



Storrington Parish Church
St. Mary's, Storrington ~ Mission Action Plan

Mission Action Plan

Draft - February 2019

This draft MAP has been prepared by the PCC and is for comment and discussion by the wider Church Congregation. There are still significant gaps in terms of identifying priority actions.

Comments and suggestions are invited in writing and should either be put in the "MAP box" at the back of the Church or emailed to Simon Emerson at simon.ann@hotmail.com. The comments Box will be available until Sunday February 24th. If you are suggesting a new "task" please also consider what might be the first steps to take it forward. All written comments will be taken to the PCC for consideration in finalising the MAP.

“A vision without a plan is just a dream. A plan without a vision is just drudgery, but a vision with a plan can change the world”. (*old proverb, variously attributed, but quoted at our discussion evening, 6 September 2018*)

1. Background

1.1 The Mission Action Plan (MAP) seeks to identify what we do well as a church; areas of concern and future action to address those concerns. It is important that we continue to do the good things that we do well, address our weaknesses and take advantage of existing and future opportunities to be more effective.

1.2 Our Church’s first MAP was agreed by the Parochial Church Council (PCC) in June 2013. It was prepared through a series of bespoke discussion evenings with the PCC and subsequently shared with the wider congregation. This first MAP was prepared at the beginning of an interregnum. The document was helpful to the new Rector (Rev Kathryn Windslow) in understanding the Church’s character and aspirations and in framing her early priorities for change. However, much of the text of that MAP is now out of date and in recent years it has not been used by the PCC in making decisions. Hence the need for a new MAP.

1.3 The aim is to involve the wider congregation in the creation of the new MAP and create a document that can guide the Rector, the PCC and the many others who are involved in the day-to-day activities of the Church.

1.4 The overall Objectives and Activities of St Marys, which is a registered charity, are set out the *Trustees Annual Report and Financial Report 2017*. That Report includes the following statement:

In particular we try to enable local people to live out their faith as part of our parish community through:

- Worship and prayer in services; learning about Christianity through study groups; and developing their knowledge of, and trust in, Jesus;
- Provision of pastoral care for people living in the parish, following illness, bereavement and other ‘life events’;
- Activities for the common good of our community, such as monthly Café in the Church and SPACE – a place for people of all ages to enjoy doing arts and crafts;
- Missionary and outreach work working with, among others, Storrington First School and Steyning Grammar School at Rock Road (Rydon Community College), uniformed organisations such as Scouts, Air Cadets and the British Legion

This MAP seeks to fully accord with those objectives and does not change them.

1.5 The following 3 sections address what are seen as the Church’s Strengths, Weaknesses and Opportunities. This text is drawn from the qualities identified under these headings in an open discussion meeting at the start of the MAP process (6 September 2018), but supplemented with other material, such as from the existing MAP.

2. Strengths

2.1 St Mary's provides a well-established pattern of traditional Sunday services each week: 8am Holy Communion (BCP); 10am Eucharist (Common Worship); and Evensong (BCP), supplemented by a Church@4 once a month for small children. There is also a mid-week Communion service (BCP). The Church has a tradition of music with a good modern organ and choir and experienced organists/musical directors.

2.2 The well conducted services for the major Christian celebrations attract those beyond the usual congregation, with the Church being full for some Christmas services (eg Christingle) and at Easter. Services for civic and national memorial events are also well attended with participation by non-church organisations eg Remembrance Sunday (Royal British Legion and Scouts/Guides) and Battle of Britain Sunday (Air Cadets).

2.3 The Church has a major focus of assisting at "rites of passage" for the wider community through the pastoral offices eg funerals, weddings and baptisms. These events and related services introduce the church to many people who would not otherwise attend.

2.4 St Mary's has a good-sized, stable, older congregation. The perception of those who have become part of the congregation is that the church is friendly and caring. The congregation is accepting of disturbance during services. There are established arrangements for Pastoral Care, with communion taken to the housebound and commissioned visiting and healing ministry teams.

2.5 There are many volunteers supporting church activities with energy and motivation and opportunities for new people to join as volunteers. In recent years, the Church (and Deanery) have particularly benefitted from the work of active retired clergy and St Marys has had the privilege of a clergy team (Rector, Assistant Priest and Curate). The Church owns a modern house which has been used in the past to accommodate an Assistant Priest or Curate, but it is let for rent in 2019.

2.6 The Church is open during the day through the week and appears as a well-cared for building. The Church is attractively sited in a large, well-maintained (award-winning) churchyard, which is a well-used local amenity.

2.7 Many people who are committed to the church are also committed to other Christian activities/organisations (eg Christian Aid, Bible Society, Mothers Union, Mission to Seafarers) raising awareness and support for those organisations from the congregation. Many members of the congregation are also active in the local community (eg Food Bank) and local clubs/societies.

2.8 There are a range of regular and occasional social activities (eg SPACE, Café in the Church and summer Saturday teas). Four to five concerts are arranged each year in the Church which attract good audiences. There is a well-established tradition of bell-ringing, involving participants beyond the congregation. There is good communication within the Church community through *The 3 Heralds* (jointly with Sullington and Thakeham) which won a national award for community engagement.

3. Weaknesses

3.1 St Mary's has a predominantly older congregation with a notable absence of children and young people and few middle-aged members. Many of the most active members of the church are elderly and it can be difficult to find people to take over their duties when they wish to or need to retire.

3.2 There is a hidden turnover of people who have an initial link with the church, but do not become regular members of the congregation and drop away (eg those that attend family events or special services referred to above). There is a lack of structured lay follow-up/relationship building between the established congregation and newcomers without a Church tradition. Whilst some contact is maintained with families of children who have been baptised, they rarely attend church activities.

3.3 Despite our perceived friendliness, many in the congregation do not know each other's names. There is no (effective) follow-up of absences - the "missing" may not be noticed. There can be a lack of communication – people unaware of what others are doing within the Church. The wider community may be unaware of what the Church really does.

3.4 There is a perception that the Church has a formal/traditional character. This inhibits our appeal to a more diverse population. There is little, if any, contemporary worship.

3.5 The Church building is not well related to the village. There is poor physical access from the adjoining roads. The only level access is a lengthy, circuitous route which is unlit. Whilst the Church benefits from modern toilets and an area to serve drinks, the fixed pews inhibit flexible use of the space within the building.

3.6 There is no effective link to local schools or other young peoples' organisations.

3.7 Ecumenical activities are very limited.

3.8 St Mary's has a longstanding, significant shortfall in regular giving, and relies on occasional bequests to cover expenses.

3.9 We do not know why so many people who have some contact with the Church, do not become more involved.

4. Opportunities

4.1 The Church has extensive contacts with the wider local community (eg civic and celebration services and rites of passage). These provide the potential for building relationships and encouraging interest in Christianity and the Church. The uncertainty is how to be more effective in this area.

4.2 The usefulness of the welcome to newcomers could be improved: eg give out 'Welcome pack'/capture contact details/organise follow-up.

4.3 As the congregation is mainly from the older age group, events and activities appropriate for that demographic could be emphasised to provide opportunities for the congregation to bring friends and neighbours. Transport could be provided to Church and other events.

4.4 Make links to schools and youth organisations; establish Young choir/singers.

4.5 Improve usability/flexibility of Church building: re-ordering to remove more pews; create space for multi-use/wider community use.

4.6 Extend attractiveness of Home Groups (timing and content).

4.7 Train the congregation to share their faith more effectively.

4.8 Ecumenical - involve other Church leaders (eg Preaching) and other specialists eg SPLASH (Local Christian Charity taking assemblies in local schools). More inter-church activities.

5. Vision for the Future

5.1 St Mary's is a Church which is growing in faith, serving the community and following more closely Jesus Christ.

6. Making the Vision a Reality - Possible Priority Actions

6.1 A MAP needs to have specific aims or actions to put the vision into reality and there needs to be measurable, expected outcomes to be able to assess whether progress is being made. The MAP needs to combine a measure of aspiration as well as reality and should help the Church know where to start.

6.2 If identified actions are to have any prospect of implementation there needs to be individuals or small groups within the Church who are: interested/excited by the suggested action; willing to work on chores, and who are equipped (or willing to learn) to take the lead on particular matters. The PCC therefore considers that for actions proposed in the short term (over the next year) at least one member of the PCC or congregation is identified for each action who is willing to make a start (which could, of course, include seeking other workers for the task).

6.3 The Diocesan Guide to MAPs suggests structuring action points under 3 Headings intended to reflect the key themes of the Diocesan Strategy which are listed below. These themes are consistent with our vision.

Church Growth: How will our mission nurture and grow the faith of our Church community both numerically and spiritually?

Contributing to the Common Good: How will our mission care for, and impact upon, the wider community?

Reimagining Ministry: How will our mission provide worship and sustain faith?

6.4 The MAP should make clear: what is to be done, by whom, when, and what is the intended outcome. Identifying future priorities does not mean a focus only on new things. Those tasks which we do as a Church which are part of our strengths, or which could take advantage of opportunities, should not be neglected. Existing tasks may have scope for expansion or need fresh support. Accordingly, some of the major existing tasks are included in the list below. (This list does not include tasks relating to Sunday services although, of course, those remain important.) The aim should be to achieve sustainable growth rather than bright, but brief enthusiasms.

6.5 *The following list of possible priority actions is still only a skeleton which needs to be considerably strengthened in the light of comments from the wider congregation. Given that most of the suggested actions are still tentative, the full checklist of: by whom, when, and expected outcomes has not been completed. But this would need to be done in the final version of the MAP*

Draft Action Plan

A. Church Growth - Numerically and Spiritually

Rites of Passage

A.1 *What:* Continue to serve the local community by responding to pastoral needs with funerals, weddings and baptisms.

Should there be more follow-up after the event? Should we be asking (eg baptismal families) is there anything they would be interested in the future?

When: on-going.

Who: Clergy have the greatest opportunity for such follow-up, provided the Church recognises this as a significant time commitment.

Outcome: Can record and compare annual numbers. A better understanding of why the Church is currently of little long-term interest.

Welcome and follow-up

A.2 *What:* Produce "welcome pack" and encourage sides-people to give it out to newcomers on arrival.

A.3 *What:* Should the existing Visiting Team have an expanded role eg to follow-up newcomers?

Growth in understanding

A.4 *What:* Possible survey of the congregation (anonymous, written, after services) to find out what if anything they would like to know about Christianity/Church e.g. the theological basics; why we do what we do in Church and what format would be of interest. This would need need considerable thought in preparation and care in execution.

Outcome: A greater understanding of learning needs, leading to specific provision of what is most requested (see below).

A.5 *What:* Provision for adult learning and/or homegroups dependent on above survey or suggestions in response to this MAP consultation.

A.6 One of the most heartfelt concerns of many in our congregation is our lack of children and the difficulties of access to the local schools. However, a long-standing local Christian charity, **SPLASH**, does take Christian assemblies once a term in most local Schools, including Storrington First School. Many in our Church may be unaware of their work. Whilst we do not currently provide financial support to external bodies, we could invite SPLASH to talk about their work at a Sunday morning service and encourage members of the congregation to support its work financially and other ways.

B. Contributing to the Common Good

By 2020 the Diocese would like every Benefice (Parish or group of Parishes which share a full time Minister) to have conducted an audit of their community engagement. On the basis of this the Diocese wants Benefices to prayerfully engage with one new project to bless their local community.

B.1 What: Audit of Community Engagement and identification of potential projects.

When: Completed by September 2019

B.2 What: New community project – *one off task or regular through the year?* It is essential that any such new project genuinely serves the local community, does not cut across good work being done by others, and that the Church can successfully deliver what it promises to do. *Suggestions are invited.*

When: Sometime between September 2019 – September 2020

B3 What: Some of our existing work which serves the wider community include -

Maintaining the Churchyard to a high standard.

Monthly Sunday Lunch Club (in conjunction with the other Churches).

SPACE craft group

Café in the Church (monthly on Wednesdays).

Should any of these (or other existing tasks) be expanded, refocussed or given more support to fulfil their potential?

C. Reimagining Ministry

In the Diocesan Strategy this is about specialist training and support for volunteers, equipping people to serve in both the wider community and the Church.

The Church needs to be clear as to the priorities for the Clergy team and how best to complement their work with lay ministry. Do they need greater freedom to focus on their gifts? Different gifts within the congregation need to be identified and encouraged to be used, with support and training where necessary.

The healing and visiting teams are good examples of trained, coordinated and publicly commissioned lay ministry in our Church.

C.1 What: Please highlight any areas where you consider some form of training or expanded lay ministry would be of benefit.

Emerging thoughts on reordering the Church building, such as making better use of the space under the Tower might facilitate different new and different aspects of ministry. However, this a long term and uncertain prospect, which must not deflect from more immediate action points.