

Keeping in Touch

The Newsletter of St Mary's Church
Portchester

No. 55 February / March 2020

2020
VISION



Cover sketch: James Hair

“2020 Vision”

During the year certain ‘bread and butter’ things we do, will obviously continue as part of the life of St Mary’s: worship, evangelism, discipleship, teaching, and outreach, but this year there will be three special areas of focus which will make this year a bit different.

Extending our facilities (Building Project Phase II). All those who lead an area of ministry in St Mary’s have expressed their frustration at the lack of space; those with bladder problems, those of a certain age, and those who drink a lot of water have expressed frustration at the lack of loos! Hiring halls in Portchester is becoming increasingly difficult. A few years ago we launched a building extension project, but this had to be put on the back boiler for various reasons: the architectural design was not pleasing and we were hit with a massive bill for a new heating system.

We feel we are now in a position to re-launch this and we hope to do so this year. In the next couple of months we hope to have appointed an architect and will produce some artist’s impressions. We also have a Steering/Advisory group in place comprised of professional people and representatives from the community.

“Portchester in Art”. Do you know that there are several famous artists buried in St Mary’s Churchyard? There are also very talented artists living in Portchester. As a way of celebrating creativity and reaching out to the community, we are inviting five local artists to hold an exhibition each taking a couple of weeks throughout the year. We also hope to use this to raise money to restore the grave of Emily Farmer (died 1905) who lived in Portchester House, and whose work is displayed in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Emily’s memorial stone lies flat behind the

New Room and broken in three parts. Money raised from the art exhibitions will go towards this.

Children and young people. Over 95% of the children and young people of Portchester have no connection with any church and no real knowledge of the Bible or the Christian faith, and this proportion will grow. At the same time, there is a record number of young people with mental health problems, taking drugs, and suffering from identity issues. It is time for St Mary's to stop drifting along and 'see who turns up' but to make a concerted and definite attempt to reach more families, children and young people. We are most grateful to the **Rev David Simpson** who has done an enormous amount of (unpaid!) work behind the scenes in bringing so many people and ideas together. There are three things we want to do:

- On Sunday 9th February, **Bethan Fogell** the newly appointed Diocesan Youth and Children's Work Advisor will be attending our 9.30 and 11.30 services to see what we do with children. We realise that not all families come every week, but could we ask that you come on that Sunday to either of the services. It would be embarrassing if Bethan came to see what we did – and we had no children!
- On Friday 28th February we are launching a **new youth group** for young teens at the Parish Hall every Friday night, to be called "CONNECT". This will be from 6.15pm – 7.30pm and for ages 10 – 13, so if you have any children or grand children in this age group, please invite them to come. Rev David will be co-ordinating this, and we will also be assisted initially by Bethan Fogell and Jenny Wymark from Scripture Union. We also have a team from St Mary's – however, most of them are of a 'certain age' and one is a member of another church! We wonder if there are some younger people out there? (perhaps even among our

newer younger people) who might like to help. Please see Rev David or Rev Ian if you are interested.

- We are also exploring the possibility of employing full-time or part time a **children's youth and families worker**, and already a profile is being prepared and the financial aspects are being worked out. We hope to make the appointment this year.

Church Finances

All these great ideas come with a price! Obviously for the building extension we will be looking at grants and other ways of capital fundraising, but the youth and everyday expenditure comes mainly from your giving and fund raising activities. By far the largest item in our expenditure is the 'Parish Share' (Payment of clergy, upkeep of Vicarages, Diocesan office and staff; central Church of England; support of weaker parishes, etc). Last year it was £97,924 for the year, this year it has gone up by £4,000 to **£101,623** – or almost £2,000 per week!

Out of interest, some of the largest churches in the Diocese are in Fareham Deanery, and the price for growth is that you have to pay more. This year, we are the 4th largest (Parish Share) church in the Deanery coming after:

Crofton (Holy Rood & St Edmunds) £177,903

Locks Heath £120,626

Fareham: Holy Trinity & St Columba £105,099

This year there will be a loss of income from several streams: fees for funerals held at the crematorium will now go entirely to the Diocese. (St Mary's makes nothing out of these funerals). Our weddings this year have reduced by 50% for some strange reason, to just 25 for the year. But even these do not make us a great deal, just £200 out of every wedding actually goes to St Mary's.

Your Treasurer and finance committee are looking at every way possible to save money, but we also need to raise more money. As

committed Christians this should come from our giving, and if every member gave (for example) £5 per week (the price of weekend newspapers or a coffee and cake each week) we would be able to afford all that we wish to do, and not rely so much on fundraising. We will be embarking on a stewardship campaign this year and more will be explained later.

Report on a couple of our services

When people ask how many attend our “Sunday service”, that’s a difficult one to answer, because St Mary’s is made up of several different worshipping congregations, and so we tend to quote how many attend the various services each *week* rather than on Sunday. (*Around 260 adults and children each week*). There is quite a bit of cross-over between them, as depending on circumstances, people may dip into the one they don’t normally go to. There is also a solid core who only attend ‘their’ service and no other. Filling in the annual returns we were pleased to see that there has been a significant rise in the numbers attending St Mary’s. This was partly through the evening services, the later 11.30am and the Friday morning service. The biggest casualty, however, has been the 9.30 Parish Eucharist which has seen a drop recently, as several who used to attend that, now prefer other services. As far as we have been able to see, at the recent Pastoral Assistants meeting, we worked out that since the new service structure began in September, we had only lost four people who have actually left the church for another. Even that is four too many, as we miss their fellowship and friendship. Of course others don’t attend so often now, and there have been the usual winter illnesses.

11.30am. The ‘Later Morning Service’ began as a monthly experiment. It is more informal and the music is led by a praise band rather than organ, with the songs being more contemporary. At first this was slow to get off the ground, with just over 30

coming for the first couple of months. However, since January the numbers have really gone up, and on two Sundays in January we reached 80 people (including 15 children). Numbers go up and down, but the tide is rising. Although a few from the 9.30 stay on, most who attend just come for that service, and we reckon we have attracted about 35/40 new people to the church, particularly families. The Sunday School at this service is normally far larger than that of the 9.30. We encourage more younger families to try it out – the later start time may suit. On Sunday 19th January, one of our newer friends, Keith Fleming-Brown prepared a meal for 64 people.

We have a couple of young guest speakers coming soon:

1st March – Lizzie Davidson, former youth worker at Bishop's Waltham and now Verger at St Anne's in the Dockyard.

22nd March – Rev Dan Greenfield, Curate at Holy Rood Church, Stubbington.

Children at the 11.30am Service

As we now have a larger and growing number of children at the 11.30am service, we are making some changes after chatting with the children themselves. The format will be nearer to that used at 'Messy Church'.

We will begin with a song, a prayer and an introduction to the subject for the day. Justin is happy to lead once a month. We will have songs and videos other weeks.

We can then ask for the songs to be played in church at the beginning of the service sometimes and at the joint 9:30/11:30 service on 5th Sunday.

There will be a creche aged group for the babies and toddlers. Amy will arrange toys and activities. Based on feedback we have agreed the following:

Rather than have groups split by age we will have various stations which children can go to, similar to messy church. Some will be more appropriate for older or younger children.

Activities to include - crafts/painting/playdough, music, drama, cooking/biscuit decorating etc, reading about the theme and make something such as a poster, quiet activities, discussion group.

The older children could be encouraged to take the lead in some of the activities/prayers/songs. They could also spend time helping the younger children explore the theme for the day through the activities.

Friday morning. The 10.00am service at the Parish Hall has also seen a significant rise in attendance, reaching almost 30 people most weeks. For many of those attending this is their 'Sunday' as they do not normally attend our Sunday services. This suits those who are away or have family most weekends. We also get quite a few people from Postern Close, some of whom have mobility issues, so this service is easier to get to. It tends to be more for an 'older' generation, but also has quite an informal and friendly atmosphere as we sit in a circle. One hymn is sung at the close from the Sunday printed hymn sheet.

If you can't manage Sundays or Fridays, how about coming on Thursday evenings to the Community School? (See under 'Discipleship and Teaching'). It isn't a full service, more a teaching event, but at least it keeps you connected with St Mary's and gives you the opportunity to learn and grow.

..... **but it's about more than numbers.** Simply getting more folk to turn up at services is not really what we're about. Rather, we want to build a Christian community offering love, friendship, acceptance, spiritual growth and maturity, and from that *'reaching out with the love of God into our local community and the world.'* (Mission Statement)

5th Sunday of the month 'Celebrations'

In order to try and keep a sense of unity, and that we are one family at St Mary's, no matter what service we attend, we are

planning on having a joint 'Celebration' on the 5th Sunday of each month (4 times a year) at 10.30am. The style will alternate between the Parish Eucharist and the Later Morning Service, but each also containing elements of both, and probably different stuff as well. We are also trying to get a special guest preacher for these services. They will be held at Portchester Community School, White Hart Lane. The first one, however, will be held in the church and it will be on **Sunday 29th March** with Rev Andrew Hargreaves (Diocesan Parish Development Officer) as our speaker. The next two will be held at the Community School:

31st May (Pentecost) Rev Wing Man Tsang from Holy Rood Church, Stubbington

29th November (Advent) Steve Lee, Miracle Street, Southampton

Help Wanted at Sunday services.

Tea & Coffee rota. We struggle to get people who will make tea and coffee after the 9.30am service. Hospitality is such an important part of our welcome, and the fellowship after the service is very important for many people. Please have a word with the Churchwardens or Parish Office if you can help. You would be on a rota and not expected to do it every week.

Notices. Several people coming up to give out a notice for their event is being discouraged, as it is lengthening the time when the service starts. Those giving the notices (Churchwardens and Deputy Wardens) will mention most special events, but if you want something mentioned, please contact the Parish Office by Thursday.

Sidespeople and Communion. Perhaps the worst and unnecessary lengthening of the 9.30 service is the time it takes to distribute Communion. Could we ask the Sidespeople especially to get people out of their pews and forming a queue in the aisle in

plenty of time, and to make sure that both sides of the altar rail are filled. Often there is a long pause while no one is coming forward, and when they do, only half the rail is filled.

Day of Prayer

Our Mission Statement declares that at St Mary's we are firstly '*A People of Prayer.*' We pray as individuals at home, we have Morning Prayer each day in the Church, we pray regularly for the persecuted church throughout the world and we pray before each meeting and service. We also have from time to time 'days of prayer'. Our next one will be on Thursday 6th February from 9.00am – 2.00pm. The day will be divided up into 30 minute sections each dealing with a particular aspect. Included in the day will be prayer for youth and children; the 11.30am service; the building extension; the Just One event in April; and for revival and renewal in our church and nation. Please join us on that day, or pray at home. See posters on notice board for details of times and prayer subjects.

Discipleship & Teaching

Our Mission Statement also says that we are "*A People learning and growing in faith together.*" To this end we have booked the training and conference room at Portchester Community School, White Hart Lane for a series of courses in learning and discipleship throughout the year. There is a leaflet available giving details of all the courses this year. We are particularly looking for someone to lead the course on 'Positive Living' a nine week series on Paul's Letter to the Philippians. This is a DVD course, so you would not need to produce lots of teaching material. The course is based on 'Discipleship Explored'. See Rev Ian if you are interested.

February Services and events

The Men's Breakfast is on **Saturday 8th February** when the guest speaker is Dr Bob Gowers a lecturer in bio-chemistry at Portsmouth University. He will be speaking on 'science and faith.' All men are welcome to this. We start at 8.00am with bacon butties and finish at 9.45am. See new poster on notice board for speakers in next few months.

Messy Church on Thursday 13th 3.30pm – 6.30pm sponsored by Churches Together in Portchester and held at the Methodist Church.

Prayers for the Persecuted on Friday 14th at 2.30pm.

Exploring Baptism. If anyone is considering having their child baptised at St Mary's this year, we invite you to attend 'Exploring Baptism' an evening at the church on Friday 7.30pm. There will be wine & nibbles or tea & coffee, and some presentations on Baptism and other alternative 'naming ceremonies.' We are starting a different approach to Baptism this year, and parents will be required to be part of the worshipping community of St Mary's first. We would also like to increase our team, and have some younger people who would be prepared to make links with some of the baptism families, as well as help in the presentation that evening. There may be another session in the autumn, but basically if you want your child baptised this year, you need to attend on 21st February.

Lent

Lent is the 40 days leading up to Easter and is traditionally a time of fasting, learning and engaging in good works in preparation for the great feast day itself.

Lent Services. Each Wednesday during Lent we hold a 30 minute service at 12.00pm at Portchester Methodist Church under the

auspices of Churches Together in Portchester. This is followed by the **Lent Lunch** at 12.30pm which is a simple meal of homemade soup, bread and cheese with donations being divided between Christian Aid and CAFOD. This year St Mary's is responsible for two Wednesdays – 26th February and 25th March.

Quiet Day. This will be held on Saturday 14th March from 9.30am – 3.30pm at St Andrews Church, Hayling Island. The day will be led by Rev Celia Jones who has recently joined our congregation, now living in Portchester having retired from ministry in Wales. Celia is an artist and expresses her faith through art and creativity, so this will be the theme of the Quiet Day. This also fits in with one of our themes for the year "Portchester in Art." Please bring your own lunch; tea and coffee will be provided. There is a sign up sheet on the notice board, and we are limiting the day to 25 people.

Bishop's Lent Appeal. Bishop Christopher writes, "I'm writing in advance to help with your planning about next year's Bishop's Lent Appeal. The focus will be on the **Environment** and, following the pattern of the last few years, I hope that the theme will enable learning, reflection and study as well as fund raising. I am also inviting suggestions for smaller local charities and causes to receive sums to contribute within the diocese and region to the care of God's creation. The principal recipient of this year's Lent Appeal will be A Rocha, and specifically their project in Ghana to educate, preserve and reinstate environmental damage that has already occurred."

The Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book 2020 is a timely resource : *Saying Yes to God* is by **Ruth Valerio**. It draws on Genesis 1 to consider how the days of creation relate to environmental, ethical and social concern. The book, usually £9.99, is presently available at 20% discount and with free

postage at www.spckpublishing.co.uk using the code SAYINGYES20.

Events and services in March

Our monthly **Theology Group** re-starts on Thursday 5th March 10.30am – 12noon at the Parish Hall. This is an opportunity for open-minded and thinking Christians to explore some different ideas, or familiar ideas from a different viewpoint. We have an interesting series of speakers and details will be announced. We are holding these eight times a year: four in the Spring and four in the Autumn.

Our next Concert will be on Friday 13th March 7.30pm. It will be an evening of feet tapping Irish traditional music with local folk group, “**The Courtiers**”. Tickets are £8 each available from the Parish Office, Tea Room or at church after the services. Please support this concert as the group are offering us the concert at a reduced rate as it is a fund-raising event.

The speaker at the **Men’s breakfast** on 14th March is Tony Gillam.

Sunday 22nd March is Mothering Sunday. The 9.30am service will be an all age service and we hope to have the uniformed organisations present.

The annual **Passover Meal** led by Rev Trevor will be on Saturday 28th March 6.30pm in the Parish Hall. Tickets will be on sale soon for this.

APCM and new PCC Members

The APCM (Annual Parochial Church Meeting) of the Parish and Church will be on Sunday 26th April at 11.15am. There are 8 vacancies to be filled for the PCC: Terry Marris, Ray Norman and Denise Simmons are up for re-election (if they wish to stand again), and this means we are looking for another 4 new PCC

members. This is a chance to be at the heart of the decision making body of the church during these exciting years. Nomination forms will be available soon. The Churchwardens are also an annual election, and we also require 3 Deanery Synod reps: Peter Bradley, Valerie Agar and Mike Baker are all up for re-election.

Electoral Roll Membership

We are inviting our newer friends to become members of St Mary's Church by joining the Electoral Roll. This currently stands at around 300. This gives you a greater say in the life of the church and also shows a degree of commitment. You may apply to be a member up until 5th April to be in time for attending and voting at the APCM. Forms are available from Denise Simmons.

Confirmation

Confirmation is a ceremony where you own personally the promises made by your parents at your Baptism. It is a great way for adults who have recently come to faith, to profess that faith publicly. In the service, the Bishop lays hands on you for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The next service will be on Easter Eve – Saturday 11th April 8.00pm at Portsmouth Cathedral. We are currently running a Christian basics course, and participation in this would qualify for Confirmation, with an additional session on the service itself. Please see Rev Ian if interested.

Calling all women

It has often been noted that while the men have their monthly breakfast, there is nothing similar for the women. Valerie Agar and one or two others are thinking of reviving a branch of the MOTHERS UNION. This would be a monthly meeting with speakers, worship, fellowship, outings and action projects. By being part of the Mother's Union (MU) means being part of a national organisation which can provide many resources. We

would be holding an open meeting in the next few weeks to present what the idea is and the see what interest there would be. We are hoping to attract younger women, so it may be an evening meeting. Oh, and by the way – you don't need to be a 'mother' to belong – all women are welcome; and what's more important in these politically correct days, you don't even have to be a woman. Men are welcome to join the MU. Come to think of it, if a woman turned up at the men's breakfast, we don't think they would be thrown out!

2019 Poppy Appeal

Recently Jean Withinshaw got a surprise when the British Legion presented her with a certificate for raising £128.57 at St Mary's Church during Remembrance Sunday. This was part of the £28,000 raised in Fareham as a whole. Jean also makes sure that all the Commonwealth War Graves have a red poppy and blue cornflower on them.

VE Day Celebration Dinner

Friday 8th May 2020, has been designated by the Government as a Bank Holiday to commemorate the 75th anniversary of VE Day, and many councils, communities and organisations will be marking this. Richard and Margaret Andrews are thinking of organising a dinner and entertainment at the church that evening, and in the next few weeks will be ascertaining what interest there might be. Richard and Margaret have arranged some very successful events in the past, and anything to do with the war, patriotic anniversaries and the armed forces usually gets Richard on board with some interesting ideas.

Nell's CD

Nell Wycherley has so far raised £900 for church funds through selling a CD of her various musical performances throughout her long career as a professional singer. Let's help her reach the

£1,000 mark by selling another 10 of these. Thank you Nell for your generous donation.

Church Pews for sale

We have been given permission to sell seven church pews which are surplus to requirement. They are currently in the Vicarage garage. They are 10 feet long and made of solid oak. We are asking £250 for each one (A website is selling similar for £395). If you are interested in buying one or more, please speak to Keith Phillips or contact the Parish Office.

New Notice Boards

You may have noticed that the external notice board is leaning over and looking a bit weather beaten. When Richard Andrews made this, he made an exact copy for such a time – so the notice board is being replaced. Special seasoned oak wood is being used as posts and a frame being built for it, the work being done by Duncan Mason. We are very grateful to Councillor Roger Price who has donated £500 from his Hampshire County Council Community budget for this.

We are also replacing the internal notice board in the church. The present one is rather unwieldy, the shelf gets too cluttered, and most importantly, it blocks the heater. The new one will be better and will allow the free flow of warm air. However, there are plans to use the bottom part of the notice board for making a table or altar so this lovely wooden craftsmanship will remain a feature of the church.

Facebook

Facebook is becoming the main means of communicating events these days, and we post regularly on four of these: St Mary's Church; Voice4Portchester; Portchester Events; St Mary's Lambs; and Castle Street residents. It would help us if you could:

- Let us know of any other Facebook pages we could use

- Share our posts with other Facebooks
- Use the comments section more to chat about events which have happened or are coming up.

“Just One”

This is a two day event being held at Portsmouth Guildhall on Saturday 4th and Sunday 5th April. J. John is a well-known evangelist who has a great gift in communicating the gospel. The events will be very inspirational and motivational with good music and inspiring life-changing stories, then J. John will present his message. We at St Mary’s are one of the sponsoring churches and the event is being supported by most churches in the greater Portsmouth area. It is a great opportunity to invite someone on the fringe of the church, or someone you have been talking to about the Christian faith. Tickets are £5 each, and why not buy one for yourself and one for a friend. Felicity Mellows husband, Mick is the co-ordinator for the event and we really want to encourage your support. Felicity has also hired a coach for the Saturday evening, so you don’t need to worry about getting there and parking. Please see Felicity for tickets.

For further information, booking on courses, purchasing tickets, or offering to help, please contact Emma Capps our Parish Administrator at the Parish Office, Assheton Court. Tel: 02392 321380; E-mail: stmaryoffice@btconnect.com