

St Swithun's, Hither Green: Mission Action Plan, MAP 2020-2025

In this MAP we share our Vision, Values and Priorities at St Swithun's for 2020-2025

Background

Every parish now has a Mission Action Plan which helps us to be focussed with our work – this is not set in stone and can be revised if the need arises. In 2019 we issued a questionnaire and open discussion with the church to respond to key questions about who we are as a church and what our values and priorities are. We discussed this at length in July 2019 in a Vision Day as well as ongoingly in PCC meetings. We have been reflecting and praying together and have now written our ideas into this document to help take us forward for the next 5 years.

St Swithun's Context

St Swithun's is the parish church of Hither Green. Hither Green is part of Lewisham and is a very diverse area. As a parish we are relatively young with most residents aged between 18-44. The area has many community projects and includes a festival in May.

Hither Green station is at the edge of the parish and is a focus for our many commuters. Hither Green Lane and Springbank Road have shops and places to eat. Mountsfield Park is in the parish and is a green haven for many. We have two schools in the parish – Trinity Church of England Primary school (which is part of an all through school) and Brindishe Green Primary School. We have good relationships with both schools and we interact with them regularly. There are various care facilities for those with learning or mental health needs as well as care for the elderly in the parish; as a church we engage with Beechcroft residential care home.

St Swithun's is a large Victorian church. We are in a modern Catholic tradition and we are an inclusive church, seeking to be faithful to scripture in the context in which we serve. St Swithun's has a Sunday focus – many come every week on a Sunday to our parish Eucharist but few are able to engage at other times through the week. We are a young congregation with mostly younger families and people who work full time. We are a majority BAME church with many nationalities represented in our congregation.

Our ministry team comprises Mother Juliet our priest in charge (part time stipend), Mother Ann who is a priest with PTO, Rev Frances who is a deacon with PTO, Leon who is a Reader and Richard who is a Reader with PTO; we also include Izzy Warren in our ministry team who leads the children's and young people's ministry in the church. We currently have one churchwarden Diane Keen and a part time hall manager Sean Hopkins who is employed to maintain, clean and organise bookings for the hall.

We have developed our music in the past two years and now have two organists who run community music projects at the church: Phillip Bell who directs the Hither Green Community Choir and Karen Wallis who directs the junior choir with Claire Cooper and also runs the brass band. All the music groups interact with our worshipping life at church as well as being community resources.

We currently run or support other community projects: Diamond Days lunch club, Sunshine playgroup and cubs and scouts.

St Swithun's has been working on various building issues and this is ongoing; in addition we have worked on our finances and we are now more stable than in previous years – we are a growing church in terms of regular worshippers.

Our Vision

Faith, hope and love in Hither Green

We seek to live out and share our faith in Hither Green, bringing hope to those we walk alongside and loving radically all those we engage with in our parish and our church family.

Our Values

Faith – To be founded on God the Trinity encountered through Scripture, Sacrament and Spirit; to deepen our faith as we learn and worship together, to make Christ present in our parish; to be open and inclusive to everyone wherever we are on our journey of faith.

Hope – To sow seeds of God’s hope and light which we actively shine out to our community and our world; we seek God’s justice for all.

Love – To love one another; as an inclusive church we seek to love everyone with God’s radical love; as a church family we create a safe space where all can belong; together we share God’s love with our wider community and our world.

Our Priorities

To sustain and deepen our faith; to consolidate and provide new opportunities to sow seeds of hope in our diverse community by making connections and building bridges with those we serve; and to actively work on our church community being inclusive.

MAP Priority 1

We hope to deepen our faith in St Swithun’s as we learn and worship together wherever we are on our journey of faith.

Action:

- 1) As a church family which primarily gathers on a Sunday morning – find creative ways to challenge and develop faith in the sermon slot, in our worship and after the service. The Ministry Team to explore and engage with this.
- 2) To extend the reach of the midweek Bible study group by providing resources for us to use remotely – working on our website and social media to improve accessibility.
- 3) To find creative ways to nurture our prayer life outside of church – Ministry Team to explore and engage with this
- 4) To begin an enquirers’ course / beginners course alongside our confirmation and first communion classes for those curious about faith or new to faith
- 5) Develop ministry to children – exploring ways to increase our provision for 0-4 and 11 plus. We will need to work on this with Izzy and the Ministry Team to create a rota and resources. Training for diddy disciples and Godly Play to be included. Roots on the web to be bought in to enable and facilitate more leaders.
- 6) Explore the possibility of a parish pilgrimage.

MAP Priority 2

We want to sow seeds of hope to the community in which we are called to serve and to our world. We will need to find new ways of putting the church at the heart of our vibrant community by being aware of our parish so that we can make creative connections and build bridges in order to actively shine God’s love and justice out to our community and our world.

Action:

- 1) Nurture and resource our existing community groups: Sunshine playgroup, Hither Green Community Choir, junior choir and brass band, Diamond Days lunch club for older people, cubs and scouts and the coffee morning. Mother Juliet and others to find opportunities to engage with every group – continue to invite and share connections with the worshipping life of the church. Financial support as needed.
- 2) Explore some new areas – art classes especially looking at intergenerational craft opportunities, accessible well-being opportunities, a drama group (following from the panto), open door group appealing to our vulnerable adults.
- 3) Explore how we can open the church building more frequently to provide space for reflection and prayer
- 4) Continue to update our hall space: improving the kitchen and beginning the conversation about restoring the Undercroft.
- 5) Improve our outdoor spaces around the church and hall – inviting others to help us maintain the spaces. Connect with local environmental groups and issues – Friends of Mountsfield Park, watering street trees on Hither Green Lane and awareness and involvement in local cleaner air projects.
- 6) Continued awareness of the parish through local engagement and regular prayer walking so that we are aware of the needs of the parish we serve.
- 7) Ongoing focus on our financial status and maintaining the church building – working in conjunction with the Diocese in the next few years to enable debt issues to be dealt with.

MAP Priority 3

As an inclusive church we seek to make our diverse church family a safe space where all belong and feel welcome. We hope that we will share God's love with our wider community and our world.

Action:

- 1) Safeguarding – ensure that safeguarding has a central place in our church life so that we all work together to create a safe church: additional to the ongoing safeguarding work include opportunities about the importance of being a safe church in our worship and preaching.
- 2) Ability and neurodiversity – work on disabled toilet access and the loop hearing system; work with Rev Tim Goode and inclusive church about how we can support those in our congregation with autism exploring multi-sensory worship spaces and ensuring our regular Sundays are autism friendly.
- 3) Ethnicity – nurture and develop all vocations and encourage everyone to take their place in the life of the church.
Work with the children's groups to explore vocations; invite more BAME preachers to St Swithun's.
- 4) Gender – Ministry Team to explore inclusive language in our liturgical practice to enable all to flourish in their faith.
- 5) Sexuality – continue to welcome all to our church recognising that we have many diverse families and partnerships.
- 6) Age – find ways to reach all age groups in our church and to serve all age groups in our parish – explore the intergenerational art group, develop our all age worship to focus beyond the children.
- 7) Mental Health – development of our groups to include safe space to support mental health; notice and talk about everyone's mental health needs in church
- 8) Socio-economic – Continue our work with St Mungo's, ensure our groups are accessible to all, social committee to develop the shared lunch idea for those who are in need, continue to work with the foodbank to meet the needs of those who live with poverty, work with our schools to find ways to support the most needy in our parish.