



Hope Church Islington

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Overview

Hope Church Islington, as a parish, is both contemporary and historic, being named so only in 2013 at the reopening of one of the two churches in the benefice, and yet present in Islington in one form or another for over two hundred years.

Historically rooted in an evangelical tradition, we continue to draw on the best of our heritage whilst seeking to go beyond it, to recognise what God is doing in the world today, and to bind together people of all traditions, and those of none, through the love of Jesus.



We think we were the first Church of England parish to take the name 'Hope', and we continue to be spurred by its forthright insistence that the Church has something to offer to our culture: the hope of the glory of God (Romans 5:2).

Our Vision

Our vision is that we might fully grow into our name, that we would *know* the living Hope that we have in Christ, and that through Him we might *be* Hope to the community of Islington in the following ways:

- Bringing healing and wholeness to the people of our parish
- Supporting the vulnerable, oppressed and voiceless in our midst
- Providing safe and inclusive spaces for the diverse community that we are a part of

We believe that the atoning work of God in the world is fundamentally practical, and we long for the people of our parish to be reconnected to their Creator and the creation, to themselves and to others.

The goal of the Diocese of London in the next 10 years is for every Londoner to encounter the love of God in Christ. At Hope, we understand this encounter as one of wholeness, of healing, of balance, of rhythm, and of peace and, as we consider our part in fulfilling this goal, it is clear that our response needs to be as intensely practical, embodied, and human as the people that we aim to reach. In particular, we are striving to reach the increasing number of people in our area who describe themselves as "spiritual but not religious", and the agnostics who are seeking purpose and meaning in their lives. We aim to grow in number, depth and impact, through a model of invitational ministry, giving pathways for people from a variety of spiritual experiences and traditions (as well as none), to encounter Christ in their everyday lives. This includes adults, youth and children, and hopefully this profile will give a flavour of the variety of growing ministries aimed at increasing the number of younger people in our church and community. Our vision also includes the renovation of our main church site to support this growth and supported by careful management of our large property portfolio.

To achieve this vision, we recognise that we need to grow and continue to transform, building on the firm foundations we have already created - we are open to this and all the joy, and potentially sometimes pain, change always brings. We look forward to welcoming a vicar who has a vision for our parish and community, who will enjoy leading us, and journeying with us, as we discern God's next steps for our life together.

We celebrate our diversity across age, social background, theological leanings, ethnicity, life stage and aspirations, whilst proclaiming our unity in Christ. We strongly believe that the heart of God is for unity, and that this unity is a profoundly counter-cultural and powerful witness in an increasingly divided world. We also recognise that we are a work in progress, we are part of an institution that has participated in and perpetuated injustice, and we as a parish church are not exempt from those failings, as well as our own. We seek to listen to the guidance of the Spirit as we continue to discover and discern what it means to bear the name Hope, to be Christ's ambassadors in the world, and to lead our community in love, justice and humility.



What Our People Say

We asked the people of Hope Church to reflect on who we are and where we're heading. Here's a summary of what they shared in response to those two questions:

What do you love about Hope Church?

The welcome and friendly nature of Hope Church, with friendships and welcome shared across generations, ethnicity and gender, came through particularly clearly in the responses. The strong sense of community and togetherness that people feel was also clear in the responses.

People also highlighted the informality, we have a saying that *we don't stand on ceremony*, and our passion for ministry and openness to a sense of the holy spirit wherever you were at. This was highlighted alongside a sense of honesty, openness and vulnerability within the church that supported a feeling of safety and non-judgmentalness.

Lastly, there was a strong theme in the responses about the family feel of the church with children being welcomed with the chaos they bring being embraced.

What would you like to see happen in the next 5 years at Hope?

People shared they wanted to build upon the strong foundations already established, continuing to develop many of the themes shared above and extending beyond them.

A key theme was continuing and building new connections with our local community, bringing Hope to our parish. A couple of new expressions of this were highlighted including youth, single people and investing in our gardens so they could be used even more. Excitement for our building, once restoration has been completed, and how that could be used in new and fresh ways was also shared.

Also highlighted was a desire to continue to acknowledge racism in the church historically, the role we as a church have played, and to think about how we play our part to address it.



The Context for Ministry

Our Parish

The parish of Hope Church Islington is one of the larger parishes in Islington, with nearly 10% of the borough's residents living within Hope's boundaries. Much like the geographical division made by the A1 running through the middle of the parish, with Arsenal's stadium and the Georgian terraces on one side, and Pentonville Prison surrounded by social housing on the other, the parish of Hope Church Islington is very much a tale of two cities. Those with plenty live next door to those with little, and an increasingly transient population rubs alongside people who have lived in the borough all their lives. There are also many local organisations adding vibrancy, and sometimes challenge, to the local area including Arsenal Football Club and Pentonville Prison, a thriving CofE Academy for students aged 4-18, 3 other primary schools (Sacred Heart, Drayton Park and Laycock), two alternative provision schools (New River College and The Courtyard) and London Metropolitan University.

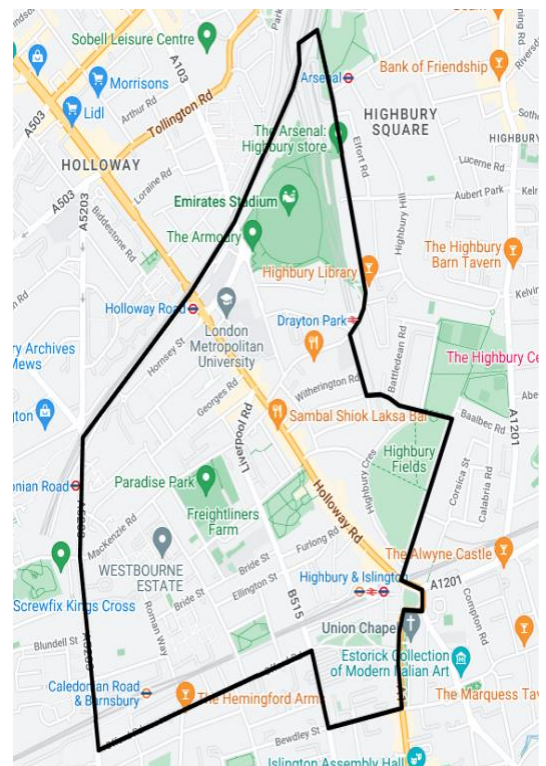


In the borough with the least green space of all London boroughs, where 71% residents do not having access to their own outside space, Islington as a borough is measured as:

- The 6th most deprived borough in the capital (of 32)
- The 10th most deprived borough in England as it relates to low income and the impact on children
- The 4th most deprived borough in England as it relates to low income and the impact on the elderly.

The parish of Hope Church Islington is a challenging place to live if you do not have the high income to match the high costs of living in a Central London borough, and in a parish of nearly 21,000 people, whilst there are plenty of those who have an income fit to match the demands of living in the area, there are plenty more who do not. More information about living in Islington can be found [here](#).

Whatever the financial and lifestyle circumstances of the parishioners of Hope Church Islington, census data from 2021 reveals a fascinating mix of spiritual identifiers and stories. 40% of residents in the census identified as having 'no religion', whilst 30% identified as Christian. Within the group of those identifying as having no religion, 42% of those described themselves as believing in something supernatural, meaning that two in three of Islingtonians you might encounter are open to a spiritual story, whether or not they would explicitly identify that as Christian. The people of the parish of Hope Church Islington are a people looking for, and exploring, meaning. They are looking for healing and wholeness. They are looking for a story they can be part of.



Life and Ministry of the Church

Our People

As a church community, Hope Church Islington is as diverse as the local area it inhabits. We are diverse socio-economically, we are diverse ethnically, we are diverse in terms of whether or not we consider Islington our long term home, we are diverse in terms of our life stage. Our diversity is reflected in our congregation, in our serving teams, in our PCC and in our leadership. We believe that our diversity is vital to representing and serving the community we belong to, and helps us to grow as we engage and learn from people who are different to us.



There are 93 people on the electoral roll, with a worshipping community of closer to 130. A staggering 66% of our electoral roll (47% of our worshipping community) volunteer regularly in church activities across the week, and in 2023, congregational giving increased to just over £100k.

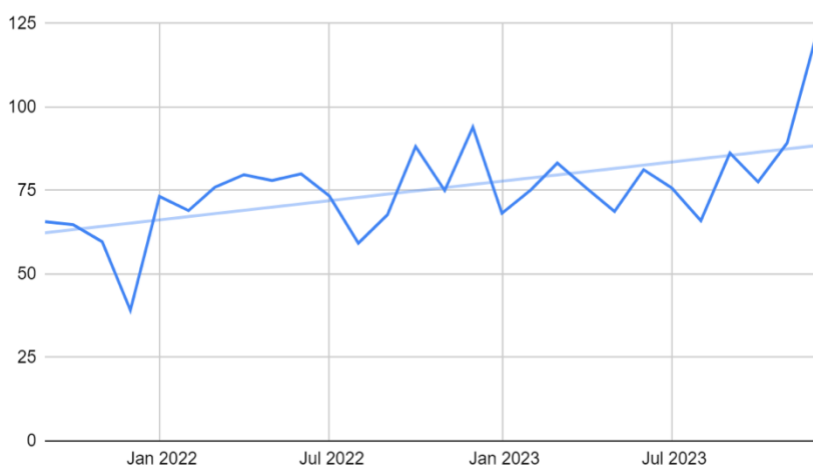
Sunday Services

At the beginning of 2020, Hope Church Islington worshipped across two sites (St Mary Magdalene and St David), with an incumbent, associate vicar, assistant curate and ordinand in post, alongside a lay staff team of 5. As the COVID pandemic hit, our associate vicar (coincidentally!) left London, and our incumbent retired in 2021. In collaboration with our patrons, the Bishop of Stepney and the vicar of St Mary's Islington, we had the privilege of instituting our former assistant curate as priest in charge at the culmination of his training, understanding that meant we would not be able to recruit a new associate vicar, or support ordinands in training during his interim ministry. Into that season, we united from our previous expression of four services to consolidate into a single 11am Sunday service, Hope Together. As we have recovered from the pandemic, we have seen steady growth in our numbers, with an average attendance of around 80 in 2023. As we enter the final quarter of 2024, our average Sunday service attendance has reached 85, and we planted a new service in 2023, beginning to reflect our growth and heart to reach our community.



In consolidating our services, we have embraced the opportunity to gather together the different traditions of our various expressions, and share them in one service. The Eucharist has become more central to our main service, we are learning to be open to the lead of the Spirit, and we are seeking genuine transformation through our prayer ministry.

Average Sunday Attendance



Our worship is contemporary and led by a dedicated group of volunteers, and we would describe ourselves as a preaching church, rooted in Scripture and willing to explore and tackle challenging issues - climate, race, money, sex, empire - issues which benefit from wondering, exploration and questioning, and that take us beyond doctrine. We regularly invite sermons from lay members, providing an opportunity to grow new leaders and hear God speaking through different voices in our midst. We also support those who are deaf or hard of hearing with a fully signed service once a month.

Children and Youth Ministry

The power of wondering is translated into our children's work, which starts with Godly Play for those aged from 2-5, and moves into Hope Kids for those in Year 1 to Year 6 in primary school. Together both groups are run by our Children and Families worker and an amazing pool of leaders and volunteers.

The curriculum of Godly Play explicitly makes space for children to wonder about their experience of listening to a story, as they begin to learn to listen to their own knowing - the whisper of the Spirit at work in them. Our youngest members spend time together in play before joining together for a feast.

In Hope Kids the focus is on understanding the Bible, making friends, caring for each other and encouraging discipleship and prayer. A bespoke curriculum written for children aged 5-11 is used, which is full of games, challenges, stories, and creative activities.

We currently have an average of 18 children under the age of 11 attending our 11am service. Our hope is that this number will continue to grow, that more young lives may be transformed by encountering Christ in our midst.



In 2024, we launched a Place for Youth, a monthly gathering within our 11am Hope Together service for young people between the ages of 11 and 18, which offers a safe and comfortable space for the young people of our community to connect with each other and wonder together. We currently welcome 4-6 young people each month, and we have recently established connections with several local church youth leaders, as we explore opportunities to partner together to reach the young people of our communities.

Community Hope Service

Once a month, the worship space is transformed into the round for our Community Hope service. The Godly Play story and wonderings become the centre of our service as we experiment with what it can look like to bring together all ages, learning abilities and styles, and challenge ourselves to explore going beyond head knowledge and reconnect with other forms of our expression of our faith.

Church of the Wild

As we walked together as a community into 2023, we launched a new service: Church of the Wild. An exploration of encounter in nature, this service is importantly not Church *in* the Wild, but Church *of* the Wild. The familiar trappings of a Sunday service are missing with intent: no chairs, no tea and coffee, no singing. Church of the Wild is an opportunity to explore the presence of God in a blade of grass, to hear the chorus of worship in rustling leaves, to notice the peace of unity as a tree root meets the soil.

With language intended for the many of Islington who might consider themselves spiritual but not religious, Church of the Wild is pioneering an expression of church which seeks to reconnect us with one another, our planet, our God and ourselves, through stilling, noticing, reflecting and sharing together.



We have paused our Church of the Wild gatherings during our vacancy, but we hope to restart them in 2025, in order that Hope may continue to be a church where mixed ecology is the norm – where every person in our parish has access to an enriching and compelling community of faith and, in the words of Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York “*an expression of Church locally that would really suit them*”.

Spear

The Spear Programme (developed by Resurgo) is an award winning employability programme that helps 16-24 year olds overcome the challenges they are facing to find and succeed in sustainable employment. The initial programme runs for six weeks, with a year of active support for each participant to ensure long-term success. One year on from completing the programme, over 75% of the trainees who complete Spear are in further education and employment. As part of the church's vision to transform the lives of young people within the community, Hope Church established a joint venture with Resurgo in June 2016 to form Spear Islington. The following was written by Anna Skinner, Lead Coach at Spear Islington and member of Hope Church, and gives an insight into what Spear are about and the impact that our partnership has on the work that they do:



“A fundamental aspect of all Spear Centres in the UK is the partnership with a local church - the relationship is critical to the successful running of the programme. The Spear Programme is a practical outworking of Christian faith; that through providing young people with meaningful employment, confidence, tackling self-doubt or other barriers to work, the young people are finding hope, healing, wholeness, and purpose to their life - the effect of which very often extends beyond the first job they land. This is a glimpse into the restoration Jesus provides for us, and we believe it is also God's desire that we provide practical support (in this case in employment), to share the love Jesus showed for us.

We are fortunate to have many committed volunteers from Hope Church who show their support to Spear Islington's work and trainees in many ways – a testament to the strength of this partnership. Our Church members volunteer to be on careers panels, offer mock interviews to trainees, support at fundraising events such as the annual Gala Dinner or more recently a community football tournament (pictured). A number of Spear Islington's Trustees are regular members of Hope Church.

Above all, Spear Islington is grateful for and continues to require support from Hope Church in the form of prayer – for coaches, for trainees, for job opportunities, against mental health challenges, etc. This is crucial to the work we do and as Spear Coaches we bring everything we do each day back to prayer.

Spear Centres typically have a second aspect to the model which is known as 'Torch'. This intends to be a space that offers a bridge between the Spear Centre and the local Church, where Spear trainees can find community, explore big questions around life/faith and ultimately we pray, come to know and decide to follow Jesus. Post-pandemic there has not been capacity for Torch to run but we hope that in the near future we can establish Torch in Spear Islington again, such that Spear trainees can experience life in all its fullness through life with Jesus (John 10:10).”



Hope Community Groups

The diversity of our parish and congregation is reflected in our community groups and activities – these come in various shapes and sizes, with different frequencies, formats, and areas of interest. They are a great place to get to know people and are open to all – newcomer, regular church goer or curious wanderer.



Wednesday Morning Group

Every Wednesday morning some of our community meet in the church to catch up, read the Bible and pray together. This group has a faithful core of regular attendees and provides a much needed social as well as spiritual companionship that is often overlooked in this digital age.

Wednesday Evening Home Group

Organised and hosted by members of our community, this home group meets fortnightly on Wednesdays for food (dinner and dessert!), taking it in turns to host in their homes. The aim of the home group is to further their understanding of living a Christian life – this is through exploring topics that deepen or introduce a fresh way of understanding what it means to walk with Christ. It is also a place for the group to share their journey in Christ with one another, to encourage each other, to pray and to have hope for one another.



Wednesday Evening Prayer

We want to place prayer at the heart of everything that we do at Hope Church. In 2024, a community from the congregation started to gather on a Wednesday evening to pray for our church, community and our world. Prayer has been a source of strength to us in this season of vacancy, as we seek God's will and vision for the future of our church and of our parish.

Solo

Church can often be a challenging place to be single, sometimes even more so than in other parts of life. Solo is a small group opportunity to explore the experience of singleness with other people who are not living as part of a romantic relationship. Exploring identity, community and authority, small groups of people have the opportunity to share their experiences, questions or pain around the life experience of being single, and together to encounter Christ at the centre of those experiences. Solo runs over four weeks, and was written and developed within the Hope Church Islington community.



Pub Theology

Pub Theology is a discussion group that meets in a local pub to explore the way we think and talk about God. The group is run seasonally a few times a year to provide a fresh space for discussion, debate and learning in an informal and fun setting. It has given an opportunity for both regulars and visitors to Hope Church to share, challenge and learn from each other.

Sunday Sports

“Football is the only sport where you put people together, it doesn’t matter if you are rich, or poor, or black, or white. It is one nation. That is the beauty of football.” - Pele

The Sunday Sports group brings together a mix of different members of Hope Church at the Arsenal Community Hub every few weeks after our 11am service. The group usually play football but have occasionally branched out into other sports and are always interested in trying something new. The group is open to anyone who wants to be active and enables both the younger and more mature generation of Hope Church community members to connect with each other in a more informal (occasionally competitive) way – left feet and all!



St Mary Magdalene Bell Ringers

Twice a week, this talented and enthusiastic Band come together to ring the historic bells of St Mary Magdalene. Anyone is welcome to come and learn this fine tradition. It is a piercing moment of joy on a Sunday to hear the bells ring out clear across the parish - that all are welcome to Sunday service, to join us in worship and praise of our God.

Hope in the Community

Spreading the word and love of Christ comes in many forms and bringing together the church and wider parish community is an integral part of what we aim to do with our community events and activities.

A Little Hope

During term time A Little Hope, our weekly parenting group, runs on Monday mornings. We welcome mainly non—church parents and their 0-4 year old children. The group is an opportunity to foster relationships and community between new parents, who are navigating the difficult journey parenting can be. It is a wonderful opportunity for spreading God’s welcome, love, and grace and to invite them to our special events throughout the year.



Fitness at Hope

Having recently completed a qualification in fitness instruction, our Children and Families worker hosts two HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training) classes every week (term time only) for different audiences. Both classes are set to music with cardio and conditioning. Monday evenings are for all levels and abilities, whereas Tuesday mornings are specifically for parents and their babies (2 months - 18 months). Promoting positive physical, mental and spiritual health, as well as providing community and connection; this has been an exciting venture to begin.



Prison Ministry

Right on the edge of the parish is HMP Pentonville - a local category B resettlement prison for remand and convicted male prisoners aged 18 and over. For many incarcerated here, it can feel like there is no hope and no future. A team of volunteers from Hope Church regularly go to Pentonville alongside London City Mission (LCM) to pray with the inmates and support their Sunday services with a vision of helping those who may be at their lowest point in life, finding Hope through Christ.

Maundy Thursday Meal

There is plenty of symbolism around food in scripture - from Jesus' fasting in the desert to the feeding of the 5,000. Food itself is not what connects us at a deeper level, but it's often the centrepiece around which relationships are built. Here at Hope Church there is no better way to come together in community and fellowship to share the passover, as Jesus did with his disciples. We meet every year for dinner on Maundy Thursday. It brings together the community, from all of its diverse backgrounds and often people new to the congregation too, to feast together and pray together and look, with hope, towards Easter day. It also provides us with an opportunity to connect with the Jewish tradition on which Christianity is built, to feel connected to the story of the Holy Week as we eat the same meal Jesus did with his disciples and give thanks together for what Christ gave for us and to us.



After Hours Worship

Throughout the year, members of our Hope community gather after our 11am service for an extended time of praise and worship, to practise new musical arrangements, try new instruments and to generally enjoy this time of musical communion with God. Musical prodigies, tone-deaf enthusiasts, and everyone in between are welcome to join in and raise a joyful hallelujah!

Seek First

Once a term, Seek First is a space to seek God, for people to stretch themselves spiritually, and to meet together in a time of extended prayer and worship.



St Mary Magdalene Academy

We have a long established connection with St Mary Magdalene Academy just on the other side of Liverpool Road. The Academy was established in 2007, and the head and staff operated out of the crypt of St Mary Magdalene Church prior to the completion of the school building. Over the years we have built up a good relationship with the Academy, with previous staff conducting weekly assemblies prior to the recruitment of a chaplain, and also helping out with the Lighthouse after-school club. Many staff children have or are attending either primary or secondary, and a number of members of our current congregation are also staff members at the Academy.

We continue to partner with the Academy by helping to run after school programmes and supporting their seasonal fairs, and we also host all secondary year groups at St Mary Magdalene Church for their Easter, Christmas and beginning and end of term services. In 2024, the Academy commenced a long-term lease of St David's, our second church building, which has enabled them to develop additional classroom space in close proximity to the school. We continue to seek opportunities for partnership with the Academy, as we strive to engage with the young people in our community.

Winter Hardship Fund

As part of the local community, we wanted to do something practical to start supporting the community through the often financially challenging winter months especially last year as prices started to rise. Last year, members of the Hope community had the idea of setting up a fund that members of the community living within the parish could claim to help deal with unexpected expenses (e.g. a boiler breaking) during the winter. The church raised money including fundraising at the Christmas Carol Service and, through the money raised, we were able to give over 20 grants to members of the local community. The feedback from the recipients has been amazing and we plan to continue it into 2024/5.

A message from one recipient of a grant: *"I would just like to say thank you very much! You can't understand how much relief this payment has given me at a most crucial time. We appreciate the church, parish and the support we receive from Little Hope immeasurably."*

Hope in the Gardens

The gardens surrounding St Mary Magdalene's church are famous as the home of Britain's most valuable tree – a majestic 300-year-old plane tree that was valued in 2019 at £1.6 million. However, the gardens have their own chequered past and have been known as a site for antisocial behaviour. To celebrate and to promote positive community use of these gardens, we run a number of seasonal activities that are open to all.

Easter Fun Day

A time of rebirth, of joy and of hope. Alongside the more traditional elements to celebrate Easter, we meet the families and the youngest members of the parish and community a little closer to where they are with an egg-citing Easter Saturday, Easter egg trail! No stone is left unturned as young and old run riot through the gardens in search of those sweet treats. This annual activity has provided a much loved opportunity for our young people to share in the joy of the Easter service while they enjoy the fruits of their labours. In 2024, the event was expanded to include a bouncy castle, face painting and crafts, drawing over 470 people into the Church gardens.



Pumpkin Trail

The Pumpkin trail was born out of a desire to find a way to connect and engage with our neighbours of all ages during a "festival" that the Church is known not to engage with. Starting in the late afternoon of All Hallows Eve, families are invited to participate in a series of interactive activities in the gardens, winding their way through the pumpkins lovingly carved by our team of volunteers. In 2023 this event drew approximately 600 people from both near and far.

Jazz in the Gardens

Our annual jazz events are free for the whole community. Professional jazz bands play on at least two consecutive Friday evenings in July while the wider community and our neighbours are invited to picnic together. Music is a universal language that transcends social boundaries and listening to music with others has been shown to foster a sense of community and connection. Our ambition for these events is to bring people together, reduce loneliness, and promote positive physical and mental health - through dance, conversation, and song.



Hope Supporting Other Communities

As part of our vision to be a hub for the community, we are proud to be able to share our building space with some other local groups and communities.

Eglise Christ - Roi

Every Sunday, after our Hope Church 11am service, a French speaking Christian congregation gathers for worship at St Mary Magdalene, filling the building with glorious gospel vocals and a joyful message of salvation through Christ.

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)

AA is a community of people who come together with one aim: to stay sober, and help other alcoholics seeking help to stop drinking. Every Tuesday evening, the AA group "Holloway Beginners" meets in the main body of the church providing a welcoming space for the attendees.

Planet Drum

Based in the crypt of St Mary Magdalene, this team of passionate musicians have been teaching students of all ages and backgrounds for over 25 years and offer a wide variety of musical lessons. The day to day operations of the church are often accompanied by the harmonies and beats of musicians at play.

Buildings, Finances and Governance

St Mary Magdalene

An integral part of the current story of Hope Church Islington is our Grade II* listed St Mary Magdalene church building. Our main building can accommodate approximately 150-175 people seated, with a total capacity of 240. It is currently on the Heritage at Risk Register (Priority C), and there are multiple complex and interconnected issues with the building that need to be resolved. Although manifesting in a number of different problems, the issues are mainly caused by water as our surface water drainage, that was likely fitted in Georgian England, is no longer able to cope and the spillages and floods have damaged the brickwork.



This has, over time, damaged the internal woodwork, facilitated fungus and rot, and led to cracks and damage. Over the last year, our staff team, in conjunction with the PCC and external advisors, have made significant inroads in assessing the needs of the building, which have been exacerbated by a lack of attention in the years prior. We now have a long term strategy in motion to address the building, which in the first phase (currently underway) involves detailed assessments, surveys and investigation, to fully understand the nature of the restoration project the building is facing, as well as implementing measures to prevent further damage.

Addressing these issues will be one of our biggest challenges in the coming years, as we navigate a multi-million pound renovation project of the building. We have some way to go, both practically and financially, but we aspire to bring healing and wholeness, to bring salvation and hope, as we tend to our beautiful falling-down building, just as we want to tend to our beautiful, falling-down people. See Appendix C for further information and / or please reach out if you'd like to understand more.

St David's

St David's was deconsecrated by the Church of England in 1984 and leased out long-term to the Greek Orthodox church. It was returned to our care in 2004 and was reopened in 2013, to much acclaim, after a nine year project to see the building redeveloped and reimaged. It resulted in the creation of:

- A new church space with the addition of a commercial kitchen, toilets, offices and a prayer room
- Two floors of upstairs space currently used by St Mary Magdalene Academy, as their Sixth Form Campus.
- In the basement, 7 classrooms and a cinema room currently used by The Courtyard, a specialist school for young people with Autism.
- Two parish flats, a one-bed flat which is part of the church complex and a two-bed flat which is part of the adjacent apartment block (built on the land that was St David's Church Hall).
- The apartment block houses 30 private flats (which were sold), 9 social housing units managed by a Housing Association, and between the church and the apartment building, there is a four bedroom vicarage which the church currently rents out.

You can find more information on the redevelopment [here](#).

In 2022, we conducted a thorough evaluation of our property portfolio and considered the ongoing challenge of managing our assets sustainably alongside the prioritisation of ministry. In view of the ongoing cost and effort required to sustain St David's alongside addressing the needs of our other church building, the PCC came to the difficult decision to pursue a long term lease of St David's. This has provided us with the financial stability to focus on addressing the material needs of our main church building, whilst also enabling St David's to be utilised in a way that supports our vision for the community. At the end of 2023, we secured a long term lease with St Mary Magdalene Academy, who are now utilising the building to provide much-needed additional classroom space for their sixth form students. The Academy's lease began in March 2024 and has provisions for Church use on weekends, which gives us the opportunity in the future to use the building to host another service or congregation as we continue to grow and advance our mission and vision for our parish.



Cloudesley Funding

As an Islington church, we are extraordinarily privileged to be a beneficiary of Cloudesley, a charitable foundation which provides grant funding to support the upkeep of churches in the borough. St Mary Magdalene is eligible for funding rounds from Cloudesley twice a year, without which the investigative and survey work would simply not be possible for us to undertake. Since 2019, Cloudesley has awarded approximately £207,000 in grants for St Mary Magdalene and £7,500 for St David's.

The expertise, generosity and support of Cloudesley means that we are in a position to begin to address some of the challenges of our building, as we build up to fundraising for larger grant input from Heritage Lottery Funding. We are hugely indebted to the ongoing support of Cloudesley and their recognition that the buildings we hold are not simply assets to be utilised, but resources to be stewarded and shared for the good of the whole community.

Our Other Buildings

The vicarage is located on Witherington Road and is cared for by the diocese (see Appendix D for more information on the vicarage). As a benefice which previously had two clergy, there is also an additional property on Bride Street which is owned by the Church Commissioners but for which the church is responsible. The house is reserved for persons working in ministry in the parish and is currently occupied by our Children and Families worker.

The church has an additional three residential properties under its care which were constructed as part of the redevelopment of St David's. One of these was designed to be lived in by the associate vicar and their family, but currently generates additional rental income alongside the other properties.

The church also owns St Mary Magdalene gardens, including the freehold of the currently old Coroner's Court, though an agreement dating back to 1894 means that Islington Council control and manage the gardens on a day to day basis. The old Coroner's Court building, while currently disused, has the potential for redevelopment, which the PCC will explore in the coming years as we continue to steward and invest in our wider property portfolio.

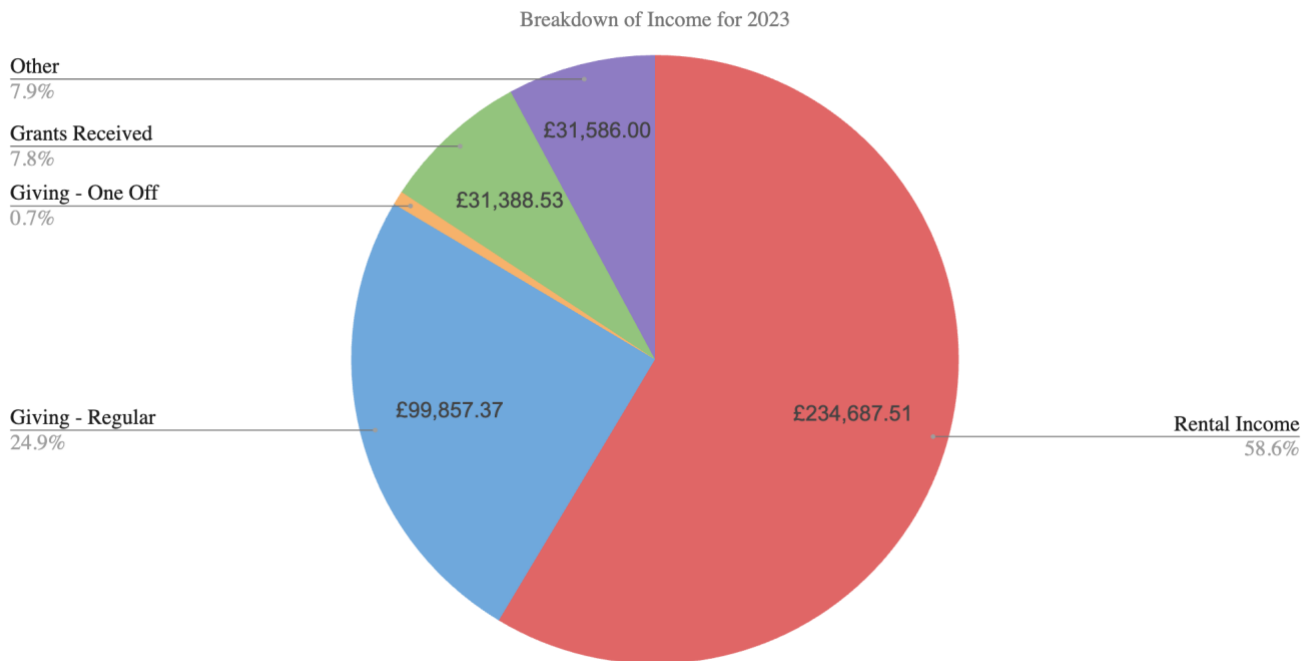
Finances

In the year ended 31 December 2023, the combined entities of Hope Church Islington (HCI) generated income of £400k, with expenditure of £443k, resulting in a loss of £43k. There were no significant unplanned expenditures, however our income was significantly less than budgeted due to delays in the process of renting out St David's.

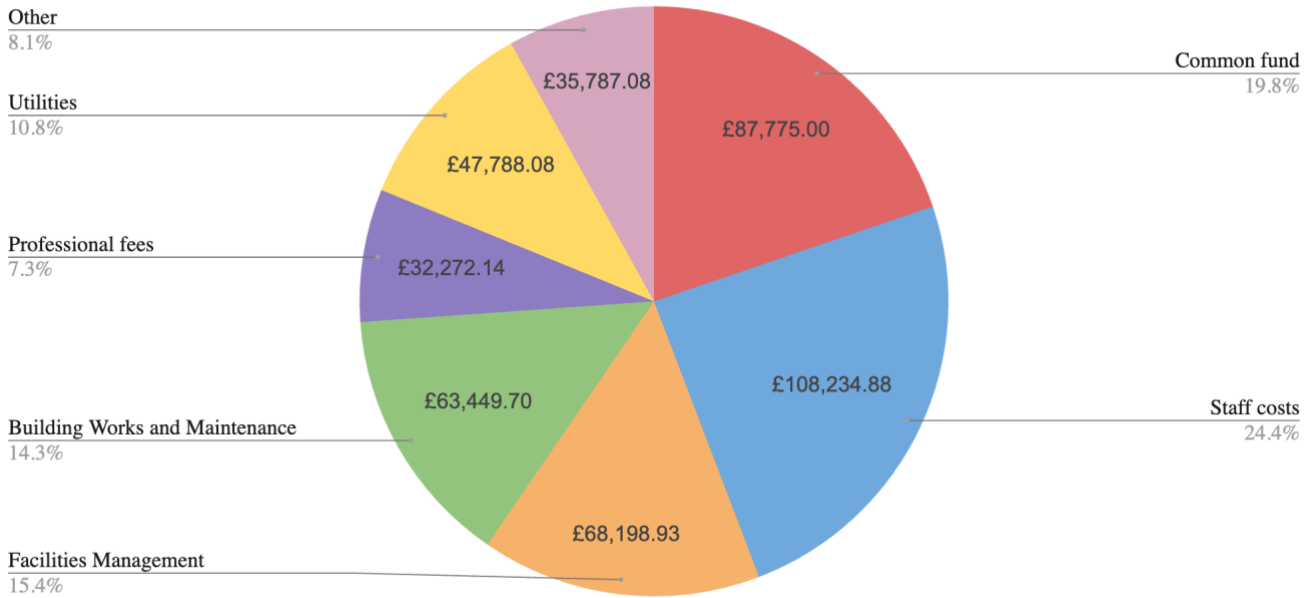
In March 2024, St Mary Magdalene Academy began their rental agreement for St David's. The rental and service charge income, combined with the associated cost savings, is generating a net income of approximately £20k a month. As a result, we have now returned to making a surplus on a monthly basis and are forecasting an overall surplus for the year ending 31 December 2024.

Our monthly giving increased by nearly 20% in 2023, from a total of £83k to £100k. We have seen a benefit from moving to Parish Giving, which not only claims the Gift Aid in a timely manner at no additional cost, but also once a year writes to all donors and suggests an inflationary increase to their monthly giving.

A more detailed breakdown of our finances for the year ended 2023 can be found in our [2024 APCM Report](#), with full details available in our accounts.



Breakdown of Expenditure for 2023



Governance

Our PCC is a registered charity (charity number 1130900) and ecclesial governing body comprised of the following:

- 2 elected church wardens
- 8 elected lay representatives
- 1 Deanery Synod representative

The PCC meets six times a year, and we make decisions using a three stage process of information gathering, conversation, and voting. We also have two socials each year to actively engage in rest and grow our relationships with one another.

Who We Are Looking For

The position for a permanent incumbent of Hope Church is being advertised following a period of interim ministry for the past 2 years, during which we were led by our priest-in-charge who we said good-bye to in June 2024. We are looking for a new leader who, under the authority of God, will lead us forward in our vision for Hope Church as we strive to *be* Hope for our community.

We have summarised the key aspects of the role that our PCC, staff team and church congregation feel are most important below

Highlighted responsibilities:

- Lead the church forward through refining the vision for Hope Church and strategy for how we grow in number, depth and impact in consultation with the PCC, staff team, congregation and diocese
- Inspire, teach and disciple a diverse and varied congregation and community through all stages of faith, culture, background and age (including supporting wider Stepney and London vision of growing younger in our churches)
- Lead, develop and effectively manage our staff team, identify and develop future leaders (both lay and ordained) for our church and hire an Associate Vicar once we are financially ready
- Continue to grow our local community partnerships and relationships including with local Academy and London Metropolitan University, and also partner with the diocese and other local churches to support achievement of our vision, London and Stepney diocese visions and also local initiatives such as Hackney and Islington Partnership
- Provide wise and diligent stewardship of our assets and resources including plan, prepare for and lead us to deliver the restoration and renovation of our main building, seek and provide input to support achievement of fundraising initiatives
- Work collaboratively with the PCC and provide guidance and leadership to enable efficient, thoughtful decision making that enables Hope Church to navigate the change and adventures of the next phase of our growth and achieve its vision
- Foster and grow the relationships with the Bishop, Archdeacon, other Church of England leaders and the wider network
- Promote safeguarding and commit to continuing good safeguarding practice, compliance and culture at Hope Church

Key attributes and gifts we are looking for:

- Desire to serve the people and place of Islington, with an awareness and sensitivity of the local demographic and diversity of the parish, and ability to build and grow flourishing local partnerships
- Passion for, and a proven track record of, vision building, growing a church in number, depth and impact around that vision and building collaboration with local partners and organisations to support that growth
- Empathy, kindness and approachability in pastoral care, continually pointing us to the example modelled by Christ
- Leadership to take the team and church on the journey to restore our church buildings, and manage the rest of the property portfolio to ensure it stays financially healthy
- Commitment to the inclusion of all people, actively fostering unity over uniformity and embracing our diverse expression of Church, with strong communication and interpersonal skills
- Inspiring, thoughtful and relatable preaching and teaching, experienced in tackling challenging subjects and commitment to transforming lives through the faithful application of Scripture
- Willingness to be authentic, vulnerable and honest about your own weaknesses, advocating the sufficiency of God's grace
- Sense of humour and desire to learn as well as teach, taking a balanced view and being open to new or different perspectives
- Appreciation for the rich history, traditions and qualities of Hope Church but with a willingness to try new ideas, be creative, innovative and not fixed on one style or tradition

We would encourage you to visit a Sunday Service as you think about applying as it is one of the best ways to understand what makes us Hope Church. Once shortlisting is complete, we will organise parish visits to give you a tour, answer any

questions you have and for you to meet parishioners - giving you a warm Hope welcome as is part of our DNA. We will also try and organise visits to the local CofE Academy Trust to meet the Chaplain.

How we can support the new incumbent:

- Prayer and willingness to provide time for reflection and discussion
- Strong staff team and a network of willing volunteers who will use their gifts to support the leadership of the church
- A refreshed and actively engaged PCC with the enthusiasm to support the growth and evolution of Hope Church
- Support for personal development and continuous learning, keeping an eye on wellbeing to foster a healthy work-life balance

Living in Love and Faith

We believe it is important to engage with challenging issues of sexuality, gender and marriage in our preaching, discipleship and our community groups. As a church, we have diverse experiences and diverse convictions, and our priority in an incumbent is that, whatever their own convictions, they are inclusive, open minded and welcoming to all without judgement or prejudice. We are looking for a leader who will support people of different views both within our congregation and within our leadership (including both lay leadership and staff) team, and will champion unity over uniformity.

Further Information

Further information about Hope Church Islington and our parish can be found in the links below.

- Our website: <https://www.hopechurchislington.org>
- Our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/HopeChurchIslington>
- Our Instagram feeds:
 - Hope Church Islington: <https://www.instagram.com/hopechurchislington>
 - HCI Active: <https://www.instagram.com/hci.active/>
 - A Little Hope: <https://www.instagram.com/hci.alittlehope/>
 - Hope Youth: <https://www.instagram.com/hci.youth/>
- Our 2024 APCM Report: <https://www.hopechurchislington.org/s/Hope-APCM-Report-2024.pdf>
- More information about St Mary Magdalene Academy can be found on their website: <http://www.smmacademy.org>

Appendix A - History

After a two year building project, which as it so happens, was fraught with difficulty and challenge, St Mary Magdalene Church opened as a Chapel of Ease to St Mary's Islington, on neighbouring Upper Street, in 1814. As the industrial revolution abounded, and the population of Islington exploded, St Mary Magdalene and its surrounding churchyard became the centre of a burgeoning and emerging community. By 1853, along with most churches in London, its graveyard was full and closed, and when, in 1894, it became a parish in its own right, St Mary Magdalene and its gardens also housed a mortuary, mortuary keepers' cottage and coroner's court. As the community grew, and infrastructure emerged around it, St Mary Magdalene was a focal point for many of the complexities of Islingtonian life. In nearby Westbourne Road, the church of St David opened in 1869, also to serve the growing population, at the time, under a different parish configuration, but which would one day form one of the two church buildings now in the parish of Hope Church Islington.



Although this densely packed corner of London has more than enough people to warrant these two churches sitting almost side by side, the decline of Christendom and the increasing connectedness and mobility of the populace placed the two congregations in evangelistic competition. In the early 1980's the more prominent Mary Magdalene won out and St David was deconsecrated, Mary Magdalene absorbing its parish boundaries. The newly formed benefice maintained a presence across the parish by moving a remnant into St David's church hall whilst St David itself was let long-term to a Greek Orthodox congregation. Although Mary Magdalene and the church-hall offshoot were overseen by one incumbent the two congregations retained separate identities, and continued to do so right up until the renovation of and return to St David in 2013. It was at this point that the parish was renamed in a declaration of unity.

The modern parish bears the marks of the story in which it is embedded: lost stained glass from Second World War bombings, a grand piano gifted by the BBC after using St Mary Magdalene to record and broadcast during the blitz, and artefacts from churches which did not make it through the bombings unscathed, and for which St Mary Magdalene acted as a refuge. It also witnesses to some of the more complicated aspects of its history, ones which the community continue to attempt to process and reckon with now: soft stone used to save money on the construction as the project went wildly over budget, a grand - and in many ways spectacular - painting of Jesus and Mary Magdalene above the altar where both Jesus

and Mary are depicted as white Europeans, a crypt which is prone to continue to flood, in part because of a complicated and historically fractured relationship with our colleagues in Islington Council, and two church buildings in close proximity to one another, reflecting an age of church attendance which is no longer the reality in liberal Islington.

As the community works to bear witness to the name Hope, to a vision of salvation through healing and wholeness, we do so attempting to not only look forward, but also in awareness, appreciation and assessment of the story which has brought us here. An acknowledgement that transformation is a lifelong process, and the life of Hope finds its beginning more than two hundred years ago.

Appendix B - Occasional Offices

Since returning to in-person services in 2021, we have held 14 baptisms, of which 11 were child baptisms and 3 were adult baptisms. In 2022, we held 4 weddings and 3 funerals, and in 2023, we held 6 funerals, 3 weddings, and one baptism. In 2024 to date, we have held 4 baptisms in the parish and one funeral.

Our goal is that people truly encounter the love of God in Christ when they are held at these important life moments, without a sense of an ulterior motive or an agenda. We strive to make meaning for those who sense there must be more, even if they aren't regularly attending.

Appendix C - St Mary Magdalene: Arresting Decay and Restoring a Building Fit for Purpose

Overview

An integral part of the current story of Hope Church Islington is the building of St Mary Magdalene. We are in a vital phase of her nearly 210 year history, as she is in need of tender loving care to the tune of approximately £5 million, with the work anticipated to take 5-10 years to complete. Her roof leaks, the porches are sinking, her crypt floods, the drains overflow, and dry rot has begun to find its home in her timbers.

The day-to-day reality of caring for our dilapidated building can at times be an incredibly overwhelming prospect. We couldn't be more fortunate to have Alex Sherratt as our Quinquennial Inspector (QI), who provides the wisdom and expertise we need to plot and navigate a course forward which will eventually resolve some of the longstanding issues the building has faced, and in the tenure of our former Priest-in-Charge, we have built relationships with a range of experts, contractors, professionals and engineers, all who are beginning to get to grips with the scope and scale of the project at St Mary Magdalene. It is fair to say that complex, structural challenges had been exacerbated by a lack of attention, but in the last two and a half years, a long term strategy has been put in motion to address the needs of St Mary Magdalene in detail. The first phase involved detailed assessments, surveys and investigations, helping us to fully understand the nature of the restoration project the building is facing, and the second phase (currently underway, in conjunction with an ongoing first phase), begins to address some of the urgent works required on this Grade II* listed building. This lays the groundwork for pursuing the third and final phase of a more total reimagination and restoration of the building. The outline of the assessment of needs can be found in more detail on our website (www.hopechurchislington.org/stmarymagdalene).

What still needs to be done?

Whilst a significant amount of Phase 2 has been progressed or plans are in place, Phase 3 of Restoring the Building Fit for Purpose remains at an early stage. While an assessment has been done of what the need is, a new incumbent would need to lead, working with the congregation, PCC, diocese and experts to:

- Define a vision for the building long-term within the parish in support of our wider vision for being Hope
- Make a plan for the delivery of the work and build a team that can deliver on that work
- Fundraise to support the completion of the project
- Work with a team, to manage and deliver the restoration of the church

Funding

As an Islington church, we are extraordinarily privileged to be a beneficiary of Cloudesley, a charitable foundation which provides grant funding to support the upkeep of churches in the borough. Without the funding rounds which St Mary Magdalene is eligible to apply for twice a year, the investigative and survey work would simply not be possible for us to undertake. The expertise, generosity and support of Cloudesley means that we are in a position to begin to address some of the challenges of our building, as we build up to fundraising for larger grant input from Heritage Lottery Funding. We are hugely indebted to the ongoing support of Cloudesley, and inspired to a generosity that sees the properties we hold, not simply as assets to be utilised, but resources to be stewarded and shared for the good of the whole community. In the tenure of the recent Priest-in-Charge, we applied to Cloudesley 5 times (Autumn 2021, Spring 2022, Autumn 2022, Autumn 2023 and Spring 2024), and were generously awarded grants on all five occasions. Across the 5 grants already awarded, we have been so fortunate to be awarded all the money we have requested, a total of £207,000, and that

funding has allowed us to complete a transformation of the lighting in the sanctuary, complete urgent repairs to our foul water drainage system, and commission a host of specialist and experts to complete surveys and investigations of the building.

Whilst prioritising the work required to stop and slow down the damage being done to St Mary Magdalene over time, as detailed in the table on our website, the PCC are also working hard to continue to focus on what is required to move from arresting decay to restoring the building. This means exploring the ways in which the parish might raise the significant amounts of money required in order to fully restore St Mary Magdalene and reimagine her use for the community in Holloway in the 2020s and beyond.

As a building on the Heritage At Risk Register (category C), it is certain that the parish will need to seek the funding and support of the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), and we need an incumbent able to develop strategies and work towards a successful application in this competitive space. This is highly likely to mean recruiting a specialist fundraiser, and it will be essential for the PCC to apply for smaller grants with NLHF in the first phase, before preparing to apply for the significant large Heritage grant which will fund a complete redevelopment.

Alongside the pursuit of a heritage grant, the PCC is also in the process of developing a strategy to utilise the portfolio of property at the parish's disposal for the benefit of the regeneration of St Mary Magdalene. They have recently secured long term income at the second church in the benefice, St David's, to support the maintenance and management of properties under their care, including urgent repairs at St Mary Magdalene, and they are also exploring the potential sale of the Old Coroner's Court, on site in St Mary Magdalene gardens, to provide direct capital (estimated to be about £1m) for the building project. The PCC are currently in the initial stages of considering commissioning a Preliminary Designated Adviser Report to understand what would be required to sell the property.

Appendix D - The Vicarage

Located approximately a five minute walk away from St Mary Magdalene, the vicarage is nestled in a quiet residential street close to Highbury Fields. Built in the 1860s, this beautiful Victorian terraced house is spread over three floors, with two bathrooms, two reception rooms, a kitchen diner and five bedrooms. A small courtyard garden at the back of the property is a real sun trap in the Summer. There is plenty of storage throughout the house, and it is possible to apply for a Residents' Permit through the London Borough of Islington for on-street parking outside the house. There are Good and Outstanding primary, secondary and nursery schools located within walking distance, and whilst on a quiet street, the house is also located close to all the amenities of Holloway Road and Upper Street, including public transport links (underground, overground and bus), supermarkets, restaurants, pubs, gyms and parks. You are also close enough to hear the cheers every time Arsenal score a goal!

