­Vacancy in the benefice of S Mary Reigate

**Bishop’s Statement in relation to the benefice, the needs of the diocese and the wider interests of the Church.**

# The Appointment

 St Mary’s is already a thriving and growing parish, with one of the largest Electoral Rolls in the diocese and an effective mission to the town of Reigate. The next incumbent will need of course to have the skills of service and leadership to enable the staff team and to take the parish into the next phase of its mission. Without in any way ignoring that primary responsibility, it is important to recognise the significance of the wider relationships, both locally and across the diocese, of which St Mary’s is part.

The diocese has in the past worked in collaboration with St Mary’s in church planting, a venture which resulted in the renewal of the life of the parish of St Luke’s. While there are no other churches in need of that sort of help in St Mary’s vicinity at present, I would want to continue conversation with the new incumbent about how the church can assist others in their mission and outreach. The previous incumbent was also a member of the Diocesan Council of Trustees (aka Bishop’s Council); that commitment to the wider governance of the diocese was noticed and much appreciated.

St Mary’s is one of only three parishes in Southwark in which the diocese is committed to the permanent provision of two full-time stipendiary posts. During recent rounds of post reductions, we have maintained that commitment, and now that the diocese’s finances are much more stable we are confident that we can continue to do so.

The diocese of Southwark has in recent years undergone a significant change in culture, and has adopted a renewed vision which is founded in a commitment to mission, particularly through affirming and encouraging all church communities to embody some aspect of the Anglican Communion’s Five Marks of Mission. We have renewed our commitment to the diversity of traditions within the diocese, recognising particularly the vital role in diocesan life played by evangelical parishes and clergy. St Mary’s is a parish which has led the way in showing what a mission-focused church community can look like, and that is a gift to the diocese as a whole.

The Deanery

The parish is part of the Reigate Deanery. The Area Dean writes:

The Reigate Deanery is made up of 23 parishes and we embrace a diverse range of communities from quiet country villages to main town centres. We are learning that there is much to be gained from being a large Deanery as we are able to draw upon a wide range of expertise to support one another and to embrace new ways of working together. The aim of our Deanery is that we be not so much defined by our meetings, as by our actions. We aim to make both Chapter and Synod meetings gatherings which express a shared enthusiasm and energy for the missionary work we share. Support for projects such as Street Pastors and our Winter Night Shelter have shown us how we can start putting this into practice. We hold an annual workshop day to explore ways of empowering our laity. There are regular Quiet Days and Healing Services. In recent months the Deanery has been a focus for our response to the refugee crisis. You would be made most welcome amongst us and I would want to assure you of my own personal and prayerful support as you take up your ministry here.

# The needs of the Diocese & the wider church

All appointments in the Southwark Diocese take place within the context of the diocesan *Hearts on Fire* vision. As this unfolds, it is providing a challenge to all parishes and worshipping communities to ensure that their lives and activities are all shaped around the call of the gospel, and our participation in God’s mission in the world. The other strategic document affecting the whole diocese is the *Strategy for Ministry*. Under this banner the diocese is emphasising the call to growth, both numerical and spiritual, to a renewed partnership between all members of the church in ministry, and to increased collaborative working beyond parish borders, and particularly in deaneries. As the *Strategy for Ministry* document will inform diocesan and Area policy over the next few years, it is important that all clergy in the diocese have a good understanding of its aims and objectives (it can be read on screen or downloaded from the diocesan web pages). These aims have recently ben summarised in our diocesan vision document *Southwark Vision 2017-2025.*

## Finance

As of 2016, a new system of financial contributions was introduced across the Diocese, called the Parish Support Fund. All parishes are invited to contribute with generosity, and to aim to meet their own ministerial costs. St Mary’s PCC resolved as well as meeting the full costs of its own clergy, to contribute to the diocese the full cost of one more clergyperson. This commitment to supporting the mission of the church in some of the poorest parishes in the country is very much appreciated, and it is hoped that it will continue.

## Collaborative Ministry

I am looking to appoint clergy in this Area who are able to articulate their vision for the mission of the church in the places to which they are called, and who have a vision for the church’s growth. In whatever tradition or location, I look to hear from the clergy how they will work together with lay members of the church and with their neighbouring parishes and colleagues. I am looking for people with active and developing spiritual lives who are able to be an example of discipleship to the people of God. I take very seriously my own responsibilities as pastor to the clergy, and will always endeavour to make myself available to support them in their ministry.

+Jonathan Croydon