

St Mary's, Slough
November 2023

Mission Action Plan



Mary, Mother of the Church

Reviewing our situation...

Imagine that God has given us the task of planting a new church in Slough. He has given us an amazing building, a prime location, goodwill in the community, lots of local connections, a pot of money and our gifts and talents. Where do we begin? Where do we look for inspiration and advice?

Introduction

As a church seeking to relaunch after Covid, our mission planning is informed by "church planting" insights. Church planting is when a large church "plants" a fully functioning congregation in another church building. This usually occurs when the building is large and in a strategic location and the existing congregation is deemed to be too small or is struggling. It is something the Church of England actively looks to do when appropriate. We are not offering to plant nor seeking a church plant in our building, but some of the expertise gained from recent church planting in the Church of England may be helpful for us to note at this phase of our church life.

As catholic Christians we seek church planting insights in the past and the present. We take inspiration from the church's history as well as current best practice. The astonishing Cistercian expansion in the C12th is an example of successful church planting in a catholic mode.

Approach

With the Cistercian mission practice in mind, **firstly, we entrust ourselves and dedicate our endeavours to Mary, Mother of Jesus, and Mother of the Church.** In previous generations, the church has flourished under her protection and nurture. All Cistercian houses bear her name, as do we.

*Mary is our model in discipleship. We ask for her prayers.
We keep her Holy Days, honour her in our worship and renew our faith at her shrine.*

Actions.

Review our church calendar. Reintroduce The Angelus. Arrange a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham.

Then, we build on three foundational principles. We see these clearly in the Cistercian movement.

1. Prayer, as our end not our means.

*Our church should open as a place of prayer, for us and our neighbours.
We can pray daily for the renewal of ourselves and our church and the well-being of our parish,
and offer a contemplative approach to the discovery and nurture of faith.
(Archbishop Rowan Williams has written persuasively of how contemplative Christianity can be a way-in to faith for our neighbours.)*

Actions.

Produce a prayer card for people to use at home. Ensure that the church is open for prayer for some time each day. Launch a course in Christian Meditation. Arrange a parish quiet day.

2. Planning, we need to be practical and organised.

*We can professionalise key roles,
ensure that all essential aspects of church life are in place,
and aim for quality in all we do as a sign of the seriousness with which we take our faith.*

Actions

Secure a drawdown of capital from the Bowyer Trust. Employ a Cantor, a Sunday School Leader, and a Parish Administrator. Review our website and social media presence. Invite new people to be actively involved.

3. Finally, such renewal will require us to show **discipline.** The culture of our church matters as well as organisation.

*Can we commit ourselves to be regular in worship,
careful in speech, focussed on issues that really matter,
and resolute in looking to the future rather than the past?*

Actions

Arrange social events and joint activities that allow people to get to know each other better and to make friends. Manage meetings to avoid giving too much time to secondary issues.

Collect

God of mercies,
your only Son, while hanging on the cross,
appointed the Blessed Virgin Mary, his mother,
to be our mother also.
Like her, and under her loving care,
may your Church grow day by day,
rejoice in the holiness of its children,
and draw the peoples of the earth to your saving love.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.