Vicar’s Letter for July 2016

Dear Friends

Like most churches St Matthew’s celebrated the Queen’s 90th Birthday on 12th June with a special service with both the Deaf and Hearing churches coming together in worship. We then followed it with an indoor ‘Street Party’ – remember the rain?! – concluding with an excellent (but hard) Quiz on what we should know about the Queen (her first corgi was called Susan and she has never had one of her horses win the Epsom Derby yet). The Queen’s birthday was a chance to rejoice, reflect and celebrate with her. And the pageant and celebrations at St Paul’s and down the Mall in London reflected just that.

Next year, 2017, St Matthew’s marks its 175th anniversary! So more details to follow nearer the time. We may not match the scale, but I hope we will match the rejoicing, reflecting and celebrating. Any anniversary gives us cause to look back over the years and to reflect, remembering God’s loving constancy, to rejoice by giving thanks to God for so many rich blessings and to celebrate our faith in a living God who is present with us always.

Anniversaries are also opportunities to take stock and to look ahead to the future, and I know we at St Matthew’s will be doing just that, as we are all in the Diocese of Manchester being encouraged to embark upon Mission Action Planning – locally in our parishes and together in our deaneries.

So, what is Mission Action Planning or MAP for short? As the acronym may suggest it is about finding a way forward. It is a process designed to help each church grow – in depth, impact and numbers. In other words it is to help us refocus and live out our calling to be a faithful presence in the communities in which we live and serve.

MAP will help us:

* See where we are now but identifying our strengths, our buildings, our gifts and talents and to try to look at ourselves and our local community with fresh eyes, so that we can see and hear what is going on within and around us.
* Identify our vision, priority and goals for the future. It will help us ask and find an answer to questions such as: what is our vision for our church and our community? what would we really like to see happening in and through our church?
* Prioritise what we do. We are all stretched for time and resources, so we need to ask ‘what would God want our church to be like in five years’ time?’ We will have to look at what we do and work out what we keep and what we may have to let go.
* Plan how to put our priorities into action. We will need to ask ourselves how we will meet our goals in terms of people, time and money, in terms of what we do and when, and how we ensure we all know what is happening so we can all pray for it and be part of the process.
* Take action so that our plans and priorities don’t just stay on paper!

In one way we are doing this already and have been doing this all along, but Mission Action Planning is a more strategic approach so that all parishes take part and so that all parishes work together more to share resources so that we continue to be vibrant places for our communities and living witnesses to God’s Kingdom of love and justice for our world.

Please pray for God’s Holy Spirit to inspire and guide each one of us.

With every blessing

Kate

Update on our Children’s and Youth Worker

Following a rigorous and thorough process of advertising, shortlisting and interviewing, because we want to make sure we have the right person for St Matthew’s, it was decided not to appoint someone to this post at this point. We expect to be re-advertising in the autumn. Please continue to pray for this process and for all involved in it.

Thank you.