



THE BISHOP OF HERTFORD
The Right Reverend Dr Jane Mainwaring

Bishop's Statement on the appointment of a Vicar for the benefice of Oxhey, St Matthew

In the last few years, St Matthew's has seen new life come into the worshipping community following a pandemic experience which left the church very much depleted. Although the previous incumbent's tenure was shorter than some, some good foundations were built and growth in number, spirituality and heart grew in this time.

We are now seeking a new vicar who will build on the foundations already laid and enable this growth to continue and the confidence of all to be increased.

The increase in families attending St Matthew's and the links now established with the local schools is something to be celebrated and an area that we would love to see further strengthened.

I hope that you enjoy reading the parish profile and if St Matthew's feels like a place that God might be calling you to, the Archdeacon of St Albans, Charles Hudson, would be very willing to have an informal conversation with you to explain more of St Matthew's story and our hopes for its future.

Some specific matters:

1. After extensive consultation, the Diocese is focused at this time on "Living God's Love" (www.livinggodslove.org). We are asking every benefice to address three themes: Going Deeper into God; Transforming Communities; Making New Disciples, alongside 'Growing younger and more diverse'. Of course, all our benefices are free to approach these themes in the way that seems right to them under God. But any priest accepting this post will commit himself or herself to engage with this initiative and to work with the people of the benefice to make sense of it in the life of the local church.
2. Within "Living God's Love" every priest is expected to work with their lay and ordained colleagues in the construction of a Mission Action Plan. Mission Action Planning is a tool to help each benefice listen to the communities in which it is set and to identify ways in which the Church can grow. The Benefice has previously engaged with this process, and I shall look to the Vicar to carry the process forward. Further information is available on the Living God's Love website: http://www.livinggodslove.org/about/mission_action_plans

3. As a Diocese we are committed to developing the ministry of all God's people. Any priest wishing to come and serve here will therefore be working collaboratively with ordained and lay colleagues. A key part of his or her ministry will be to identify and encourage those who have the calling and the gifting to be ordained or to be lay leaders.
4. The spiritual and numerical growth of the Church is a priority for the Church of England and for the Diocese. We will help and support any new post-holder in the Diocese as they work to secure this growth in depth and in numbers, and we will act in partnership with them to ensure that they have the necessary training and equipping for this vital part of their task.
5. I expect that anyone appointed to this post will involve themselves actively in the life of Watford Deanery, in particular of its Chapter and its Synod, and in the life of the Diocese more generally. It is expected that you will attend Diocesan Clergy Conferences as and when they are arranged and access the wide range of ongoing training opportunities offered by the Diocese. The Church of England needs to hear the wisdom and insight of the diverse community of strong and thoughtful people that this Benefice contains. I look to the new Vicar together with his or her colleagues and people, to be fully involved in the ideas, strategies and policies of the Diocese and of the wider Church of England, robustly offering his or her own wisdom and insight, and listening carefully to the wisdom and the insight of others.
6. The Diocese takes seriously the call on the Church of England to serve all the people of this land and in particular to be there for any who may need us at significant moments of transition in their lives. For this reason, we expect our clergy to be wholehearted in their exercise of the "cure of souls" to all within their benefice, and to take responsibility for the provision of the pastoral offices to any who request them.
7. The Benefice is generous in its giving and pays its Parish Share in full.
8. Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults is a priority of the Diocese, as it is of the whole Church. The clergy of the Diocese receive regular training in this area, and anyone coming into the Diocese will commit themselves to remaining up to date with their safeguarding training during their tenure in office.
9. St Albans Diocese makes the well-being of our clergy, and lay ministers and officers, a very high priority. We have support in place for our clergy including Support in Your Ministry (SIM) scheme, Clergy Counselling, Dispute Advisory Service, training, regular reviews with senior clergy, and more. We encourage any priest coming to St Albans Diocese to access this support.

+ Joe Holford