

Grapevine

vision launch issue

May 2014

St Mary's Vision 2024

Introduction

This is a very exciting time in the life of our Parish.

In 1863 the Government granted the Church of England land to build a church. In 1867, construction of St Mary's was completed and the church was consecrated for worship. Over the next few decades additions were made to the original rectangle building until the final addition of the soldier's chapel following the First World War.

Other buildings on the site have come and gone, including a vicarage.

At times, over the journey of the Parish, we have been supported by other local churches including Lancefield, Romsey and Gisborne, and we have reciprocated with support for Lancefield/Romsey Parish of recent times.

In the early 1990's, extensions were made to the hall and a Community Store was built and opened in 1997.

Finally in 2007 an off-site Vicarage was purchased and the existing vicarage became available as an additional on-site Parish resource.

Over the years, St Mary's has continued to be a place where locals have gathered to worship God through Christ.

Recent Developments

As we all know Sunbury is growing at a very rapid rate and this has resulted in people moving into Sunbury and looking for a good local church in which to worship.

Over the past 10 years our average weekly attendance (Sundays and Wednesdays) has nearly doubled. In 2003/04 our total average weekly attendance was a tad over 100 compared with our current average weekly attendance of about 185.



**St Mary's
is a
community
...
Loving God,
Following
Jesus,
Sharing
God's love
with all.**

"As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. "

- John 17:21b

"Over the past 10 years our average weekly attendance has nearly doubled."

Recent Developments continued ...

Research from around the world shows that we have reached a capacity in terms of both how we fit people into our building and also in the number of people a staff team can properly care for and lead.

In addition, as we know and experience, our building (as beautiful as it is) has many limitations – including wooden and increasingly uncomfortable pews, no proper disabled access, no toilets in the church vicinity, no opportunity for hospitality (kitchen etc) at the church building and poor heating and cooling.

We all do a marvellous job to cope with these limitations and we still enjoy worshipping God together despite them.....but this lack of modern facilities is having an impact on our evangelism and outreach activities into the community. This problem won't go away and will only become more difficult for us as Sunbury continues to grow and we continue to follow God's call to reach out with the gospel to those in our community who so desperately need to hear it.

To honour God, and to follow the lead of those who were the original pioneers of our church, we need to provide an appropriate place for people to meet and worship him in the 21st Century and beyond, just as they did in the 19th Century.

Visioning work to address this issue

St Mary's began the process of ascertaining God's Vision for us for the next 10 years and beyond, early in 2013.

This process involved:-

- (a) A period of consultation which included:-
 - a period of 40 days of prayer and Bible reading;
 - a series of questions available for all parishioners to complete;
 - a series of consultations as Wardens and members of Vestry visited each Home Group;
 - an open forum for discussion and ideas led by the Wardens;
- (b) A Day of Discernment – 25 May 2013
This was held at Bullengarook and involved wardens, vestry, staff and other key leaders and was facilitated by Ken Morgan. At this gathering the information obtained from the consultations and questions was reviewed and prayerfully considered.

A Brainstorm took place to summarise the findings and the results were summarised into five groups:-

People, Mission, Building, Heart, Style

After some time of personal reflection and prayer, people then formed 5 groups around each of the categories and there were various ideas collected.

Two specific issues which became very clear were:-

1st - Our priority in God's vision for us is reaching out to people with the gospel and providing a place and space for people to grow in their faith. Any building work we feel called to undertake is only to facilitate this vision.

2nd - We obtained a very clear sense that we need to be working towards a new single building on one site rather than St Mary's being a multiple set of buildings and sites around the district.

Visioning work deferred

The visioning process effectively stopped at that point as I was unable to focus on this work following the death of my mother, just so soon after Vicki's death.

When I returned to full duties in August 2013, the Wardens and Vestry decided, given the events of 2013, to hold over consideration of the Vision until early 2014.

Some preliminary preparations for 2014

However some visioning activities continued.

Given the sense of God's call for us about a new building, a Building Committee was formed by Noel Sprague with Phill Stacy, Alan Phillips, Rod Smyrk and Peter Jones. They have met on a few occasions and undertaken some preliminary investigation work including the cost and availability of land in the area and the logistics of building on the Village Green, or part thereof.

Some discussions with Hume Council have also begun by way of obtaining some background information only.

In addition, at the suggestion of Wardens and Vestry, to assist our start in 2014 a small working group (consisting of Kim Beales, Mark Armstrong and myself) met with Ken Morgan on Saturday 9 November. We met to review the summary papers from Bullengarook and attempted to further summarise the material into a more concise document which would form the basis for a Vision Statement for the Parish for the next 10 years.

There were a couple of key outcomes from this meeting:-

1st – The five categories from Bullengarook were helpfully defined as follows:-

“Mission” and “People” are the key focus of the Vision

“Building” is a practical consideration that needs to be part of the vision by way of facilitation.

“Heart” contains the core values that underpin how St Mary's operates as a Parish and it's good to have these values highlighted as part of the vision statement, but separate to it.

“Style” is of less importance and will flow out of “Mission” and “People” activities.

2nd - With all of this in mind, a draft Vision Statement was produced.

During this meeting, Ken Morgan also stepped inside the St Mary's building for the first time and made the following comments:-

- what a beautiful building;
- he was staggered that we were getting as many people as we are to services based on the limitations of the building. He said we are going against trends and studies to be maintaining the number of weekly worshippers we have. “You must be doing something right here” he said; and
- he indicated that the current building and its set up is most likely blocking any growth in attendance and probably causing people to stay away

Visioning Work in 2014

Parish Council has met 3 times in 2014 to consider the Vision Statement, with full and robust discussion. An implementation process developed by Mark Armstrong, Don Cottell and I was also discussed, amended and endorsed.



"In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling-place for God"

Ephesians 2:21-22

The Vision being presented today is the result of much prayer; significant input and contributions from many people across the Parish and the endorsement of Parish Council. We believe this is where God is leading us as we seek to minister and serve in His name in this community of Sunbury and surrounding areas for the next 10 years and beyond.

The vision continues the original work God laid before the pioneers who built our original building back in 1867.

God's Vision for St Mary's Parish for 2024

The vision itself is on a separate page and I will walk through the key aspects of it here.

We need to respond to what God is doing and will continue to do if we are to be faithful to His call on us to reach out to others and make and grow disciples. That is what God clearly calls us to do and the next 5-10 years will see us increase our efforts with various strategies to connect with those who are calling Sunbury home.

5 Years – by the end of 2019

By the end of 2019 our vision is that we will have 5 congregations meeting regularly with an average attendance of 400.

This is double the number of people who currently regularly attend worship at St Mary's.

How will we do this?

Who are these people?

Well Sunbury is growing at a rapid rate and there are many people in the community who don't know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. God's call on us is to clearly step up our efforts (in the power of His Spirit) in reaching out to others.

Some questions we could ask are:-

How do we connect with new residents?

How do we connect with those who tick "Anglican" on their census paper?

What type of ministry is required for the increasing number of retirees in our community?

How do we connect with those youth and young adults for whom God and church has never been a topic of discussion?

What role would God have us play in the new Sunbury municipality?

These are but a few questions we need to begin answering as we take the next steps of God's call upon us.

So based on those who are connected with us already, the continued growth of Sunbury and our Godly response and action to the above questions, this Vision of having 400 people regularly attending services at St Mary's by the end of 2019, is very realistic.

But how do we do this and where will they fit?

Mission Action Teams

We will be establishing 5 Mission Action Teams – one for each of the 8.30am, 10.30am, Wednesday 10am and 7.30pm congregations, and a fifth team with a focus on families.

Each of our existing congregations is unique:-

- 8.30am serves those who prefer a more traditional style of worship;
- 10.30am serves those who prefer a less traditional style of worship;
- Wednesday 10am serves those for whom 8.30am on a Sunday is too early and those who cannot make Sunday services for other reasons, including shift workers; and
- 7.30pm serves those who prefer a younger (youth and young adults) style of worship.

In their uniqueness, each congregation has been able to minister to a specific group of people in Sunbury. Now is the time for each congregation to become more intentional in their outreach.

That's where a Mission Action Team (MAT) assists. A MAT is a small group of people from that congregation who will meet together, pray and think strategically about ways to engage with a certain sector of the community. Pathways are then established as the congregation has a go at reaching out to those people.

The MAT does the strategic thinking and then invites other members of that congregation to get involved in the strategies and actions suggested.

We have already experienced the impact of a MAT at St Mary's. Kim Beales headed up a MAT which focussed specifically on St Mary's outreach to young families. This resulted in the establishment of Music Playtime on Thursday mornings, a re-working of our Baptism Ministry and the 4pm Congregation and finally assisted in the re-configuring of our ministry to children through God's Gang on Sunday mornings, which we are trialling for this term.

You will have noticed how the MAT for Young Families invited a number of St Mary's members to become involved in various pathway activities and to assist in a variety of ways. That is the model we will continue to use with these new Teams.

The result of the work of the Young Families MAT to this stage has seen us connect with over 60 new young families and the work with them will continue. The experience of the MAT will also assist the new MAT's we will be establishing.

How Can I get Involved?

Kim Beales has already established a MAT for the 7.30pm congregation and the members of the team have been trained and are beginning their work.

The MAT for young families has now finished their initial two year work. Kim will establish a new MAT for young families which will continue the great work already done and build upon it.

I will be heading up the MAT's for the other 3 congregations. I am calling on at least 4 other people from each congregation to join me as we think strategically about what God is specifically calling the 8.30am, the 10.30am and the Wednesday 10am congregation to do.

Training will be provided for members of the MAT's by Ken Morgan. A training day has been organised for Saturday 9 August, locally.



*"Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain.
Unless the Lord guards the city, the guard keeps watch in vain."*

Psalm 127:1

Mission Action Teams.....continued

After that date it's expected each MAT will meet on a monthly basis, at a day and time suitable for the team. As strategies are developed, these will be shared with members of each congregation and invitations given more broadly for people to be involved.

Each Mission Action Team will report to the Service Leader's meetings (already established and which meet quarterly) and it's expected that implementation of some of the strategies will commence before Christmas this year.

if you are interested in registering your interest in this exciting new stage of St Mary's life by being on a Mission Action Team for one of the congregations, please fill in the form in the Pew Sheet and give it into the office over the next few weeks.

It's possible that as a result of the work of one or more of the Mission Action Teams, God may lead us to undertake a Church Plant. If so, this would require a completely different group of people to be involved. That would be an exciting outcome but we will wait on God's leading and direction in this regard.

Reconfiguration of St Mary's Building – 2014/15

As the Mission Action Teams begin their work, we will continue to experience some of the space problems we have been having over recent years. Any major building work is a long term project so we need to do something in the shorter term.

Therefore we have decided we will work towards re-configuring the existing St Mary's building to enable us to comfortably seat 150 people at a time.

By doing this, it's expected that our regular attendance will increase accordingly as we provide more comfortable space for people to enjoy worshipping God with us. It's a commonly understood fact that a church will only have a regular attendance of about 75% of its seating capacity. People don't like to come along and have to find a spare seat somewhere in a packed church. As we provide more space then more people will come more regularly.

So how do we do this?

There are no easy answers or solutions to this; however we need to do something. Geoff Klouth, Don Cottell and Katherine Burn from Parish Council have offered to be part of a working group which will explore some options. I invite 2 or 3 other members of St Mary's to join them.

The working group will:-

- consult widely with everyone (ie perhaps hold a couple of open sessions in the church to receive feedback/ideas and seek external input as required);
- draft a possible plan of ideas;
- consult specifically with certain stakeholders regarding this plan (e.g. musicians, service leaders, pa team, staff team);
- report back to Parish Council with recommendations to the July Meeting
- work towards a reconfiguring of the church by October 2014 for a trial period over Christmas/New Year to be reviewed in February 2015.

If you would like to register your interest in being involved in this working group, pleased also fill out the form in the Pew Sheet and give it into the office over the next few weeks.

10 Years – by the end of 2024

As we connect with people our space and building problems will increase and we will need to provide appropriate facilities for God's work in this area.

Our 10 Year Vision is therefore to be worshipping in a new building which may have an initial seating capacity of somewhere between 400 -500 people. The building will be multi-purposed so that it incorporates offices, meetings rooms, an auditorium and a potential café. This would enable flexibility for a range of outreach and community facilities. The building could quickly become a hub of activity for the Community of Sunbury for a variety of groups from children's activities to young parents to retirees.

The building will be multi-staged – that is so that it can be added to in later stages as needs be.

Some key features of the building will be:-

- it may or may not be built on the Village Green (we will be exploring options with the Hume Council over the next six months);
- if it's on the Village Green – it's planned that the new building have large windows which open onto the existing St Mary's building (which will remain) and the Village Green;
- if it's on a new site, the existing St Mary's building will remain to be used for various services, including weddings, funerals and possibly even some form of weekly service etc; and
- any new building be made available for the Community of Sunbury for community purposes, as we are able.

We have a current debt on the Vicarage loan of \$57,000 and we would be keen to eliminate that debt as soon as possible so we can proceed forward, without a debt.

Much work is needed with a building project. It will take time but how exciting would it be to turn the first sod for our new building as we celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the original St Mary's building in October 2017?

If you would like to register an interest in working with the Building Committee, please fill in the form in the Pew Sheet and give it into the office over the next few weeks.

On-line Presence

Technology continues to develop way beyond my capabilities and understanding. In 5-10 years technology will be very different from now. There are many questions to consider:-

How will people connect with St Mary's in 2024?

Is it possible that we will have a whole group of people who never physically set foot in St Mary's but who call St Mary's their spiritual home and who worship God with us, through technology?

How can we position ourselves to be ready to adopt new technologies to reach out to those who need to hear of Jesus' love for them?

We already have a great Website; sermons available on podcast and a Facebook page which helps us connect with people today. But what will be appropriate in a decade's time?

Steve Whittington from Parish Council will be considering these issues and will be presenting some ideas to Parish Council in November 2014, but of course this is an on-going matter.

Once again, if you would like to register an interest in working with Steve in this area, please fill out the form in the Pew Sheet and give it into the office over the next few weeks.



" God has clearly been guiding us through this process, amid the turmoil of 2013. God has great plans for us as a Parish and he is gifting us with many capable, skilled and godly people. "

Our Heart and Underlying Core Values

As we step forward boldly into the next 5-10 years, we do so with Christ as our cornerstone and God underpinning everything we do.

As Psalm 127:1 says "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain." God has been building this house of St Mary's for nearly 150 years and we continue to rely on Him as we seek to always do His will.

This is shown in the core values which underpin our life as a church:-

- To always invite the limitless power of God into all our decisions and lives through prayer;
- To always be inspired and guided by the loving and trustworthy God who reveals himself to us through the Bible;
- To always work towards being more like Christ in all we do and say;
- To actively work together in restoring people to peace with God through Christ, who brings peace and wholeness.

Contact St Mary's

7 O'Shanassy St, Sunbury
PO Box 2049
Sunbury VIC 3429

03 9744 1347

admin@stmarysanglican.org.au
www.stmarysanglican.org.au

Conclusion

Prayer has been a key and critical aspect of this process. We need to keep praying seeking God's wisdom and guiding hand as we take these next steps. So whether or not you feel called or are able to be involved in the initial phases by joining one of the working groups or Mission Action Teams, I ask you to pray regularly for us as a Parish that all we do will be in accordance with God's will and His leading.

If you would like to register an interest in joining our group of prayer intercessors who meet weekly to pray for the Parish please fill in the form in the Pew Sheet and give it into the office over the next few weeks

God has clearly been guiding us through this process, amid the turmoil of 2013.

God has great plans for us as a Parish and he is gifting us with many capable, skilled and godly people. Now is the time to move and take the next step.

Let's get on with the work He has prepared for us.

In Christ



Gavin Ward

Vicar

Jesus has commanded us to make disciples and grow people to maturity so that they serve His church and make more disciples.

As we reach out to others in Sunbury, creating mission pathways including to new residents, St Mary's will continue to grow.

We therefore need to respond to this challenge:-

St Mary's Vision 5-10 years



Our Vision is that by the end of 2019, St Mary's will have:-

- 5 congregations, with an average attendance of over 400;
- turned the first sod for our new building at our 150th Celebration; and
- re-organised the existing St Mary's building to comfortably seat 150.
- an online presence that enables anyone to access St Mary's.

Our Vision is that by the end of 2024, St Mary's will be worshipping in a new building, possibly on the Village Green which:-

- is multi-purposed;
- is multi-staged;
- initially seats 400-500 with a capacity to expand;
- preserves the existing St Mary's building and Village Green; and
- is available to Sunbury as a facility for Community use.

All this will be underpinned by our core values, which are:-

- To always invite the limitless power of God into all our decisions and lives through prayer;
- To always be inspired and guided by the loving and trustworthy God who reveals himself to us through the Bible;
- To always work towards being more like Christ in all we do and say;
- To actively work together in restoring people to peace with God through Christ, who brings peace and wholeness.

"Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened"

Matthew 7:7-8 (NRSV)

Hebrews 12:1-2 (NRSV)

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God."

Isaiah 55:10-11 (NRSV)

"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it."

Joshua 1:9 (NRSV)

"I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

God our Father,

**through the ages you have called your people to follow you,
and you have led them where they were to go.**

**As we begin these new steps on our journey with you,
may we hear when you call,**

**see when you reveal,
listen when you speak,
act when you command,
follow when you lead.**

**Though we don't know the way you will take us
help us always to trust in your goodness and mercy
to love others as you have loved us
and to hope in the promise of eternal life with you.**

**We ask these things in the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ our Lord,
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit
belongs all the glory and honour and praise.**

Amen.

Ephesians 3:20-21 (NRSV)

"Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."