

CHURCH OF ST MARY MAGDALENE

January 2023

PARISH OF LITTLE BRICKHILL IN MURSLEY DEANERY

SUMMARY MISSION ACTION PLAN

1. What is your current parish situation?

Little Brickhill is a small village of approximately 400 people in around 200 dwellings. Housing types range from council run flats and modest affordable houses to large properties.

The church occupies a central position in the village, although, being at the crown of the hill, has limited accessibility for people with mobility challenges and it has not been unusual for previously regular attenders to find that they can no longer access the building to attend services.

The church's congregation has been diminishing over the past 15 to 20 years as regular worshippers have aged and died or moved away. However, special services, such as Christmas services, Harvest and Easter are well attended.

As with all churches, the pandemic has severely impacted attendance at services and there are doubts as to whether and how long it will take for people to feel confident to return.

There are normally 2 services per month – a celebration of Holy Communion on the 2nd Sunday in the month and a Family All-age service on the 4th Sunday.

2. Three things that our church does really well

1. We are a very welcoming church and are always delighted to welcome newcomers and visitors to the village.

2. We seek a variety of ways to involve children and families in the life of the church and try to make our services as accessible as possible. Whilst being religious and spiritual at heart, a broad approach is taken and there is a strong emphasis on values in our family services.

3. The church has a high profile in the village, being the central point. A number of people in the village are keen to support the maintenance of the church in the village, even if they don't regularly attend services. A recent recruitment drive to encourage more engagement has resulted in wider interest and support, especially amongst some of the new residents. Fund raising events and working parties are usually well supported.

3. Our top three challenges.

1. Congregations for Holy Communion services are very small – between 3 and 5 people. The Family Services have been popular in the past, but as the children get older there are many conflicting activities on a Sunday and attendance is falling. Attendance at Lent courses is very low.

2. In 2020 the quinquennial inspection for our church was completed. For the first time in recent years this included architect's broad order estimates of the cost of the works needed as well as their priority. This showed us that we face a significant challenge. The work identified is expected to cost £361,500 over the next five years. Even if the work were stretched to a ten-year timescale the cost is way beyond our resources. Our challenge is to gather the resources, both human and financial, to ensure correct and lasting stewardship of the church building. Failing this, our duty, however reluctant, will be to start a discussion about its closure.

3. The Church Warden and the majority of the PCC are getting towards the age when they will be needing to step down from these responsibilities over the next few years. It is becoming increasingly urgent that new blood is found for these roles.

4. Our key priorities for the next 3-5 years are:

Meet, welcome, engage, involve, sustain contacts with more village residents, including families.

Enrol new PCC members and Church Warden(s)

Make wider use of the church building – encourage community ownership and use of the church. Water and sewerage services on the site and accessibility are key to making any real difference with this.

Look for opportunities for wider aspects of worship and spirituality in the village.

5. Our key actions for the next 3-5 years

- Drive engagement of the whole village, including new residents, to take ownership and responsibility for the church building and use it more widely. Firmly establish the tasks of the volunteer working groups to ensure that the church and churchyard are properly and sustainably taken care of and shared with more people.
- Ensure that the priorities identified in the 2020 quinquennial report are completed so that the building is in a sound physical state. Research what grants are available to support this.
- Recruitment in leadership roles within the church.
- Survey of views of parents – how can we change our offering to meet the views, needs and preferences of families and other worshippers? What would families support?

6. **Our Bold Vision**

(Is your vision big enough? This is the space to add dreams or wild ideas that you may not think possible but may trigger planning at deanery level – for example, if several parishes needed help with a resource of skills or leadership could the Deanery help? Where is God leading you?)

- Increase the numbers of people attending regularly all services. Engage families to make church attendance an important part of their family life. Contact and welcome new residents and maintain the church as the centre of the community.
- Ensure that village residents feel ownership of the church and take an active part in ensuring its future as a place of worship and the heart of the village - a central hub, maintained and cared for by its residents.
- Broaden the church's use for social, cultural and educational activities. To allow for wider community use of the church:
 - instate mains water and sewerage – install toilet and kitchen facilities;
 - improve disability access to the church – re-route access and install ramps;
 - re-purpose part of the building – replace existing pews with movable seating, repair or replace flooring.