

Towards God's Future – Our Mission Action Plan

Approved by the Parochial Church Council 4 October 2010

Introduction

What is a Mission Action Plan?

A 'Mission Action Plan' is a strategic plan which outlines a church's key priorities and activities for the coming months and years. Through a process of prayer, consultation and discernment the document should express the leadership's clear sense of God's vision for the church – what kind of church God is calling it to be, and what it is being called to do as its part of God's mission in his world at this time. A mission action plan is a working document which needs to be reviewed and updated each year, with a rolling five-year horizon in view.

A good mission action plan sets out the values on which the church is built, and expresses these in a 'mission statement' which clearly states the church's purpose and character. Alongside the mission statement, it is helpful to draw up a 'vision statement' which expresses the church's desired future – what it believes God is calling it to become over the next five years. A clear vision statement acts like a magnet, drawing people together around a shared vision, and like a compass, clearly showing the direction of travel.

The phrase 'mission action planning' was coined by Bishop David Hope in the diocese of London in the early 1990s. It draws on the lessons learned by those involved in strategic planning in all kinds of organisations, but sets the process within a context of prayer and biblical reflection, so that a church can discern what is truly God's vision for his church rather than just human aspiration. Mission action planning has now been adopted as a strategic tool by at least sixteen dioceses in the Church of England, including Lichfield.¹

This document summarises the history of MAP at All Saints, discusses our core values and how these are expressed in our mission statement, unpacks our new vision statement adopted in 2008 and sets out our strategic priorities for the next five years.

MAP at All Saints

All Saints is a parish with a long history of mission action planning, based on a five-year cycle. The first five-year plan, *Towards 2000*, was produced by the then vicar, Prebendary Malcolm Potter, after a period of wide consultation in 1995. The third five-year plan, *Towards 2010*, was produced ten years later, and contained around a hundred specific goals. Soon after this document was produced, the parish went into vacancy, and *Towards 2010* was incorporated into the Parish Profile for the appointment of the new vicar.

The existing mission action plan was updated and revised following the arrival of the Revd Mark Ireland in January 2007. Five initial priorities were agreed with the PCC at the beginning of his incumbency:

- Growing in our relationship with God
- Growing out in fresh expressions of church, and in the community
- Growing together with St. Catherine's
- Releasing new ministries
- Reaching out in mission beyond the parish.

¹ For an introduction to mission action planning, see Mike Chew and Mark Ireland, *How to do Mission Action Planning*, (SPCK, 2009)

In the autumn of 2008 a widespread consultation exercise took place, involving two services in church and contributions from all cellgroups (now homegroups). This process led to the adoption by the PCC of our first 'vision statement'. In April 2009 the Ministry Team and PCC spent a morning together working on three key priority areas. This was found to be a valuable format, and in April 2010 the Ministry Team and PCC were joined by the District Church Council from St. Catherine's, making the mission action planning process parish-wide. Work on our mission action plan is now moving onto an annual cycle with a rolling five-year horizon, under the new title *Towards God's Future*.

What are our Core Values?

In the New Testament the word 'church' is used to describe not a building but a worshipping, missionary community. The three aspects of worship, mission and community are all integral to the nature of church, and can be thought of the three directions of Up, Out and In. Mission is not an optional extra activity of the church, but central to its purpose. As the Church of England report *Mission-Shaped Church* put it, 'It is not that the church of God has a mission, but rather that the mission of God has a church.' *Mission-shaped Church* defines five core values for a missionary church:²

A missionary church is focussed on God the Holy Trinity – God in relationship. We worship and serve a missionary God - the word 'mission' was originally used to describe the character of the Godhead (the Father sending the Son, and the Father and Son sending the Spirit) rather than the activity of the church.³

A missionary church is incarnational – as God came to us and became incarnate in the world in Jesus, so the church makes the Good News of Christ visible and real within the local culture, and responds to the activity of the Spirit in its community.

A missionary church makes new disciples – we are called to be active in calling people to faith in Jesus Christ, and to a consistent Christian lifestyle within their culture - making not just converts but disciples, of all ages, who will in turn disciple others in the way of Christ.

A missionary church is transformational – existing for the transformation of the community it serves, through the power of the gospel and the Holy Spirit, as a sign, agent and foretaste of the Kingdom of God.

A missionary church is relational – as a Trinitarian church we are called to model life-giving, nurturing relationships. We are 'a community of faith characterised by welcome and hospitality, whose ethos and style are open to change when new members join'.⁴

What is distinctive about All Saints with Eyton?

Every church has its own history, and particular values and character which are part of its vocation – what Robert Warren calls 'the angel of the church', picking up the imagery of the Letters to the Seven Churches in Revelation 1 and 2.⁵ What are the defining features of the 'angel' of All Saints with Eyton?

- **We are Bible-based:** In the words of the Ordination Service we 'accept the Scriptures as revealing all things necessary for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ'; and we accept the Bible as our ultimate authority in all matters of faith and conduct. Over recent decades the parish has developed a strong tradition of biblical, applied preaching.

² General Synod, *Mission-Shaped Church* (CHP, 2004), p81

³ See David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p1

⁴ *Mission-Shaped Church*, p82

⁵ Robert Warren, *The Healthy Churches Handbook* (SPCK, 2004), chapter 9

- **We are here for the long-term:** All Saints can trace its history back at least to the Domesday Book in 1086, where Wellington is recorded as having both a church and a resident priest. We have names of vicars going back to 1189. St. Catherine's church has a history dating back at least to 1548. We are reaping a harvest which others have sown over many years, and we pray that the seeds we sow today will bear fruit in decades and centuries to come.⁶
- **We are a church that is used to change:** Over our thousand-year history All Saints has seen a great many changes to its buildings (at least 3 buildings) and its patterns and styles of worship (from medieval Latin to Book of Common Prayer to modern language), as its leaders have sought to proclaim afresh the Gospel to each new generation. Major changes in the last twenty-five years at All Saints have included the re-ordering of the church building and the introduction of *Common Worship* and contemporary music.
- **We seek the renewal of the Holy Spirit:** All Saints was one of the first parishes in the area to set up a healing team and seek to release the spiritual gifts of every member. Today we try to include times of prayer and listening to God in everything we do, and healing and prayer ministry is a regular part of our worship and small group life.
- **We are a parish church:** Until 1988 All Saints and St. Catherine's were separate parishes, but since 1988 we have been one parish with two different worship centres. As an Anglican church we have responsibility for sharing the Father's love with all those who live within our parish boundaries. As Archbishop William Temple said, 'the church exists for the benefit of its non-members'. Our heart longing is not just to see these buildings full once a week, but to see our whole parish filled with believers seven days a week; and we will do whatever it takes to demonstrate the Father's love in acts of grace, so that all kinds of people in our parish find God. As previous churchwardens boldly carved over the doors of All Saints in 1867, 'All seats in this church are free and unappropriated for ever.'
- **We are an all-age church:** We value and nurture children and adults of all ages, 'from 0 to 105' as our song Superglue now puts it! All Saints has long invested in youth and children's work, through employing a youth and children's evangelist, through training a large team of volunteers to run our Sunday groups for children and young adults, and through equipping and sending out young people in mission. Our Oasis lunch club and our monthly home communions are two of the various ways in which we express our commitment to our senior members.
- **We are a training and sending church:** All Saints with Eyton is a 'training parish' with a long tradition of training curates and local ministers, of calling out people to ordination and to overseas mission, and of supporting young 'Associates in Mission'⁷ in Christian work at home and overseas. Today we are a resource hub, growing and training new leaders, and equipping other local church leaders to plant fresh expressions of church in the deaneries of Telford and Wrockwardine.
- **We are a 'Sea of Galilee' church:** In Palestine two seas are fed by the life-giving water of the River Jordan – the Sea of Galilee (which gives away as much water as it receives) is teeming with life, whilst the Dead Sea (which does not let any water go) is lifeless. Our vision is not for All Saints with Eyton to flourish at the expense of other neighbouring churches, but rather to be a servant church whose members are involved in resourcing other churches and helping plant new churches. Planting new churches will involve giving away people as well as money. Our PCC has been committed to the principle of tithing for many years (giving away the first tenth of all its income to mission). Giving freely of ourselves and our resources to bless God's

⁶ See Judy Meeson and Terry Tuffnell, *A Short History of the Parish Church of All Saints Wellington Shropshire* (2008), and Geoff Harrison, *A Family – A Manor – A Church: A Story of Eyton upon the Weald Moors* (2009)

⁷ Associates in Mission are members of the church whom we support in mission outside the parish.

mission both in the developing world and in the borough of Telford will be key to continuing to receive God's blessing in the future.⁸

'God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work... You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.'

2 Corinthians 9: 8, 11

Our Mission Statement and Vision Statement

Many churches now have both a mission statement and a vision statement. A **mission statement** expresses a church's values and purpose, whilst a **vision statement** sets out its vision for the future and its direction of travel. In 1992 the whole congregation at All Saints was involved in developing its mission statement, which was then depicted in a series of beautiful banners:

**Because of Jesus All Saints Wellington
Means Good News People
Caring and Sharing
Growing and Going
Praying and Praising**

In the autumn of 2008 all the homegroups and the Sunday congregation at All Saints were involved in developing a new vision statement. This vision statement is like a compass, pointing the direction in which we believe God is leading us over the next five years:

Jesus is calling us to become a church known in the community for open doors, acts of grace, Spirit-led worship and growing leaders

What is our Vision based on?

It is the regular daily and weekly study and preaching of the Scriptures that most shapes a church's vision. This is a continuous process in which all church members are involved, and all are called to listen to God, and to pass on to the leaders anything particular they sense God might be saying to us as a church through his Word. Many passages of Scripture have helped to shape our current vision, including...

The Isaiah Vision

Isaiah 65: 17-end is a passage which shaped All Saints' thinking in developing our ministry to the local community in recent years, and to the appointment of the Revd Richard Kirby as our first chaplain to the local economy. In this passage God gave to the returned exiles a vision of a new heaven and a new earth, where children do not die in infancy, where old people are able to live out their years with dignity, and where those who build houses live in them and those who plant vineyards eat the fruit. This is an inclusive vision, for the flourishing of children (vv 20,23), the elderly (v20) and those who work (vv21-23)

This is a vision of God's future, which is also a call to action for the present, as we seek partners in our community who share these values even if they don't (yet) share our faith. We invite all people of goodwill to work with us, to pray with us, and to learn what it means to grow God's kingdom together.⁹

⁸ See Robin Gamble, *Jesus the Evangelist*,

⁹ See Raymond Fung, *The Isaiah Vision*,

What does our church's vision statement mean?

Jesus is calling us to become...

Jesus doesn't call us to stay as we are, but to walk with him on a journey, a journey of becoming more like him, a journey of discipleship. How do we as individuals and as a church hear the call of Jesus today? By continuing to devote ourselves to the same things the first Christians did...

*'They devoted themselves to **the apostles' teaching** and to **fellowship**, to the **breaking of bread** and to **prayer**.'* (Acts 2.42)

a church known in the community...

*'Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and **enjoying the favour of all the people**.'* (Acts 2.46-47a)

We are a **parish** church, standing at the heart of the community of Wellington and called to be a sign of spiritual renewal and hope, working for the spiritual regeneration of our town and borough, and praying for its leaders – for example at our Civic and Remembrance services.

for open doors...

Jesus said, 'I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will go in and out, and find pasture.' (John 10: 9)

Our vision is partly about **having our buildings open** and in use seven days a week – and also about being a **place of hospitality** - this year we have opened the church and churchyard for the Midsummer Fayre, and opened the church for a drop-in each Thursday lunchtime – as well as continuing our Oasis lunch-club for the elderly and providing premises for the Wellington Youth Project. 'Open doors' also means being a **church with lots of ways in** – this year we have redeveloped our website (www.allsaints-wellington.org) and revised our initiation policy, and have drawn in new members through baptism preparation, through our Toddler groups, through Life's Big Questions and Emmaus, and through our series of All Saints Live concerts.

Our big challenge this year is our 'Open Doors Project', which will **refurbish and extend our parish hall**, to enable us to provide new rooms for our children and young people's groups, a new kitchen and new toilets, and space for our parish office.

acts of grace...

'All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.' (Acts 2.43-4)

Since the whole church studied Philip Yancey's book **'What's so amazing about grace?'** in Lent 2009, homegroups have each been thinking of ways in which we can show God's love in surprising acts of grace to those in different kinds of need. These have ranged from decorating the flat of a neighbour, giving the garden of a pensioner a makeover, collecting baby clothes for needy mums to fundraising events for mission partners at home and abroad. Church members have also been active in a number of mission ventures over the summer – in Morfa Bay, Moldova, France and Croatia amongst others.

Spirit-led worship...

'Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.' (Acts 2.43)

...where our worship includes the best of the old and the best of the new, where creative arts reflect the creativity of the Spirit, where healing and prayer ministry are regularly available, and where everyone, young and old, is encouraged to use their gifts to enhance our worship. Where everyone listens to God and feels able to pass on whatever God may be saying to them.

and growing leaders

'Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ might be built up.' (Ephesians 4: 11)

...where we are constantly resourcing and growing our leaders, and developing new leaders for ourselves and for the wider church at home and for the church overseas; training and mentoring including both the local ministry scheme and our young leader programme releasing and equipping young people with a calling to lead.

What are our Strategic Priorities?

A: to redevelop the parish hall, with the support of the whole church, to fulfil our vision statement; to oversee the process, minimise disruption and secure funding.

B: to improve the operational management and administration of All Saints, to ensure we fulfil our vision statement and support the future growth of the church. List the priorities

C: to enrich our existing services and plant fresh expressions of church, to ensure we fulfil our vision statement and enable more people to worship God.

D: to reflect on how All Saints as a church and individuals within it are already involved in acts of grace, and on what further support and encouragement are needed to help us fulfil our vision statement.

E: to identify ways to attract and retain new members for St. Catherine's, and develop a simple mission action plan for the next year which will help to grow the number of occasional and regular worshippers.

Priorities A, B and C were agreed by the PCC and Ministry Team together on their MAP morning in April 2009.
Priorities D and E are the fruit of our PCC/Ministry Team/DCC MAP morning in April 2010.

Revd Mark Ireland, Vicar

13.10.10