



THE BISHOP OF HERTFORD

The Right Reverend Dr Jane Mainwaring

Thank you for looking at the profile for the Parish of Norton. This parish fell vacant following the departure of the previous incumbent which was very sudden, not allowing for good endings for the parish or incumbent.

The Rural Dean and I have worked with the parish to understand what led to this sudden departure, undertaking a listening exercise within the parish, and working with the PCC to identify areas which the parish might wish to consider giving some attention to in preparation for the appointment of a new incumbent. This has been a difficult time for the parish; it is to their credit that there has been a high level of engagement and a willingness to self-reflect and to ask what needs to change going forward.

When we undertook the listening exercise, we did so with the intention of understanding what had happened and what might need to change in the light of events but deliberately did not seek to place blame on any individual, including the previous incumbent. This has been difficult for some as they've felt that all the blame has been placed on the church. In any situation where there is a break down in relationships there are always aspects which all involved need to own.

The results of the listening exercise were shared first with the PCC and then with the wider congregation at the APCM in 2023. At the APCM a number of PCC members stood down and new people joined. The impact of this has been that the different congregations, including the congregation which meets at St Nicholas church and the former members of St Michael's church, are now represented on the PCC and this is regarded as a very positive development. Through the current membership, all the different groups which run in the church are also represented.

The PCC has done some work with an outside facilitator to aid the council to work in a more cohesive way. This work continues with three more sessions planned, the final one being timed for when the new incumbent is in post. The outcomes already seen through this work are a determination by PCC members to get to know each other as people in a greater way, to build strong relationships, and to discuss things well, even when opinions may differ. The recent PCC meeting at which the parish profile was discussed was a demonstration to those involved of the progress made in having healthy and respectful debate, with a conversation containing varying views being held but which left no one feeling hurt and relationships still strong at the end. The PCC is planning more social times together to enhance relationships further.

Another significant development since the listening exercise has been the creation of a Children and Families Team which has representatives from all the different groups which cater for all ages of children and young people. This has brought cohesion and a sense of working together which previously had been a struggle to establish with each group operating separately from one another.

The desire of the PCC is to continue to develop a supportive space where people feel able to share their concerns and struggles and they are keen to be able to offer that to their new incumbent. Their hope is that a new incumbent would feel able to share when they were struggling or concerned by any aspect of church life.

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Although many people have given of their time, emotion, and energy to help the parish move forward, inevitably there are some who haven't felt able to engage and have either left the church or are waiting until the new incumbent arrives to feel their way back fully into the life of the church. Therefore, it is important for anyone considering this post to be aware that the ministry of quiet listening, healing and reconciliation will be required in the early days, but that this will be done alongside supportive church wardens and an increasingly cohesive PCC.

The Parish of Norton has a lot to offer for an experienced priest and is in need of someone to take them forward in a hopeful way following a difficult season. Myself, the Archdeacon and Rural Dean are committed to supporting the new incumbent as they undertake the ministry of bridge building, re-building and casting a new and hopeful future for all who attend St George's and St Nicholas' and for the community the parish serves.

If you would like to know more about the most recent season the parish has been through, then please do contact my colleague, Tanya Willington (bishophertfordpa@stalbans.anglican.org or 01438 817260), and I will be very happy to have an informal conversation with you. For other enquiries about the post please contact Archdeacon Charles (archd@stalbans.anglican.org).

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+Clae Holford". The signature is written in a cursive style, with a large, stylized 'C' at the beginning.