



Parish Profile October 2018





We aspire to be inclusive and welcoming

St Luke's, West Holloway is a Church of England parish church in north London.

The people who make it what it is would like it to be a place of welcome and care, a place where we're surprised by God and changed for good.

A place where we begin to understand how to live a rewarding life. How to forgive each other and forgive ourselves. How to find our life by losing it.

We are a community which aspires to be inclusive and welcoming, regardless of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age or background. Sometimes we meet our aspirations, often we don't.

We want to be open even when we're closed.

Like many Londoners, we come from everywhere, but this urban patch is now home for most of us. Comedy house prices forced some of us further out and away but we try and come back, every month or so. As a church, we steward some historic capital resources and we believe that both in our Vicarage and our premises on North Road, we can partner on imaginative developments which enable more people to live locally, sustaining church and community.

We believe God makes herself present when people join together in community dreaming of a new world as some people in Scripture dreamt before us. As some people, of all faiths and none, have dreamt through all history. Sometimes we meet God when we pray and sing, when we share bread and wine. Sometimes we miss her.

We find that you don't need to believe in God to encounter God.

Often it's the week by week, ordinary habits of trying to live together in a community of faith and doubt. Some people in our community are accidental Christians. They inadvertently stumbled into faith after a funeral or a baptism. They made a friend who was part of this crowd of witnesses and found they became friends too. Other people at St Luke's are in recovery from church.

We're grateful to be part of the Church of England and recognise the privilege in being a church for a parish, not just a church for those who come along on a Sunday. We don't always find ourselves in tune with the institutional church. We're proud of it when it stands with people who society seems to have forgotten, works to make our world fairer or suggests a different way to find peace and joy in this life. We're dubious about the institution when it appears obsessed with what consenting adults do together in private.

There has been a church in this place for 160 years but it was almost dead and buried not so long ago, on a life support of prayer and financial subsidy. Successive clergy allowed local people to imagine church more as a spiritual laboratory and feel a sense of collective ownership. Collaborations with the Greenbelt Arts Festival and the Iona Community infused new perspectives and liturgical ideas as a different kind of faith community emerged.

We would like to find a priest who appreciates this eccentric patchwork, who sees how friendship is no less important than faith, who is more interested in running with a parish than running a parish. Someone who doesn't mind collaborating with people who have many blind spots as well as the odd moment of clarity. Someone happy to lead and happy for others to lead. Someone who knows what they are not good at and is secure with the gifts of others. Someone, like that early Christian writer, who knew we had to run the race with endurance but also that it might be a relay race, the baton passing between different hands.



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About us

We know we're asking a lot of you, but we think we have a lot to offer.

St Luke's looks like a traditional anglican church in lots of ways, but that's definitely not the whole story. We harness liturgy, music and traditions that we've borrowed or adapted from many people and places - sometimes we've written it ourselves - and we hope to ground it in the local time and place we find ourselves in. We believe in God's love for each and every one of us. We try to embrace difference, and one of the few things we're strict about is our conviction that everyone is welcome at the table of communion because it belongs to Jesus of Nazareth who didn't turn people away.

We are a spiritual community with

- a holistic outlook
- a liberal heart
- a progressive theology
- a social conscience
- an eclectic liturgy

We try to be generous and engaged, distinctive but not arrogant, learning and journeying together - a place where those who can, do; and those who can't are carried.

Roughly 120 people attend our main Sunday morning service, and we have about 250 people on our electoral roll, with the same number receiving our weekly notices. We have a pretty good age range represented in the congregation, but we're aware that many young families in particular get pushed out of the area by the high cost of housing. We appreciate the ethnic diversity of our parish, and know that we don't fully reflect it in our congregation. On any given Sunday, about half of us have travelled to church from within the parish and half from further afield.

On a good day we're welcoming, non-judgemental, inclusive, fun, friendly and relevant. On a less good day, we remind ourselves about the good days. We'd like our new vicar to stretch us out of our comfortable spaces.

Our services

At the moment, we host two Sunday morning services: a short, spoken Eucharist at 9:15am and a family communion service at 11am with children's activities. The format of this service looks traditional, but some of the language is bespoke, much of it created by people who are or have been part of our congregation. We sometimes feature poetry or video among our readings and sometimes a 'Gospel According to St Luke's West Holloway' - a 'faith story' of someone in our community. (Some of these can be seen on our website). Working within the CofE template, we wonder if some of the software of the church might need an update. Perhaps we can contribute, both by borrowing from the creative work of other liturgical communities and by devising our own. Sometimes small amendments in tone or text can add up to something significant in our worshipping life - for instance the way we might refer to God as woman.

Music is a big part of our worship at the 11am Sunday service. We have two talented musical directors and a growing choir bringing a variety of traditions, from Taize chants or Celtic folk tunes from the Iona Community to Latin choral music and songs drawn from worshipping communities in countries of the 'global south'.

We value children and young people very highly and they are included in our services each Sunday. When they are not in the service, there are activities for all primary and secondary age young people, run by a range of people from the congregation.

On Sunday evenings we run a rotation of different services, starting with traditional Choral evensong on the first Sunday of the month, Soulspace on the 2nd Sunday (ambient and poetic) and an Iona inspired service of quiet, drawing on Celtic spirituality, on the 4th Sunday.

One weekday morning or lunchtime a small group gathers to hold morning prayer, or share in a simple eucharistic service. Over the years we've experimented with 'home-groups' based in different people's homes, but not recently. We usually have weekly Lent groups, sometimes two or three meeting in different places up to Easter. Lately weekday meetings have focussed more around ad-hoc groups such as a small 'white allyship' group currently meeting monthly in The Coronet on Holloway Road while further 'community-building' takes place on our Saturday gardening mornings, in the weekly Tuesday rehearsals for Vox Holloway (and 3x a year concerts) and in a series of idiosyncratic entertainment nights (see below) including Speakeasy, Swish and Lyrical.

We have special traditions for festivals, including a community-based art-inspired stations of the cross on Good Friday, a beautiful carol service and a child-centred nativity service. This year we even had a homemade harvest loaf, a wheat sheaf in bread form.

Over a year we might host around a dozen weddings, and our clergy may be asked to do several dozen funerals, a tradition which has led to packed houses each November for our afternoon All Souls Service when we invite people to remember those they have loved and lost. This has become an important part of our identity in the parish and drawn new people into the life of the church.

Lay participation is key

People in the congregation are involved in being St Luke's in all sorts of ways; we lead services, we pray, we serve coffee, we run the traidcraft stall, we lead Sunday School and youth club, we raise money for good causes, we tend the garden, we do the sound and look after the tech, we support the local foodbank, we cook church lunches and we organise a cold weather night shelter for people who find themselves homeless. But we have ambitions to do more, and we know that sometimes a lot of work falls on a few people. We're keen to work out how we encourage more people to be active creators of the sort of community we're building, rather than passive consumers. It's important to us that all sorts of different people can be involved in services. We encourage and support non-ordained people to speak as part of our services.

Folks on rotas for services include:

- x 12 Leaders
- x 18 Speakers
- x 20 Prayers
- x 42 Readers

St Luke's Leadership team

We have a non-stipendiary minister Rev Martin Wroe, and a lay reader Meg Warner.

Our PCC meets regularly with an average attendance of 12. It operates through a number of sub-committees which report to, and are overseen by, the PCC. We have a range of experience and skills in the PCC and our current priorities fall into three categories;

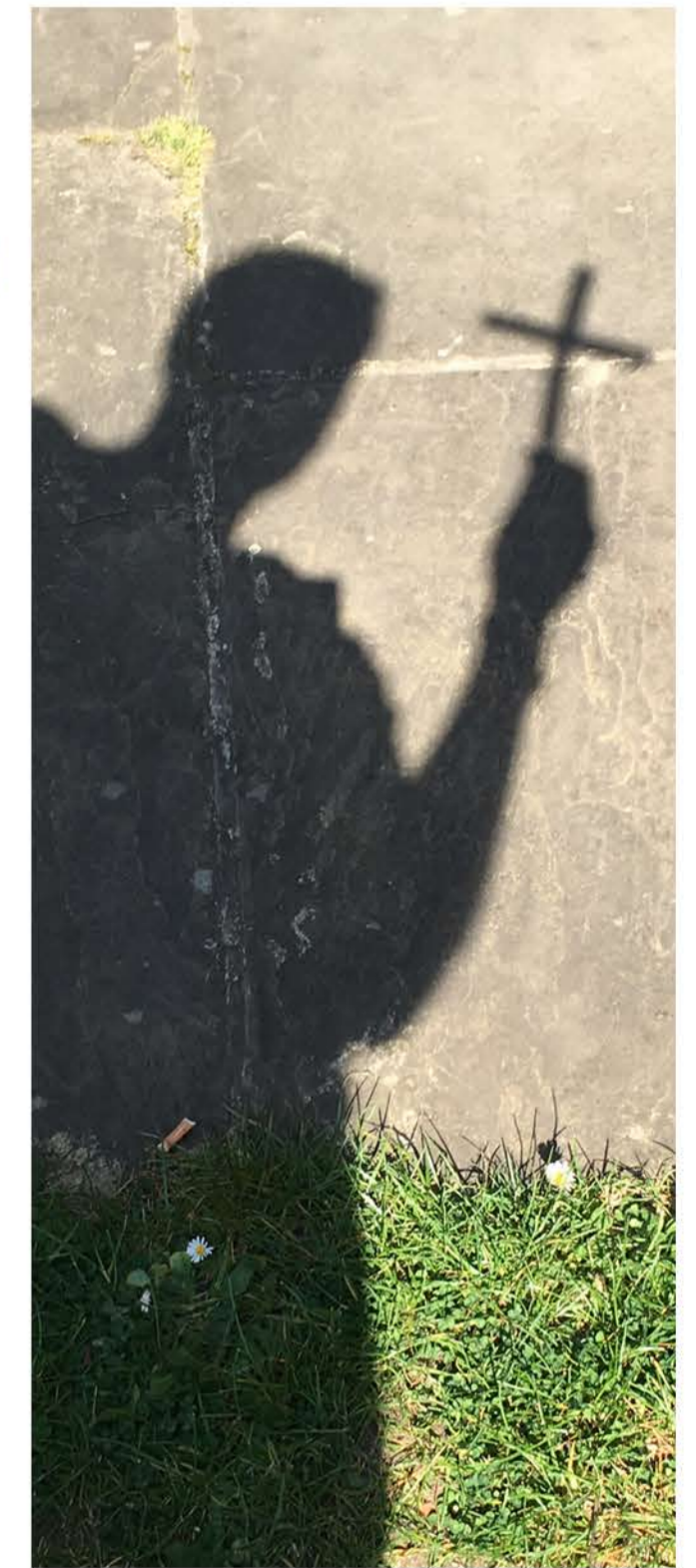
1. Improving the interior of the building to enhance our worship and daily life as a community by funding and completing a package of building projects.

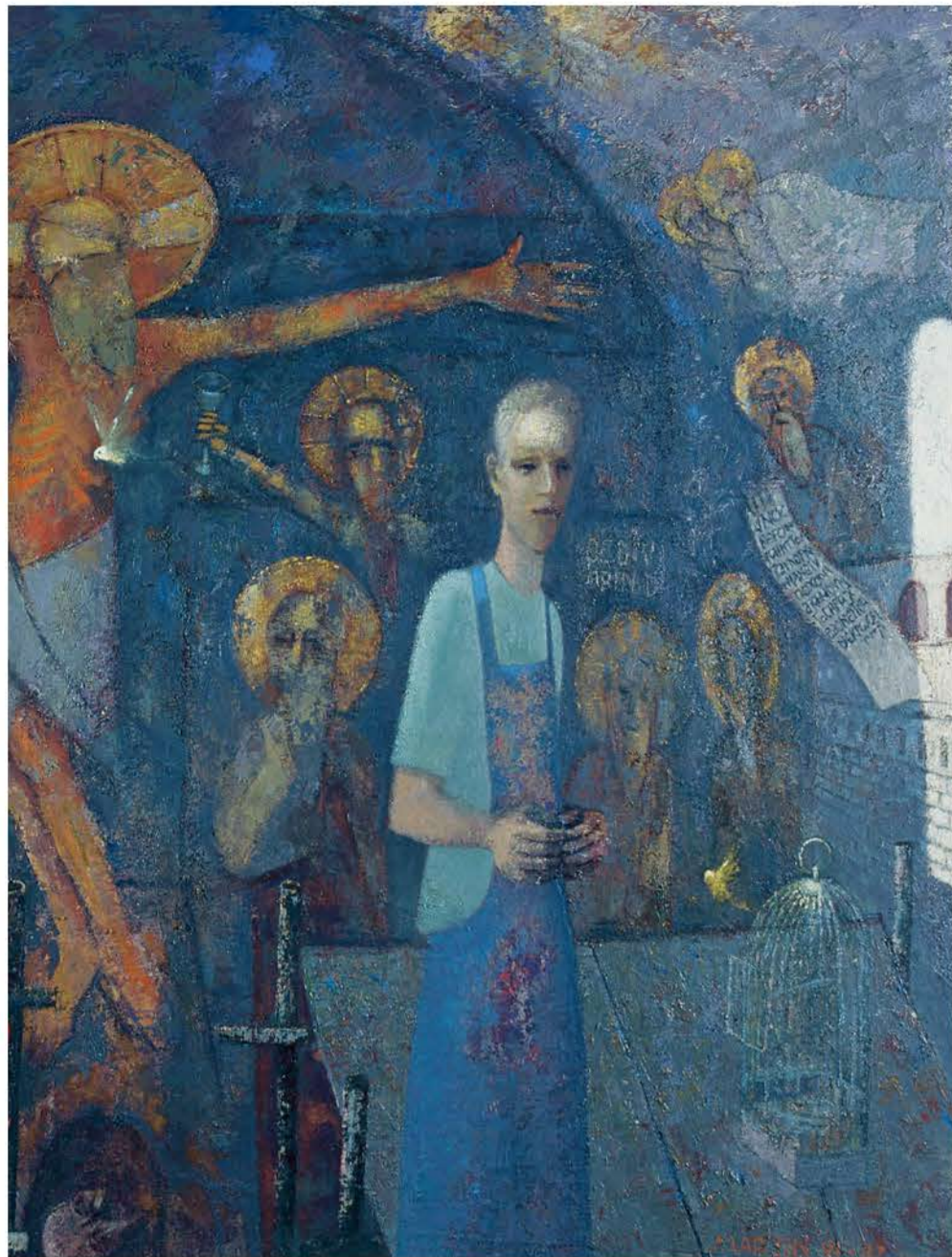
2. Creating a welcome and supportive environment by providing opportunities to build lasting friendships and offering focused care for those in distress.

3. Extending our social and spiritual mission locally and globally by giving time and money to work for justice and peace for all people, and effectively promoting the ethos of St Luke's

Our budgeted expenditure for 2018 is £199,818, which includes paying 100% of our Common Fund. We receive regular grants from the Richard Cloudesley Foundation which helps us to maintain the fabric of the church. Although we can just about cover our running costs, we don't currently have much in reserve so we are working on a plan to be a bit more financially strategic. We're keen to better implement more of our big ideas that have been stuck at the ideas stage for a while.

Tina is our brilliant administrator who works four days a week, and we are hoping to recruit a verger soon. A small group from the PCC is supporting the wardens to keep the place going during the interregnum.







Our buildings are used 7 days a week

St Luke's PCC is responsible for two buildings: St Luke's Church and St Francis. St Luke's was established on the corner of Penn Road and Hillmarton Road in 1860. Parts of our building were bombed in World War II and have been rebuilt. Other features began life in different churches – our organ, refurbished in 2011, was originally the organ at St Paul's Church in Covent Garden. In 1987 in partnership with Greenbelt Festivals the building was modernised creating a flexible space for the church and office accommodation for Greenbelt. Since then the church has grown, Greenbelt has moved on, and we now rent space to local groups. In the future we'd like to be more business-like about how we administer and develop the church, both to raise money but also to improve our interaction with our immediate neighbourhood. We're reviewing our ecological footprint and in the process of making the church building more sustainable.

We don't have pews, so the space is very flexible and we often sit in the round. As well

as the main church space, we have a kitchen, an office, a vestry, a chapel, a creche and a small hall with its own kitchen.

If you're standing in the chancel and look up you'll see the golden branches of a tree spreading across forty panels embedded in the ceiling. A Bible verse runs along either side, taken from Revelation, where the writer has an ecstatic vision of a holy city with a river running through and trees alongside: 'The leaves of the trees,' she writes, 'Are for the healing of the nations...'

People from St Luke's worked with tartist Rob Pepper to create this huge piece of community art. Springing from the branches are thousands of greeny-grey leaves – but what you can't see from the ground is that every leaf has a name on it. The name of someone who has been part of St Luke's, the name of someone loved and lost, the name of someone venerated because of their lives – from Dorothy Day to Martin Luther King, from Mary Davies to Garry Rutter. One day we will put up ladders and add more names.





Reimagining the Vicarage and St Francis

Build club is a subgroup of the PCC and helps keep the place in pretty good shape. We've just done some major work to fix subsidence, so the place looks great and we're watertight again, but there seems to be a never ending list of smaller jobs to do.

St Francis Church was a 'daughter' church on a local estate which was never quite sustainable. For many years it has been let to The Gower School, and the rent helps us balance the books. We have always held on to a commitment to reinvest those funds in wider service in the parish. As the surrounding estate and lands have been regenerated, we have a small group who have been exploring potential redevelopment of our property in partnership with other stakeholders.

Our Victorian vicarage, next door to the church, is a beautiful and quirky and slightly rambling old house and has had no significant reconfiguration in many decades.

It has been a good home for our priests and families for many years but our warm summer seems to have contributed to some subsidence - not dissimilar to that which affected our church hall last year, which required significant work. We anticipate some building work on the Vicarage in the near future.

We've also had early conversations with the Diocese about how we might reimagine its facilities so that it could provide a more modern and comfortable home for a priest (and family) while also including some discrete affordable accommodation, with separate entrance, which might be used - for instance - by a key parish worker such as a youth worker.

Within the next couple of years we believe significant work should take place to make the property fit for purpose for the next chapter. We'll make sure there is always appropriate accommodation for our priest if and when work occurs but we want our new priest to know that this is on the cards.)



Our extended community

We host all sorts of events that appeal to people way beyond our congregation, a (locally) famous cabaret night, Vox Holloway performances, comedy nights, music nights, poetry nights, clothes swaps... we like having fun together as well as worshipping together.

Vox Holloway is our church-based community choir. It is home grown, established by our musical director Justin and a group of St Lukers, has grown into a 100+ choir that is a registered charity and has raised over £60,000 for other charities (as well as the restoration of the organ). Quite a few new St Lukers now come to church because they first came to the choir or to a concert.

Some of our members host singing afternoons at a local care home for senior citizens. We have a strong connection with St Mary Magdalene Academy, an all-through school which some of our members were instrumental in founding and several have

served or serve as governors. Some in our congregation offer pastoral support to inmates in the nearby Pentonville Prison, and others are involved in campaigning with local citizens to ensure the Holloway Prison site, which has recently closed, goes on to serve the community and is not simply sold to the highest bidder. We're members of Citizens UK.

We have historical and current ties to Greenbelt festival and The Iona Community. Through Amos Trust, some of us have ties with communities in Nicaragua, Palestine and South Africa. After some training from the Collective Liberation Project, a small group of us are working on how we can be better allies and challenge the systemic racism that surrounds us and we are sometimes unknowingly part of.

We have a wide community of St Luke's 'alumni' and we're keen to work out how can we maintain a connection with people forced to leave London but who want to stay part of our community. Some people have been part

of St Luke's and then gone on to become vicars themselves - we want to keep in touch with them too

Come to Holloway - it is

Centrally located - 2 stops on the tube from Kings Cross. Green - there is a lovely park at the end of the road, plenty of trees and magnificent large spaces like Hampstead Heath close by. Blessed with some good schools - like the St Mary Magdalene Academy right down the road. Multicultural - over half of the people working in the borough being from different ethnic backgrounds. Relaxing - there are plenty of places to get fabulous food or great coffee & beer. Liveable - several church families have put money into living in close proximity.



Our local area

Despite its reputation as a wealthy borough, Islington has very high levels of poverty and deprivation. It is inequality, rather than wealth, that defines the area, with some of the richest people in the country living side-by-side with some of the poorest.

In 2016, Islington was home to around 230,000. It is the most densely populated local authority area in England and Wales. It's a busy but exciting place to live. There's excellent transport links as we're close to Highbury and Islington, Caledonian Road and Holloway Road tube stations, all of which are also busy bus routes. We're less than two miles from King's Cross.

According to the Church Urban Fund, The population of this parish is 13,877. It ranks 665 out of 12,599 (where 1 is the most deprived) - meaning that the parish is among the most deprived in the country.

We know that our congregation is not reflective of the demographic of the whole parish, and many of us are interested in what more we can do alongside our local community.

At the last census, the average age in Holloway was 33, and 57.1% of people living in Holloway were born in England, almost 40% were Christian, 27% had no religion, and 12.0% were Muslim.

The Stepney Episcopal Area covers the London boroughs of Hackney, Islington and Tower Hamlets. Like much of London the area spans great social and economic contrasts. The three boroughs contain some of the most deprived wards in the country alongside neighbouring districts of expensive housing – as in the south of Islington.

Our vicars have been involved in various interfaith and ecumenical initiatives, but it's not something we're heavily involved in as a congregational community. We think there might be ways we can better collaborate with our faith neighbours, including our sister churches in the local area.



We're excited about what's next for this community, and if you are too, we'd love to hear from you.



www.saintlukeschurch.org.uk



ST LUKE'S