

## **Under fire, vicar who said 'we love Allah': Liberal clergyman attacked by traditional Anglicans for allowing full Muslim prayer service in his Church**

- **Giles Goddard, vicar of St John's, Waterloo, held 'inclusive mosque' event**
- **During service asked congregation to praise 'the God that we love, Allah'**
- **Fellow clergymen call service 'offensive' and say it is against church law**

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A leading liberal clergyman has come under fire from traditionalist Anglicans after allowing a full Muslim prayer service in his church. Reverend Giles Goddard, vicar of St John's in Waterloo, central London, joined in the event by reading a passage from the Bible at the 'Inclusive Mosque' event.

He then asked the congregation to praise 'the god that we love, Allah', it was reported last night.



Reverend Giles Goddard, vicar of St John's in London, held an 'inclusive mosque' event during which a full Muslim service was

hosted inside his church (pictured, painting a cross on the church for Ash Wednesday)

It is thought to be the first time an entire Islamic service has been held by the Church of England and has sparked criticism from evangelical clerics.

Orthodox clergyman said the event was against canon law, which prohibits any divergence from the official liturgy.

They argued that it could be 'offensive' to Christians who are persecuted for their faith.

Rev Goddard defended his decision to hold the event, describing it as a 'very moving' service. He said his intention was simply to offer people a 'place to pray'.

He told the Christian Today website that everything his church did was legal and within bishops' guidelines.



Mr Goddard said he was simply offering the Muslims a place to pray, adding that the religions share 'the same God' (pictured, St John's)

He added: 'It is very much about St John's being a place of welcome. We understand God as a generous God, a God who celebrates love and celebrates life.

'We try and make sure we live that out. In that sense we feel very properly Anglican.' The 'Inclusive Jummah' was held in partnership with the Inclusive Mosque Initiative. It was organised to coincide with the run-up to International Women's Day last weekend.

The service was arranged by Dr Amina Wadud, a campaigner for gender justice in Islam. Rev Goddard said the service had not put off Christian churchgoers and his congregation is growing.

He told the Daily Telegraph: 'We are offering a place for people to pray so it made absolutely perfect sense. We should be offering [a place] to party, we are the Church of England.'

'They could have gone to a community centre, I suppose, but they loved being in a church, they were just really pleased and delighted to have the welcome and it was very moving, really. It is the same God, we share the same tradition.'

At the end of the service, the vicar read a section of Psalm 139 and said: 'This is from the Hebrew scripture – we all share these great traditions, so let us celebrate our shared traditions, by giving thanks to the God that we love, Allah.'

Rev Stephen Kuhrt, vicar of Christ Church, New Malden, said: 'I am appalled by islamophobia and when people whip up anti-Muslim frenzy, but the vicar of St John's Waterloo has done something that is completely illegal, which is to allow an Islamic service to be held in his church, and then he has participated as well.'

Critics say Rev Goddard has overstepped his bounds by introducing other faiths.

Rev Robin Weekes, the minister of Wimbledon's Emmanuel Church, said: 'The issue is not primarily that canon law has been broken, which it has, but that it is offensive to Christians who believe that there is only one God.'