

The Revd Mark Poulson has been appointed to serve as the Secretary for Inter-Religious Affairs to the Archbishop of Canterbury and National Inter-Religious Affairs Adviser for the Church of England.

The post resources the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Church of England in relating to the great world faiths nationally and internationally as well as at a local parish level.

Mark Poulson has been Vicar of St John's Church, Southall for the last 11 years. Southall is an extraordinarily diverse area of West London with flourishing relationships across different faiths and communities, and Mark has been instrumental in fostering these relationships. He has also been involved nationally in the Church of England's Presence and Engagement Programme as a long-standing member of its Task Group, and sits on the Board of the Church's successful partnership with Government, the Near Neighbours Project.

The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby said: "I am absolutely delighted that Mark is taking on this role. Bishop Toby Howarth has exercised an extraordinary ministry in difficult times for inter faith relations. His appointment as Bishop of Bradford was as much a loss for Lambeth as it is a remarkable gain for them. Mark is one of the rare people who could fill Toby's shoes. I was very pleased when the appointing panel recommended him. We are very grateful to his parish, and to the Area Bishop of Willesden for releasing him quickly and generously."

The Director of Mission and Public Affairs, Rev Canon Dr Malcolm Brown, warmly welcomed the appointment. "The Inter Faith Adviser is not only part of the Archbishop of Canterbury's team but is also a team member in MPA, offering advice to, and often representing, all the national structures of the Church of England", he said, "Mark Poulson is a hugely experienced practitioner with the background and wisdom to take forward both the theology and practice of the church's encounters with other faith communities. He will be a valuable asset to the Mission and Public Affairs Division and will help cement our close working relationship with Lambeth Palace."

Mark said: "I am enormously excited by the opportunity to serve both the Archbishop and the wider church in the field of inter-religious relations, building on the work of my predecessors in enabling the national church to be confident and sensitive in its ministry and mission in an increasingly complex multi-religious world context."

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