



## Lives transformed by the Light and Love of Jesus

*'By this everyone will know you are my disciples, if you love one another'* John 13:35

## Mission Action Plan Progress Spring 2024

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### Introduction

St Paul's Mission Action Plan supports our vision for the future by reflecting on what has been achieved as we go deeper into God's love. In 2023 we celebrated how our Church has reached out to the community over the last hundred years at a family day with refreshment, crafts and activities, ending in a special service on Sunday thanking God for his inspiration. The strategic location of our Church at the gateway to the town, located within a Parish rich in the diversity of its people and landscape will enable us to continue to serve the community in the future.

In our MAP 2024, we consider how our Church has grown this year with a sense of vision and purpose. At the beginning of the year, we had a Vision Day, led by John Truscott, where we reviewed our vision to say 'Lives Transformed by the Light and Love of Jesus'. This year the focus of our Vision Day is to discern the values underlying our vision.

### Leadership and Management

The leadership and Management of our mission shaped Church is led by Jeni and the ministry team, based on our management framework, consisting of the following domains: worship, pastoral care, discipleship, outreach, children and young people, administration, communication, and prayer. It has been a challenge, to ensure the smooth management of the Church without churchwardens but we thank God we have a member of the congregation willing to stand for election to fill one of the roles. In the absence of churchwardens, we are grateful for groups of volunteers who have fulfilled some of the necessary duties e.g. safeguarding, sacristan duties, prayer ministry, worship, grounds maintenance, rotas for reading, duty wardens, refreshments.

### MAP Review of the Year

MAP 2023 is reviewed according to the following five marks of mission:

- **Tell:** to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom.
  - **Teach:** to teach, baptise and nurture new believers.
  - **Love your neighbour:** to respond to human need by loving service.
  - **Transform:** to seek to transform unjust structures of society.
  - **Tend:** to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and renew the life of the earth.
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#### ***Tell***

We proclaim our news in many ways:

- We stream our 10.00 am and 6.30 services which have been accessed widely, spreading the Good News to many people. Our AV team continues to grow as more volunteers join the group. We have invested in high quality equipment and have reorganised the AV desk in Church.
- Our communication volunteer produces a weekly newsletter, 'Inside St Paul's', of activities and events taking place, which is emailed to the community.
- Messages are given out at the start of each service, communicating events and activities.
- The termly St Paul's magazine is of a high quality, complete with photographs and articles witnessing the outpouring of God's love.
- Church Suite is used to manage our rotas and our calendar.
- Our website contains key information.

#### ***Teach***

We teach the Good News of the Lord in many ways:

- This year we have welcomed Nick Smith as our Associate Vicar and Jess Batten as our Curate both of whom have been valuable additions to our ministry team. We are blessed in having a strong team to deliver inspirational talks at our services.
  - We have a wide range of services to meet the needs of our diverse community: 8.00 am, 10.00 am, 6.30 pm Sunday Communion services, Wednesday 8.30 am and 12.00 noon. Once a month we have an Altogether service for adults and children and Morning Service.
  - Since the appointment of Emma Vernon as our Youth Worker and the return of Claire McDonnell, our Young People's worker, from maternity leave, the number of young people joining the various groups has grown exponentially. We held a successful Vision Day in June to review our work with young people.
    - There are Sunday groups for all ages, mid-week activities - toddler groups, Messy Church and Prayers for Bears.
    - One off events e.g. the light party, holiday club, assemblies in local schools, harvests, Schools' Carol Concert, Christingle services.
    - The Youth Weekend away was a successful first event when 23 young people aged 5 and upwards went away together for three nights.
    - A youth Vision Day was held in June to evaluate our work with young people and to consider ways of moving forward.
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- Two significant events drawing young people nearer to God are the Christmas and Easter Journeys when the Church is transformed to show the journey to Nazareth and Jesus' birth, to his death and resurrection.
  - 275 children and 47 adults from local school attended the Christmas Journey in the week and the congregation were invited on Saturday morning. A small group took the Christmas story to Woolgrove Special Needs school.
  - The Easter journey was visited by 252 children and 40 adults from local schools. We are grateful for the creative and organisational skills of Pam Hull who makes these events so special.
- Our Alpha groups, which teach and nurture those new to God and those renewing their beliefs, have grown significantly this year and are a major feature of our calendar.
- A large group of our community, drawn from our youth groups and Alpha groups, were baptised in June at a moving service led by Bishop Jane.
- **Several** established home groups meet to go deeper into their faith and caring for each other. A new 'Emerge' group has grown, largely from Alpha.
- A retreat for the congregation, arranged by Nick Smith, providing an opportunity for quiet reflection, was well received.

#### *Love*

We respond to human need, showing our love for each other in many ways:

- Our Connect groups have become a key feature of the social aspect of our lives. These groups meet, usually for a few weeks at a time and range from tag rugby to craft and philosophy. These offer the opportunity for people to get to know each other and are particularly helpful ways for newcomers to feel part of our community.
  - We women have welcomed the recently introduced 'Beloved' evenings where we have an interesting talk with refreshments and Prosecco. It is good to know that such evenings have recently been introduced for the men.
  - Many of our church family camped together at New Wine in Kent where friendships grew alongside worship and teaching opportunities.
  - Refreshments after church Sunday services moved from the Church Hall to the Church in January 2023. Our aim was to encourage the congregation to stay after the service and create a more welcoming environment. Thanks to Suzanne Gillard's organisational skills self-service stations were quickly set up at the back of the church and a group of volunteers serve on a rota basis. This has proved successful with more people staying and mingling after the service.
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#### ***Transform***

We work to address the socio-economic issues many in our community are experiencing:

- The monthly Community Café provides the opportunity for refreshments, support from Citizens Advice on budgeting, Acorns activities for children and preloved children's clothes and books.
- We address the issue of food poverty by supporting the food bank, collecting donations of food, volunteering at the foodbank, distributing vouchers, **and** providing meals through 'Make Lunch' during school holidays.
- **The** 'Love In Action' team, working largely behind the scenes due to the confidential nature of their work, support those who come to us for help in challenging circumstances.
- A thorough review of our mission **partner** support was undertaken last year to ensure it is appropriate. This was a difficult undertaking but our work with our mission partners is no more focussed.

#### ***Tend***

We strive to care **for** the integrity of God's creation.

- This year our focus has been on our 'Raising the Roof' project, ably led by Paul Thomson and Chris Dingwall. At the beginning of the year, we were devastated to hear we had to replace part of the Church roof at the cost in the region of £220,000. God answered our prayers, and the money was raised through the amazing generosity of our community. As with all such building and renovation projects, there have been setbacks but we are hopeful that we will have a wonderful new roof in the late Spring.
- We continue to work in an eco-friendly way, for example the cups used for coffee after the services in Church are re-cycled.
- We have replaced the chairs in Church to make it easier to move them round to adapt our space for a variety of occasions. The existing chairs were disposed of sustainably by offering them to other organisations.
- We have raised money to replace our out-worn bibles.

#### **Looking Forward**

The review of the MAP highlights the extent to which St Paul's has grown in numbers and developed the experience to worship for our community of all ages. However, our church has not grown physically, and our growth has revealed the challenges we face to meet our long-term needs.

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In the long term we will be considering the appointment of an Operations Manager as well as the overall redevelopment of our church. We are grateful for the support from a member of the congregation who is a specialist in redeveloping properties to suit their future needs. We are aware this will require a major investment of funds and we will work towards this after recouping our finances for the roof repair.

Nevertheless, there are challenges we can begin to address:

- Support a churchwarden.
  - Review the spaces used by the children and young people.
  - Review the storage space for the various activities -Christmas and Easter journey.
  - Make the vestry a suitable place for Jeni to use in quiet contemplation before services.
  - Improve our facilities – toilet and kitchen.
  - Develop our welcome area once the work on the roof has been completed.
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Following the evaluation of progress on the MAP, we look forward to developing our key priorities in the coming year as we work to our big picture developing St Paul's church as the gateway to Letchworth.

We thank the Lord for bringing us so far on our way.

'Now you are the body of Christ, and each of you is a part of it. And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues.

1 Corinthians 12:27-28

*Judith Nash*

*March 2024*

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