



Parish Church of Earley St Peter, Reading

# Mission Action Plan 2017-22



Church Road – Earley – RG6 1EY

[www.earley-stpeter.org.uk](http://www.earley-stpeter.org.uk) /  EarleySaintPeters

Registered Charity No. 1128997

## **Introduction**

### **Telling the Story**

In 2019, Earley St Peter's will celebrate its 175th Anniversary. Since 1844, our church has been a centre of Christian worship and witness in our part of Reading. For nearly two hundred years, St Peter's has been a place for telling the story of Jesus Christ – of how God loves all people so much that he came to live as a human being; and of how God invites and welcomes all people to share life with him.

Telling the story of what God has done in Jesus Christ is the core of what Earley St Peter's does. We continue to do this through personal prayer; daily and weekly worship; opportunities to explore Christian faith; groups and events to bring people together; many acts of care and service through the week.

But, like many churches and indeed other institutions, we face some major challenges in telling this story today. In a busy culture which is less familiar with faith, people find it harder to commit to Christianity and the church. We are not attracting as many people, especially younger people and children, into the life of the church. We must raise ourselves the funds necessary to continue God's work.

So that we can continue to tell the story of Jesus Christ here, we have been working on a Mission Action Plan (MAP). A MAP is a well-tested tool to help a parish identify what it should focus on over the next few years. Over the past year the whole church family, and people in the wider community, have had the chance to contribute their ideas and suggestions. These have been reviewed by the Parochial Church Council (PCC) who have agreed this document. It identifies five specific areas for us to work on over the next five years (2017-22). They are in no particular order. By focusing on these priorities we hope to grow in our own faith as we learn more about the story of Jesus Christ; and to grow in numbers as we reach out to draw others into knowing that story for themselves. Of course, setting out these priorities does not mean other things aren't important. So, for instance, although worship is not set out as a priority, it remains the foundation of all we do. The naming of one age group as a priority does not mean we care less for others; we must work hard to welcome, cherish, and include people of all ages. But what we have tried to do is set out some particular areas of need and opportunity – like the need,

while caring for people whatever their age, to do better at attracting young people, who are under-represented in our church family.

A MAP sets out our hopes and intentions, prayerful and thoughtful, for our future work from 2017 to 2022. But the plan may need to change as new opportunities or problems are thrown up. And we can't do all of this at once, so we will need to think about what things can be done in the first couple of years and what may need to wait. Your Parochial Church Council will consider progress regularly, and after the 175th Anniversary (so in late 2019 / early 2020) the MAP will be thoroughly reviewed.

What next? The PCC ask you to read the MAP, and to pray about the next stage of implementation. Then we'd like you to ask yourself if there are ways in which you could be involved in helping us put this MAP into practice. Perhaps you could ...

- commit to pray for one particular priority regularly;
- approach a PCC member, churchwarden or one of the clergy if you have skills you could offer as we seek to work on these five areas;
- review your giving: as we seek to grow and develop, we need to increase our financial giving as well as the other ways we give to our church;
- let us know some other way you'd like to be more involved in church life.

Through all we do in this parish, and the work we do as part of our Mission Action Plan, may God help us to tell the story of our faith better, so that we and many others may come to know 'the mighty acts of him who called us out of darkness into his marvellous light' (I Peter 2.9).

*Approved by the Parochial Church Council of Earley St Peter  
7th September 2017*

## **Publicity and Communications**

*to be overseen by Publicity and Communications Group (to be created)*

We want to communicate effectively with each other so everyone knows what's going on and can have the chance to shape our church's life. We want to make sure our publicity is appealing and informative, so that those outside the regular congregation can find out easily what's happening and participate.

As a first step we will

- Draw together a small group of people who have skills and / or interest in this area to review all aspects of our communications and publicity. Members of the congregation will be invited to express interest. This will be a time-limited group, meeting regularly for a year in the first instance.

This group will be asked to in particular to:

- Develop a single logo / design to be used on all publicity.
- Consider how best we communicate with regular members of the congregation and give everyone a chance to participate in our decision-making.
- Consider how best we communicate with those (e.g. baptism / wedding / funeral contacts) who we encounter occasionally.
- Review the layout and content of Keys, our parish magazine.
- Review the layout and content of Life at St Peter's, our weekly news sheet.
- Review the layout and content of our website and Facebook page.
- Explore how we might use other social media (e.g. Twitter) to get our message across.
- Review the location and content of our internal and external noticeboards / signage.

The group will update PCC regularly and bring any significant proposals (or any with financial implications) to PCC. The expectation is that these items will be complete by the end of 2018.

## **Increasing Lay Involvement**

*to be overseen by clergy and churchwardens*

We are blessed by many people who give considerable amounts of time, energy, and skill to the life of our parish. Almost all of this is done voluntarily and often behind the scenes. As we seek to grow as a church, we will need to continue to encourage people to contribute in a variety of ways to our church life, ministry and mission.

Matching people to tasks and opportunities is important. There is also an expressed desire to train and equip people for different roles, and to build people's confidence. We want to help people identify and use the gifts and ideas God has given them.

We will

- aim for everyone at St Peter's to see they are a valued member of our church family and to consider what their God-given gifts might be
- promote a clearer understanding of church as a place where all contribute, in a variety of ways
- help people identify their particular gifts and skills, perhaps through a congregational survey
- help people identify things they would like to stop / start doing
- identify particular people who would like training for particular tasks / roles
- look into resources and training which are available (at deanery and diocesan level)
- identify particular areas of church life where we need to pay attention to resourcing: where there are 'gaps', where more help is needed, where someone would like to step down if there were a replacement, where we would like to see something grow and develop.

## **Nurturing New and Existing Christians**

*to be overseen by clergy and licensed lay minister*

Telling the story of Jesus Christ is at the heart of what a church does. Through welcome, teaching, and worship we discover more about who God is and what he has done for us in Christ. As his followers, we want to know that story better for ourselves. We also need to get better at telling Jesus's story to others so that they too can respond to his invitation to follow him. This means we will provide a range of opportunities for more people to pray, to read the Bible, to find out more and talk more about Christian faith, and to find their own words to express what they believe. We hope that this means we will all grow in the depth of our Christian faith and we will see more people coming to know Christ's love for themselves.

Building on existing strengths (such as the Advent and Lent Groups, other study groups, 'Thy Kingdom Come' etc.) we will:

- Each year hold Advent and Lent Groups plus at least one another study group in the summer.
- Each year offer a basic enquirer's group providing a general introduction to Christian faith.
- Each year offer a 'next steps' groups providing more in-depth discussion of Christian faith, which might (for those who want it) lead to confirmation.
- Within six months (subject to PCC agreement) provide opportunities for children to receive Holy Communion after instruction.
- Within six months provide printed resources for people to pray at home.
- Within six months make more generally available Bible reading notes for people to read the Bible at home.
- Within six months look at possibility of a monthly daytime fellowship / Bible Study group, perhaps attached to the Wednesday communion service.
- Within eighteen months evaluate desire for an evening group along similar lines.
- Within a year, trial a service specifically designed at inviting baptism families back to church for a celebration service with refreshments.

## **Children, Young People, and Younger Adults**

*to be overseen by Children & Young People Group*

We want to be a church where people of all ages feel welcome and included. We are aware that some age groups are currently under-represented within our church family, and a focus on children, young people and younger adults is part of an attempt to address this issue.

As well as the plans listed below, making children, young people and younger adults a priority will mean considering their needs when we discuss more general issues (whether as a PCC or in another context). For example, when discussing welcome, this priority in the MAP will remind us to ask 'what does it look like to be welcoming to children, young people, and younger adults' as part of our wider discussions.

In the next year we hope to

- continue to develop 'Bread & Wine' as a service in which the children can play an active part, as all ages worship together. This might include further involvement of children in welcoming, taking the collection, doing readings and leading prayers
- build up a larger group of leaders and helpers for our Sunday Children's Church, helping people to grow in confidence in this area of church life
- continue with pattern of craft sessions and short service particularly aimed at families – at least once a term
- think more about the involvement of children and young people in the musical life of our church, and to make musical links between Children's Church and Bread & Wine and other services
- think about opportunities for inter-generational links within our congregation. How can we promote friendships across age groups and encourage integration of all within our church family?
- continue occasional meetings of clergy with younger adults for discussion/Bible study and to review this and develop as appropriate
- develop better communication with families we see occasionally (including baptism families, and families who come to toddlers but whose children then reach school age), inviting them to join us for events as appropriate.

In the next 2-3 years we plan to think about

- whether there is demand for a new, more informal service at a different time of the day/week which might be more attractive to families
- provision for young people. As our existing children grow, if they remain part of our congregation, we will find ourselves with a small group of 9-10 year olds, which might give us a starting point to think about provision for this age range, either on a Sunday morning or at a different time
- whether there are possibilities for using technology eg screen and projector for some of our children's services
- training for volunteers
- to look into the diocesan 'Child and Youth Friendly Church Award' as a tool for evaluation of this area of our church life and to give us ways in which we might further develop this area of ministry.



## **Presence in the Community**

*to be overseen initially by Standing Committee*

We are blessed with warm, welcoming, and well-maintained church and hall buildings. Our church is visible to those travelling by foot, bus, and car through the area and many people pass it every day. It is a widely-appreciated building – not least by those who attend ESP school or who come for a funeral, wedding, baptism, or seasonal service. Being open to those around us is part of our Christian responsibility to love our neighbour, but also hopefully encourages people to engage with the message of Christian faith.

However, we feel we could be even more open and engaged with the wider community. We want to think more about the extent to which we reach out into the community around us. This is our least specific priority as we still have much reflecting to do in this area.

By the end of 2018, we will:

- Optimise the use of our church hall as a meeting place for commercial and charitable groups, through better marketing and a rolling refurbishment programme (Responsibility: Hall Committee / Hall Manager).
- Continue to run St Peter's Café roughly monthly in term-time, and look at ways to raise the profile of this event and encourage more people to come (Responsibility: café team).
- Generate specific proposals to have our church building open more during the week so anyone can drop in for quiet and prayer (Responsibility: churchwardens).
- Continue to work with the Town Council, Residents' Association, University, and others to see what the needs of our community are and how we might help meet those needs (Responsibility: clergy).

Further ahead, we will explore ways (e.g. signage, leaflets, website) we can provide information about our church buildings, history, and Christian faith to visitors.

*with thanks to W.D. Watts for photographs*