

A chance to discern vocations on a great scheme in a great city

OUR VISION

Our scheme is based in Camden, Tottenham and Hornsey, in the Edmonton Area of the Diocese of London. We believe that energised parish ministry is one of the greatest assets of the Church of England, and we have a two-fold vision that undergirds all our work.

First, we are committed to offering bright, enthusiastic, young Christian people the opportunity to work in our parishes to the greater glory of God and for the building up of the Church. Second, we want to make a positive contribution to the life of the Church of England by providing a steady stream of young gifted candidates for ordination, who have been fired with enthusiasm for priestly ministry by the experience of life in our vibrant Anglo-Catholic parishes.

If you sense that the Lord might be calling you in some way to offer your life to him, we hope you will enjoy finding out about the life of Pastoral Assistants here in North London. Our website will tell you more about our vision for Pastoral Assistants and about the places in which we work. You can find out about the people who are serving here this year and read about what past Pastoral Assistants have gone on to do.



LIFE TOGETHER...

A key aspect of the Pastoral Assistant experience is living an intentional life of prayer and service in community. Learning to love and respect one's colleagues is a vital element of formation for life in the Church. We do not think of Pastoral Assistants simply lodging in the same place but we aim to cultivate a purposeful common life for the support and enjoyment of all, remembering the words of the Psalmist, "How very good and pleasant it is, when kindred dwell together in unity" (Ps 133. 1)

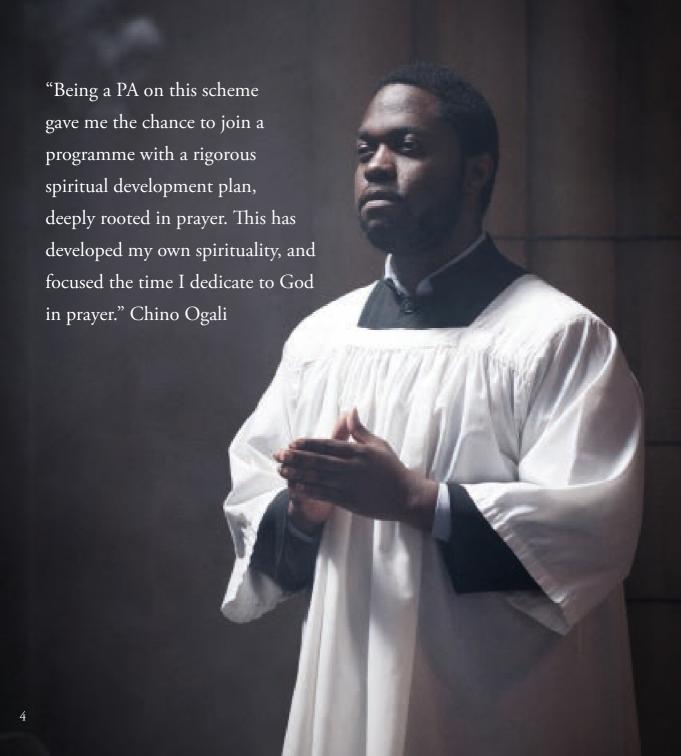
We offer excellent accommodation to our Pastoral Assistants and we also value the hospitality they are able to provide to the wider parish and beyond.

HELP & SUPPORT...

Each Pastoral Assistant is offered a weekly time of supervision with an experienced priest. This is to make sure Pastoral Assistants have the opportunity to reflect on their experience and discuss the pastoral situations they have experienced.

Supervisors are also particularly keen to help Pastoral Assistants who are considering ordination to navigate their way through the selection process. Many former PAs are now at theological college or serving the Church as priests up and down the country.

In addition to regular supervision in the parish, our Pastoral Assistants participate in formation sessions deepening the spiritual aspects of the role and life, as well as theological formation sessions engaging with basic themes in Christian doctrine, biblical study and moral theology.



CHRISTIAN FORMATION

Christian formation is at the heart of the experience we want to give to our Pastoral Assistants. This is gained through living their life together, with supervised reflection on what the ups and downs of this can teach. Also, the liturgical life, and regular worship and prayer, nurture a deepening understanding of what God may be calling these young men and women to offer their lives into.

As a scheme we offer monthly theological reflection sessions which are rigorous, and aim to begin to equip participants with important tools of theological reflection. These include book reviewing, field study experiences to art galleries and other cultural hubs, as well as seminar style sessions where Pastoral Assistants are asked to prepare presentations on aspects of their ministry reflected against the background of the work of a favourite theologian.

Participants in the scheme have a range of academic experience, and this is very much catered for so that each may develop in his or her own way.

For those considering a vocation to the ordained ministry, this rigorous theological formation has proved invaluable for candidates attending Bishops' Advisory Panels (BAPs). Particularly useful are the opportunities to present on a chosen topic, and to share in group discussions with others of differing theological views and traditions.

The daily round of pastoral encounters and connections enable our Pastoral Assistants to speak with insight about their experiences in our parishes, which stay with and shape them beyond a BAP, through theological college and into ordained ministry. We are proud of the diversity of opportunities for personal formation our parishes are able to offer, and rejoice to see our Pastoral Assistants using experiences gained here in the service of the whole Church.

"...Being a Pastoral Assistant was the best two years of my life. We lived in a spare vicarage in the parish. It was a great house, much better than my student house! I probably most enjoyed my work at The Well, which is a drop-in centre for sex-workers and homeless women in Kings Cross. The thing I felt most nervous about at first was working in the Night Shelter, but I soon discovered there was nothing to be worried about and it was huge fun. Every day brought challenges. It made me completely re-address what Christianity was all about and it had an impact on every area of my life all the time."



DEEPENING DISCIPLESHIP

Intentional spiritual reflection is offered each term in times together for prayer, discussion and shared experience. Complemented by individual spiritual direction, these timetabled sessions bring opportunities to learn some of the jewels that can be drawn from the well that is the Christian spiritual tradition.

In the Autumn term, the Rule of St Benedict helps members of the scheme to think about life lived together, as well as learning the ways of a balanced and well formed life of discipleship that St Benedict encourages. In the Spring term, the rules for discernment that the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius articulate so helpfully are engaged to help our young women and men try to make sense of God's movement in their lives. St Francis is the focus for the spiritual formation sessions in the Summer term. Taught on a field trip to Paris, we explore the way Francis' legacy has inspired the life of St Vincent de Paul and the experience of the modern Communities of Jerusalem, living Franciscan spirituality of

contemplation and service in an urban setting.

One of the practical ways in which most of our Pastoral Assistants put the teaching of St Vincet de Paul into practice is through serving in winter night shelters for the homeless, or volunteering in local projects that seek to serve those on the margins of society. Most of our Pastoral Assistants speak of a profound connection between their service of Jesus in church, and their service of him in those outside the walls of our church buildings. This connection between our wosrhip of Christ in the Eucharist and our service of him in the poor and vulnerable is key to deeping our discipleship, and to getting to know Jesus better in the people we least expect, and the places we never thought to look.

We also encourage our Pastoral Assistants to take a retreat during their year with us: this may be to Walsingham, or to a religious community or retreat house, for the inside of a week.



St Vincent de Paul, whilst a young French priest of the early 17th century, ministered to the rich and the elite; however, an appointment to a poor parish inspired in him a new vocation. This was to work with those on the fringes of society who had no money, no power or no voice. He urged those who followed him to be vessels of God's love and mercy, founding orders of religious and lay people to continue his work. St Vincent was also concerned that priests were properly formed for their ministry through study, prayer and works of charity. Our parishes, though economically and socially challenging, are rich in opportunities to serve and encounter God.





LIVING TOGETHER

One of the greatest opportunities and challenges of being a Pastoral Assistant is the experience of living together in small communities with other Pastoral Assistants. Our Pastoral Assistants share houses with one or two others in each of our clusters of Camden, Hornsey and Tottenham. This is an opportunity because life together is at the heart of what it means to be a Christian and what it means to love one another in a practical day-to-day way. Our Pastoral Assistants have enjoyed the opportunities to pray together in the house, share fellowship and fun, and reflect together on the many and varied experiences that life in a busy parish brings.

But living together is also a challenge, and this challenge is probably one of the deepest formational aspects of the scheme. Learning to support one another through stressful times, learning to manage conflict in a prayerful and loving way and learning to be open and communicate with one another is both an excellent preparation for Christian ministry, and an essential part of being a Christian. Our Pastoral Assistants come from a diverse mixture of backgrounds and come with different experiences of the church. Building strong relationships across diversity may be a challenge, but it is also a great gift of the scheme.

Another important aspect of life together is learning to use the house as a place of hospitality and welcome, and Pastoral Assistants have sometimes used their homes for nurture groups and social occasions in the parish.

Being a Christian, and especially being a Christian minister, involves our whole lives, our rest and leisure as much as our time spent serving. The scheme is a chance to begin to work out what this means by living with other Christians in community, and sharing the good times and the bad, the fun as well as the pastoral tasks as we share our lives together.

"...I'd never lived in London before. I really loved it. I loved the diversity, it was really new to me. The sheer variety of people living almost literally next door to each other was incredible. Plus there's loads to do in London on your day off. You never get bored. I'd totally recommend being a Pastoral Assistant. You can come to the scheme without necessarily knowing what you are going to do next, knowing that the priests and people will support you, no matter what. It was the first time I'd gone to the daily office and daily Mass. It deepened and enriched my faith and gave it a whole new emphasis."



The Revd Alex Garner

A SCHEME TO BE PROUD OF



91% of our Pastoral Assistants have gone onto start ordination training

25% of those are female candidates





50% of candidates go onto study at St Stephen's House, 20% at Westcott, 12% at Mirfield and 10% at other Colleges



"... We know we can expect ordinands from the scheme to have a good grounding in the nature of the Church and parish ministry, and in the spiritual disciplines that sustain those in ordained ministry. The scheme's value lies in the high quality of supervision from the clergy of the parish, and the rigorous engagement with the ordinands' personal as well as ministerial development. Each ordinand who has come to Westcott comes with a strong and tested sense of vocation, and an enthusiasm for training. For us this scheme is among the best available in the country..."

The Rt Revd Martin Seeley, Bishop of Edmundsbury & Ipswich, former Principal of Westcott House.





LONDON, A GREAT WORLD CITY

London has triumphed in a new study of the world's greatest cities, well ahead of close competitors Paris and New York.

From it's great artistic and religious heritage to cutting edge contemporary culture, London has much to offer. London is also one of the most diverse and tolerant cities in the world and so working and living here will mean being part of a truly global community.

Although the Capital has many riches to offer, our work in the churches means that we also engage with the most vulnerable; the homeless, the refugees, the mentally ill and the lonely. Our ministry is demanding and yet ultimately rewarding.

London has long had a attraction for young adults, whether they be university graduates looking for their first job, or those wanting to experience all that this city has to offer. As a Pastoral Assistant in London you should expect to experience the diverse, challenging

and rapidly-changing nature of this great world city. At first, the frenetic pace of can seem overwhelming, but our Pastoral Assistants leave London better equipped for the challenges of ministry in the 21st century, using their experience gained here in the service of the wider Church.

For many, London can be a lonely and bewildering place, and our churches find themselves increasingly forming the centres of community where otherwise traditional forms of community have broken down. As we seek to draw people into the life of Christ, we do so by drawing them into community: this is what our worship, outreach and service seek to do, and our Pastoral Assistants have a key role in this aspect of our work.

As one of the world's greatest cultural hubs, London offers huge opportunities for relaxation, socialising, learning and having fun. At times, being a Pastoral Assistant is hard, but it is also huge fun.



"...It was good to engage with neighbouring parishes of a different tradition to our own. This gives a real vibrancy of perspective on how God's love is brought to a world city. I'd definitely recommend being a Pastoral Assistant. For me, the role allowed me to move immediately into the line of work I wanted to do. It was motivating, hands-on and really enriching. My spiritual life took on a shape and a body through the Daily Office and the sacramental life of the Church. It became deeply relational because all our prayers spilled out into the life of the wider community."

The Revd Mischa Richards,

WE COME HIGHLY RECOMENDED...



"I'm delighted to commend the NLPA scheme to you. For nearly 20 years, we have been providing the opportunity for men and women to immerse themselves in the service of Jesus Christ in North London. Each placement is uniquely tailored to enable God's vibrant love for the inner city to deepen your personal faith, draw you into the beauty of the body of Christ, and support you in the midst of a praying and prayerful community. Life on the NLPA scheme is never dull, but it is incredibly rewarding. Why not find out for yourself?"

The Rt Revd Rob Wickham, Bishop of Edmonton, Patron

"...I have been glad to commend this scheme to a number of candidates for ordination from Ely diocese, all of whom have benefitted enormously from the chance to be immersed in parish ministry, with good support and supervision, opportunities for theological reflection, and rootedness in both prayer and community. As a chance for those exploring a vocation to spend a year experiencing the joys, privileges and demands of ministry, it is among the best in the Church of England."



The Revd Canon Anna Matthews, DDO for the Diocese of Ely



Is God calling you to be a priest? The North London Pastoral Assistant scheme offers a unique opportunity to spend a year discerning your vocation in the context of parish ministry. The Diocese of London serves the growing, vibrant and cosmopolitan population of our capital city, and is uniquely placed to meet the challenges of preaching the good news of Jesus Christ in the midst of contemporary urban living. This Pastoral Assistant scheme will offer you hands-on experience in ministry and mission, deep and prayerful formation, and the guiding hand of experienced parish clergy. Go for it!

The Rt Revd Jonathan Baker, Bishop of Fulham, Patron

HOW TO APPLY

We begin our recruitment process at the start of each year. Application forms are usually available from early December with interviews scheduled for March and June.

Visit our website north-london-pastoral-assistants.org.uk and download the application form. Once completed, email the completed application form to NLPA@posp.co.uk

Alternatively you can post your application to us:

North London Pastoral Assistants Scheme

Parish Office

St Paul's Church

Camden Square

London

NW1 9XG

Pastoral Assistants

NLPA@posp.co.uk hello@north-london-pastoral-assistants.org.uk 020 7424 0724

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