers of being in a green space.

I am part of the LGBTQIA+ community. Will I be find a home here?

Of course. And it breaks our heart that you even have to ask. At Forest Church we believe that everyone is sacred and is to be respected and is deserving of love. That's it – no 'ifs', no 'buts', no coconuts.

Can I/my child get baptised my child in a Forest Church Session?

Absolutely. Our Ministers would be totally up for that.

I/a member of my family are neurodiverse. Will I like Forest Church?

Cool – welcome to the club! A number of our team are neurodiverse or have colleagues/family members who are. In fact, the appeal of Forest Church is that it is more likely to work for those who need more flexibility in how they worship. While we are aware of some of the typical traits, characteristics and difficulties which are often associated with neurodiversity, we do recognise that we are all individuals and that our particular combo of characteristics is unique to each of us. If you prefer, get in touch so we can chat it through and make any adjustments or arrangements necessary help you feel at home.

Is it a bit 'woo woo'?

Don't worry, no-one is going to make you hug a tree (though I would encourage to give 'tree listening' a try sometime!). Whether you describe yourself as 'a bit of a hippy' or whether that is totally not your bag, we say yes to it all. It has its roots (excuse the pun) in the Celtic Spiritual tradition so Forest Church is taking us back to worshipping outdoors and having a deeply held respect for nature. As a general rule, we take what we are trying to do seriously, but not ourselves seriously. So hug a tree if you want to, or don't. Do it your way.

I don't have a faith/I have a different faith/I consider myself spiritual rather than Christian. Can I come to forest Church?

The way we see it, we all bring wisdom to the table, whatever our beliefs and background. Let's face it, the world needs as much wisdom it can get, so let's learn from each other and work together to make the world that little bit better. We are a Christian tradition, so we will lean on that quite a bit, so bear that in mind, but no-one will be hitting you over the head with a Bible. Come along and take part in any way you feel that holds your own integrity, knowing that you will be warmly welcomed.

How do I get there?

1. Haxby & Wigginton Community Garden. The number 1 bus stops straight outside the Methodist Church. It also has a cycle rack. The community garden is a 3 minute walk from the church, heading towards Wigginton, though if you need to park directly outside the garden, that is totally fine. The Whole Life Community Garden is at the back of the Doctor's surgery (Haxby Group Practice) and is well signposted when you get there. The Village, Haxby, YO32 2JJ.

2. Acomb Methodist Community Garden is down the right hand side of the Methodist Church. It's on Front Street, Acomb, York, YO24 3BX. The number 1 bus will take you to Acomb, and it is then a 3 minutes walk. Car parking is limited, so please park in Morrisons car park, which is free. You will then have a 5 minute walk. If you need accessible parking, this is available in front of the church.
3. Glen Gardens is on East Parade YO31 7YB and is a 5 minute walk away from Heworth Methodist Church. It is on the 11, 25 and coastliner bus routes which you can pick up at The Stonebow in the town centre. It is approximately a 15 minute walk from the town centre. Parking is limited at the gardens and also by the Methodist Church. If you are feeling energetic, it is a 35 minute walk from Monks Cross Park and Ride (YO32 9JU), or the number 9 park and ride bus will take you a 6 minute walk away.

Are there toilets close by?

The closest toilets are at Heworth/Haxby & Wigginton Methodist Churches which are 3-5 minutes' walk. Acomb Methodist has an accessible toilet that is tucked away in the garden itself as well as toilets in the church building.

I have dietary needs, will I be looked after?

Absolutely you will. Among the team are vegans, coeliacs, allergy sufferers and intolerances to all sorts of weird and wonderful things, so we are totally used to making sure we make food that is flexible to accommodate these needs. We always find that a healthy dose of paranoia in the food prep goes a long way (!!) and we are very mindful of cross contamination. Things like jacket potatoes and wraps (including GF wraps) with different fillings are the simplest way of catering for everyone, with things clearly labelled with packets left out to allow folk to double check ingredients. However, you are more than welcome to bring your own food if you feel more comfortable and no-one will bat an eyelid. Please do talk to Lorraine or any of the team leaders to have a conversation if you prefer. There is always a non-dairy alternative to milk available for hot drinks.