

Bishop's Statement for the post of Vicar of Clayton

Our vision in the Diocese of Leeds is about confident clergy equipping confident Christians to live and tell the good news of Jesus Christ. In appointing to every post, we seek people who have a joyful and confident faith which has inspired a track record of church growth, both numerically and spiritually.

St John's Clayton is a single church parish within a clearly defined large urban village in West Bradford. It has a growing population through new housing developments. St John's has strong lay leadership and associated structures. It was designated a Resourcing Church in 2019 and is receiving Strategic Development Funding from 2019-2027 to support revitalisation work in west Bradford. This funding is providing Operations Management support to the Resourcing Churches, and a series of 2-year part-time Mission Apprentices to develop areas of mission and ministry. In return, the Resourcing Churches committed to share resources generously with neighbouring parishes and to send people graciously to help revitalise and plant churches.

For St John's, a key Resourcing Church objective was outreach to the Thornaby estate within the parish. However, in 2021 the focus shifted to offering support to the nearby parishes of St Peter's Allerton and St Saviour's Fairweather Green as part of an Interim Ministry scheme. The Vicar of Clayton became Interim Priest in Charge of the two parishes, and an Interim Associate Minister was recruited. Progress was hindered by a number of factors, not least the pandemic, and then the retirement of St John's Vicar. Nevertheless, good work continued, led by the Interim Associate Minister and supported (since July 2023) by a training curate and the neighbouring parish of St James Thornton. As part of St John's role as a Resourcing Church, it is expected that the church will continue to work with the Area Bishop and Archdeacon to support church revitalisation and planting in its part of Bradford.

St John's church is well-maintained, with excellent and well-used community rooms, and a recently reordered chancel area, which gives more flexibility for leading worship. There is a very good relationship with the Clayton St John's C of E Primary School and a growing relationship with Clayton Village School. The congregation is recovering well from the impacts of the pandemic, now growing with new people as well as returners, not least families and children (especially at Messy Church). A new worshipping community has also been established at The Avenue Nursing Home.

A key challenge for the incoming vicar will be to continue building up the "home" congregations, especially with children, young people and families, and to re-engage St John's more fully with its role and agreed goals as a Resourcing Church. From the perspective of the Episcopal area we therefore see four particular priorities for the new vicar:

- a) To sustain and develop a 'mixed ecology' of effective forms of mission, ministry and styles of worship to grow a wider diversity of ages in the church, and especially with families, young people and children. This must include reaching out to those moving into the new housing developments in the area.
- b) To continue building up confident lay ministry, both in depth and numbers. This will include developing pathways for evangelism and discipleship, encouraging new people into leadership and inhabiting a role as a strategic leader of leaders in a way

which enables others to flourish. Hence, the incoming vicar will need excellent teaching, pastoral, communication, team building and team leadership skills.

- c) To lead and enable St John's in its role as a Resourcing Church, working with the Area Bishop and Archdeacon to realise agreed goals around church revitalisation and planting.
- d) To creatively develop and strengthen active and visible relationships in the parish, both personally as an individual and also through the congregation. (S)he should be able to engage strategically with the life of the community, fostering excellent relationships (for example) with the local schools, uniformed organisations, other churches and community organisations. I expect her/him to contribute with others to a shared vision for Clayton in particular, and West Bradford more widely.

The Deanery of Outer Bradford is comprised of parishes similar to Clayton, many of whom are experimenting with mixing new approaches to worship and mission alongside inherited patterns. The new Vicar will therefore find a group of creative and supportive colleagues in the Deanery chapter, all of whom will be deeply familiar with the joys and challenges that each other faces. Hence, the new post holder will be expected to work with a spirit of generosity in sharing wisdom and insights about ministry within the Deanery of Outer Bradford and across the Episcopal Area.

+Toby Bradford, 28 May 2024