

# ST JAMES' ISLINGTON

Parish Profile 2024



If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

(1 Corinthians 13.1, 4 and 13)

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# INTRODUCTION



St James' church is a haven of tranquillity near to the bustle of Upper St and Essex Road in Islington. Our congregation is committed, reflective of the diverse community in the parish and welcoming.

Our worship is in the liberal, catholic tradition of the Church of England and centred around the celebration of the Eucharist. The church and the church hall and the wonderful vicarage play an important part in the parish – concerts are held in the church, an outreach programme called 'Pack-up' provides practical support to the most disadvantaged, there is an active Sunday school.

But, as with any parish in 21st century Britain, there is much for a new priest to do – he or she can help reconnect those parishioners for whom the Church was something more relevant to their grandparents than them, with a spiritual and ethical quest, inspired by Christ.

We want to work closely with our neighbouring churches, while retaining our identity and style of worship and continuing to encourage all who live in our part of Islington to see St James' as "their" church and to feel that they will always be welcome.

We are looking for a priest who through their spiritual example, through working closely with the community and with the Diocese of London and through empathy and gentleness will be able to succeed in making St James' a real force in the hearts and minds of our parishioners. Our key message is that we would love you to explore applying for the role with us at St James' and we would welcome the experience and talent that you would bring. There is a lot to do, but you would be supported by friends, within the congregation, in the Diocese and neighbouring churches, and in the wider community.

In the next few pages, we describe the church itself, the church hall and the vicarage; the nature of our worship; the role the church plays in the community; and the characteristics of the parish. We then describe the challenges our new priest will face and the qualities we are looking for.

In the run-up to writing this Profile, we surveyed the congregation and others who use the church – much of what we say is supported by the survey and the quotes that you will see in the document are drawn from it. A summary of the findings can be found [here](#).

We haven't put everything we could have into the main body of the profile. Further detail is included in the links and we hope that if you are interested in coming to St James' you will read both the main text and all the linked material.



# ABOUT ST JAMES' ISLINGTON



## The Church

If someone is exploring the streets close to the Regent's Canal or getting a coffee from the ever-popular Pophams, they will go past St James' and they might be moved to take a look inside. They may well be surprised - the perfectly nice 19th century church looks pretty, but, if they go in and take a seat, they will feel the peace and spirituality of our church.

And unusually they will be able to go inside - unlike many churches, ours is open every day.

The church was built in 1875. The land on which the original church was built was owned by St Paul's Cathedral and was acquired in 1453 by William Lambe, who became the Master of the Clothworkers' Company. The association between the Clothworkers' and the church lasted until the 1980s when they set up a trust to benefit the church.

*"People love coming into the holy place, even if they are not religious. The feel of St James' is very special"*

The church is in good decorative order and has a newly restored and magnificent organ. More mundanely, it is well-equipped with kitchenette, toilets and audio-visual equipment, including a screen for showing films and a camera which allows our services to be streamed.

There is also a church hall, 100 yards from the church, which is similarly in good order and well-used. It is a relatively modern facility, built in 1995, and forms the ground floor of a residential block, built by a housing association. It hosts various church functions and the Sunday School and our community initiative, Pack-up (see more on this below), but also provides a service to others in the parish – for example, the Women’s Institute, Alcoholics Anonymous, yoga, ballet and ballroom dancing classes.

This produces valuable income for the church. The church office is also located there. The hall also has good facilities – toilets, a kitchen and a flat for the caretaker.

More detail on the church and the church hall can be found [here](#).

The vicar will be provided with a home in the Parish. The current vicarage is a large house that overlooks Arlington Square and has a beautiful garden. Future arrangements are being discussed and the successful applicant will be fully involved in these discussions.

Where the church, the church hall and the current vicarage sit relative to each other is shown below.



## The Parish

The parish covers a small area, only a third of a square mile, and sits east of Islington’s Upper Street and south of the Essex Road.

It is home to 12,000 people. The population is slightly younger than the average in London. The ethnic mix is predominantly white (75% according to the 2021 census), with black and Asian accounting for 9% and 8% respectively. 43% identify as Christian, 31% as of no religion and 7% as Muslim.

While there are some very valuable houses within the parish, overall, it is quite deprived – only 15% of Church of England parishes are more deprived than ours. It is a residential area and there is a mix of owner-occupier, private rented and social housing. There are two large social housing estates, the Popham Estate and the Packington Estate. The latter has been extensively redeveloped and now has a very attractive mix of privately-owned and social housing.

There are five schools in the parish (three primary, one secondary, one catering for children with special needs). Prior to Covid, the church had a more active relationship with these schools. We consider reaching out to the schools to be an important task for our new priest.

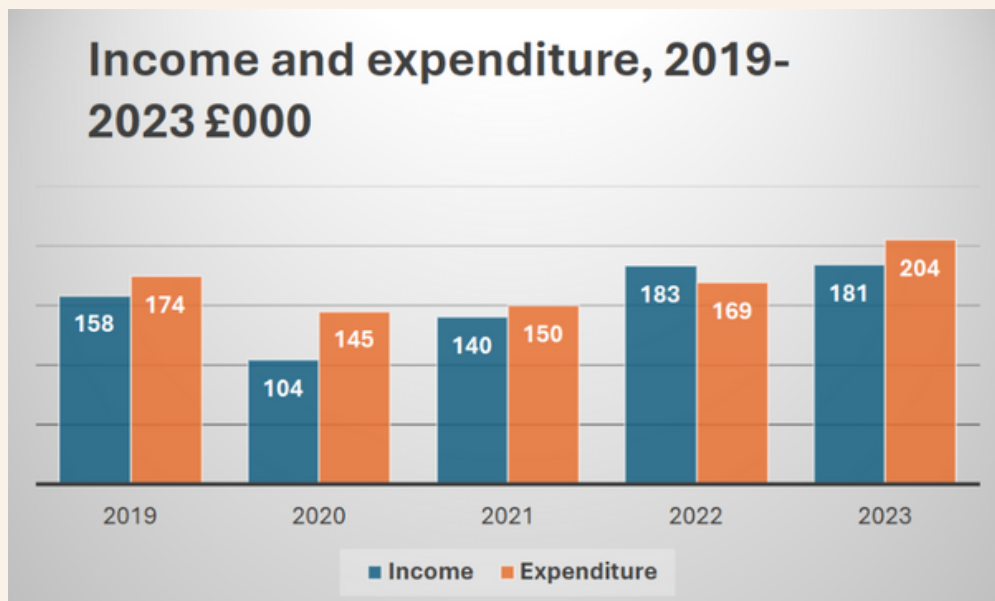
Additional information about the parish is included [here](#)



## Finances

What of our finances? A detailed picture of our position is available [here](#).

In outline we are relatively comfortable with respect to our cash and other assets, and we pay our full contribution to the Common Fund, but in four out of the last five years we have had an annual deficit. In rough numbers, the total costs last year were £204,000 ((including our Common Fund Contribution, but excluding the cost of the organ project) . The amount we raised from renting church facilities (around £78,000) and from the contributions of our congregation (around £49,000) offsets these costs. In addition, the Church is supported by two trusts, the William Lambe Trust, set up by the Clothworkers for the exclusive benefit of St James, and the Cloudesley Trust, which (among other activities) supports the maintenance of churches in Islington. In 2023, the deficit was about £23,000 and the chart below shows how this compares with previous years.



We have above £300,000 in cash and investments. In addition, the asset value of our leasehold on the church hall is significant. However, we need to find ways of either increasing income or reducing costs to avoid the gradual erosion of our healthy asset base.



# KEEPING FAITH ALIVE

How we  
worship and  
the role of the  
church in the  
community

We asked respondents whether St James' Church helps people grow in their faith - 59% agreed or strongly agreed.

Quotes from respondents included:

"When I first attended St James' Church, I had very little religious background and didn't know where this new journey would lead me. Through supporting me in allowing myself to discover my faith, I have since had quite a journey!"

"There are regular services, but provision is limited re prayer groups, meditation, Bible study and other opportunity for religious discussion."

"Feels like a committed congregation. Long-timers and newcomers alike give the air of being serious about faith, the liturgy and prayer."

## Worship & Community

Our worship at St James' is in the liberal catholic tradition of the Church of England, centred on the weekly celebration of the Eucharist.

Currently, we have a spoken Mass on Sundays at 8am, with a small but loyal congregation of about 10 people. Our main celebration is the 10am Parish Mass on Sunday, including hymns and organ music, as well as the sermon, prayers and readings. Although the template for this 10am Mass remains constant and reflects the seasons of the Church's year, the style and emphasis of the worship varies. Under the previous Incumbent we had monthly "all age" services, and children who have been meeting together elsewhere come back into church for Communion. Under Covid we started streaming the 10am service for online viewing and we have continued ever since. . Examples can be seen on YouTube at [St James Church, Islington N1 – YouTube](#)

The congregation for our 10am Mass varies in size but averages about 30 to 40 adults with a group of (mainly young) children (numbering anything between 8 and 15) attending the service or Sunday School. We had six baptisms in the church in 2022 and twelve funerals and these services generally swell the congregation's size substantially.

The previous Vicar also offered a spoken Mass on two weekday mornings. This has not continued during the Interregnum, but weekday services would be very welcome in the future. And we have continued to keep the church open on weekdays for private prayer and reflection. This is much appreciated. There are toys available at the side of the church, and on some weekdays a parent will come in to sit peacefully while their child plays with the toys.

A lot of our worship involves members of the congregation – for example, in readings, intercessions and as eucharistic ministers. The way in which the services are structured – the choice of music and prayers, the issues addressed in the sermons – has also built the sense of involvement within the congregation.

And our congregation is diverse: we reflect the ethnic mix in Islington and, as evidenced by the quotes taken from our survey, we have members of the congregation who did not grow up in the Christian tradition. What we lack, however, is enough young people – we have some families attending church, but in general the age profile of the congregation is older than we would wish.

Under the previous vicar we had a popular Sunday School, which welcomed all children, whether or not their parents were regular members of the congregation. We are giving priority to maintaining activities for children during the Vacancy, and we shall look forward to working with our new priest in expanding and building on our engagement with children of all ages.

"I am a relative newcomer to the area. I have not attended any services but, when I have attended other events, I have been warmly welcomed so that I feel part of the community centred on the church."





What we have described so far is the way in which St James' serves its congregation – but a church also needs to reach out beyond itself and bring the message of Christ to the broader community. Three ways we broadcast our message are mentioned here:

## Music at St James'

Music is integral to our worship at St James' – while we have only an occasional small voluntary choir, we have a cantor and a professional organist. The organ has been restored (it was rededicated in May 2023) and is a great asset for the church. We also have a Bechstein grand piano. We are very hopeful that our new vicar will develop further the role of music within our services, particularly our 10am Sunday mass. But music is also a way of connecting with our broader community.

The church is heavily used by rehearsing musicians – it has excellent acoustics and is particularly valued by chamber groups, singers, and string quartets. As well as being a source of income, this brings people into the church who might not otherwise come. Some of the groups who regularly use the church feel part of our extended church family.

The Islington Proms (a series of concerts and other events) have been hosted in the church for over a decade. The programming of the Proms is designed to have broad appeal and we very much hope the church's support for the Islington Proms will continue.

More detail on music at St James' can be found [here](#).

TENTH ANNIVERSARY  
**ISLINGTON PROMS**  
SEPTEMBER 2022



# 2022 YOUTH PROM

Performances by the next generation of highly talented young Islington based singers and instrumentalists. The concert will include eleven viola players performing Queen's famous anthem, 'Bohemian Rhapsody'.



## Bell Ringing

We have a light ring of six bells, installed in 1989, and our team of bellringers regularly perform prior to the 10 o'clock mass on Sundays (and practise on Tuesdays). This is a wonderful way to bring us harmoniously to the attention of the wider community – several respondents to our survey (see (1) for more results of the survey) mentioned how much they appreciate this aspect of what we do. More detail on bellringing at St. James can be found [here](#).



## Pack-Up

Pack-up, based in the church hall, was set up in 2015 to give food to the street community and those affected by food poverty. It provides a three-course meal, toiletries and some food bank items to the community on Mondays. It is staffed entirely by volunteers, some of whom are churchgoers and some not, and is sponsored and supported by St. James'.





# LOOKING AHEAD...

We see the main challenges we need to address in future as being:

## **Keeping St. James' relevant**

As we have described above, there are 12,000 people living in the parish and the adult congregation for our 10am Parish Mass on Sunday averages a little more than 30, with others coming to events during the week or coming in during the day. Although being a successful vicar is not defined by numbers, the most fundamental challenge for our new priest is the same as that of the Church of England as a whole – being seen as relevant to people's lives at a time when many people don't think at all about religion, except fleetingly when there are the major religious festivals, or at key points in the lifetime of their families

## **Attracting young people**

Although we do have young people participating vigorously in the church, the congregation's demographic skew is older than the parish's. Reaching out to young people is a specific priority

## **Strengthening community links**

Related to this need to attract more young people, our survey indicated that some people feel the bonds between different parts of the community (Christian or otherwise) in the parish have been weakened since Covid. We work well and closely with the local ARC Community Centre, but (as mentioned above) our relationship with local schools is not as close as we would like.

## **Working with the Diocese, supporting the '2030 Vision' and getting closer to neighbouring churches.**

The Diocese of London provides support to the parish and the vicar in numerous ways. We are keen that the new priest works collegiately with the Diocese and in particular takes on board the '2030 Vision', authored by the Diocese. Ambitions articulated in the 2030 Vision include Confident Discipleship, Compassionate Communities and Creative Growth and these in turn are translated into priorities – we should focus on creating a younger, safer, and more racially just church. All of this is in the service of the vision itself – 'for every Londoner to encounter the love of God in Christ'. We want our new priest to support the vision enthusiastically and to be a part of the wider mission of the Diocese.

We also want to work more closely with our neighbouring churches, in Islington and beyond. We are open to proposals for joint work on mission – particularly with young people – and we see practical advantages in sharing some administrative resources and expertise.





# The Person Specification

**THE ESSENTIAL  
QUALITIES** WHICH WE  
ARE SEEKING IN OUR  
NEW VICAR OR PRIEST-  
IN-CHARGE, ARE THAT HE  
OR SHE...

- Is a spiritual and pastoral leader, skilled in preaching and teaching, who will enable us to grow as a worshipping community
- Has empathy, gentleness and sensitivity
- Has skills in motivating, delegating and teamwork – good at bringing the best out of others and finding areas where collaboration makes sense
- Has energy, resilience, and an ability to manage and harness enthusiasm.
- Has a commitment to serve the wider community.
- Has experience of working with young people and willingness to support initiatives to engage with and involve children and young people
- Will provide wise and diligent stewardship of all the parish's assets and resources
- Will work collaboratively with the PCC
- Is committed to good safeguarding practice and to the development of a healthy safeguarding culture
- Is committed to racial justice and inclusivity.

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**IT WOULD BE DESIRABLE**  
IF HE OR SHE ALSO...

- Had a willingness and enthusiasm to promote any new initiatives that build the faith of the congregation and bring in more from the community: for example, bible classes, pilgrimages, harvest supper
- Supported the role of music in worship and outreach and had a willingness to encourage and maintain music at St James
- Had a strong understanding and experience of church governance
- Was willing to collaborate with neighbouring churches

## In Summary...

We hope this profile has given a clear sense of the church itself, its wonderful facilities, our liturgical approach, our congregation, our place in the community and our aspirations for the future. Above all else, we want a new priest who will reintroduce to our community a sense of the sacred and the spiritual through Christ.

### **St James' Parish Office**

**Church Hall, Prebend St, London N1 8PF**

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### **St James' Church Vicarage**

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### **[St James' Islington Website](#)**

### **[St James' Islington Parish Profile - Further Reading.](#)**

“Come unto me all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”  
(Matthew 11.28-30)

