

St Nicolas Earley - Our Mission Summary

Vision

We see a day when everyone in Earley is open to God, open to one another, open to the community.

Mission

We are followers of Christ who believe and seek to demonstrate that God is with and for all people.

Values

These are the values that we hold at St Nicolas and would always want to be known for.

We are God centred

If it wasn't for God we would not be here. We want the character and values of Jesus Christ to be the bedrock of who we are as a church. We have Holy Communion at the heart of our worship where everyone is welcome to receive.

We are open and friendly

We come as we are and anyone else can do the same. We are serious about our faith but don't take ourselves too seriously. We believe God loves and welcomes everyone – we try to do the same.

We are supportive

We try to support people in the good times and the bad. This support may be for a person in our congregation, in the local community or further afield.

We are seeking justice for all

Jesus had a particular connection with people who were living in poverty, outcast or marginalised. We aim to follow his example by working directly, with charities and with communities for a fairer world.

Our Parish Environment

Our parish is suburban with 11,600 people within the parish boundary. The area is part of Wokingham Borough Council and contains a large part of Lower Earley, which is a 1980's housing estate of 6,000 houses.

Wokingham Borough says it is, '*an area with one of the highest quality of life in the country*'ⁱ The 2001 census showed that over 70% of people said they were Christian.

However, trends in our area suggest an increase in the number of people from minority ethnic groups,ⁱⁱ which is increasing the diversity of world faiths.

There is also a forecast rise in the number of people over 65 and in the number of single occupancy households.ⁱⁱⁱ

The parish area is characterised by large suburban housing estates, without an obvious heart or hub, where many people go out of the parish to work leaving some, stay at home parents for example, feeling isolated.

The parish contains two primary schools, with a secondary school on the parish boundary.

With regard to the economy, Wokingham Borough is, '*A prosperous and economically vibrant area, with thriving businesses and unemployment below 1%. The Borough is home to service sector and leading high-tech companies. Around 28% of employment in the Wokingham Borough is in the business and financial services sector.*'^{iv}

Every group at St Nicolas helped to identify the following factors that we need to be aware of as we pursue our mission.

Factors from the wider culture and community (beyond our direct control)

Opportunities

- our local primary and secondary schools welcome our engagement and we have a good track record with them
- funding for social services and NHS services is being reduced in real terms year-on-year and this means that other community groups need to step up
- there are many churches and community groups in our area to work with
- there are few meeting places in our parish area where people can come together
- with an increase in ethnic minorities and other world faiths in our area, religion is more 'visible'

Threats

- issues and debates in the Church of England on sexuality and women bishops harm the image of the church
- the prominence in the media of 'new atheist' thinking and the promotion of secularism
- prejudice and/or misunderstanding about people who go to church in this increasingly secular environment
- sport and shopping on a Sunday morning and the seven day working week
- a culture in which money can be seen as the way to happiness and where the levels of stress are high

Factors from within the scope of St Nicolas (things we can influence)

Strengths

- we are generous and open people
- we are known to be a place where people feel welcome and accepted
- we have good leadership in many areas of our church
- we have a good number of young people in the congregation with good leaders
- we have Holy Communion at the heart of our worship
- we have strong and active links with local schools
- we have an active prayer life and prayer ministry
- we have unity in diversity

Weaknesses

- we need to establish worship and music that is suitable both for regular attenders and those thinking of coming to church
- human and physical resources are sometimes stretched
- lack of flexible space in the church building
- not many people in the 20-30 age range
- our lives are increasingly busy

Our Mission Priorities

We have a good idea of where we are as a church. We know our community's characteristics and have ideas about how we may achieve our mission in this place. So, what are our mission priorities? There is so much we have the ability to accomplish. What are the mission priorities that we can see and understand so that everyone at St Nicolas is encouraged and can stay close to God in mission? They are:

Being Rooted – in God through worship and prayer

Being Visible – well known in a busy world

Being Open – and easy to engage with

Being Aware – of God's presence in the whole of life

Being Sustainable – in resources and models of ministry

Being Rooted – in God through worship and prayer

Objective

To ensure that all we do at St Nicolas has its wellspring in our worship and prayer

Actions

To continue with our deep and Christ-centred worship that allows people who are already part of St Nicolas and those who are coming for the first time to experience God's goodness

Through our worship, the daily office, home groups, reflective space and personal prayer to draw closer to God and be encouraged to seek God's will for our lives and the life of St Nicolas

To incorporate prayer and quiet listening at the beginning, during and at the end of each church meeting

To offer opportunities, like the Open Door Retreat, for a group of people to be enriched in their prayer life

To offer a regular retreat for the PCC and church members

Being Visible – well known in a busy world

Objective

To raise the awareness of St Nicolas as a 'go to' place for people who are thinking about exploring faith, needing a church, seeking community

Actions

Appoint a team leader for external communications and develop a clear communications strategy that includes:

- engaging words and images that speak of our mission and values and can be used for internal and external communication
- an updated website with specific people responsible for updating content

Being Visible – well known in a busy world contd.

Actions contd.

- the use of social media where appropriate
- a review of notice boards and signage; the newsletter, Sunday Sheet, stationery and email communication
- a consistent relationship with local press and radio
- resourcing the website and local media by taking pictures and capturing good news stories and events

To look at every part of our church life and activity and ask the leaders of those areas ‘*who is this for?*’ and ‘*how can we let people know about it?*’

To ask which other organisations in Earley we can work with to raise awareness of St Nicolas

Agree a budget to fund website renewal and for annual publicity

Being Open – and easy to engage with

Objective

To ensure that we meet people where they are in ways and in places that are relevant to them

Action

To be sociable and put on regular events that are fun, engaging and relevant to the wider community

In each team at St Nicolas implement a few ‘quick wins’ from the Leading Your Church into Growth resources about being open to community

Research how people regard church/ St Nicolas and what they think church is for and could/should be about

A review of places and situations where we currently meet and/or engage with people new to St Nicolas and to allocate these areas to a relevant team *i.e. baptisms and funerals; schools work; visiting homes for the elderly*

Within existing teams to ensure that these new encounters have an agreed pathway that upholds our mission and values *i.e. baptisms – contact person is clear; reply is swift; home visit is good; preparation group meets; person baptised; relationship maintained*

Loving Sunday – continuing to make our Sunday worship engaging, open, deep and genuine and review the worship we offer through the week and through the month

The people at St Nicolas are our greatest resource in being open and engaging – people are most likely to accept the invitation to explore faith and/or church from a friend or colleague. We need to build our confidence and equip ourselves in talking about our faith and St Nicolas, wherever we find ourselves in life, and have appropriate occasions we are happy to invite new people to

Being Aware – of God’s presence in the whole of life

Objective

To encourage and equip ourselves as Christian disciples for life outside church

Action

To have continued input in sermons, home groups, young peoples groups that encourages whole life discipleship

To have teaching that deepens our understanding that our work (paid or unpaid) is given to us by God and is valuable in its own right

To have people talk in a Sunday service about This Time Tomorrow (TTT) what they’ll be doing on Monday morning and how their faith is involved in that

To promote and incorporate the work of the World Issues Group on peace, justice and care for creation in both our work as a church and as individuals.

To have seminar evenings on topical issues – faith in the workplace, parenting course, relationship courses

To combine with other churches and groups on these *topics i.e. with Brookside Surgery on living with and managing stress in life*

Being sustainable – in resources and models of ministry

Objective

To be a church on a stable footing, confident that current ministries and activities are sustainable in terms of both personnel and finances

Action

To ensure that teams are in place with leaders to run the ministries of the church. These will be teams with both an external and internal focus

To have role descriptions and responsibilities implemented for the clergy team and for team leaders

To ensure the continued good management of our financial resources

To encourage prayerful, generous planned giving from all church members. We aim to raise more than our fixed costs so that we have some extra cash to invest in new projects in line with our mission and values

To identify, train and give opportunities to all those called by God into leadership

To ensure that all ministries are sustainable in light of human and financial resources

ⁱ Fair and Equal Access to Services Strategy 2009 -2012

ⁱⁱ 2010 Ofsted for Hawkedon Primary registered a third of its pupils from Black & Ethnic Minority Groups

ⁱⁱⁱ Fair and Equal Access to Services Strategy 2009 -2012

^{iv} www.wokingham.gov.uk/business/advice/employment-areas/