

RECTOR

Introduction

The Classical composer, Bach, wrote 256 cantatas. Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring may be his most famous.

Nearly 4 centuries later, it's still one of his most popular pieces and as someone once said: **"The reason Bach's music touches your soul is because it became his soul"**

Something a lot of people don't know is that Bach's cantatas didn't originate as music, but as prayers.

Before he would start to score a sheet, Bach would scrawl **JJ- Jesu Juya-** at the top. This means **"Jesus help me"**. Then at the bottom of every composition he wrote 3 letters: **SDG** which stand for **Soli Deo Gloria-** **"to the glory of God alone"**- Bach's life was a unique series of songs to God- an original score, and so is ours: Each of us with God given talents and a unique song to sing.

This time last year, we all agreed that: **"St Mary's has Got Talent!"** and I also asked the question: **"Does St Mary's have time"** to reach others for Jesus?

I would like to begin today, by saying Thank you to all those who have answered that question, with their faithful commitment (and time) over the last year, as we have sought to be: Here and Now, for God and for Good in our community.



As
Christians
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Here for Good is our Vision and **This is our Mission Statement**

In 2015, we divided this into 3 Priorities, each referring to one aspect of our Mission Action Plan (MAP):

- Physical Presence
- Spiritual Presence
- Fruitful Partnerships

1. Physical Presence: [Going Out] **As Christians...**

What does it mean to be a Christian?

I have just been to Spring Harvest where the theme this year was "Only the Brave"- Determined Discipleship.



The Bible study each day was from the book of James, widely believed to have been written by Jesus' half-brother. It was all about how to live faithfully as a Christian, especially in the face of adversity and the culture of our world.

Trials and temptations, words and action, wisdom, finance and faith. It is through these that the substance of what it means for us to be followers of Jesus is worked out as determined Disciples, living lives for God: called to be- Physically Present, wherever we are, intentionally relating to the people of our parish and beyond.

2. **Spiritual Presence:** [Worshipping] **Together in Bermondsey, we are seeking to live for the glory of God, by following Jesus...**

There are various aspects to this calling, not least the acknowledgement of the Spiritual realm and the battle recognized in Ephesians 6. It is also about our relationship with God and how that is expressed- 3 of the most powerful expressions of our Faith are: Praise, Prayer and Preaching.

Praise:

It has been good to hear the volume increase and for our presence to be felt, both through the hourly chiming of the Clock during the day and before and during our worship in church on Sundays. These are things which speak of our confidence as well as God's presence in this place through us, His people.



One of the "Actions" relating to this part of our Mission Action Plan was to "continue to build a committed Music group at St Mary's". That this is happening, is an answer to Prayer as we continue to build on the foundations laid by the faithful over the last few years.... And:

Prayer: is something we need to keep on doing...

To this end, I would again like us take up the Archbishop of Canterbury's initiative to pray daily

"Thy Kingdom Come" for 9 days from Ascension to Pentecost (10th to 20th May). Beyond that we hope that many of you will be able to join us as we pray regularly throughout the year. The importance, impact and influence of Prayer cannot be stressed enough. As Pete Grieg, the initiator of 24/7 Prayer has said: **"doing an Alpha course without prayer is like doing Alpha without batteries"** More Prayer, More Power!



Preaching:

Not everyone is called to preach, but over the last year we have been building up a team of regular preachers. As God's church, we have a unique and privileged opportunity to proclaim **"God's word to God's world"** and we have a responsibility to do that to the best of our ability. Therefore, over the next year, I hope that we can make a real effort to take seriously the words brought to us by our preachers and that relates to the 3rd Priority of our MAP.

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JOHN 3:16

3. Fruitful Partnerships: [Building] In the reality of God's world.

In Romans 12: 2, Paul talks about “not being “conformed” to the patterns of this world, but rather being “transformed” by the renewing of our minds.

This comes as God works in us by his Spirit and Praise, Prayer + Preaching take effect in the way we live our lives. We are called to be Salt bringing flavour, and Light, casting out darkness. Through prayerful and discerning contact, we can both encourage and influence those around us.

Hopefully partnerships such as those with London City Mission, the Salmon Youth Centre, Robes and other local groups (not all church related) can help us bring transformation as we seek to be the people God wants us to be.



Conclusion

When I was a very young Christian, I used to visit a Great Aunt who had prayed for me for many years. As we sat by the fire in her house I cast my eye to wall to a calendar where I saw some words of scripture displayed.

They came from the Book of James and I was reminded of them last week:

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters,^[a] whenever you face trials of many kinds,³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.⁶ But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.⁷ That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.⁸ Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

James 1: 2-8

