

## Bishop's Statement for St John at Hampstead Church.

St John at Hampstead has an iconic presence in the middle of Hampstead, and we have served this diverse community over many centuries. The Church building, churchyard and people all point towards God's interaction with the local community, and speak loudly of a local church which has, at its root, a missionary zeal for our locality, a desire to offer good and thoughtful teaching and preaching, and a desire to offer a pastoral place of inclusive welcome and radical hospitality.

Understandably, given the nature of the sudden departure of the previous incumbent, following a disciplinary process, this vacancy has been marked by, at times, significant turbulence. I'm grateful that the lay and ordained leadership teams have continued to strive to restore stability in these circumstances.

As part of your discernment, I would ask that you pay some attention to these four areas, alongside those raised in the parish Statement of Needs.

Firstly, I am looking for a new priest who will focus upon developing healthy models for church growth. There is a great scope to work with the Senior Staff of the Diocese to enable this growth. The new priest must take seriously the need to discern new forms of Church presence and worship, develop our ecclesiological ecology, and be excited by the possibility of new forms of church. The Gregory Centre exists to support any Incumbent, and the Grow Course will be an obvious way to begin this interaction.

Secondly, the congregation is drawn from people from a number of different socio-economic communities, ages and cultures. But, as yet, none of the Edmonton churches are culturally or demographically competent, including Hampstead Parish Church. The new priest will need to oversee the development of a safe church, where racial diversification of leadership (including potential ordinands) and a heart for children and young people is critical.

Thirdly, my hope is that discipleship and teaching the faith will be central to all church's life. The new priest will be a lifelong learner and pass on their love of learning to the wider church. They will oversee small groups within the life of the church and also they will help the church to understand the impact and importance of digital discipleship and a digital presence, as we seek to be a church for every Londoner, within a very mobile community.

Finally, there is the need for creative engagement with other churches within the Deanery in a time of significant change. This parish has a wonderful school, and local clergy who are keen to develop partnerships in many ways. Currently, there are a number of vacancies across the Deanery, and I am looking for clergy who will help us think creatively about the way in which we serve the very diverse communities across the London Borough of Camden, especially relating to the injustices that exist. For example, the average life expectancy differs within Camden by approximately 18 years between the residents of Hampstead and the inner urban estates of, for example Somers Town. It is therefore clear that in order for each church in the Deanery to thrive, I am looking for clergy who are able to respect other local churches and pray for each church to thrive in a spirit of generosity. This means that Chapter and Synod will need to be high priority for the new priest, as they play their role in developing a cohesion for our mission across Camden and across the Area.

These challenges, if faced with enthusiasm, along with the vision set out in the Mission Action Plan and the Diocesan Vision 2030, offer an exciting and rewarding ministry for the right priest.

+Robert Edmonton  
May 2023