

St Stephen's Ealing

MISSION ACTION PLAN 2024 to 2030

Introduction

Over the past 15 years St Stephen's Church has experienced growth and renewal. We have planted new Sunday services, seen attendance increase and more than trebled our planned giving. A number of mid-week small groups have been established and prayer ministry is available at many Sunday services.

The worship at St Stephen's embraces a range of styles. The 9am Sunday morning communion service has a traditional feel with robed clergy, use of standard Common Worship liturgy with organ/piano and hymns. The 10.30am service is intentionally informal (no robes), is liturgy light with contemporary worship songs led by a band. Communion is held at 10.30am on the 2nd, 4th and 5th Sundays of each month and All Age Worship on the 1st Sunday. Midweek services reflect the diversity of styles with liturgical Morning Prayer (Mon – Fri) and an informal Prayer Gathering on the first Tuesday of each month. A single mid-week Communion service uses Common Worship liturgy but is held informally with an open discussion based on the Bible readings. Occasional evening celebrations are held which allow more opportunities for extended sung worship and prayer ministry.

The teaching and sermons at St Stephen's are biblically based and usually follow a theme relevant to Church life. The Church of England lectionary is used for the main seasons of the Church year. The use of Spiritual Gifts is encouraged – a prayer time before the Sunday morning services and at Prayer Gatherings allows space for people to share prophetic words and pictures that the Spirit may be saying to us. Several mid-week home groups (which we call Connect Groups) meeting in individuals' homes have been established, Alpha is run every autumn and other mid-week courses are held when appropriate. Before the pandemic we ran regular summer Holiday Clubs and, on several occasions, ran Experience Easter for classes in local schools – we are hoping to do so again in the future.

We are fortunate to be able to employ several key staff to help fulfil our mission. A full time Premises Manager lives on site and oversees bookings and maintenance of the building. A part time Communications Manager oversees office administration, a part time Children's Worker provides leadership and oversight of our children's work, and a part time Worship Pastor both leads and oversees our contemporary worship bands. We also have a post of p/t Youth Pastor which is currently vacant.

We have invested in our building, replacing the Church boiler, repairing the roof, installing a sound and data projection system and refurbished the toilet area and former choir vestry which is now a comfortable meeting room. We now have well developed plans and permissions in place to develop the reception area of the Church and provide a more obvious entrance to identify us from the neighbouring 'old' Victorian church building (which was converted to flats in the 1980s).

We are keen to make a deeper connection with the wider community and to see more people come to faith in Jesus. However, this is increasingly challenging in an area which is changing as house prices continue to rise, reducing the number of young adults and families who can afford to live near to the church. Two mid-week activities reach out to local people – Shining Stars toddler group and Teatimers for the over 60s. Pre Covid, a biennial Community Fete attempted to reach out to all parts of the Parish by providing a free event which blessed the community and provided opportunities for us to share our faith. We regularly partner with other local churches to ensure a Christian presence at events such as Pitshanger Party in the Park and Light up the Lane. We continue to use natural opportunities in church life and the wider community life for outreach such as the Ealing Half Marathon.

Less affluent areas are located at the furthest western boundaries of the Parish. Over many years the Church has attempted to make stronger connections with these areas and to run different expressions of community engagement. In 2016 we partnered with the Tate family who moved onto the Gurnell Grove estate to start a new church community. Despite the challenges of Covid, this has developed, and a thriving weekly Sunday afternoon service is now held in the Community Centre as well as a range of community support activities. The Grove Community Church (as it is now known) is actively supported financially and with practical help from St Stephen's as well as from several other churches and partners.

St Stephen's has achieved its Silver Eco Church Award and we are keen to make further progress towards Gold but know that this is likely to require significant changes to and expenditure on our buildings.

As part of the Diocese of London....

We share in the diocesan vision for every Londoner to encounter the love of God in Christ. The ambitions of this vision are to grow Confident Disciples, Compassionate Communities and enable Creative Growth.

Our strap line is ***Community growing in the love of Jesus***. We seek to achieve this in four distinct areas as identified in our Vision Statement:

1. Children and Young People
2. Discipleship
3. Outreach
4. Worship and Prayer

How are we doing at the moment?

We believe that there are a number of things that we do well and in the coming years we wish to build on them.

These include:

- inspiring worship and high-quality teaching
- having a generous heart towards others (including supporting seven core mission partners - the PCC tithes its regular income for mission support)
- being a welcoming, loving and caring community

The areas where we need to improve include:

- being more open to the work of the Holy Spirit
- better engagement with our community (including those who use our building during the week)
- developing initiatives to spread the good news of Jesus
- developing further our youth and children's work
- equipping every member for mission and ministry
- reaching out to the 'least and the lost'

Our future plans

As we welcome a new Vicar and look towards 2030, our ambition is to sustain and continue the growth of recent years. We want to see growth in numbers, passion, depth of spirituality and finances. Taking into account our desire for continued growth and the analysis above, our ambitions for the next few years are as follows:

Children and Young People

We will encourage children and young people to know Jesus and grow in their relationship with Him:

- Encourage young people to serve
- Hold more events to attract non church young people
- Develop links with schools where doors are open
- Restart running a summer Holiday Club
- Offer Parenting Courses

Discipleship

We want every member of our church to deepen their relationship with Jesus and for it to affect every aspect of their lives.

- **Equipping every member for mission and ministry**
 - Ensure that the vision of the Church is understood by all members through teaching and explanation and integrate it into everyday life so that it becomes part of our DNA
 - Help people to grow and become passionate Christians
 - Grow more leaders
 - Develop and extend the number of Connect Groups and be more intentional to enable all members to be a part of a group
- **Generosity of heart**
 - Encourage all members to reach out to the 'least and lost' through social action, fighting injustice and being involved in local mission
- **Integration of New People**
 - Further develop our procedures to ensure that new people continue to receive a warm welcome to the building but also receive appropriate follow-up to help them integrate

Outreach

We seek to follow Jesus' mandate to go and serve our community, make disciples and give others the opportunity to respond to Him in faith.

- **Engaging with our community (including Hall Users)**
 - Find appropriate ways to engage with both the wealthy and less affluent areas of the parish
 - Provide welcome information/invitation to new residents especially in areas of new build
 - Work with other 'people of peace'
 - Set up more St Stephen's owned and run initiatives
- **Evangelism**
 - Encourage and develop more opportunities to share our faith in Jesus. These may be on a large scale whole Church basis (such as a reinstated Community Fete), equipping individuals on their Frontlines, or fresh initiatives
 - Seek to work with local schools to engage with pupils and families

Worship and Prayer

We want to be people who are committed to seeking the presence of God in prayer, worship and our community life.

- **Continuing to provide inspiring worship**
 - Create more opportunities for people to come together to worship
 - Recognise our different styles of worship by celebrating and developing the distinctiveness of each of our main services
 - Ensure that all worship services have space to be open to the leading of the Spirit and to encourage the use of Spiritual Gifts where appropriate.
 - Encourage more personal testimonies in worship
 - Encourage every member to play their part in the ministry of St Stephen's
- **Continuing to ensure good quality teaching**
 - Ensure that sermon series are topical and relate to everyday life
 - Develop discipleship routes for those new to faith, or going deeper

Other

- **Pastoral Support**
 - Ensuring that all church members are provided with ongoing pastoral support either through a mid week Connect group and/or the work of the Pastoral Care Team
- **Developing our buildings**
 - Complete plans and works on the Entrance Improvement Project to enable more effective mission
 - Ensure our facilities are accessible for those with mobility or other issues that may prevent participation in services and activities.
- **Growing in activity to promote environmental awareness**
 - Seeking to achieve a gold Eco Church award, ensuring that the building is as eco-friendly as budgets/needs permit
 - Encourage individual members to become more active in pursuing environmentally friendly actions.
- **Communication**
 - Further develop our website, use of social media and other new media to support our mission
 - Develop applications to allow the sharing of information by those in church roles
- **Foundations**
 - Continue to underpin our ministry with good practices e.g. Safeguarding, Recruitment, Risk, Finance, Data Protection etc.
- **Celebrating together**
 - Provide opportunities for the church community to celebrate together

Our Vision Statement

Our Vision is

Community Growing in the love of Jesus

We aim to achieve our Vision through:

Children and Young People

We will encourage children and young people to know Jesus and grow in their relationship with Him.

- We will provide opportunities for teaching and nurture of our young people both as part of our Sunday teaching programme and also during the week
- We plan to direct additional resources towards our work with young people through our own work and in conjunction with other Christian partners

Discipleship

We want every member of our church to deepen their relationship with Jesus and affect every aspect of their lives

- We will develop a structure of mid-sized and small groups to enable all members to find a place of welcome
- We will seek to equip members to live as passionate followers of Jesus
- We will provide ongoing leadership, Biblical teaching, prayer and practical support

Outreach

We seek to follow Jesus' mandate to go and serve our community, make disciples and give others the opportunity to respond to Him in faith.

- We recognise that we need to live out our faith day by day in the places where we find ourselves
- We are committed to serving and engaging with the local community both as a church body, by ourselves and in partnership with others
- We will be intentional in finding ways to present the good news of the Gospel in ways that are accessible to those outside the Church community
- We are also committed to working with others to share the love of Christ in other parts of the world.

Worship and Prayer

We want to be people who are committed to seeking the presence of God in prayer, worship and our community life.

- We will regularly review our worship services to ensure that they facilitate a genuine encounter with God
- We will seek to develop patterns of worship and a community life that equip Church members to live in such a way that others are drawn to faith
- We want to provide a variety of worship styles including traditional and informal
- We will develop opportunities for prayer gatherings both in smaller groups and in a wider Church context
- We will offer personal prayer support for healing or any other need through the provision of a trained Prayer Ministry Team.

Our Values Statement

The Values that we strive to demonstrate in fulfilling our Vision are:

- Ensuring that **worship and prayer** are at the centre of all we do - while we are aware of our traditions we seek to be open to the fresh leading of the Holy Spirit
- Seeking guidance from the **authority of the Bible** and the **presence of the Holy Spirit**, to inform and direct our life, witness and service
- Reaching out in **mission**, sharing the love of Jesus, and providing practical support to the community that we are called to serve
- Representing and celebrating the **diversity** of our local community
- Supporting **social justice** and a concern for the **environment**
- Being **generous** with our money, our time and our gifts
- Creating an **atmosphere** that is relaxed, hospitable and respectful and in which all members and visitors feel welcome
- Caring for young and old alike so that people feel part of a **church family** that seeks unity, provides mutual support, and values each individual