



“In Touch” Issue No 1 April 2012



Introduction

One of the findings from the first phase of our Mission Action Planning (MAP) consultation was that the church family felt that there needed to be better communication. Obviously, we all need to play our part in this, including reading the weekly notices sheets, our monthly magazine, and any flyers and talking with PCC members (whose names and pictures are displayed in the church porch).

We also now have a ‘Mission Accompanier’ Revd Lydia Humphreys, who is priest in charge at the Transfiguration, Kempston. The Mission Accompanier acts as a ‘critical friend’ who walks alongside us in the MAP process, helping us to reflect on our journey as a church. It was Lydia’s suggestion that there might be occasional letters from the Vicar to the church, reflecting on current issues, as one of the ways of responding to the desire for more communication.

Where we are now

Thanks to everyone who has helped us with the ‘looking’ stage of MAP. All parishes are asked to send in their Mission Action Plan to the Bishop of St Albans after the Annual Parochial Church Meeting. Following work done by the PCC at its meetings in March, I’d like just to share with you what we shall be sending to Bishop Alan from St Mary’s, Goldington.

Our Vision is (how we want to be described in five years’ time)

for St Mary’s to be a growing church, whose welcome, in Christ’s name, extends to all. Furthermore, that St Mary’s will express this in buildings that are well-used and open to the fullest extent, offering modern and traditional worship that meets the needs of people now, with an active social life for all age groups, nurturing people who know the power of Christ in their lives, and expressing our faith in God by service to our community and the wider world.

Our key priorities for the next five years (Each priority reflects one of the themes of Living God’s Love)

- 1. To make more of our worship attractive and accessible to younger people and families, including those of little church background** [Going deeper into God]
- 2. To ‘open up’ our church to the local community to offer support and pastoral care: so that more come ‘in’ and more of us ‘get out’ into our community** [Transforming Communities]
- 3. To develop what is on offer at St Mary’s so that we increase the church family and attract and retain new people, especially more children and younger people.** [Making new disciples]

Our Goals are (our five SMART goals for the next year or more)

1. Re-organise the style, content and times of services, learning from local churches that are growing, so that we start to deal with our decline, and are no longer perceived by most as an 'ageing' church.
2. Build up our links with schools, children and young families so that more come to some church activity more often.
3. Re-evaluate our communication methods so that more people - within and beyond our church family - feel they know what is going on.
4. Build on existing links and develop new ones, with groups in the community, so that we are known by, and involved with, more of the parish beyond our walls.
5. Cut out (at least for a while) some of what we do, so that our clergy and lay ministers and active people have more time and energy to focus on things that build the mission of our church, rather than maintaining all that we have historically done.

So how does all this work?

We'll be forming 'task groups' to work towards our five goals. The membership of these will be drawn from within PCC and from other members of our church family. There will be opportunities to learn, pray and discuss our next steps during the year ahead.

I fully understand that the prospect of some changes to what we do might cause each of us - including myself - some trepidation. However, the well-attended open parish meeting on 28th January showed that there is widespread concern to see more families and younger people added to our congregations, and to change slow decline into growth. We all have a part to play - from the faithful attenders of decades to the newest worshippers. We all serve a risen Lord, who is able to change and transform lives. With Christ with us, we can move towards a healthier future here in Goldington.

With my love and prayers

Richard