



A VISION FOR MISSION AND MINISTRY

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

ST PETER'S CHURCH, ST ALBANS



A CHURCH FOR THE CITY

WELCOMING ALL
CELEBRATING LIFE
SHARING THE JOURNEY

INTRODUCTION

From The Rev'd Anne Hollinghurst,
Vicar of St Peter's



A VISION FOR MISSION AND MINISTRY WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

It began with listening - listening to one another and to God, as we thought about these questions:

- What do we have to celebrate as a church community, and what do we yet aspire to?
- What are the significant characteristics and God-given opportunities of our church and context?

Following on from the wealth of responses received through both questionnaires and conversations, members of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) set about prayerfully discerning a vision. I am grateful to them for their work over a sustained period, and for their enthusiasm and openness to where the Holy Spirit is leading us.

The PCC's work was in turn resourced through our Mission Action Planning Group under the chairmanship of Richard Butler,

to whom huge thanks are also owed. Meanwhile, the Rev'd Mark Slater has been a helpful "Mission Accompanier" to us in this process.

As we have travelled this journey, we have shared an understanding that the church is not an end in itself but an instrument of God's mission, or as Bishop John V Taylor once expressed it: "it is not that the church has a mission but that the God of mission has a church".

Every church community in every time and place is called to embrace the whole mission of God and to reach out with compassion and imagination. The vision statement at which we have arrived does not attempt to say all that can be said about that mission, but we have sought to identify what we believe is distinctive about our context and calling at St Peter's at this time.

BE A PART OF IT



The PCC on their 'Vision' Awayday

We have identified priorities and key strategic tasks for the next five years to enable us to respond to the special God-given opportunities and responsibilities that we have as St Albans's city-centre church. The "mission action planning" we have mapped out also forms our response to the Bishop's priorities for our diocese as a whole - "going deeper into God, transforming communities, making new disciples".

I commend this booklet to you as a working document and our guiding plan under the continued leading of the Holy Spirit, with the understanding that it will be important to review regularly our priorities. This process is always a dynamic one and we need to remain open to the God of surprises!

The realisation of our vision will need commitment, prayer, financial resources, and the God-given gifts of each member of our church community and other friends if it is to flourish. I would ask you to pray for and support our vision for mission and ministry at St Peter's, and to ask how you can be a part of it.

OUR 'LISTENING' - WHAT WE HAVE HEARD AND SEEN OUR WIDER COMMUNITY AND CONTEXT

Some important insights have shaped our vision. Whilst serving all those within our parish continues to be important to us, we see that it is our pivotal location at the north end of the city-centre that most defines our ministry. Our church is a dominant feature of the city-centre landscape and many feel a strong attachment to us, even if they are not regular attenders. We are already a notable venue for concerts, lectures, play groups and other occasions which attract a wide range of people. Our highly regarded choral tradition draws many, as does our ministry of weddings and baptisms. Locals and visitors alike appreciate the oasis offered by our beautiful churchyard, and want to drop into the church to look around, or to pray and light a candle.

Another important group for us is young families, both existing and new to the area, who are looking to be part of the local community. Welcoming those who are new to the area, and to St Peter's, is a high priority for us; there are new people at St Peter's every Sunday.

"I came to a concert at St Peter's and found it so inspiring. It's also such a beautiful church and I was made so welcome."

"I was a stranger and you made me welcome."
(Matthew 25.35)



Beaumont School musicians at a lunch-time concert

As the city's visitor strategy develops, along with interest in both heritage and pilgrimage, we have realised that it is important in our vision to draw not only upon St Peter's identity as the historic town church, but to recover our identity as an ancient gateway church which itself welcomed pilgrims to the city of Alban's shrine.



Church Green



The Bishop and the Mayor of St Albans unveil new churchyard visitor information panels



James Darling Photography

"I've walked past St Peter's every day of my life and it's the church I've always dreamt I'd get married in one day."

"It's a joy to spend time in the Garden of Hope. I do not worship at St Peter's, but my daughters attended both Brownies and Guides there. When my husband died, we decided that St Peter's was a fitting resting place for his ashes so that we can easily visit, sit and contemplate."

OUR 'LISTENING' - WHAT WE HAVE HEARD AND SEEN OUR CHURCH COMMUNITY AND CONGREGATIONS

In our consultation we heard that those who are longstanding St Peter's members feel well supported by a caring community. However, we also recognise that this quality of care is becoming an increasing challenge across four Sunday congregations and as new people join. Large churches need to be organised differently to enable pastoral care and growing discipleship. We have seen that we need to develop a vision of leadership teams and to encourage every church member to use his/her gifts within the ministry of the church.

Our listening revealed that there is a growing hunger for study and prayer that will deepen faith; for more provision for our children and young people; for more opportunities to get to know others and for a real sense of core community. We have seen that it will be important in our vision to have this vibrant community of faith at the centre if we are to be effective in our outward-focused mission and other partnerships.

Whilst many of our newer members seek a sense of belonging, we also heard how many lead pressured lives and find it hard to be involved beyond Sunday worship. We want a rich community life on the one hand, yet we struggle to find those with time to give. We are not short of ideas on what we would like to see our church doing, but we are short on financial giving as well as human resources to see them come to fruition. These are challenges that the outworking of our vision will also need to address.

"My daughters and I gain so much joy from being part of the Church and we are enjoying becoming more involved."



"I so value the love and support I receive from everybody."



Mothersing Sunday service



Some members of Junior Church show off their Diamond Jubilee banner

"I would like to talk further about Living God's Love and God's will for me as my life changes shape."

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services but the same Lord. (1 Corinthians 12. 4-5; 27)

MANY 'STAKEHOLDERS'

It is clear that there are many different groups of people who in one way or another deeply value St Peter's and have a share in our life, including many from the wider community in addition to our congregations. We are a busy and complex church and

we believe God is calling us to embrace all of this. We believe that God is calling us to bea church for the city - welcoming all, celebrating life, sharing the journey.

OUR VISION

WE ARE CALLED TO BE A CHURCH FOR THE CITY -
WELCOMING ALL, CELEBRATING LIFE, SHARING THE JOURNEY

A CHURCH FOR THE CITY

As the historic town church, we seek to serve the life of our city and parish in partnership with others, and to make God's love visible. This includes support of civic occasions, community events, city-wide development, the work of local charitable organisations in line with our priorities, and our hosting of concerts and the arts.

We have faith in the city.

WELCOMING ALL

We seek to offer generous hospitality and the inclusive welcome of Christ to all who come through our doors, whether newcomers, visitors, pilgrims, shoppers, those seeking weddings and baptisms or those requesting other kinds of help.

We embrace diversity.

CELEBRATING LIFE

We seek to celebrate as sacred the life of all creation and to promote human flourishing. This includes our commitment to issues of global justice and the environment; to music, liturgy and learning which nourish the human spirit; and to the nurturing of children and young people in the faith.

We cherish the gift of life.

SHARING THE JOURNEY

We seek to be pilgrims on a journey into deeper knowledge and love of God, and to build a Christ-centred community at the core of church life. We are called through our mutual care and pastoral ministry to share in life's celebrations and sorrows, and to inspire faith today in continuity with St Peter's ancient witness.

We invite you to travel with us.



OUR PRIORITIES

From our core statement of the vision and mission to which we believe God is calling us, flow the key priorities that we have identified for St Peter's over the next five years.

1. Realistic resourcing of the varied and busy ministry that St Peter's currently struggles to sustain and which will underpin successful achievement of our other priorities and goals.
2. Developing and extending St Peter's core community in terms of discipleship, spirituality and mutual pastoral care.
3. Placing a greater emphasis on passing on the faith to children and young people and nurturing them within this.
4. Inviting those who have a connection to the church and those who come to us through our pastoral ministry / occasional offices, (weddings and baptisms etc), to belong more fully to our core community.
5. Developing our welcome facilities / resources for newcomers and visitors to encourage and inspire them on their pilgrimage and faith journey.
6. Developing key strategic partnerships: (i) to better serve our city, (ii) to develop our mission in the wider community and (iii) to address our concerns for green issues and global injustice.
7. Actively building on the musical heritage of St Peter's, through the choir, music events, concerts and related groups, so that music continues to be a strength of the church in both worship and outreach.
8. Making the presence of our worshipping community and something of our Christian values highly visible to the wider community.



The vicar leads civic Remembrance Sunday service at the city's War Memorial



The opening of St Albans' centre for the treatment of addictions, which St Peter's Church is supporting



Blessing the Farmers' Market at Harvest



Baby and Toddler groups at St Peter's



OUR PLAN OF ACTION

Specific goals and strategic tasks flow from our identification of key priorities. We cannot do everything at once, so each year we will focus on a different set of strategic tasks, or on the next stage of on-going tasks. As we annually review our planning, new tasks will emerge.

A separate "Vision for Mission and Ministry Newsletter" will be produced at regular intervals. This will detail our current goals and enable the whole church community to share in celebrating developments. The newsletter will also highlight areas where further thinking, action and prayer are needed.

Members of the ministry team, PCC, and other church office holders, will take lead responsibility for furthering each of our identified strategic tasks, but it will need all of us playing our part if we are to become fully the church that we believe God is calling us to be. If you would like to get more involved in an area of mission and ministry, or have ideas to share, please do speak to members of the PCC and Ministry Team.

Above all, please commit our vision for St Peter's and all our plans to your prayers. You may like to use the two prayers below. One is the prayer which supports the vision of our wider Diocesan family and which encourages parishes and chaplaincies across the Diocese of St Albans in "Living God's Love". The other has been specially written for St Peter's as we seek to live out God's love in our own particular context.



The Hope Stone in St Peter's churchyard inscribed with the words "God is with us, so there is hope"

Living God's Love

*Living God,
draw us deeper into your love;
Jesus our Lord,
send us to care and serve;
Holy Spirit,
make us heralds of good news.*

*Stir us, strengthen us,
teach and inspire us
to live your love
with generosity and joy,
imagination and courage;
for the sake of your world
and in the name of Jesus.*

Amen.

A PRAYER FOR ST PETER'S

*Welcoming God,
we give thanks for our church of St Peter's:
for its worship and witness in every age.*

*Give us your spirit of hospitality and joy
as we seek to serve our city and its people,
to share our rich inheritance of faith,
and to celebrate the good news of your love
in our own generation.*

*Guide us, by your Holy Spirit,
as we meet new challenges and opportunities
in our ministry and mission.*

*May we give generously of ourselves
in response to your own generous love.*

*This we ask though Jesus Christ,
the one in whose company we travel.*

Amen.

“Every church community in every time and place is called to embrace the whole mission of God and to reach out with compassion and imagination.”

“We need to remain open to the God of surprises!”

