

St. Mary's Mission Action Plan 2017 to 22

Vicar's Preface & Launch Sermon

Not long ago a respected life-long, octogenarian member of St. Mary's sent me a Lambeth Palace postcard, bearing the following quotation "after a French Bishop". It is entitled "**A Vision for the Church**" :

"A church ... where the Holy Spirit will feel at home because everything hasn't been foreseen, settled and decided in advance. An open church. A church where the audacity to do something new will be stronger than the habit of doing things as they've always been done"

This is a most helpful reminder of where Vision for the Church begins : being open to God's leading, shaping & empowering. For St. Mary's to catch His Vision, it will mean we start our "Mission Action Plan" not with Action, nor yet with Plan - but with Mission : God's Mission. It is about opening us up, not nailing things down.

My correspondent adds "I feel this sums up what you are aiming to achieve - I pray you will be able to succeed and that we will help make it so" ...

I am so grateful for the prayers & loving commitment of church family like this, who stand with me in longing to see St. Mary's grow stronger still, in the years to come : in congregational number, range and spiritual depth; in loving service; and only for the Glory of God & His Kingdom (explicitly *not* that of St. Mary's , its people or leaders):

By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples (John 15v.8)

How does that happen?

As cultivated fruit-bearing plants, grapevines follow a cycle of growing, pruning and harvesting. The cycle has a clear Mission purpose : so that the Father, the vine-dresser, can produce much fruit.

And according to Jesus, the growth cycle doesn't work without at least two things :

1. the Branch remaining healthily connected to the Vine
2. the Father's pruning

"The Branch remaining healthily connected to the Vine" – this means St. Mary's will grow to the extent that, and only to the extent that, we (individually & corporately) "abide in Christ" through prayer & faithful living :

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing (John 15v.4-5)

"The Father's pruning" is the second necessary preparation for growth - and we should note that it will include the pruning of both *fruitful* and *unfruitful* branches alike :

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit (John15v.1-2)

Tom Wright concludes his comment on this passage "*though it always hurts, we must be ready for the father's pruning knife. God is glorified, and so will we be, by bearing good quality fruit, and lots of it. For that to happen,*

there will be extra growth that needs cutting away. That too, is an intimate process. The vine-dresser is never closer to the vine, taking more thought over its long-term health and productivity, than when he has the knife in his hand"

While discerning God's vision is a vital & exciting task for the leadership of a Church; it is also a most holy & humbling responsibility. Today is the fruit of much prayer for His wisdom, & for courage to embrace His leading - recognising that a path of *no pruning* at St. Mary's, no change nor challenge, might be far more popular in the short term.

So I need to remind myself today, and all in this wonderful and diverse church family, that the call to Christian Worship & Discipleship is fundamentally a call to *self-giving* rather than self-gratification. It is about putting God and the needs of my neighbour before myself :

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends (John 15v.12-13)

"Laying down my life" involves laying down my own preferences, out of love for others and concern for what they would find helpful. This is a common-place in any healthy family life, and in healthy Church family life also.

In a moment, we will turn to what all this will mean at St. Mary's over the next few years. Our next Mission Action Plan contains proposals for changes to our Church Buildings and our Church Services, two aspects of St. Mary's that matter as much as any other, for many of us ... and they will be changes that I don't expect everyone to like (to begin with at least!)

Talk of laying down our own preferences isn't a matter of theory; Jesus is quite emphatic that in the end it is the Lord who chooses & directs His people :

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide (John 15v.16)

As we launch our Mission Action Plan, I conclude we each need to respond in two ways :

- Please consider how you personally might "bear fruit" , by helping St. Mary's grow (there is a form attached to help you consider your calling)
- Please pray expectantly for your church family, and Church Council especially, as we do our best to discern and follow the Lord's "abiding, pruning and growing" priorities for St. Mary's in the years to come :

... so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. This I command you, to love one another (John 15v.16-17)

In faith then let us pray together, with one heart and voice, for :

"A Vision for the Church ... where the Holy Spirit will feel at home because everything hasn't been foreseen, settled and decided in advance. An open church. A church where the audacity to do something new will be stronger than the habit of doing things as they've always been done" ... And to God be the Glory, Amen.

With my love and great gratitude, now as ever

Guy Bridgewater

Advent Sunday 2016

St. Mary's Worship Services

At St. Mary's Vision Day in July 2016 our congregation identified a range of proposals for consideration by the Church Council. As a result, a trial pattern of Church Services is to be introduced, including elements of Abiding, Pruning & Growing, as follows **(NB to be introduced in February 2017, & run for 12 months before being reviewed in February 2018)** :

Abiding

- 2017 : Review Prayer life of St. Mary's (& ensure Prayer fuels/directs the "Thanks A Million" project)
- 2017 : Service Card produced for 8.00 Eucharist (as for Matins & Evensong)
- 2017 : Weds 10.00 Communion to be developed, & followed by Coffee (inc with clergy) in Leslie Room
- 2017 : Current varied range of 8.00, 9.30 & 11.30 Sunday services to continue unchanged

Pruning

- 2017 : Thursday 9.15am Communion to move to 9.30am, on alternate Thursdays only and followed by Coffee (inc with clergy); venue to depend on Church Centre renovation
- 2017 : Saturday 9.00am Communion discontinued (replaced by 8.30am morning prayer)
- 2017 : Café Church to be on 5th & Summer Sundays only
- 2017 : Sung Evensong to move to 5.00pm, and now held on 2nd (Full Choral) & 4th Sundays

Growing

- 2017 : New Informal Service (*Name TBC*) to be started at 5.00pm on 1st & 3rd Sundays

See also [MAP THOUGHTS re Worshipping & Praying \(attached below\)](#)

St. Mary's Ministry & Mission

Abiding

- 2017 "Year of the Bible" : Personal Bible Reading Plans; Home Group Studies; Sermon Series
- 2017 : Review pastoral visiting scheme (ways to expand & ensure folk not missed)

Pruning

- 2017 : Trial Replacement of "Lent Lunches" with "Lent Angels" (volunteer teams recruited & hired out for Gardening, Tidying, Cleaning, Car-washing, etc as they choose ... to raise "Thanks A Million" funds)
- 2017 : DCC & PCC to explore greater collaboration with sister churches in "pruned" Team Parish

Growing

- 2017 : New Sunday Brunch Group for 20s & 30s (meeting after 9.30 Service)
- 2018 "Year of Prayer" : St. Mary's Programme of Conferences, Retreats & Quiet Days
- 2019 "Year of Mission" : St. Mary's Programme of Concerts, Festivals & Outreach Events

St. Mary's Buildings

Our St. Mary's "Thanks A Million" Project includes elements of Abiding, Pruning & Growing as follows (***NB timings will inevitably depend upon funding & planning permissions***) :

Abiding

- 2017 : South Roof repairs
- 2018 : North Roof repairs

Pruning

- 2017 : Create a Coffee/flexible seating area (in South West corner) – stage 1
- 2017 : Church Centre Renovation Consultation, Design & Planning Applications

Growing

- 2018 : St. Mary's Pre-school premises & new kitchen created within Church Centre
- 2018/19 : Church Centre Renovation (eg Café Area created within Church Centre, Chapel reordered, Toilet block reordered, Entrance reordered, etc)
- 2019 : Enhance Coffee/flexible seating area (in South West corner) – stage 2
- 2019/20 : Multimedia capability

MAP Thoughts re Worshipping & Praying

Intro

- Christian Church; Anglican Church; Parish Church
- Keep (refresh, target and broaden) a “wide range of services”
- Ministerial resources have reduced from 4/5 clergy & 3 Readers to 3 clergy & 2 Readers
- 9.30 & Kairos services have been well supported & are growing
- Evening services have been falling in numbers (both Evensong & Cafe Church)
- Midweek congregations are often very small
- School for Prayer is also very small

Proposal for Midweek Communions

Less services, with enhanced fellowship and clergy engagement

- Weds 10.00 Communion weekly – followed by Coffee in Leslie Room
- Thursday 9.15 Communion fortnightly – followed by Coffee in Manor Room

Notes

- Saturday 9.00 Communion discontinued
 - Very small numbers
 - Pre-dates 8.30am Morning Prayer
- Thursday Communion going from weekly to fortnightly
 - Very small numbers & not currently linking well to Informal Coffee
 - Review venue?
- Coffee & fellowship needs small Weds & Thurs lay teams to oversee
- Coffee to be attended by presiding minister (staff meeting implications), pastoral links built etc
- “M & M’s” (nursery & primary school) communion to continue half-termly

Review Prayer Meetings

- Ask Worshipping & Praying Team to
 - review monthly “School for Prayer” and suggest any changes
 - set up & enable prayer for the “Thanks a Million” project

Make BCP Services more accessible

- Service card for 8.00 Eucharist (as for Matins & Evensong)
- Questionnaire to BCP congregations for suggestions?

Possible refreshed/broadened TRIAL Sunday pattern (for 6 to 12 months then review):

First Sunday

8.00 BCP Eucharist

9.30 Church Family (All-age) Eucharist – *Choir & Band*

11.30 BCP Matins

*5.00 New Informal Service – *Band [inc Mike/Jeremy], Setup/down team*

Second Sunday

8.00 BCP Eucharist

9.30 Parish Eucharist & Lighthouse - *Choir*

11.30 Kairos – *Band [not inc Mike/Jeremy?]*

5.00 BCP Choral Evensong – *Choir*

[Youth Cafe Connect is 7.00 to 8.30pm]

Third Sunday

8.00 BCP Eucharist

9.30 Parish Eucharist & Lighthouse - *Choir*

(11.30 or 12.00 Baptisms)

*5.00 New Informal Service – *Band[inc Mike/Jeremy], Setup/down team*

[St. John's "Encounter" service is at 7.00pm]

Fourth Sunday

8.00 BCP Eucharist

9.30 Parish Eucharist & Lighthouse - *Choir*

11.30 Kairos – *Band (inc Mike/Jeremy)*

5.00 BCP Evensong - *Choir*

[Youth Cell Groups are 7.00 to 8.30pm]

Fifth & Summer Sundays

8.00 BCP Eucharist

9.30 Parish/"Summer" Eucharist (& Lighthouse in term-time) – *Choir/Band?*

(Summer Sundays also have Kairos on 2nd/4th of month as usual)

5.00 Cafe Church

*Informal service likely to need :

- A team to run it (set up & led by Jimmy) – aim for around 20 who meet to plan/research/pray for it & take responsibility to grow it spiritually & practically
- Commitment, ownership & active support from leadership team
- New worship band that overlaps with choir (& prob also Parish help, initially to set up/train (inc band practises) during trial)
- Multimedia facility, sheet music, PA team
- DCC start-up budget submitted by the Worshipping & Praying MAP Team
- Creative use of liturgy, modern songs & classic hymns that has a St. Mary's DNA
- Emerging plans re refreshments (bring & share high tea?), crèche/children, links to Pilgrim & Home Groups ...
- Review after 12 months (eg would 4.30/5.30pm work better? Or 11.30am?)
- ... Etc ... (general freedom to evolve & discover God's way forward!)