

Mission at St Mary's (APCM report) 23rd February 2017

It's been a privilege to take on responsibility over the last year and I want to give thanks to both Claire Huggard and to Hilary Warner for their past work and continued encouragement.

It's been a long evening — so you'll be pleased to hear that I'm not going to take you through all of the mission tithe accounts! But let me say just a few words...

It was Bob Pearce, the founder of World Vision who said: "**Let my heart be broken by the things that break the heart of God.**"

As we have reflected on St Mary's involvement in mission over this last season we have not just asked, "who are we going to give money to" from the tithe, but more importantly, "how can we form a new strategy that will take our mission engagement to a new level?"

I've summarised this in four key ways:

1. **Support:** people and projects locally and globally in mission
2. **Mobilise:** more people from our church community to get actively involved in mission
3. **Pray:** more effectively for the people, projects and contexts which we support
4. **Communicate:** in a variety of creative ways — so that more people are aware of the breadth and depth of mission activity and get inspired to join in

One of the areas of focus has been to re-work the mission budget into the beginnings of a new strategy. We have started to ask questions around our focus, the depth of our financial giving and also the types of engagement that we see possible — locally, nationally and internationally.

In 2017 we are going to focus on a few key areas:

- Review the church's mission structure — looking at what's best for this next season.
- Summarise all of our different mission partnerships so we can better communicate who we support, where and why — especially on the church website and in emails.
- And later this year we want to map mission engagement and participation across church members to get a better picture of where people focus their time and resources.

Putting mission at the end of a vision evening is actually a good thing. It reminds us that it's only as we go into the community that we see the opportunities for the start of mission. The Orthodox Church calls it the '*liturgy after the liturgy*' — here at Cogges we call it '*beyond the Lychgate*' — and sometimes it's only just a few feet away — it doesn't have to be thousands of miles.

And it's amazing what has been going on over the last year with your money and engagement:

- From supporting Adventure+ as they reach thousands of young people.
- To helping families in Witney be released from the situations of debt through CAP.
- Or coming alongside those who need urgent practical and emotional support through Besom.
- Standing alongside our church partners in Burundi as they have faced constant challenges.
- Walking alongside those facing persecution through Open Doors.
- Supporting Syrian refugees on our own doorstep in Witney, to Calais or Ceuta in North Africa, to Beirut where a few of us recently have had the privilege of hearing the personal story of Syrian Christian refugees at first hand. Hilary has just returned from leading a team in Beirut with the Bible Society and I will be back at the end of March to strengthen our emerging partnerships.

There is so much more that could be said about the call of God in our lives. My prayer for 2017 is that our hearts will be broken by the things that break the heart of God — and that more of us will be mobilised to pray, support get involved in mission in new and exciting ways.

Martin Thomas