

VISION 2022 update 1

‘Meeting People, Meeting God’

As promised, this November I am providing a brief update on where we are with our Vision 2022: the plans we have for developing our ministry and mission for the next year and beyond. Please take time to read this and reflect on what part you might play. We have something very precious at St Peter's and I am confident that, with God's help, we can build on this for a bright future.

Martin

Advent 2022

‘Meeting People – Meeting God’

I have chosen this title for our **Year in Pilgrimage** from **Advent 2022 to All Saints' Tide 2023**. It seems evident to me, as I said in the original document, that it is the partnerships we work with that are the key to our flourishing now, in the past and in the future. This is exemplified in the plans for Oversight Areas which, in effect, build on the work of at least 25 years in Hall Green. So, all that follows in this plan will be based around the idea that as we meet and listen to one another, as we join in partnership and friendship with others beyond our walls, and as we relate to friends online, at work and at leisure, we grow in relationship with God.

Another principle which I am affirming, because it is what you want and what helps those we work with, is that all our energy and life is built around the core things that we already do, like worship on Sundays and weekdays, and on events we organise as part of our monthly or annual cycle.

So, for example, beginning on **Advent Sunday** we find that our **Advent Carol Service** this year takes on a different flavour by being part of **Amos Trust Christmas Tour**. And, connected to Amos Trust - a small human rights organisation which works in Gaza, East Jerusalem, The West Bank, Nicaragua and India - we begin to pursue matters of **Justice and Peace** in a more intentional way.

So it is that our St Peter's **Justice and Peace Group** met for the first time on November 1st and, as a result, became more informed about the lack of provision of meals for children in the holidays and wrote to our local councillor about this. We also learned about Amos Trust, the Iran Protests – Women, Life, Freedom - and issues raised in concern locally and in partnership with Mothers' Union about Modern Slavery in the UK (see the credit card sized memos in church). Our next meeting is at the Vicarage on Tuesday 10 January.

We have also just started the reflection before the Peace at 10.00am called '**This Time Tomorrow**'. This, I feel, is a welcome way to meet and hear from people we may know well but don't really know what they do! And, of course, it links us all from Sunday to the week ahead, which is so important.

Christmas Services including the **Gift Service on 11 December and the Carol Service on 18 December** give us all an opportunity as we usually do to meet others and share our lovely welcome and beautiful building with others. (It should also be said that we are, as usual, welcoming 120 children from Hall Green Infants in the first week of Advent.)

So, as we begin 2023, we shall focus on building those relationships which are so important to us all. On **January 22, from 12noon onwards, at The Church of the Ascension** we have a **Bring and Share Lunch and the signing of the Covenant** between our **Churches Together in Hall Green**. This takes place during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity which also includes the **Exchange of Pulpits** on the morning of 15 January. In Lent, which begins on Ash Wednesday, 22 February, we are organising **Lent Study Groups, for all the churches of Hall Green**. We believe that this year is the time to focus on one particular course of study (chosen for us by The Church of the Ascension) which will bring Christians together in different locations at different times during Lent. *Please make it a priority this year, if you can, to join one of these groups which will be advertised in the New Year.*

In early 2023 we will have a **joint meeting of the PCCs** of St Peter's, St Michael's and The Ascension to give more structure and purpose to our being an **Oversight Area**.

Later in early Spring – Ramadan begins on March 22 – we should, I hope, be able to organise another **Iftar at St Peter's**. It has been such a success in the past. The last one we hosted was in May 2019.

After Easter, Jodie and I are looking at the possibility of organising a **Parish Trip to Iona** to share in the life of the **Iona Community**. The community invites groups to book for 6 day retreats: ***'Time and Space to experience life in community and explore the here and now through creative expression and shared reflection on the Iona Community concerns for inclusion, sustainability and mutual accountability'***. It is possible to book for groups of up to 15 people. More details of that very soon. We will need to get a date in the diary before Christmas. So, expressions of interest are welcome now.

As the year progresses more opportunities to meet and meet God will come to the fore. You might like, for example, to start thinking and praying about the possibility of taking part, as some local parishes are doing, in a **Retreat in Daily Life** in the autumn. You may want to start thinking creatively about **St Peter's Festival** at the end of June, or **Creationtide** in September.

Running through all this year of **Meeting People, Meeting God**, will be our existing and developing partnerships and meeting places. Here are a few of them, as a reminder:

- **Young people's groups** – BB/GB, Scouts and Guides and Hall Green Youth (we are looking for a new trustee representing St Peter's for their valuable work in mentoring young people)
- **Tots and Co** – our lovely successful parent and toddler group on Fridays
- **Day Centre** – a very valuable meeting and eating together and in the search for new volunteers
- **Choir**
- **Wednesday Ladies**
- **Bible Study Groups**
- **Healing Prayer** and a focus on healing on Sunday mornings every other month
- **Food Bank and Child Contact Centre** work at The Ascension
- Assisting with the welcome and support at **St Michael's**
- Expanding our **online** presence
- And, quite simply, building on that lovely sense of contented **presence** to each other which is so evident after worship on Sunday mornings, both at 8.30 and 10.00am
- And, finally, but perhaps centrally, continually working to enhance and develop our **worship** in all its richness and diversity including the vitally important **Praise 3** – a congregation of up to 20 children and 30 adults.

Martin Stephenson, Vicar. November 2022.