



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

Mission Action Plan
October 2019

This Mission Action Plan was approved by the Parochial Church Council on 8 October 2019

V2 11/11/19

“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. Introduction

1.1 This Mission Action Plan (MAP) seeks to identify the Church’s priority tasks over the next few years to help the Church to grow and better serve the local community. This MAP first addresses what are seen as the Church’s strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. It then sets out a series of actions which seek to maintain our strengths, address our weaknesses and respond to the opportunities presented to us.

1.2 This MAP has been developed between September 2018 and September 2019 through a series of open discussions, consultation with the Parochial Church Council (PCC) and the opportunity for everyone to make written comments on an early draft. Following formal approval of the MAP by the PCC a separate “flyer “sheet will be prepared and distributed to the whole congregation summarising the main action points and encouraging individual actions to promote and sustain the whole mission of the Church.

1.3 The overall Objectives and Activities of St Marys, which is a registered charity, are set out the *Trustees Annual Report and Financial Report 2018*. 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.

1.4 The Church’s first MAP was agreed by the PCC in June 2013. It 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.

1.5 The PCC is responsible for ensuring that the action points listed in the MAP are implemented or reviewed and amended in the light of changing circumstances. Where possible, a named PCC lead or specific coordinator for each action has been identified to ensure that the PCC is kept informed of progress. Progress should be formally reviewed by the PCC each year and the whole MAP is likely to need refreshing after 3-5 years. Any significant change in the demographic profile of the Church, such as an influx of families with children, is likely to require a swift review of the MAP to ensure that we are meeting the needs of the whole church and responding to any new opportunities.

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 - Priority Actions

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

6.2 The Diocesan Guide to MAPs suggests structuring action points under 3 headings intended to reflect the key themes of the current 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?

6.3 These three headings have been used to structure the actions points. However, the Diocesan Strategy is currently being refreshed. Emerging themes are to encourage Churches to be: *more engaged, more representative, more generous, more converted to Jesus*. Accordingly, the action points have been subdivided under these themes as well.

6.4 Identifying future priorities does not mean a focus only on new things. Those tasks which we already 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, most major existing activities are included in the Actions Points. (This list of actions does not include tasks directly relating to the Sunday services although, of course, those remain important.) The aim should be to achieve sustainable growth rather than bright, but brief enthusiasms.

6.5 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.

6.6 The listed actions are merely a practical framework to assist the mission of the Church. They serve no purpose if no one comes to events because no-one has been invited or, when there, new people were not welcomed and befriended, or if we do not pray and seek God to bless what we do. The intended actions will be sustained only by a renewed voluntary effort across the Church community. The Church must be alert to the fact that many of the Church's most faithful and currently active members are now of very mature years and may not be able to sustain all their present efforts over the life of the MAP. Others will need to be ready to serve.

6.7 Accordingly, this MAP encourages the whole congregation to play a part in fulfilling our mission by making the most of any opportunities we have to:

- **Pray** for our mission, either individually or linked in pairs or triplets.
- **Invite** new people – neighbours, friends, acquaintances - to appropriate Church activities.
- **Welcome** and befriend new people at Church services and events.
- **Participate** in existing and new activities to provide a sustainable core of people for those regular activities or to learn new things ourselves.
- **Listen and Share** to help sustain our own journey of faith and to help others along their journey.
- **Volunteer** to help run activities (existing and new).

6.8 Furthermore, many of our congregation are active in charitable and social activities in the local community and it is essential that Church activities do not inhibit the positive contribution that many make to the well-being of the wider community.

Action Plan

A. Church Growth - Numerically and Spiritually

Becoming “more representative”

Rites of Passage Overall

A.1 Building on the well-established tradition of our Church, continue to serve the local community by responding to pastoral needs with funerals, weddings and baptisms. Seek to provide gentle follow-up and support where appropriate..

Lead: Primarily the **Clergy**, making the first visits to families and officiating at the services for these offices. Also possible role for **Visiting Team** (where invited) eg for those who are bereaved.

Outcome: Record and compare annual numbers for each office and whether any follow up was helpful.

A.2 Baptisms

Seek to provide more opportunities and flexibility for potential baptismal families to familiarise themselves with the Church and the Christian faith and to get to know the congregation:

- Continue to offer/encourage families to have the baptism at a 10 clock service (but not require them to do so).
- Encourage members of the congregation attend baptismal services to show the interest and support of the Church.
- Encourage baptismal families to try Church@4.
- Encourage members of the congregation to attend Church@4 to create a sustainable nucleus and to welcome newcomers.
- Keep under review the need for an occasional/monthly non-communion service/family service particularly suited to those unfamiliar with Church services, as and when such a service would be helpful.

Timing: Ongoing

PCC Lead: The Rector.

A.3 Promote greater engagement with local primary schools

- Continue with the promotion of the Bible Society's "Open the Book" package for presenting occasional assemblies in local primary schools.
- The team is established and materials and rehearsals are organised.
- First assembly likely October 2019.

PCC Lead: _____?

Welcome and follow-up

A.4 Produce a "welcome pack" for new visitors to the Church and encourage sides-people to give it out to newcomers on arrival.

- Meet with all sides-people to share contents of pack, explain its intended use, address any concerns.

Timing: Pack to be produced and given out from December 2019.

PCC Lead: Rector and Barbara Buchanan.

A.5 Offer a welcome visit to new people by a member of the Visiting Team.

A.6 Provide a clearer, more positive welcome message and practical information for visitors to the Church to include information on all the Church's activities with when, where and how to join. Ensure all information is kept up to date. Ensure that there is consistency of approach with "Welcome Pack" and coordination of signing with the "Prayer welcome" material (see below). Positively manage other information provided at the back of the Church to promote a clear welcome.

PCC lead or specific coordinator: Val Rice/Martyn Freeman

Timing: Refresh to be completed by Easter 2020

Becoming "more converted to Jesus"

Growth in understanding

A.7 Provision for adult learning through a cycle of short course, home discussion groups. Eg 6 weeks in January/February (before Lent) and in October/November each year. Consider start time to best meet need. First group likely to be daytime, but subsequent groups should include evenings for working people. Courses to be repeated or adapted in subsequent years in response to need.

Potential Topics include:

- An introduction to the basics - fundamentals of the faith.

- An introduction to the Bible and how we might apply it to our lives.
- An exploration of the Creed(s) and/or Lord's Prayer.
- The meaning and relevance of the ritual and symbols used in our Church services.

These homegroup discussions will most likely be based on a study booklet published by an appropriate body eg C of E, Bible Society etc.

Priority action for first group to start w/c 13 January 2020. Preparation to be done by end November 2019

- Identify first topic and booklet.
- Identify leader and (hopefully) separate host/location.
- Publicise.

PCC Lead: Simon Emerson

A.8 "Any (Christian) Questions" to a Panel. *"Everything you wanted to know about Christianity, but were afraid to ask"*. The opportunity to ask, in advance and anonymously, questions which are then addressed at an evening event by a Panel (probably of 4 both ordained and lay). Intended as an opportunity for people to ask serious questions about the Christian faith, but with a light touch in the context of a sociable evening event. Can serve as a link to introduce new homegroup discussion in the New Year.

Timing: Late November 2019.

PCC Lead: Simon Emerson

A.9 Sustain and expand the existing semi-permanent discussion/homegroups. Maintain the "term-time" timing of these groups to allow flexibility in attendance. Set up additional group(s) eg in the evening, to meet any need/demand such as arising from the conclusion of the short course groups. Encourage continued support for Ecumenical Lent Study groups. Avoid clashing with these.

Growth in individual and shared/public prayer

A.10 Promote private, personal prayer through prayer partners/triplets.

- Introduce/explain at a 10 o'clock service covering – aims, potential benefit; how to start ideas, timing. Offer a method to connect interested partners.
- Suggest new people start for Lent as a trial, so as to provide the option to stop if not of benefit to them.

Timing: Before Lent 2020.

PCC lead or named specific coordinator _____

A.11 Promote coordinated Church/public prayer with a greater local community focus:

- Introduce from Easter 2020 a fixed 31 day rolling prayer diary (same repeated each month) to include local organisations etc, for both private use and in Church intercessions.
- Encourage more people to lead the intercessions in Church by holding a training evening to introduce different ways of preparing such prayers (within a shared framework).

PCC lead or named specific coordinator _____

A.12 Encourage ecumenical prayer:

- Encourage attendance at the monthly inter-church prayer meeting
- Encourage participation in special days and courses organised by Chemin Neuf.

Promotion by Clergy

A.13 Strengthen the ministry of the Healing Team

- Encourage take-up of the healing ministry by promoting and explaining its purpose at a 10 o'clock service (Planned for October 20th).
- Continue with (as previously) the formal approval and commissioning process for new members of the team by invitation.

Lead: Healing Ministry Team

Becoming “more engaged”

A.14 Provide clear pathways for visitors to the Church (outside Sunday services) to pray, to be prayed for personally, or to leave prayers for the Church to pray. Possible elements include:

- Clear welcome signing and an invitation to pray, such as at, or in, the Lady Chapel.
- A prayer board with cards to be left for prayers.
- A secure box for confidential prayers, offered only to God or seen and prayed by the Healing Team only
- Signposting of opportunities to be prayed for personally eg Healing Ministry in Sunday services, during communion, possibly a contact point for other means?

This area needs particular sensitivity and care to protect all concerned. Need to seek Diocesan advice and learn from other Churches.

PCC Lead_____ + Healing Ministry Team to continue to explore.

A.15 Continue to develop the role and capacity of the Church Visiting Team

- Encourage new members to join the team (by invitation) by provision of a training/taster day.
- Continue with (as previously) the formal approval and commissioning process for new members of the team.
- Seek new opportunities/needs that the team could meet with appropriate training eg the bereaved/new visitors.

PCC Lead: Barbara Buchanan

A.16 Maintain a mix of regular and occasional social activities which strengthen friendship and fellowship within the overall church community, provide an opportunity for new people to get to

know the Church (both its location/building and its people) and to which the congregation can invite friends, neighbours and acquaintances.

Regular activities which should be sustained and enhanced are:

- SPACE craft afternoons
- Café in the Church
- Concerts in the Church (maintaining the high quality already established).
- Varied other occasional social events.

Unless there is a specific reason to fund-raise for a particular purpose, the priority for most events should be promoting its social purpose.

All these activities need new volunteers to help sustain them over the long term.

A.17 Increase the visible presence of the Church in the village when opportunities arise:

- Have a stall at any future Village Day.
- Have a “presence” at the late-night Christmas shopping event and seek to develop this in successive years. Initial presence at December 2019. Seek to work with any other Churches also attending.

The priority for such activities is to be a positive presence and to “give” (eg information, music or other offerings) rather than to raise funds (although that may be a by-product).

A.18 Develop and promote a major “Church and Art” Exhibition eg “Re-imagining the Nativity” (theme to be considered further):

- Choose a theme by Spring 2020.
- Invite artistic contributions from village organisations and art clubs.
- Host the exhibition for several days in December 2020 commencing on the late-night shopping evening.

PCC Lead or specific co-ordinator _____

A.19 Use more effectively the Church’s website and possibly social media to promote the activities of the Church and to create a positive welcome message.

- Ensure that the Church’s website is updated and kept live (initial refresh to be completed by end of 2019 – in hand).

PCC Lead: Dennis Cowdrey

A.20 Maintain and enhance the *Three Heralds* Church magazine (shared with Sullington and Thakeham) as a magazine attractive for those beyond the immediate Church congregation and to make more of the opportunity it provides to share about the life of the Church(es).

B. Contributing to the Common Good

Becoming “more generous”

B1 Maintain our existing work which serves the wider community, including: -

- Maintaining the Churchyard to a high standard as a public amenity;
- Monthly Sunday Lunch Club, in conjunction with the other Churches.
- Our contribution to the monthly village Pop-in lunch, run with the help of a variety of organisations.
- Support for the Storrington Food Bank (part of *Horsham Matters*).

All these activities need new volunteers to help sustain them over the long term.

B2 Increase overall support for the Diocesan Charity, Family Support Work (FSW) including:

- Promoting awareness of its work, such as through a presentation in a Sunday service.
- Supporting fundraising activities and other specific needs (eg children’s clothes)
- Encouraging volunteering to support its activities with children and families

PCC Lead: Sonia Fox

B3 Continue to support other specific charities through the year linked to the Church’s calendar and civic commemorative dates, including: (PCC to check for accuracy/comprehensiveness)

- Christmas presents for children (Advent).
- *Link to Hope* shoebox of presents for Eastern Europe.
- *Children’s Society* personal collecting boxes.
- Collection for *Children’s Society* at Christingle.
- Collection for *Turning Tides* Christmas Day.
- Support for (and for many years, organising) village Christian Aid week collection.
- Marking Sea Sunday and collection for *Mission to Seafarers*.
- Promoting participation, sponsorship and Church hosting for Ride and Stride for *Sussex Historic Churches Trust*.
- Collection for *Royal Air Force Benevolent Association* at Battle of Britain Sunday.
- Harvest gifts for the Diocesan Harvest appeal (for FSW in 2019).
- Collection for *Royal British Legion* on Armistice Sunday.

B.4 Explore provision of a children’s “Breakfast Club”(or similar) in the Summer Holidays

- Possible provision in August 2020.
- Explore with FSW and other professionals what is most needed and how this might be promoted to those most in need.
- Considering safeguarding issues.
- Organise volunteer team.

PCC Lead or other co-ordinator _____

C. Reimagining Ministry

In the Diocesan Strategy this theme 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.

As highlighted in the above sections, the Church has 2 existing teams who are trained, coordinated and publicly commissioned for lay ministry, namely:

- Healing Ministry
- Home Visiting

Over the life of the MAP, new people will need to be invited to join these teams and will therefore need training and commissioning.

Possible Church re-ordering

The Action Points above highlight the intention to promote small group discussion, prayer, and social interaction, including concerts in the Church. Many of these activities can take place in a variety of locations, but the PCC needs to keep under review whether the current layout of the Church best accommodates and facilitates these activities. For example, making better use of the space under the Tower could facilitate different aspects of ministry by providing a separate, comfortable meeting room. However, it must be recognised that any such reordering is only a means to an end and that the work involved in realising such plans might detract from the commitment to the other Action Points above.
