

St James Alperton – Multi Cultural and Ethno Linguistic Congregations

The presence of large numbers of people in Britain of Hindu, Sikh and Muslim background has been a given for the past forty years. The response of the church has often been characterised by seeing the challenge but not the opportunity, allowing confusion and uncertainty to mute its mission.

“At St James Alperton we intend – to be a family for all cultures – to nurture disciples of all ages.”

St. James is an evangelical Anglican church with a diverse congregation representative of the ethnic and cultural diversity in Alperton – near Wembley, North West London. It has worked hard over a number of years to ensure clarity in its mission. Those coming from the background of another faith may confuse Western culture and Christianity and it is important to bear witness to the difference. There are those from other cultural backgrounds (in this case primarily Asian) who are Christians who have experienced the challenges of being a religious minority. They have expectations of support from their brothers and sisters in faith in communities where they are a minority within a minority. It is also important to resist the temptation to lump together groups of people whose needs and histories may be very different.

This church has recognised the need we all have to worship in our mother tongue, or “heart

Six qualities for Churches in Multi-cultural Parishes

Conviction

God’s intention is to draw people from every culture to faith in Jesus Christ.

Prayer

We are asking God to do what we can not.

Zest

We rejoice in and learn from the variety of cultures around us.

Self Scrutiny

We examine the ways consciously and unconsciously we can express superiority and rejection.

Understanding

We discover all we can of people’s backgrounds and experience in life in this country.

Initiative

We experiment and take risks to build bridges and develop relationships with people of different cultures.

language - this alongside the need to reach out to the surrounding community, some of whom are not yet fluent in English.

They have a weekly Urdu/Hindi service at 4.00pm and a Tamil language at 1.30pm – in addition to the 9.00am Holy Communion and 11.00am morning services (and an informal “n:gage:” act of worship at 6.30pm).

They work at ensuring they remain one church. They have ensured appropriate leadership resources. The afternoon congregations have not been established as a “novelty” but prayerfully and mindful of the need to nurture the confident Christian identity and faith of all their members.

The Vicar, Prebendary John Root as prepared resource papers on [Starting Ethno-Linguistic Congregations](#) and [Aims for Ministry in a Multi-Faith Community](#).