

ST. MARY THE VIRGIN SPEEN



MISSION ACTION PLAN Easter 2019

INTRODUCTION

You have in your hands a Mission Action Plan. It is about **mission**. Over the last year, the St Mary's PCC have worked hard, through discussion, consultation and prayer, to discern God's mission for St Mary's church, as this point in our life together. It is about **action**. Because of this document we will do things – some will be the same things we've always done, but with new energy and focus; some will be new things as we step out in new ways. Finally, this document is a **plan**. It contains specific proposals for how we may go about achieving the mission God has set before us. Of course, like all plans, its not perfect. It makes no claim to predict the future. Only God knows the exact route that lies ahead for our church. But I commend this plan to you. Read through it. Pray for it. Act upon it!

Rev. Will Hunter Smart, Rector

OUR VISION AND MISSION

As St Mary's Church, God has called us to:

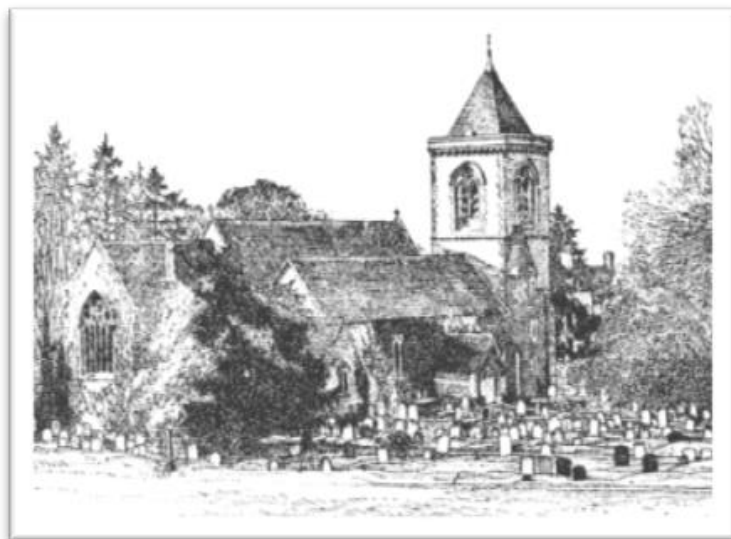
- be welcoming and caring, a worshipping community grounded in prayer and lively tradition.
- work together to be a community in which people of every generation are enabled to actively participate in the plans of God.

We will pursue this calling by holding to the following core values. We value:

- our role as the parish church of Speen, and our aspirations to connect to residents in every part of the parish.
- our location and building, which is a place of peace, tranquillity, and beauty for Newbury.
- our tenacity and partnership between invigorated lay leadership and parish clergy.
- our welcoming atmosphere, in which worshippers from across the spectrum of the Christian Church can have genuine encounters with the presence of God.

OUR PRIORITY AREAS (SUMMARY)

- 1) **We will pursue DISCIPLESHIP AND CHRISTIAN FORMATION** (see page 11)
- 2) **We will IDENTIFY, TRAIN, and COMMISSION** our members for leadership and ministry (see page 12)
- 3) **We will pursue PASTORAL CONNECTION WITH OUR COMMUNITY,** particularly through our pastoral services (see page 13)
- 4) **We will pursue a FORM OF OUTREACH THAT IS DISTINCT TO ST. MARY'S** (see page 14)
- 5) **We will pursue EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP IN THE NORTH NEWBURY BENEFICE** (see page 15)
- 6) **We will pursue an EFFECTIVE LAY-CLERGY PARTNERSHIP IN THE LEADERSHIP OF St. MARY'S** (see page 16)
- 7) **We will value our CHURCH BUILDING, GROUNDS, AND LOCATION** (see page 16)



THE CURRENT PICTURE

OUR STORY SO FAR

When Rev. Vernon Smith ('VS') retired in 2003, St. Mary's Church was effectively closed for several months and the congregation dwindled. At this point St. Mary's was one parish amongst four in the Newbury Team Ministry. The Team Clergy were almost never seen in the Church on a Sunday.

We were a 'faithful few' and were joined initially by Rev. Christopher Ardagh-Walter ('CAW') and then by Rev. Trevor Dorey ('TD'), two retired clergy who maintained Communion services on a fortnightly basis, and also presided at festival services. Five lay members of the church, (initially Jane Booth, Katy Haddelsey, Julian Shelley, Jo Fageant and subsequently John Hughesdon) took 'Services of the Word' on other Sundays, so we had a service at 10.30 every Sunday morning. TD was also in church most Sundays, even when he was not presiding, which provided a significant element of pastoral care, supported also by other members of our congregation.

We have often been identified as a 'lay led church.' Initially, this was really by default. In subsequent years positive decisions were made, in collaboration with the rectors of the day, not to have clerical leadership each week. This has been a strength; service leadership and preaching are generally well received, and a wider team are effective in pastoral care etc. Nevertheless, the lay leaders do not see themselves as filling the shoes of the clergy.

In recent times, ministry such as home communion, which had previously been administered by clergy (notably CAW and TD), has been exercised by a lay team, including LLM, Jane Sutton.

This lay involvement is a significant part of our story. We have also valued our clerical leadership. After 2003, CAW and TD were *de facto* our 'parish priests' for a good few years (we had no other). In addition to leading services they also did confirmation preparation and TD also led a training session for intercessors. He was also the principal of a team that arranged

monthly Sunday evening services with a variety of styles that attracted people from other churches (and none) as well as our own.

Soon after our last Mission Action Plan in 2010, this arrangement became somewhat unstable. CAW moved away from the parish. The Team Ministry was in interregnum. We were still blessed by TD's ministry, and a number of visiting clergy from time to time. In 2011 the Rev. Will Hunter Smart was appointed as Team Rector of the Newbury Team. At this point, the Rector and clergy from St Nic's began to take services once a month. While their presence and leadership was appreciated, clergy did not appear sufficiently frequently to get to know the wider congregation and so have effective pastoral oversight. This was exacerbated by TD's retirement. Mention must be made of Rev. David Winter ('DW') who at this time began leading services at least monthly, and also notably on weekday festivals. DW made a significant impact on our life until his retirement from duties in 2018 – he became 'one of us' even though living in Thatcham.

In 2015, a process of reorganisation led to the division of the Newbury Team and the formation of our current 'North Newbury' Benefice of St Mary's and St Nicolas'. At the same time, the arrival of the Rev. Margaret Yates ('MY') to the new benefice clergy team in 2015 was a great boon. She brought a facilitative ministry, and a commitment to us as a parish. She attended services when not 'up front', getting involved in pastoral care and, significantly, led a training course for lay home communion ministers. We were saddened when she retired from her more active role recently.

Whilst MY was with us, and after a period of consultation, the Evensong service held at St Nicolas' was transferred as a benefice service to St Mary's. Once the decision was taken, MY convened a group comprising members for St Nicolas' and St Mary's to devise service books and other arrangements. The inclusion of refreshments after the service has, over time, encouraged the establishment of firm friendships between people from both churches.

A significant feature in our journey has been the installation of the kitchen and toilets in 2011. The boiler and sound system were installed in

the following two years. Much of the initial funding for these community focused projects came from external sources. These facilities have enabled St Mary's 'Majendie Hall' to be let for community use as well as being much more user friendly for ourselves.

Currently we are mainly a 'senior' congregation from a wide variety of backgrounds, including different denominations and churchmanship. We sometimes have more over 90s than under 60s on a Sunday morning. While we recognise that we don't have the resources for children's and youth work, we do have an involvement with our local primary school through COINS.

Our numbers recovered quite quickly after the 2003 crisis and after the restart of weekly services they have been maintained at around 50 (Usual Sunday Attendance) since. Our electoral roll is just short of 100 and we have some 70 regular attenders. It is fair to say that our enthusiasm and capacity for the wider work of the church (i.e. not just Sunday), has been significant, but varies with circumstances.

We are much better at raising money for special projects than for routine expenses. This is partly due to the earlier history and the idea that the parish share was almost entirely funding other churches. As we develop our future plans, the level of giving and fundraising will need to be continuing subjects of conversation.

We are now looking to the years ahead, recognising that we are shaped by our invigorated lay leadership. We have been encouraged by the appointment of the Rev. Joy Mawdesley as Associate Rector in the Benefice, with St Mary's as one of her areas of responsibility. The ministry of the Rev. Pam McKellen, who has begun to take services with us is a blessing. We are open to exploring the possibility of other ordained leadership, perhaps shared with other parishes, to establish a regular pastoral presence with us.

OUR CURRENT ACTIVITIES

The nature and extent of our activities reflects the contribution of many to the day to day running of St Mary's. It includes, but is not limited to, the following picture:

Corporate Worship:

First and foremost, we are called to love and worship God. This is the greatest commandment and is at the very centre of all that we do at St Mary's. The Sunday services at St Mary's are what draw us together, week after week, for corporate worship; they nourish and sustain the life of our church and from them flows everything else that we do.

- *Eucharistic Services* are held on the first and third Sunday of the month and main festivals. Apart from the clergy, a sacristan and other volunteers assist in the provision of communion, and attend to the linen etc.
- Lay led *Services of the Word* are held on the second and fourth Sunday of the month.
- Fifth Sundays of the month vary in style, and provide an occasion for some alternative services, (e.g. *Songs of Praise*).
- *Benefice Evening Services* take place at 6pm. These occur on the first and third Sundays of each month. The congregation is drawn from both St. Mary's and St. Nicolas' and the pattern of worship is a rhythm of Evensong and Choral Evensong. From time to time we host benefice services such as All Saints, Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday.
- For most services, readers and intercessors are drawn from the congregation.
- There are also those who help distribute refreshments, and we have several lunches to celebrate specific dates in the year.
- We have a choir of about twelve on the first and third Sundays and special occasions, including weddings and funerals.
- Alongside our vergers, our sidespeople are required at all services, and including funerals and weddings. This is normally two people, but more might be required for larger services.

- Floral decorations are provided throughout the year when seasonally appropriate.
- Pew News is published on a weekly basis in both hardcopy and electronically.
- Bellringers practise weekly, and ring before each morning service and at special occasions.

Administration and Maintenance:

Various volunteers are required to help with the administration and maintenance of St Mary's. This involves numerous skills to help maintain the building, the finances, the bookings, and so forth. It also includes PCC membership, safeguarding, and grounds maintenance, etc. The administration of burials, weddings and baptisms is largely organised by the office at St Nicolas's.

Civic and Pastoral Connection:

We are available for funerals, weddings and baptisms. Festival services provide a point of connection with the local community; they include Crib, Carols, All Saints, Patronal Festival with Blessing of the Well, and Remembrance at the Speen war memorial. Our hall is hired by several external organisations. We are constituent members of CTNA (Christians Together in the Newbury Area) and have hosted CTNA breakfasts.

Communications:

Pew News is mentioned above. We also have a newsletter that is distributed to all households in Speen, and this requires a large number of volunteers to produce and deliver. Worthy of comment is Su Elsdon who for many years has formatted the newsletter for no reward. It is printed by the print room of West Berkshire Council for a competitive fee. Our website is maintained with up-to-date information.

Pastoral Care:

The *Tuesday Club* provides fellowship for its members, all are welcome. It meets on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of the month. We also hold celebratory parish lunches. A team is available to provide Home Communion. Some of our members make private arrangements to transport others to church. We look after each other well. There are

strong relationships and spontaneous and informal care for one another. Many of our donations are received as points of connection, including to commemorate loved ones in floral tributes, or a remembrance in a hymn book.

Building /Location:

We hold a number of community-based fundraising events including the Christmas Bazaar, Fete and Quiz. We have an ongoing connection with Community Service for the maintenance of our grounds. Our churchyard is a place of peace for local residents and walking passers-by.

Specific Outreach:

We hold occasional Men's Breakfasts. We are connected with Robert Sandilands School where there is a weekly voluntary 'Bible Club' ('Rock Solid'). COINS also makes use of the church for Easter and Christmas presentations. The church provides copies of 'It's your move' a Christian book about the challenge of moving from primary to secondary presented to all Year 6 pupils.



PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS

Given our history, and our current activities, we have a foundation from which to move forward. We have discerned the following areas of priority. Each priority is accompanied by some specific actions. Our PCC will discuss and implementation schedule upon the formal adoption of this plan.

1) We will pursue DISCIPLESHIP AND CHRISTIAN FORMATION.

We seek to *grow* in our faith, individually and together. This growth attends to how we follow Jesus and are shaped by his teaching (Matthew 28:18-20). We spur one another on (Hebrews 10:25) in our worship, our mission, and ministry to one another.

We understand that it is God who works in us (Philippians 2:13); Christian growth is so often about changed hearts, improved attitudes, and an increase in love. It is the Lord's work. Nevertheless, we can pursue it by being a means through which we are led and taught by Christ as we share our lives with each other.

We note that there is very little outside our services that we could describe as intentional activities to further discipleship.

To further this priority, we will undertake actions such as:

- a) We will encourage, and provide material for, private and small group devotions.**
- b) We will provide at least one course a year, at Lent and/or later in the year, that encourages Christian living and engagement with Scripture. We will be open to working with other churches in this.**
- c) From time to time we will have sermon series that relate to spiritual growth, and provide related devotional material.**
- d) Where there is the opportunity for new small groups to form, we will encourage and recognise them.**

- 2) We will IDENTIFY, TRAIN, and COMMISSION our members for leadership and ministry.

We value the invigoration of lay ministry at St. Mary's. We desire to express that value through the provision of support and training to our existing lay ministers, and through encouraging others to consider taking on areas of ministry and leadership. Replenishing our lay leadership is essential to the ongoing vitality of our church.

To further this priority, we will undertake actions, such as:

- a) **We will pursue the priority area of an effective lay-clergy partnership in our benefice.** (See priority 6 below)
- b) **We will identify areas of immediate need that could be met simply by raising awareness and offering a small amount of training.**
 - In particular, there are opportunities in the area of liturgical assistance for our clergy and sacristan that could be explored relatively easily and quickly.
- c) **We will make use of Diocesan, Archdeaconry, and Deanery Training Opportunities.**
 - We will not re-invent the wheel but ensure that we are aware of what is provided, and assist those who wish to attend.
 - We are willing to host training events, when appropriate.
- d) **We will implement different pathways for people to explore the possibility of leading services.**
 - e.g. we will encourage lay leadership of the ante-communion parts of eucharistic services, where the clergy can offer support and guidance.
 - e.g. we will encourage lay leadership of "special" services, e.g. Taize, Community Choir, etc.
 - e.g. we will encourage those who might wish to preach or lead a service, but perhaps not do both.
- e) **We will provide support to our preachers so as to encourage and articulate the exploration of faith in today's world.**

- 3) We will pursue PASTORAL CONNECTION WITH OUR COMMUNITY, particularly through our pastoral services.

We value being a caring and welcoming community. This strength and passion can be a foundation for our effective presence in our local community. Our pastoral services provide a significant opportunity to grasp.

To further this priority, we will undertake actions, such as:

- a) **We will arrange for a member of St. Mary's to be involved in contact with baptism families, including pre-service connection, follow-up, and further invitation.**
- b) **We will arrange for a member of St. Mary's to assist clergy in funeral services, to be present at funeral services, and to provide appropriate ongoing contact and care.**
- c) **We will arrange for a member of St. Mary's to assist clergy in wedding services, to be a point of contact for the couple and family, and to offer appropriate ongoing contact.**
- d) **We will develop our pastoral care arrangements**
 - i. **We will ensure a connection between our pastoral services and our existing Home Communion and other pastoral teams, ensuring support and coordination.**
 - ii. **We will identify those who independently provide care and offer them support as appropriate.**
 - iii. **Drawing on the experience of others, we will identify improvements in our provision of pastoral care, so as to recognise those who might "slip through the net" and to strengthen relationships.**

4) We will pursue a FORM OF OUTREACH THAT IS DISTINCT TO ST. MARY'S.

We recognise that we are a church which reaches older generations more readily than younger generations and families. This is a distinctive that we can confidently embrace as a context for mission and outreach. It is appropriate to focus our efforts and develop expertise in this area of ministry.

To further this priority, we will explore and articulate what it might mean to focus our efforts on “Ministry to The Third Age.”, including but not limited to:

- a) We will investigate ways in which we can connect with and support those in our community who are, for instance**
 - i. Recently Retired**
 - ii. Recently Re-located**
 - iii. Recently Widowed**

- b) We will investigate ways in which a ministry of this kind can be well-led and adequately resourced, perhaps in collaboration with other churches.**

5) We will pursue EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP IN THE NORTH NEWBURY BENEFICE

Our vision is to work together. This not only means pursuing active fellowship within St. Mary's but also valuing our contribution in the wider church, including our benefice. We recognise positive initiatives that have begun and continue, particularly Evensong. A number of our members attend events held at St Nicolas', for instance, women's breakfasts, Lent courses.

Nevertheless, we also acknowledge where there is distance between the two parishes in the benefice; there are times when we are not well aware of each other, and of how we might contribute to and encourage one another. We wish to pursue a relationship between our churches that lays an even stronger foundation.

To further this priority, we will undertake actions such as:

- a) We will ensure regular meetings of the senior leadership of the benefice e.g. the rector and the four wardens of St. Nicolas' and St. Mary's.**
- b) We will explore opportunities for the PCCs of St. Nicolas' and St. Mary's to meet together and develop a relationship.**
- c) We will have "Benefice Business" as a standing agenda item at St. Mary's PCC, and we will invite the PCC of St. Nicolas' to do the same.**
- d) We will explore other initiatives where the congregations of St. Nicolas' and St. Mary's may communicate, collaborate, and meet and be encouraged by one another.**

6) We will pursue an EFFECTIVE LAY-CLERGY PARTNERSHIP IN THE LEADERSHIP OF ST. MARY'S

We are firm in our identity that we are a parish with a strong history of invigorated lay leadership. We are also aware of the necessary place of ordained leadership. We have valued the blessing and sacrificial contribution of a number of clergy in recent years, many of whom have been retired or non-stipendiary. We recognise that the effective pursuit of our mission relies on a well-understood and widely-embraced participation of the benefice clergy in that mission.

To further this priority:

- a) The Rector will ensure that the benefice clergy team**
 - i. are aware of our distinctiveness**
 - ii. understand and embrace our core values**
 - iii. grow to know St Mary's well**
 - iv. lead services at St. Mary's and also attend some services at St. Mary's when they are not leading,**

- b) The Rector will ensure that one member of the clergy team will**
 - i. have a particular relational responsibility for St Mary's**
 - ii. act as 'first point of contact' for clerical leadership in the parish.**

7) We will value our CHURCH BUILDING, GROUNDS, AND LOCATION

We recognise the value of our location. Our grounds are peaceful, and our buildings are not only functional but aesthetically pleasing. The ongoing improvement and development of our grounds is a priority

- a) We will continue to improve our grounds and buildings, responding initially to our recent quinquennial inspection.**

- b) We will continue development of the memorial garden.**

A PRAYER FOR OUR MISSION

**Almighty God,
who called your Church to witness
that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself:
help us to proclaim the good news of your love,
that all who hear it may be drawn to you;
through him who was lifted up on the cross,
and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen**

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