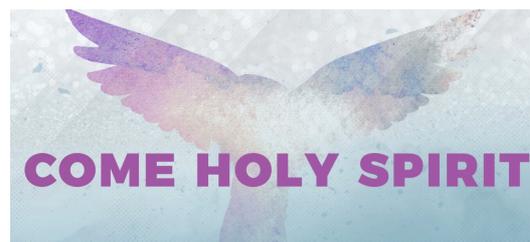


## We really need God to move

This is a decisive moment in the life of St Mary's. We have had two tough years and this year we celebrate our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Now is the time to pray, "Come Holy Spirit". We need Him now.



## Our vision is to see everyone saturated with God



EVERY PERSON,  
EVERY PLACE,  
SATURATED  
WITH GOD

God is doing something new at St Mary's. The Holy Spirit is remoulding us for mission and discipleship. We need more of the Holy Spirit to play our part in multiplying, equipping and sending disciples and ultimately revival!

The post-pandemic world gives us a gospel-moment to share Jesus; our living hope. There are many challenges facing us all and sometimes we feel like we have "little strength" (Rev 3:8). Life has become more uncomfortable and we don't know what is to come. Yet, it is also a moment of potential for revival. In uncertain and fragile times, the gifts, fruit, wisdom, purity and power of the Spirit are needed more than ever. We need God to move in the church and the world!

## We need to be honest about the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on St Mary's.

The pandemic has had a real impact on St Mary's. The effects are similar to what many churches are experiencing locally and across the UK.<sup>1</sup> It has been a tough time for us all.

- Our regular Sunday attendance at St Mary's is down 30% compared with late 2019.<sup>2</sup>
- There was a wonderful response to the Renew Gift Day (£45K – thank you!), but regular giving has been decreasing for the past year (mostly due to people moving away).
- For a variety of reasons, our volunteer and staff capacity has reduced across the church, with some ministry teams down by a third.
- Everyone has been affected in different ways, and it has been really hard.

## So, now is a good time for God to move in power!

I am passionate about seeing St Mary's thrive and love this church family! Despite the challenges, I have seen many people serving, putting others first, praying through trials, caring for others and leading them to Jesus. Alongside various trials, we have also seen blessings, such as new people coming, God providing financially and also we have seen people come to faith in Christ. God has been at work in a beautiful way in our Sunday services.

My prayer is that having been tested and stripped back, we are hungrier than ever for God to move. Not going back to how things were before, but seeking something more. I think we know we want to see a renewed church emerge from all of this; so "Come Holy Spirit."

## Share & reflect on how the past two years have impacted on you and St Mary's

<sup>1</sup> For more information on national church trends during the pandemic, you can visit the Changing Church Survey conducted in autumn 2021 by the Evangelical Alliance at <https://www.eauk.org/assets/files/downloads/Changing-Church-Autumn-2021-Research-Report.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> A number of the church family have moved out of the area or very sadly have passed away. A number have not yet returned on Sundays and more people are less regular. I have been saddened that some have chosen to detach and we have not now heard from them for some time, despite pastoral follow up.

## **What is God saying to us 'for such a time as this'?**

Last year we listened to the church through a survey, where we were hoping to listen to what God as saying through the church family. Alongside the church survey, the staff and PCC have been praying and seeking to discern what God is saying to us in this time. Here are three areas that came through in all the discerning and where we want to focus on in 2022.

### **1) Praying for a fresh move of the Holy Spirit**

Please let's make **prayer** the priority for 2022. Now is the time to get spiritually hotter. Have we been perhaps just coasting along?. It is time to humble ourselves and seek God in prayer. We also want to make more space for the Holy Spirit to move in our church and community so people will be saved, healed and set free. Last year at this time, I shared a call to both prayer and repentance from Isaiah 40:3. I would call us to this again. We all need a fresh move of God to start in our own souls.



### **2) Making disciples of Jesus in our community**

Our **passion** is to see people come to faith in Christ. We already have lots of disciple-making opportunities and need to more fully engage, particularly with ignite, Living Hope, Life Groups and Café Hope, plus everyday mission. We also want to help one another grow in confidence and leadership; to learn to seek first His kingdom and engage biblically in the issues facing our world today. We need to invest in raising our children and youth in the way, truth and life of Jesus.



### **3) Loving each other as a caring church family**

Developing a healthy church family takes commitment, time and **participation**. No church is perfect. We all struggle and need help at times. That is why friendships and real fellowship are so important. Life Groups are key to discipleship as well as deepening friendship and resilience. There is much fatigue, grief and loss as life has been so different. It will take time for recovery in people and the church as a whole. Living in such a divided and fear-filled world, a church where people love more deeply is so powerful.



## **This next season may be uncomfortable, but it will be worth it.**

There are no shortcuts when we set out to renew the church and when we pray "Come Holy Spirit" with sincerity. If we are serious about taking responsibility as individuals and together for praying for a fresh move of the Spirit, making disciples in our community and loving each other as a church family; it is clear this will call us to a higher level of commitment, sacrifice, generosity and reordering our priorities. I won't pretend that will be easy. But, I believe it will be worth it.

#### **Psalm 126**

- God can do amazing things in times of exile. Sowing in tears came before reaping in joy.

#### **Nehemiah 1:3-11**

- There needs to be a deep commitment to spiritual rebuilding.

#### **John 12:23-28**

- Jesus rejected the easy route – dying to self is the way to multiplying.

See also, Galatians 2:20, Matthew 16:24-26, Luke 9:23...

Something may need to change in us. What areas might I need to address in my life?

- **How is my relationship with God?** It's time to get know God through scripture, prayer, fasting, worshipping and reconciling. Imagine a church where we all prayed together!
- **Am I a witness for Christ?** it's time to stir that passion and focus on 3 people who don't yet know Jesus. Imagine a church where everyone shared the gospel.
- **Am I serving generously?** It's time to discover my spiritual gifts and decide to use them to serve others. Imagine a church where everyone gave generously and joyfully.
- **Am I helping to build community?** It's time to commit to wholehearted participation on Sundays and a Life Group.<sup>3</sup>
- **Am I Spirit-filled?** it is time for you to ask God to cleanse you and fill you.

It is good to reflect on what belonging to a church in a meaningful and biblical way looks like, This means everyone having life-giving spiritual disciplines. This is basic Christianity. We take responsibility for our own Christian lives and the life of St Mary's together.

## Space for open sharing, prophetic & ministry

### Get ready for our 150<sup>th</sup> year of mission and ministry at St Mary's

1. Planting a **new 5pm church community** on 30 January in church.
2. **Church Weekend Away** (21-23 October at High Leigh Conference Centre). Book your place by 28 February to get an Early Bird Discount.
3. **'Celebrate 150' outreach events** in the summer and autumn.
4. Week of nightly **'Come Holy Spirit' renewal meetings** in the Springtime.
5. We hope to appoint **new staff** - Curate and also full-time Children & Youth Minister.

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  <h2><b>Encountering God</b></h2> <p><b>Prayer Gatherings</b> – Kingdom Come &amp; Hungry<br/> <b>Explore the Word</b> – more online teaching<br/> <b>Services</b> – more space for the Holy Spirit to move on Sundays and for gifts of the Spirit to flow as part of worship time.<br/> <b>Service Leadership Teams</b> – each Sunday community having a lay leadership team.<br/> <b>Creating prayer resources</b> – daily prayer journal and new <i>Saturated with God</i> book.<br/> <b>Plant a new church community</b> – In January, plant a new congregation at 5pm on Sundays.<br/> <b>Prayer Course</b> – run this course as a church<br/> <b>Week of nightly Renewal Meetings</b> – plan during Lent for some time set aside for God.<br/> <b>Lent (2 March-13 April)</b> – prayer and fasting.</p> |  <h2><b>Sharing Jesus</b></h2> <p><b>Cafe Hope</b> – Café development – refresh vision &amp; strategy.<br/> <b>Ignite</b> – recruit Children &amp; Youth Minister. Rebuilding the whole ministry to children and young people. Also, Raising Faith Course.<br/> <b>Online mission opportunities</b><br/> <b>'Celebrate 150'</b> – focus for mission - Use 150 years celebrations as a profile for mission.<br/> <b>Street Prayer</b> – appetite for this again<br/> <b>Starting from Zero</b> - pilot and launch.<br/> <b>Alpha Course / Christian Basics</b> in September<br/> <b>Mission-Shaped Living Course</b> – run in Life Groups</p> |
|--|---|

<sup>3</sup> At this time, we fully understand some people are not able to come for health reasons, which is absolutely fine.

|   |  |
|---|--|
|  <h2 style="margin-top: 0;"><b><i>Living for the Kingdom</i></b></h2> <p><b>Living Hope</b> – recovery of outreach such as Hope Supper, building volunteer team, eco-church, Saved food, Foodbank support, new opportunities such as Cook, gardening club etc. Also, expanding global missions.</p> <p><b>Life groups</b> – training leaders, multiplying and mission culture (Mission Shaped Living).</p> <p><b>Training</b> - Wholeness, Evangelism and Safeguarding</p> <p><b>Living Hope Conference</b> in 2023</p> <p><b>Leading Together</b> - next steps of development</p> |  <h2 style="margin-top: 0;"><b><i>Loving Deeply</i></b></h2> <p><b>Pastoral care (Wholeness)</b> – renewed Pastoral Team and approach, prayer ministry, More healing services. Kintsugi Group pilot and launch or Sanctuary course (tbc)</p> <p><b>Regular socials</b> – need a team / Life Groups</p> <p><b>Church BBQ</b> in June</p> <p><b>Church Weekend in 2022</b> – Paul Harcourt and Nicola Neal speaking and Red Balloon leading children and youth ministry.</p> <p><b>Staff and volunteer care and support</b> - Team wellness is a priority. This is about loving deeply, with healthy boundaries.</p> <p><b>More testimonies</b> – people get to know one another.</p> <p><b>Operations</b> – work on better communications, new social media, using video better, induction for people into church, volunteer handbook etc.</p> |
|---|--|

### **Nothing is impossible with God**

My heart for tonight is to awaken hunger in our hearts for the Holy Spirit to move more among us and through us out into the world. I don't want us to go back to how things were. God is moving us forward into a time where we know more how much we depend on His Spirit.

I believe it will only start, when we see our total need of God and act in a way that shows we are desperate for God to move.

When we come in our weakness, dryness, weariness and need – God can move!

#### **Prophetic word from 4 October 2021 at a Times of Refreshing evening**

*"I saw a group of what I can only describe as a group of angelic beings on both sides of the church. One group above the balcony and another above the altar. They were holding what looked like large black cooking pots and they were filled with oil. It looked like they were waiting to be told when to pour the oil out as the pots tipped forwards at a slight angle."*

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit." Zechariah 4:6

### **Prayer & Worship**