



ST MARY'S

calling Islington home

Mission strategy 2023 – 2026





Foreword.

St Mary's has been calling Islington home for over a thousand years. Our hope is that everyone who connects with St Mary's will discover their home with us and in God.



Our mission strategy will help us make our vision of 'Calling Islington Home' a reality for everyone who connects with St Mary's. It is framed by our shared values of commitment, connection and caring, and built on our foundations of prayer, safeguarding, being a good employer, and caring for creation.

St Mary's is a church which is deeply embedded in the community of Islington. This takes many forms; whether it is through St Mary's Preschool, exploration of faith, the many groups hosted on site, school outreach workshops, our beautiful churchyard, worship, prayer, or teaching; our church is a place where people's lives can be transformed by discovering their home with us and in God.

This mission strategy has been developed during and after a time of change at St Mary's. The last few years have taught us that change is part of life and that God is present with us in and through change.

As we work together to call Islington home, our mission strategy will give us focus as we seek to grow the church for the next few years and beyond.

Rev. James Hughesdon
Vicar

We are **committed** to Islington, God, and one another

Our mission aims:

- We recognise the importance of being financially sustainable so that we can be committed in the long-term to the community we serve. To do this, we will increase the use of and income from our buildings by 50%.
- There are so many good news stories in the life of St Mary's and we want to tell people about them. We will improve in telling the good news stories, both internally and externally.
- The climate crisis requires Christians and churches to take the lead in responding. We will endeavour to become a regional leader in care for creation and eco-justice.
- Across the whole community of Islington we want people to know and trust St Mary's church. We will work to become a recognisable and trusted Islington name.
- St Mary's works in partnership with local Anglican and non-Anglican churches. These networks are important. We will become more connected with Islington churches and start to resource the wider Church.
- Every day many people visit St Mary's church for all sorts of reasons, and it is important that they feel welcomed to our church. We will ensure our site is staffed and welcoming at high use times.





What this might look like: **Caring for creation**

Every person who is connected to St Mary's is able to engage in caring for creation and every area of St Mary's life plays its part in this. Whether this is educating children, young people and adults in caring for creation, understanding how faith drives us to better care for creation, or seeing how our buildings and site work for creation, not against it.

However people come into contact with St Mary's, they know our passion for caring for God's creation and there are many ways they get involved in this work—through campaigning around creation care, being part of our eco-church group, or getting their hands dirty in caring for the churchyard.

Our buildings and churchyard are net zero, and we use our site to practically engage people in discovering the beauty of creation. Our worship and prayer life recognises and rejoices in God's gift of creation and challenges us to better care for it. In our annual Creationtide season our worship and prayer life are particularly focused on caring for creation.

In our work with local schools and in our preschool we engage children and young people in caring for creation and help them to understand their roles in enabling God's gift of creation to flourish. We have strong relationships with local environment groups and are recognised as a leader in caring for creation. St Mary's is a Gold Eco Church and we use what we have learned to help other churches on their journey of engaging with care for creation.

We **connect** Islington to God and one another

Our mission aims:

- We want people to encounter Christ at St Mary's and to find their spiritual home with us. To that end, we hope to grow our congregation to at least 250 people.
- As disciples of Christ we want to know more of God and for God's love to impact every area of our lives. We will grow new and existing congregation members as disciples of Christ.
- St Mary's has been a place of connection for the Islington community for centuries. We will work to increase the number of community connections and partnerships we have and enable others to make.
- To make our vision a reality we need to develop our staff and volunteers as leaders so that St Mary's is a place where they flourish and grow.
- Prayer is one of the foundations of all our work as a church. We will grow our congregational prayer life to strengthen this foundation.
- We are a diverse community and we will celebrate our diversity and reflect it better in our leadership.
- Music has always been a part of our life together, and we want to be known for high quality music and worship.





What this might look like: **Growing in faith**

Each person who connects with St Mary's is invited to know more about the Christian faith and to discover it for themselves. We see this in the welcome that is given to all and in the growing number of people attending St Mary's and going deeper in their faith.

We regularly provide courses and resources to help people understand how faith and real life issues relate. For those who are new to faith, they quickly feel like they belong at St Mary's and are connected with Christ. We have clear pathways for people to not only come to faith, but also to go deeper in their faith and to step into becoming leaders and serving in new ways.

Our growing prayer life gives plenty of opportunities for people to connect with praying for themselves, the Church and the world. We have teaching focused on prayer, and provide resources for people to use in their own lives. At almost all of our main services prayer ministry is offered, and our quarterly healing service gives a particular focus on prayer for healing.

St Mary's is known as a church where people are coming to faith and we see this in the growing number of baptisms and confirmations. When people come to services at St Mary's, not only do they experience a warm welcome and high quality worship, but they are able to quickly connect with people in the church.

All of this allows St Mary's to operate as a confident Christian presence in Islington, and encourage other churches in their own journeys of growth.

In God's strength, we are **caring** for Islington and one another.

Our mission aims:

- Our preschool is one of the ways we care for the children and families in our community. We want to become an outstanding provider of early years childcare.
- As we care for families, children and young people, we want to develop our parental engagement and support to help parents care for their families.
- Across our areas of work with children and young people, we will work to ensure children and young people are heard and valued.
- Our community is full of children and young people and we want to increase our youth and children's provision so that they are cared for and supported.
- Good safeguarding is a foundation of our work and vital to helping everyone know the care and safety that God offers. We will ensure that everything we do and new things we begin are safe.
- Our staff are vital in making our vision a reality across all our areas of work. We will invest in our staff and be a good employer.
- Caring for the whole person matters to us. We will expand our community sports programme to work with vulnerable groups to improve physical health and wellbeing.





What this might look like: **Children and Young people**

St Mary's is a place where children and young people are welcomed and supported. Whether it is during the week at one of the groups that run from the St Mary's site, through our schools work, on Sundays or at our community events, children and young people are valued and made to feel welcome.

We support families with young children through classes that are offered and the work of St Mary's Preschool. Our preschool helps transform the lives of young children through its outstanding work. On Sunday, young children can express themselves in the service and our Sunday groups for children and young people take place at least three Sundays a month. Recognising the importance of support for our children's work volunteers we employ a Children and Families Minister to coordinate, support and grow our children's work.

Young people are enabled to go deeper in faith and encounter God through our Oasis youth group. We help young people in our community by supporting and working positively with Mary's Youth Work. Our dedicated Youth Minister supports our congregational work with young people, helping them to feel valued and growing the number of young people who are part of St Mary's.

Our schools' work is widely recognised as an excellent example of church and school engagement. We work closely with our church school, St Mary's primary school, as well as other local schools. We provide encounters with faith through education, running classes on site, visiting schools and supporting school parent groups.

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calling Islington home

St Mary Islington
Upper Street, London, N1 2TX

telephone: 020 7226 3400
hello@stmaryislington.org
www.stmaryislington.org

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