



Community Connector Job Pack





Parish

Shirehampton, near Avonmouth, at the north-western edge of the city of Bristol, is a district which originated as a separate village. It retains something of its village feel, and is still thought of as a village by many of its almost 8,000 inhabitants.

There are three primary schools within the village; Nova Primary, Shirehampton Primary, and St Bernard's Catholic Primary and a secondary school; Oasis Academy, Brightstowe. We enjoy good relationships with all the primary schools and particularly Shirehampton Primary where we are involved in leading assemblies.

Location

The Church is in Shirehampton Bristol which is a suburb of Bristol. It is located to the North West of the City of Bristol, and within Bristol West Deanery within the Diocese of Bristol.

Priority Communities Network

St Mary's is a part of the Priority community network and the funding for this post comes through the National Church as a result of our position on the indices of deprivation. The PCN describes its inception in this way, 'Many communities across our Diocese have been subject to decades of underinvestment from national and local government leading to significant socio-economic disadvantage and marginalisation. Across the Bristol and Swindon area approximately 30 of our parishes sit within the 20% most deprived in the country when ranked using the national Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). Local churches and clergy serving in these areas often face a range of particular challenges, not least, limited resources. We long to turn the tide and see clergy and churches in these areas flourishing and cultivating sustainable good growth, through intentional investment and support.'



Who We Are

Here at St Mary's we have a yearning for a world that's as it should be, a world in which all people thrive, the environment flourishes, diversity is celebrated and those who live in deprivation are seen as the assets they are, not as burdens of society. We believe the faith we have in Christ will help us to strive towards and to model this life. St Mary's church is located in the very heart of Shirehampton village. It has a churchyard and walkway which leads to a Doctors surgery and local carpark, making it a very busy area.

What we Do



When I first arrived I met several homeless men who spent almost all day sat in the churchyard. As we developed a relationship we began to meet inside church, drinking coffee sharing bacon rolls and hearing a bible story and praying together. It was a special moment in the life of the church, regular attenders getting to know the men as Rolfe, Nick and Neville, men with stories to tell and lives to share. The bacon butties soon developed into a whole coffee morning event. Then the cost of living crisis hit and we decided as a church to respond. Lunches are now served every Friday.

We feed up to 50 people weekly, casseroles, pasta dishes, homemade soup and gluten free / vegan dishes. The group is made up of young parents, children, elderly folk, people with learning difficulties and mental health issues. Several of our regulars have dementia. There is also a mix of nationalities. The church is full of music as Sarah, a young autistic woman plays popular tunes on our piano. The church buzzes and community flourishes, helping each other, building confidence and friendships. There are already signs of growth in church as this community begins to ask questions about faith and come along to see.

Over the past several years our Children and youth minister, Amy Boucher, has developed a strong ministry which includes a wonderful dance ministry. She works with children from 4-17 building confidence, sharing the Gospel message and involving the group in regular worship services. Many of the youngsters have come to the group through social prescribing. The confidence you see growing in them is such a joy! We see a similar story within our youth club. Many of the young people now make up our youth events team; helping put on major events throughout the year. There is an expectation that the young helpers who have been identified will continue to be developed into adult leaders and volunteers.



Our Glow group helps young people explore their world and the way their faith has an impact on the way they navigate it. We have also developed intergenerational pop-up events which we run every month. We have everything from pancake parties to Glow nights, amazing easter mazes and a fantastic Shire pop up play village which saw over 250 visits during one week in the summer. The community comes out in force to everything we put on and we regularly welcome 80-150 people between 9 weeks and 90 years old, laughing, sharing food and finding community. We continue to welcome new people and a few are starting to attend church through the relationships that are being built across all our community events



Developing Deeper Discipleship



We have just launched a New Worship service Rooted to establish pathways to faith that are accessible and safe spaces via a midweek service. With increased capacity and links to our community we aim to run two seekers courses, one for young people and another for those who have just moved to Britain from other nations. Building on the identity of St Mary's as part of the Inclusive Church network will also provide new connections to those within our community who may have been previously hurt by church.

We are NOT looking for someone who can walk on water!! We are NOT looking for someone to come in and single-handedly grow the church! We are NOT looking for someone who thinks they have all the answers!

We ARE looking for someone with a passion for Jesus and for people. We ARE looking for someone who loves being part of team both paid and volunteer. We ARE looking for someone who can use their gifts to look, listen and respond that learn from our community and will help them cast a vision for flourishing.

Our passion for the Gospel, hospitality, welcome and inclusivity are already starting to bear fruit. With the right person in post we believe real flourishing will continue to be seen in both our church and wider communities. We prayerfully believe God is at the heart of this mission. In St Mary's we invite people to come as you are. Be renewed. Go share God's love. A simple but powerful message to be lived out, and it all begins through connection, relationship and radical love just as Jesus shows us. We are convinced this exciting new role as Youth and Community Connector will help us spread this invitation further day by day; bringing the transformation that the love of Christ offers us all.

