

## St Mary's Storrington Mission Action Plan

### *First skeleton draft for agreeing structure, SOW analysis and Vision*

**“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 by Ida Darlington at our discussion evening, 6 September 2018)*

#### **Background**

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.

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 However, much of the text of that MAP now seems out of date and in recent years it has not been used by the PCC in making decisions.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.

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.

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. *(It is important that we do not meddle with what we have stated to be our Charitable Objectives and Activities – Simon.)*

The following 3 sections address what are seen as the Church's Strengths, Weakness 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.

### **Strengths**

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.

The well conducted traditional services for the major Christian celebrations attract those beyond the usual congregation, with the Church being full for some Christmas services 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).

The Church has a major focus and tradition 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.

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.

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 to be let for rent in 2019.

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.

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.

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.

## **Weaknesses**

St Mary's is 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

Ecumenical activities are very limited.

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

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

## **Opportunities**

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.

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

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.

Make (*but how?*) links to schools and youth organisations; establish Young choir/singers (*but how to attract potential recruits?*).

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

Extend attractiveness of Home Groups (timing and content).

Train the congregation to share their faith more effectively.

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

## **Vision for the Future**

*This text will change once a clear vision has been articulated*

At the open discussion evening there were a range of suggestions for what people would like the Church to be like in 5 or more years times (see Appendix). Most suggestions envisaged change to make the Church more representative of the local community.

In articulating a vision for the future, the Church needs to decide the extent to which it wants to continue to do what it already does and how much to change.

Two possible elements for a vision are suggested below. (*The vision should not have specific actions or outcomes, those are in the next section.*)

*A church (congregation?) which is learning how better to engage with and serve the local community and which is building (or seeking to build?) lasting relationships with those who have some initial contact with the Church.*

*A congregation which is strengthening its understanding of the Christian faith and has a growing commitment to sharing that faith and serving others.*

## **Making the Vision a Reality**

*This text will change once the overall approach is agreed.*

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 also help the Church know where to start.

If suggested actions are to have any prospect of implementation there needs to be individuals or small groups within the Church who are variously: 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. It is therefore suggested that for actions proposed in the short term (First 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).

The Diocesan Guide to MAPs suggests structuring action points under 3 Headings: *Looking In, Looking Out, Looking Up*. These headings are intended to reflect the key themes of the Diocesan Strategy as shown below, although the choice of phrase seems a little confusing.

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

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

*Looking Up/Reimagining Ministry: How will our mission provide worship and sustain faith?*

To date, this Church has not particularly engaged with the Diocesan Strategy. It is suggested that adopting a MAP structure based on the Strategy will give us a good foundation to engage with it better in the future. For simplicity and clarity, it is suggested that we use the Diocesan Strategy theme headings themselves.

The MAP should make clear: what is to be done, by whom, when, and what is the intended outcome.

Included under each heading are some of the major existing tasks we do so that these are accorded appropriate priority and are not neglected. *The following is merely a skeleton, to be amended by the discussion at the PCC. It is suggested that ideas that do not easily fit in here or not collectively seen as priorities are added to a list as an Appendix to the MAP to come back to in the future.*

## **Church Growth- Numerically and Spiritually**

### Rites of Passage

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

Should possible follow-up be explored before or after the event, with lay assistance? Should we be asking (eg baptismal families) is there anything you would be interested in in the future? What are we seeking in follow-up? Might they be asked to complete the survey (see below).

*When:* on-going.

*Who:* Clergy team.

*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

*What:* Produce “welcome pack” and encourage sides people to give it out to newcomers on arrival.

*When:* Pack produced within 4 months of approval of MAP. Distribution on-going.

*Who:*

*Outcome:* Record number of packs given out. Ask new people if it was of benefit. Revise if necessary.

*What:* Visiting team to follow up newcomers within the first fortnight?

*When:* on-going

*Who:* Visiting team

*Outcome:*

### Growth in understanding

*What:* 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. (Needs considerable thought in preparation and care in execution....)

*When:* Possibly as part of the discussion of the draft MAP with the congregation or immediately after or possibly as a Lenten discipline?

*Who:* Simon (with sign-off by others/Clergy)

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

*What:* Provision for adult learning and/or homegroups dependent on above survey.

*When:*

*Who:*

*Outcome:*

*What:* Organised lifts to Church for less able?

*When:* As soon as possible. (*Arrangements have been put in place as of October 2018*)

*Who:* A publicised contact coordinator/team (min 4-6?) willing to give lifts using their existing routes where possible

*Outcome:* Record take up and monitor.

One of the most heartfelt concerns is our lack of children and the difficulties of access to the local school. 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 SPLAH to talk about their work at a Sunday morning service and encourage members of the congregation to support its work financially and other ways.

### Contributing to the Common Good

By 2020 the Diocese would like every Benefice to have conducted an audit of their community engagement. On the basis of this the Diocese wants Benefices to prayfully engage with one new project to bless their local community.

*What:* Audit of Community Engagement and identification of potential projects.

*When:* Completed by September 2019

*Who:*

*Outcome:*

*What:* New community project – one off task or regular through the year?

*When:* Sometime between September 2019 – September 2020

*Who:*

*Outcome:*

*What:* Maintaining Churchyard to a high standard?

*When:* On-going

*Who:* Maintenance team + new support

*Outcome:* Happiness...

*What:* Sunday Lunch Club (seems important not to neglect longstanding efforts such as this).

*When:* On-going

*Who:* Are new team members/coordinator needed?

*Outcome:*

*What:* SPACE - should it be promote helped more??

*When:* on-going

*Who:* Visiting team

*Outcome:*

### **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.

Our suggested survey might identify some such needs.

*What:*

*When:*

*Who:*

*Outcome:*

Although not really the appropriate heading, our current and emerging thoughts on reordering the Church building - the Tower project and more - could fit in here as it might facilitate different aspects of ministry.

We need to be able to identify how the outcome would help achieve our vision.

## **Appendix to MAP**

### **Strengths, Weaknesses and Opportunities**

Below are the matters which were listed on the Flip Chart during the discussion at the MAP meeting on 6 September 2018 (with some minor regrouping/rewording for clarity for those not present). The matters listed were not necessarily agreed by everyone, but reflect the breadth of points raised. The text in the draft MAP describing these qualities is drawn from this material together with other well recognised qualities.

#### **Strengths**

A good sized, stable, older congregation.

Friendly and caring congregation; accepting of disturbance during services.

Many volunteers; energy and motivation among the congregation.

Opportunities to join-in Church activities and roles without any pressure.

Lots of clergy; the Rector.

Regular pattern of services.

Pastoral offices for the wider community at major life events.

Pastoral care, Home communion to housebound.

Visiting teams.

Healing team/ministry in services.

Cared for Church, open during the day through the week.

Large, beautiful churchyard.

Social activities, including concerts and other events in the Church such as Café/summer Saturday teas.

Good communication (within the Church community/ readers of *The 3 Heralds* - see also Weaknesses).

Footsteps and Church@4 (both for Children - but see also Weaknesses).



Broad Church/Our tradition.

Good music tradition -choir/organ.

Bell ringers.

Support for Food Bank.

### **Weaknesses**

Lack of children/young families.

Increasing age and infirmity among many previously active members of the Church.

Perception of formal/traditional character - does it inhibit diversity>

Lack of modern, catchy songs.

Lack of communication - sometimes within the Church, but also with the wider community

Many in the congregation do not know each others' names.

Follow up of Baptismal families not effective.

Lack of follow-up of new visitors, or after life events/pastoral offices.

No (effective) follow-up of absences/ Missing not noticed.

Church building not well related to the village, poor physical access.

No real link to local schools or some other young peoples' organisations.

Ecumenical relations

### **Opportunities**

Make links to schools and youth organisations.

Young choir/singers.

Families that seek rites of passage events in Church/Opportunities to follow-up after Baptisms.

Improve welcome/give out 'Welcome pack'/capture contact details.

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

Strengthen "offer" to over 60s in Bible Study and worship.

Provide transport to Church.

Extend attractiveness of Home Groups (timing and content).

Train congregation to share their faith more effectively.

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

## **Vision Highlights**

Own Minibus

Music band

Children's' Choir.

Church congregation is more representative of the village community as a whole.

Church is more visible in the community (eg Thakeham's "Church in the Pub").

Is a core part of the local community.

Clergy are more visible in the community.

Occasional outdoor services.

A church with flexible space, flexibly used in services (interactive.)

Forward looking, but retaining traditions/identity.

Financially solvent Church.

Uses new technology effectively.

Better access to the Church building

All members know how to share their faith.

More home groups.

More prayerful (mutual prayer support eg prayer triplets).

Greater use of the laity/well-trained - Authorised Lay Ministry.

Deepening and development of Worship.

## **Practical Ideas also suggested (running list to be added to )**

Lifts to Church organiser

Card reader for easy giving in church

Encourage social media.

Welcome pack for newcomers to village (ecumenical)

Illustrate in one "presentation" eg In porch /3 Heralds/leaflet what St Marys does and what it can provide for different people.