

St Matthew's

Church Oxford

A Vision for the Church Pentecost 2021



A vision document describes the passion for ministry, the gifts and the callings which are already in our Church. It does not impose a vision. Instead we pray that capturing and building on these gifts and callings will enable these ministries and our whole church to thrive. We want to understand the many ways in which all members of St Matthew's feel called to serve.

The three relationship strands

After the Away Day, it's clear that St Matthew's people are passionate about our worship, the relationships we have with each other and a deep desire to reach out to our local community. So the three-strand cord of Ecclesiastes would look like this for St Matthew's:

The Lord, our Christian community, our neighbours

A three strand cord is not easily broken Ecclesiastes 4.12

You can see how the Away Day drove our thinking below.



So our vision growing out of this is simple:

To love and worship the Lord, to love our Christian family and to love and serve our neighbours.

St Matthew's in its own words (from the Parish Profile 2019)

- St Matthew's identifies itself as a community of people seeking to know and love God, and to grow in this love and knowledge through life's experiences. We value acceptance and hospitality and welcome all, seeking to be intergenerational in our approach. We believe Christian faith is relevant to our daily lives. We seek to express it in creative ways and to encourage others on their journey with Christ. The church is involved in the community through a range of activities.

Helping ministries and callings to begin, grow and thrive

Lots of good things already happen in our day to day life in each of the three strands: God, our Christian community, our neighbours. These things will continue and we will celebrate them. People have lots of good ideas about what could happen and the future of the church. We want all this to grow.

There's a two fold process to this. **Stage One** is understanding where the Lord is leading us and thus what our priorities ought to be. **Stage Two** is enabling the people who have the heart for those priorities. Both of these are ongoing processes and we will need constantly to keep seeking the Lord to guide us, show us where we have not understood what he wants and encourage us. A good vision is organic and grows and develops in the light of what we learn. We will need to keep ensuring that people are able to feel and express a calling to ministry. We will need to recognise and celebrate new possibilities brought by new voices.

Stage One

Began at the Away Day where we prayed, worshipped, talked together and then wrote down in groups what we felt the Lord is calling us to. It continued at Prayer Meeting where those who came asked the Lord to continue to guide us. It developed as the DCC and PCC identified the areas we felt need particular attention. It will carry on through the teams (see below) and conversations between teams and the DCC, as well as Prayer Meeting. We will encourage everyone to continue praying and there will

be regular prayer points for our personal devotions. When we can, we will have another Away Day. The more time we spend praying together, the more we will hear the mind of the Lord.

Stage Two

After prayer, thought and consultation both at the Away Day and in conversations afterwards, we've identified some areas which need a focussed attention. They grew out of the Away Day and also from conversations afterwards with people in church and outside. These have been discussed and approved by the DCC and now come to the church. This doesn't mean that all the other things we do are not valuable and important kingdom work! Paul teaches us that all ministries are valued equally by the Lord (1 Cor 12.4). It just means these are areas where, for now, some concentrated prayer and action are needed. These areas are:

1. Environmental action
2. Community engagement
3. Diversify the profile of the congregation
4. Develop our children's work with local families

Teams

To make this happen, we are going to form teams for each of these four areas. Anyone can be in a team: there is no selection process! All you need is a sense that this is somewhere you can serve. It doesn't matter if you have no experience or lots. In the teams there will be different roles which will depend on the amount of time and practical action you can give. All are equally valuable.

Leader (s) (must also be prepared to do)

Do-ers: can get actively involved

Sometimers: can be called on for given projects (they may already be heavily involved elsewhere)

Pray-ers: commit to regular prayer for their team. Pray-ers meet once a month on Zoom to pray for what their team is doing.

What the teams do

Everything the teams do will be underpinned by our three-fold cord: God, our Christian community, our neighbours.



The church should offer unconditional blessings to our neighbours and by this show ourselves to be God's children (Matthew 5.45). At the same time, we have a gospel hope to share with our neighbours. The Church can't reach out if it doesn't grow. So our strategy in each team should be:

Invite in AND go out.

The teams pray, discuss and identify ways we can serve the three-fold strand in their area. Then they implement those ideas. We hope that this will be a mix of 'quick wins' that we can do immediately and longer-term goal which will take a while to build and mature. Collaboration with St Luke's is something to explore as often as possible.

The teams will report back regularly to the DCC about what they are working on. The teams will put together projects with the whole church in mind. This means they will need to talk to each other as there will always be overlap between them. It will also mean that a lot of what they do will directly impact what we all do.

The work of the teams will go into many areas: worship, evangelism, acts of service, fellowship....All of these things work together rather than as separate areas. This will allow members with specific gifts to work with other with different gifts, as the Bible tells us we should. Each team will need people whose heart is in outreach, evangelism, service

Stage 3 Review

Ongoing listening to the Lord:

All the teams will keep Tuesday prayer meeting up to date with things to pray for. This will also go in the weekly newsletter and on the website

Ongoing sharing with each other:

Regularly with the DCC and other teams and once a year in an Away Day for everyone.

Finally

All of this will take prayer, time and money. We have confidence that if God is leading our vision he will also bless us with the resources we need to deliver it. Delivering our vision will need all of us, individually and together, to pray and to seek God's guidance about how he wants us to invest our

time, talents and tithes (another unbreakable three stranded cord!).

For Prayer and Reflection

What are the gifts and skills the Lord has given you? What are you passionate about in the church's mission? How can you help?

The Away Day Input

What is the essence of St Matthew's?

- Importance of our community
- Supporting people in their day to day roles