

St Mary's Anglican Church North Melbourne Strategic Plan - 2017

In February 2016, the St Mary's Parish Council met for a planning day facilitated by Carole Grace, and agreed a new Mission/Vision Statement for the parish, which would form the basis for the development of a new Strategic Plan to guide the Parish Council and Clergy over the coming three to five years.

St Mary's Anglican Church, North Melbourne is an inner-city Christian community that strives to be faithful, inclusive, and sacramental.

God inspires us to worship in daily celebration; to be caring, thoughtful, and inviting.

In response to God's call, in the next three to five years we aim:

- To grow substantially in faith and numbers across all age groups
- To create an inter-generational culture that values children and adults equally
- To express our faith in active engagement within and beyond our own community
- To deploy our property and financial assets in strategic support of the long-term ministry needs of the parish
- To become more open to change as we learn to grow.

In subsequent months feedback was invited from the congregation, and the Mission/Vision Statement was agreed in its final form. Since then, Parish Council has discussed the implications of that foundational document, and engaged in brainstorming exercises to develop action points. The wider congregation was also invited to participate in the brainstorming exercise over two Sunday meeting sessions in September. Over fifty members of the congregation have therefore contributed directly to the content of this Plan.

In the brainstorming exercise, people were asked for ideas for initiatives or activities under each of the five "dot points" forming the Vision section of the Statement. These were collated into a document totalling five single spaced pages of ideas.

In developing the following plan, it has not been possible to include all the ideas thus raised, and it was never going to be possible to do so. Instead, the ideas have been collated, themes identified, and the input of the clergy has been added to develop a series of strategic directions and actions that fit the following criteria:

- they are consistent with the priorities of the Mission/Vision Statement
- they sit alongside rather than in tension with our existing core activities and values as summarised in the Statement
- they are achievable within the three to five year time frame
- we have the budget and personnel capacity to achieve them
- they have measurable outcomes

St Mary's Mission:

- To be an inner-city Christian community that is faithful, inclusive, and sacramental
- To worship in daily celebration; to be caring, thoughtful, and inviting
- To grow substantially in faith and numbers across all age groups

This strategic plan is often couched in management terms, but is not just about numbers. It is primarily about bringing people to Christ, and supporting them in a life of Christian discipleship.

Thus:

In striving to be **faithful**, we acknowledge and celebrate the ecclesial traditions that have shaped the Church through the millennia.

In striving to be **inclusive**, we seek to break down barriers of exclusion that have marred the Church's history, including exclusion based on race, gender, sexuality, age, disability, or personal religious history.

In striving to be **sacramental**, we seek to live Eucharistically, which is to say that we strive to live as a people who constantly give thanks to God.

Worship and prayer is a **daily** activity, not just for Sunday.

The support and **care** we offer is not just for ourselves, but for others as well.

We are a church for people who like to think: a **thoughtful** community, where doubt is as important as faith.

We seek to be an **inviting** church – both invitational towards others, and an intriguing community of Christ, which might be sought out as well as seeking.

Strategic Direction 1: Improving Pathways

We will improve major pathways for people to discover and access St Mary's, and will become a more visible presence in the community.

In order for St Mary's to grow in numbers, people need to be able to find us, and to discern that we are a community with which they would want to become involved. In church growth strategy terms, this is about the "front door"; about making sure that people can find it, and making sure that it is open when they do.

1.1 We will revise the parish website and social media to make them more useful tools for outreach and mission

The web and social media are amongst the key ways that people now discover a new church. In particular, if someone is new to the area and looking for a church, a good website, or an easily found presence on Facebook etc can give a parish the edge in being the "first port of call". By ensuring that our online presence is active and up to date, as well as being attractive and clearly outlining our values, we may expect to provide a pathway for new people to find us.

1.2 We will develop a strategy for engaging the St Mary's Kindergarten community and major hall users, and promoting our services and events to them

The Kindergarten community and hall users are people on our doorstep, who pass by the front door of the church every day. By ensuring that the church is an open and inviting place, and that those communities are in fact regularly invited in, we will develop a pathway for those with a pre-existing connection to the church site to develop a connection with the church community.

1.3 We will provide a monthly service in a style different to our usual style of worship

By offering a different style of worship, such as the LightUp! programme, we will provide an access point to St Mary's for those for whom the formality of our worship is a barrier, or who have special needs that cannot be met within our existing church services.

1.4 We will further improve our signage and general visibility around North Melbourne, West Melbourne and Parkville

By ensuring that our signage is clear and accurate, and advertising major events, we will attract passing trade and connect with the local community. By developing ways to be a more visible presence in the local community – through community relationships, advocacy and wider advertising – we will extend that reach. Directing people to our online presence will be as important as directly inviting them to services and events.

1.5 We will build our presence in the community as a "Church for people who think"

By making others aware that we are a church that welcomes doubt as well as faith, and that seeks to ask questions as well as offer answers, we will speak more directly to the "spiritual but not religious" element within the broader community.

Strategic Direction 2: Building a Place to Stay

We will further develop our Sunday offerings in three ways to make St Mary's a "place to stay" following initial contact.

Once people have chosen to enter the front door, we need to ensure that they find something that is compelling and worthwhile: community, activities, challenges, and prayerfulness that encourages them to look in further, and to make a commitment to Christ. Thus:

2.1 We will continue to develop and promote the 10am Sunday service as the "flagship" service for the parish

Whilst all services conducted at St Mary's are important, the Sunday 10am Sung Eucharist is by far our largest offering, and has capacity to grow by a further fifty percent within the existing building arrangement. It will remain the parish's major opportunity for growth in numbers and deepening in faith.

2.2 We will further develop the post-service hospitality to include monthly lunches, especially aimed at newer parishioners

One of the best ways to develop community and to integrate new members at 10am is to eat and drink together. By having a monthly major hospitality event, we may expect the deepening of relationships within the worshipping community. It will be necessary to broaden the group of those who provide and coordinate such hospitality in order to ensure that too heavy a load does not fall on a few. As we grow further, consideration may need to be given about moving the focus of our hospitality from the small to the large hall.

2.3 We will develop a full year programme of educational offerings at the 11.30am Sunday time-slot

Intentional Christian Education of adults through group learning is a primary discipleship tool. By developing and growing our educational offering, and utilising the high skills and knowledge base within our congregation, we have the capacity to offer a very high-level discipleship programme.

Strategic Direction 3: An Intergenerational Culture

*We will encourage an inter-generational culture
that values children and adults equally*

While some churches choose to concentrate on a particular demographic – eg. youth, families, the elderly, people of a particular ethnic grouping – we have chosen to remain a “broad church”, seeking not merely to cater for one age group, but for all. When one age group is the major focus, others can feel alienated, rejected, or simply not welcome. The best way to develop a cross-generational community is to ensure inter-generational understanding.

3.1 We will work to ensure a good spread of age groups is visible through rostered ministries at 10am

When people of different age groups can see people like themselves represented in visible ministries, both liturgical and otherwise, they are able to imagine themselves in those roles as well, and do not feel that there is a barrier to being included.

3.2 We will develop a “mentoring faith” programme, where members of the congregation will be encouraged to share their faith experiences with those who are seeking to grow in faith

We will seek to create opportunities for those of mature faith experience to share their journey with those who are just starting out. By doing so, both will be enriched.

3.3 We will provide child-friendly activities concurrently with adult-directed programmes

By providing a properly supported children’s ministry at 10am, and expanding this programme to cover the 11.30am teaching slot, as well as other adult-directed programmes, we will make it possible for those with children to participate more fully.

Strategic Direction 4: Community Engagement

*We will express our faith in active engagement
within and beyond our own community*

A healthy church engages beyond its own community of worship and care, and seeks both to bring others to Christ and to make Christ known through service. By having a three-tier engagement – with the local community, with the work of the church elsewhere in Victoria, and with the work of the church further afield, we will provide opportunities for members of St Mary's, collectively and individually, to be outward-focussed in our mission.

4.1 We will develop formal and informal links with caring and social justice agencies active in our area

UnitingCare Hotham Mission is an active social outreach agency with which we have been building links over the past year, and the parish has an established relationship with the River Nile Learning Centre. By deepening these links, and establishing others, we can strengthen our level of local community engagement.

4.2 We will commit to parish partnerships with Anglicare Victoria, Anglican Overseas Aid and ABM

St Mary's has long supported the Mission House, and more recently St Mark's Community Centre, both of which are programmes of Anglicare Victoria, through food and other deliveries. Similarly, we have been active supporters of the mission/ministry of ABM through financial and prayerful support. By maintaining and seeking to deepen these relationships we can provide opportunities for members of St Mary's to engage directly, through advocacy and action as well as through money and prayer.

4.3 We will continue our partnership with Trinity College Theological School, and be active as a training parish for the diocese

By calling and supporting people into ministry, and providing a prayerful home for many involved in theological education, we will continue to contribute to the development of the wider mission of the church.

Strategic Direction 5: Investing in the Future

*We will deploy our property and financial assets
in strategic support of the long-term ministry needs of the parish*

St Mary's is blessed with a substantial holding of property. By ensuring that properties set aside for ministry are fully utilised, and that properties set aside for income generation make the best possible return, we will provide a sound business footing in support of the ministries of the parish for the long-term, and the final phase of the major church restoration project.

5.1 We will complete the redevelopment of the Parish Hall to enable greater parish and community use by 2022

The parish hall is one of our greatest "bricks and mortar" assets, but is greatly under-developed, and consequently under-utilised. By continuing to update and perhaps also reconfigure or expand the building, we will be able to support a much wider range of community and parish programmes.

5.2 We will complete the renovation of the church rental properties by 2020 to provide a secure income stream for future ministry development

By implementing the remainder of the plan to renovate the rental properties, and then developing a comprehensive cyclical maintenance plan for them, we will complete the task of turning the properties from burden into income-producing asset.

5.3 We will ensure that the vicarage improvements are completed by 2020

By ensuring that the vicarage is fully compliant with diocesan vicarage standards, and is in a sound state throughout, we will ensure that the house remains an attractive draw-card for a prospective parish priest, and that the parish will not be required to undertake major or costly maintenance work during any period of interregnum.

5.4 During 2017 we will develop a strategy to build an additional \$100,000 capital cash reserve for emergency property maintenance by 2022

By securing a capital cash reserve, the parish will ensure that major unexpected maintenance is able to be carried out without the need for fund-raising or finance.

In order to implement the strategies outlined above,
we need:



*To become more open to
change as we learn to grow*

This will mean regular and programmed assessment and communication of our progress in each of the Strategic Directions. Thus we will:

- invite feedback from the congregation on a regular basis
- have a designated “points person” for each major initiative, and require that person to report to Parish Council in a timetabled way
- programme a Parish Council reporting session for the congregation to discuss progress on the Plan during the course of the year, and provide a report at the Annual Meeting

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