

hOME

AN EXPERIMENTAL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN OXFORD

hOME church is a Christian community based in East Oxford. Founded in 2002, it seeks a part-time leader to support its growth into a new phase.

hOME's mission:

To grow as a Christian community – in depth and numbers – which connects with people who are unable to connect with church as they currently find it. Informed by its values, the community seeks to create forms of community, worship, discipleship and mission that connect with, and serve, people in contemporary culture with a focus on East Oxford. hOME is an experimental, all-age, Anglican community, following in the way of Christ.

hOME, started in 2002, is a community of spiritual seekers, rooted in the Church of England, who value creativity, openness, experimentation and relationship in their journey. Under Matt Rees (the founding leader), hOME has evolved over the last 15 years, its focus changing along with the interests of its members. Phases have included experimenting with monastic/contemplative approaches to prayer, exploring music/art/poetry in worship, and focusing on the joys and needs of young families. The current community, of around 30, is seeking to employ an ordained minister, under a new Bishop's Mission Order, to take the community into a new phase of life.

hOME worships in a spirit of generous orthodoxy within the Church of England, an open, experimental and questioning approach is core to our values. hOME has been financially self-sustaining for over a decade. The community meets on Sunday evenings for services, often mid-week for discussion, play, spiritual support, or pub-drinks, socially and co-operatively in joint or community projects, and for annual weekends away.



hOME is a community that values the Eucharist and Anglican liturgy highly, and at the same time is particularly creative and alternative in the way it expresses and explores faith. It is this combination of tradition and an alternative approach that makes hOME unique. It is a church attended by people who might not otherwise be going to church, not being drawn to an evangelical or traditional parish church. hOME is a church for people with a particularly enquiring and creative approach to faith who value the long-held wisdom of the Anglican communion.

The Sunday service, traditionally at 5pm, has taken various experimental forms. 6-week cycles include speakers, all-age services, and meditative services on varied themes ('Falling Down', 'Colours', 'Work', 'At Your Leisure', 'Voices from the Margins', 'Coming hOME', and 'Mess', for example). We are rooted in values of inclusion, prayerfulness, creativity, playfulness, enquiry and engagement. These are expressed in the way we create new ways of worshipping regularly, a recent example being a service with no words, only a darkened room and music, with the liturgy on a screen and expressing our worship in body movement. No idea is too whacky to be tried out. We share Eucharist in various venues to help make our faith real - examples being in a local community garden saying Eucharist around a bonfire, and in a local pub saying Eucharist over a pint.

The local community is served by two parish churches – St Albans, and St Mary & St. John's. With the support of the present and previous vicars, hOME has been settled at St Albans (part of the parish of St Mary & St John in Cowley) for 9 years, and is able to use both the church and church hall space. hOME links in with this community, occasionally joining with St Albans for joint services, providing gardening help for Donnington Doorstep (the local children's centre), and supporting the local street party. It also meets outside St Albans for a number of services – the carol service and Harvest festival have traditionally been held in a local pub ; the Easter Sunday service has been at the home of a community member, and Christmas services have been at St Bartlemas Chapel.

Weekends away have been important times of togetherness, which have brought the community together in prayer, meditation, meals and laughter. In mid-week gatherings issues of life and religion are explored more deeply, we share of ourselves, providing an opportunity for closer connection. In bi-monthly community meetings the life of the community is discussed by all, and decisions are made on what we want to do. We also have bi-monthly brunches which are another opportunity to spend time together and build friendships.



INCLUSIVE | ENGAGED | QUESTIONING | CREATIVE | PLAYFUL | PRAYERFUL

We aspire to be

Inclusive

We want to be an authentic and welcoming church community, journeying to build accepting relationships with each other in dialogue and love. We believe it is in relationship that we discover more of who we really are.

Engaged

We want the things we do and who we are to join in with God's renewal and restoration of all things. Through prayer and action we seek justice and peace and the transformation of the world around us.

Questioning

We want to be enriched by listening deeply to a variety of perspectives and encountering traditions other than our own. It is important to us that we are open, that no questions are off-limits, and that we hold our faith alongside doubt. Within this we find the tension between scripture, tradition, reason and experience, which are the marks of Anglican spirituality, to be creative and liberating.

Creative

We want to be creative and imaginative in the things we do. We seek to engage positively with the world, celebrate the sacred in all things, and be expressive and experimental in our worship.

Playful

We want to be a relaxed and warm community and when we rest and spend time together, we want to enjoy the moment, be childlike and gather with sincerity and playfulness.

Prayerful

We want to recognize that God dwells amongst us. Through prayer, intercession, stillness, contemplation, and a breadth of spiritual practice, we acknowledge God's transforming presence.

Governance

Registered as an independent charity the ordained minister works with 'trustees and guardians' for the hOME community in shared leadership. Typically there are around 4-5 trustees at any one time, elected by the community, serving around 3-4 years. They meet, with the vicar, every month. This rotating engagement by members of the congregation in the leadership of the church ensures an informed, inclusive, and participatory atmosphere in all expressions of hOME. hOME's governance will come under a new Bishops Mission Order (BMO), but is determined also by its Articles of Association.

hOME has a flat hierarchy, and its ideas are generated from within the community about how we worship and engage with our faith. We have a great deal of autonomy in how we express ourselves and engage with the community around us, which we treasure highly. It is important to us that the energy of community members can find expression in the way we worship.

What we are looking for

hOME looks for a minister who can continue to welcome into the community those who have felt alienated from traditional churches, who nourishes the spirit irrespective of church experience or theological persuasion, and who is able to grow the community in numbers and in the depth of their faith. Creative, organised, inspirational, fun, original and welcoming without exception, we hope for a minister who can encourage us to new ventures in the support of others, and in the fullness of faith.

hOME looks towards this major transition period in its life with anticipation and hope. It will lead itself, without a minister, from July 2018 and prays that, during that period, the skills of members will be developed to support, build and inspire the community and others. And it hopes to find a new leader to grow, invigorate and refresh its life. The community is ready for this change, willing for engagement, and committed to its support. It wishes to remain within the Church of England, as a BMO, and employ an ordained minister on a part-time basis. It envisages being able to financially sustain a half-time post (roughly 2.5 days a week) as it stands, but that a new incumbent would want to secure, and build from, this basis. hOME will pay the incumbent at the same rate as clergy salaries set by the Church of England.

hOME's accounts, Trustees Annual Report, BMO application and Articles of Association are available on request. Its website also provides some of its flavour, including its 10 year birthday film: <http://www.hOME-online.org/hOMEis10film>

Anyone interested is encouraged to email the current Chair of Trustees, Becks Sutton (rcksutton@gmail.com) for further information (including job description, terms and conditions and application form); and/or to contact other community members. Please pass this on if you know of anyone who might be interested. We hope to have recruited someone into post by early 2019.

hOME, NOVEMBER 2018