

EMMANUEL CHURCH

West Hampstead



MISSION ACTION PLAN

2008



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Church Profile

- ✠ Emmanuel Church is a Victorian parish church in the thriving residential area of West Hampstead in North West London.
- ✠ We have a liberal catholic tradition, and the PCC is signed up to the Inclusive Church network.
- ✠ The church is now in interregnum, and the living is currently suspended. The previous incumbent was in post for over 17 years, and brought the church from a conservative low church tradition with a dwindling, elderly congregation, to a thriving congregation which follows a liberal Catholic tradition and is mainly made up of young families with children. We have a licensed parish Reader.
- ✠ We currently have 121 people on our electoral roll, and an average attendance at our principal Sunday service of approximately 112 (2007, excluding “special services”), of whom on average one-third are children under the age of 11, and one-half are communicants.
- ✠ The focus of parish life is the 10.00am Sunday morning Eucharist, which is followed every week by coffee at the back of church.
- ✠ We are listed by the Diocese of London as a ‘B’ parish—one with the potential to become healthy and viable.
- ✠ There is a sought-after church school and the school children attend the church for a Eucharist each Friday.

Area Profile

- ✠ The parish has around 10,000 inhabitants, and is socially mixed, but generally educated to a high standard, and with a high proportion of professionals. It is a young area, with 10% of the population of retirement age. The congregation is representative of this general social picture.
- ✠ There are no other Christian churches in the parish, but there is a large synagogue. 25% of the community declared themselves in the last census as being “of no religion.”
- ✠ The area is not especially diverse ethnically by London standards (except for a large Jewish community), and our congregation reflects this; however, we do have people from several different European backgrounds, and from North America and the school is rather more diverse .
- ✠ The Liberal Democrats are the most active political party, and one of the local Lib Dem councillors serves on the Board of Governors of the church school. Our MP, Glenda Jackson, is Labour.
- ✠ There is good provision in the area for pre-school age children, but less for school-age children, outside that provided by the schools themselves.
- ✠ It is generally a safe, peaceful neighbourhood with a strong sense of community.
- ✠ There are excellent transport links with the rest of London (West Hampstead is in ‘Zone 2’) and with the rest of the country (within a few miles of Paddington, Euston and King’s Cross/ St Pancras stations, and from the start of the M1).

Strengths

Emmanuel is a church with a diverse, cosmopolitan and growing congregation with a strong sense of community, and a genuinely welcoming and inclusive atmosphere.

Specifically, it has:

- ✠ A thinking congregation which enjoys lively debate and likes to be intellectually stimulated.
- ✠ A high proportion of young families and children.
- ✠ A lively and well-planned Sunday School which has seen rapid growth over the last few years. A number of skilled professionals in various areas, for example teaching, accountancy and the law, which gives us a wide pool of expertise from which to draw advice for management of the church. One of our congregation is a member of the General Synod so we have a good understanding of national and diocesan church politics and affairs.
- ✠ An excellent professional organist and cantor and a growing choir which welcomes both professionals and amateurs and enhances our worship with a wide variety of music.
- ✠ An excellent and popular church school of just over 100 pupils ('a village school in the heart of London'), which received an outstanding Ofsted report in July 2007. A number of members of the congregation serve on the Board of Governors.

Weaknesses

The following weaknesses have been identified:

- ✠ No specific provision for young people over the age of 11.
- ✠ Coffee after the service is well attended and has been a vital part of our growth. Our previous Vicar was excellent at ‘hosting’ this. During the interregnum we will miss this important contribution which he made.
- ✠ A surprisingly small and steadily dwindling number of older people in the congregation. In consultation prior to compiling this MAP, the most noticeable comments concerned the small numbers and relative isolation of the older age group, as a result of the huge increase in young families coming to church over the last few years. Although there is a monthly weekday Eucharist aimed at retired people, followed by a lunch and talk organised by the parish Reader, it was felt quite strongly that adequate Sunday provision for this age-group was lacking, due to the very high proportion of children and toddlers at the Sung Eucharist. The number of older people attending the church is now approximately 10-15, and there appears also to be a lack of outreach into this age group in the community.
- ✠ The high number of children at the 10am service can interfere with the worship, particularly for older people and those without children.
- ✠ Helpers for all tasks are drawn from a small pool of willing volunteers, but in many families both adults are in full time work and have little free time.
- ✠ Although the area and population appear affluent, there is limited gifting. We also have low capital resources. This means that (despite some recent progress in this area) we are not yet able to cover our net costs to the Diocese, and are unable to give much to charity.
- ✠ We have very limited community space.
- ✠ Systematic preparation has been established for those seeking baptism or confirmation, but there are no other nurture groups or Christian education at present.
- ✠ There are no community outreach groups, other than certain non-church groups who rent the limited community room facilities in the church.
- ✠ Comments were also made in consultation for this MAP by some parents of young children, that the main service is too long, and they would appreciate a shorter service with less choral music.

Aims and Objectives

Given the interregnum, it has been difficult for the PCC to draw up objectives with a specific timeline, as this will need the guidance and commitment of the new priest in charge. However, bearing in mind the profile, strengths and weaknesses identified above, the following aims and objectives for Emmanuel's mission over the next few years were proposed:

- ✠ ***We aim to reach out with God's love and welcome to those of all ages.***
This could be achieved by a more varied provision of church services, to allow for both stillness and child-friendliness in worship. This will need to be considered in conjunction with the new priest-in-charge. There could also be increased pastoral visiting amongst the elderly, both those who are already members of the congregation, and those who may have been dechurched. We are researching ways and volunteers to re-start the lapsed mothers and toddlers group, which for several years was extremely successful.
- ✠ ***We aim to increase the understanding of stewardship amongst the congregation, and the need for gifting both time and money to the church.***
A stewardship month was held for the first time in September 2007, in order to raise awareness of the need for sacrificial giving as part of commitment to the church. The recent increase in attendance figures has not been matched by a similar increase in giving. It is important that we continue with a similar Stewardship Month, or other scheme, working together with the new priest. Emmanuel is not covering its net costs within the Diocese, although it pays the amount asked for by the Diocese. In the last few years, however, we have increased our contribution by a higher percentage than that requested, and we aim to be fully self-funding within the next couple of years. We are currently still listed as a "B" parish by the diocese, but would aim to become an "A" parish as soon as possible.
- ✠ ***We aim to build on the already strong links between church and school.*** The church school attends the church weekly for a Eucharist (Morning Prayer during the Interregnum). Children from the top year at the school are also prepared each year for Confirmation. The Chairman of Governors, one other Governor and three school parents are currently members of the PCC. The second criterion (after children in care) for admission to the school, is that the family should have attended the church regularly for 12 months before applying, and this has drawn many families into the church. It is important that efforts are made to reach out to these families, and to retain them in the regular congregation, after their children have been accepted by the school.

Aims and Objectives continued

- ✠ *We aim to increase Christian education within the church and community in keeping with our liberal inclusive tradition.* Considerable interest has been expressed by several members of the congregation in pursuing a programme of Christian education at various levels. As with many aspects of the life of the Parish, this has often failed to progress further due to the challenges of marshalling people with very little spare time, but we would hope that this could be arranged in collaboration with a new priest.
- ✠ *We aim to improve Christian teaching and fellowship particularly amongst those aged between 11 and 18 and the men in the congregation—* we have a strong Sunday School but the focus is on the 4 to 11 age group. We need to ensure that there is a better focus for children older than this. There have been a number of initiatives over the years for women in the congregation, including a bible study group. There is a men's group which meets from time to time in a local pub but we should seek to engage better all those in the Church community.
- ✠ *We aim to expand our community space, both within the church and its gardens, and to use it to offer greater outreach into the local community* This will require significant investment in upgrading facilities—to increase total space, to offer more flexible space, and to provide a full range of facilities which will enable us to rent out space to more groups on an occasional and/or regular basis. Possible architectural plans were drawn up in 2007, but obviously these cannot be considered until after the interregnum.
- ✠ *We would like to build on the many gifts of members of the congregation to increase our outreach into the community.* The congregation includes a number of talented and creative individuals, for example, musicians, actors, artists and photographers, who might be encouraged to use their gifts to encourage people into the church.

Summary

Emmanuel is a thriving and welcoming church, with a young and vibrant congregation and a strong commitment to the values of the inclusive Christian tradition. We are eagerly awaiting the appointment of a priest-in-charge, who will help us to achieve the objectives listed above, in order that we may continue to reflect God's love and glory into the area around us, and to reach out more effectively to people of all ages in the local population.





EMMANUEL CHURCH

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