

St
George
—in-the—
east

**GROWING
TOGETHER**
Our parish vision



Introduction

During Lent, we have been praying and listening to one another to discern God's vision for our parish. This process grows out of our listening in Advent, when Ali Lyon helped us reflect on our experience of the partnership with the Centre for Theology and Community and the new lay Community at its heart. The outcome was a unanimous decision to extend the partnership, excitement about the church's growth, and a desire to improve communication and shape our vision for the future *together*.

We began on the Third Sunday of Lent. Our Gospel reading challenged us to be fruitful (Luke 13.1-9). We divided into groups thinking about at different areas of church life: what we wanted to celebrate and the new fruitfulness God might be calling us to. These questions were also asked in children's church. For two more weeks, there were opportunities to feed into these groups after the Sunday Eucharist and also by email. The process continued with a Congregational Meeting and further one-to-one conversations.

This document draws all these threads together. Because it is *God's* vision which we are discerning, it links our current process into what God has done in the parish in the past (expressed prayer reprinted on the back cover) and what God is doing in the wider diocese. The Diocese of London's Capital Vision 2020 is of a Church that is "Christ-centred and outward looking... more confident in speaking and living the Gospel of Jesus Christ, more compassionate in serving communities with the love of God the Father and more creative in reaching new people and places in the power of the Spirit". As you can see, that is also the vision being discerned here.

Discerning God's vision is a never-ending task. So a document like this can only ever be a draft! Throughout the coming years we will return to it regularly, to pray about it, refine it and implement it. The order of those things is important, for "unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain" (Psalm 127).

Angus Ritchie
Easter Week 2016

WORSHIPPING: A Spirit-filled church

"We want a taste of glory land when we sing"

"We are being revitalized"

"If we are to include everyone, we will all have to put up with some of the worship making us uncomfortable"

"We want more percussion, rhythm and rousing tunes"

"Children should never be being entertained or just kept quiet - they should be engaged at all points in the service"

Our vision:

- We can only "shine with Christ's light" if we are filled with his Spirit. We want our worship to lift our hearts, to engage with the realities of our lives, and to be accessible to all kinds of people.

Our action plan:

- We are making the liturgy more accessible to all ages, with songs the children can sing and prayers they understand in the parts of the service where they are in the church with the adults.
- By starting activities for 0-3s, we are ensuring they are engaged and not just entertained, and also making the liturgy in church easier for adults to hear, with more opportunities for silence and stillness.
- We are broadening the range of music, with percussion and modern as well as traditional hymns, and would also like to develop a liturgical choir.
- We are trying to cater for different types of people, both those who are more private and those who want discussion during the service.
- We are aiming to make sermons more engaged with people's daily lives, and also explore different uses of the "sermon slot" with interviews and talks by lay people each month.

WELCOMING: A compassionate church

“As we have been welcomed, so we welcome others”

“We want wider use of the church by local groups”

“We want to give thanks for the pop-up café”

“Some people no longer come to church because it is not physically accessible”

Our vision

- Our building is “a beacon of Christ's light on the Highway”. We want to make it accessible, and for it to be a place of practical compassion serving those in greatest need.
- We also want to work with and for our neighbours in other spaces in the parish, especially our church school.

Our action plan

- We are engaging hundreds of our neighbours in conversations over the next few months, to see how the building could be more accessible and useful to them, and how we can work with and for them as a congregation.
- We are fundraising to make the building accessible to people with disabilities (including a lift, disabled toilet and sound system with hearing loop), and exploring other ways the layout of the church could be more accessible and flexible.
- We want to develop our kitchen and south-west meeting room into a place of hospitality, particularly for people who are vulnerable (including homeless people and those with mental health issues) and all who need support and fellowship (ranging from elders to parents and carers of young children).

GROWING: A Christ-centred church

"We need to be accessible and encouraging to new people who want to explore the Christian faith"

"We need different acts of worship which engage different kinds of people"

"We want to be a place where people know a deeper conversation is available"

"We think it is good for people to be able to be vulnerable with one another, but we don't want to force this"

"We need acts of worship in different places in the parish"

"We need to reconnect with those who used to worship here"

Our vision

- We want to grow together, giving one confidence to share our faith and to deepen our walk with God.
- We want to nurture, and learn from, the spirituality of our children.
- We want to keep on growing numerically, being creative in reaching new people and places in the parish.

Our action plan

- We are beginning monthly meals to which we will successively invite the whole congregation - to get to know each other better and to reflect on the Sunday Gospels. These groups will feed into the following Sunday's "sermon slot".
- We want to explore the idea of "spiritual friends" as a way of mentoring people preparing for confirmation, and also as a way of offering mutual support in an ongoing way to those in the congregation who want it.
- We want to find new ways to nurture the prayer life of our children as well as adults, both in the liturgy and in the home, and to learn from their walk with God.

- We have designed a new logo, and will be increasing publicity around the church, and putting leaflets through doors and in local shops and cafes.
- We will begin two new monthly midweek services: a more extended version of Compline (linked into our Sanctuary Course on Christian meditation) and a Choral Eucharist at St Paul's Whitechapel at the end of a school day (linked in with a new school choir which will sing sacred music, and will occasionally join us at church). We hope these will help us make new disciples.

CHALLENGING: A prophetic church

"There is a strong sense that we must act on the issue of housing, which already affects too many people in our parish."

"We need to work for justice, not just give charity. The Living Wage Campaign is a good example."

"We want to be a fair trade church. Let's also make that a personal commitment."

Our vision:

- We believe true compassion has to be prophetic, challenging injustice and not just caring for its victims.
- We want to work for justice with our neighbours of all faiths and none, on local and on global issues. In particular, we want to address the housing crisis which is driving many people out of our area.

Our action plan:

- We have been at the heart of the Shadwell Sunday Lunches with Darul Ummah and local churches, and of the Ramadan Youth Project. We are hosting the Shadwell Assembly with these groups, and from this will develop an agenda for action on issues of common concern
- We will explore whether community organising provides a good way to address some of these issues, and to develop lay leaders in our own congregation, especially on issues such as affordable housing, hospitality to refugees, and a Living Wage.
- We have also been at the heart of the campaign for a real museum of East End Women's History, and will be hosting an exhibition this summer.
- We will practice what we preach on issues of local and of global justice - as a Living Wage employer, a Fairtrade church, and an ethical energy consumer.

St George-in-the-East Prayer

Loving Father, we thank you for calling us
to be a beacon of Christ's light on the Highway.
For the sake of our neighbours and community,
inspire us to shine with the light of your welcome,
your forgiveness, your challenge
and your healing love;
in Jesus' name.
Amen.

**Now to him who is able to do
immeasurably more
than all we can ask or imagine,
according to his power
that is at work within us,
to him be glory
in the Church and in Christ Jesus
throughout all generations,
for ever and ever!
Amen.**

Ephesians 3.20-21

