

St Mary's, Slough

Mission Action Plan *Updated November 2024*

A prayer for the renewal of our church.

The Collect for Mary, Mother of the Church.

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.



Introduction

St Mary's Church is in the heart of Slough. It is a sacred place and a landmark, well-used by local people of all ages and from all backgrounds and faiths. As well as worship and prayer, people come to play and learn, to make friends and to celebrate their achievements. As Slough's largest public venue, we are a centre for music and the arts as well as major civic and community celebrations.

In recent years while wider community use has flourished, congregational life has declined. Following the Covid lockdown there is a need to relaunch some aspects of our church life. There is more to St Mary's than just those who gather to worship on Sunday, but at this stage in our journey our M.A.P. focusses on reviving congregational life.

"Imagine that God has given us the task of planting a new church in Slough. A church in the catholic tradition of the Church of England: inclusive, inter-cultural, inter-generational with expertise in inter-faith relations. He has given us an amazing building, a prime location, goodwill in the community, lots of local connections, a pot of money, an international and culturally diverse congregation with many gifts and talents. Where should we begin? Where do we look for inspiration and advice?"



As catholic Christians, we look for guidance in the past as well as the present. We take inspiration from the church's history as well as current best practice. For example, we have reflected on the astonishing Cistercian expansion in the C12th and the principles that undergirded that revival. We can see helpful insights for us in the current church planting movement too.

Approach

In keeping with our spirituality and tradition, firstly, we entrust ourselves and dedicate our endeavours to Mary, Mother of Jesus, and Mother of the Church. She is our mother too. In previous generations, the church has flourished under her protection and nurture. We are privileged to bear her name.

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 2023/4

Review our church calendar in include Our Lady's feast days. Introduce a seasonal antiphon into our worship. Arrange a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham.

Then, we build on four foundational principles:

prayer, community, planning and discipline.

We see these at work in past initiatives and flourishing churches of all traditions today.

1 Prayer, as an end not a means.

Revival occurs when prayer is at the centre of the church's life, when Christians 'live to pray' rather than 'pray to live.' Our church should be 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.

Actions 2023/4

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 Community. The church is Jesus's family, a company of friends, not an institution.

Warm relationships and a healthy social life are not distractions from worship and action but their foundation and goal.

Actions. 2023/24

Arrange social events, meals and joint activities to allow people to get to know each other. Take every opportunity to share food after worship. Launch a St Mary's WhatsApp group for better communication.

3 Planning, we need to be practical and systematic.

Spiritual renewal often goes hand in hand with innovation in economics and organisation.

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. Finance: the building must pay for itself through lettings and be equipped and managed to do so. Congregational stewardship will be important in paying for ministry.

Actions 2023/4

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 and be open to new patterns of volunteering which reflect contemporary lifestyles.

4 Such renewal will require us to show **discipline.**

It is easy for churches to become overly repetitive in their planning or bogged down in secondary issues. 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 2023/24

Ensure that our governance is efficient and enables change. Manage meetings to avoid giving too much time to secondary issues.