

# Witness, mission and outreach through the years



*"Mission work was strenuously exercised in the neighbourhood by St James's, the Congregationalists and the Primitive Methodists and they all played their part in caring for the villagers." St James's maintained several almshouses for the poor in the parish.*

The Provident Club was an old society closely linked to the church which, according to the magazine of December 1884, *"encouraged thrift amongst our poorer neighbours, and helps them, though mostly at their own cost, to provide a fund for clothing and other Christmas wants. Members make weekly payments of any amount they please to the District Visitors, and the money, to the extent of some £30 or £40, is deposited*

*monthly in the Post Office Savings Bank. Each year the whole is withdrawn in December and returned to the depositors with interest of 1d. in the shilling, but no member may receive more than 3s.4d. added money. The interest and other small expenses of the club are provided for by the Savings Bank interest and also by Voluntary Subscriptions."* The amount distributed in the parish through the Provident Club reached its *"high-water mark"* of £648 in 1915.

During Lent in 1885 Revd Bligh circulated a long letter to all the working men and women in his parish *"earnestly inviting them to attend Sunday evening services to hear plain mission addresses"*.

As well as caring for the old and sick, it was often necessary to provide aid for those who were neither old nor sick. The magazine of January 1891 recorded: *"In consequence of the unusual severity of the weather which has thrown so many out of work and has caused much distress amongst the working classes, a soup kitchen has been opened in the Fitz Wygram Working Men's Coffee Room with a view to mitigating, as much as possible, the suffering which prevails"*. The soup kitchen opened in December 1890 and a subscription list was started so that the soup could be sold cheaply. It gave out 1,750 pints of soup and an equal number of substantial pieces of bread. During this bad spell of weather Revd Bligh gave money out of his own pocket to the men who had no work. He also organised some work for them and arranged for them to lay the path running from the 'kissing gates' by Burton's Road railway bridge, alongside the railway line and coming out opposite Fulwell Station.

Beyond the needs of the parish itself, St James's contributed generously to the work of the church through the Home and Foreign Missions and other charities. Advent Sunday became its Mission Sunday, when this work was celebrated and collections taken to support it. The first Work Meeting was held at the vicarage on 31st October 1884 and they continued throughout the winter months. These Work Meetings were in connection with the Ladies' Association of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts.

The NSPCC was keenly supported as was the Waifs and Strays' Society. A branch of the British and Foreign Bible Society was formed in 1896. St James's held a sale of work to aid both the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and the Church Missionary Society. There were also regular missionary working parties and monthly services of intercession. Offertories were devoted to the SPG on Advent Sunday in 1902, to the Colonial and Continental Church Society on Ash Wednesday in 1909, and to the Mission to Seamen in May 1909, to quote just a few examples. Special appeals, such as that for the Indian Famine Relief Fund in 1897, were also generously supported. There was also a Teddington Hospital Fund and regular sums were contributed to help what must have been the fulfilment of a long felt parish need.



The lectern

The Missionary Working Party was reorganised and renamed the Parochial Working Party in December 1923. Its object was to help the work of the church overseas and to assist the parish in raising money for projects like building a new parish hall. Revd Harvey wanted to create a greater and wider interest in the work of the church overseas. The March 1924 magazine reported: *"At present, interest in Foreign Missions is confined to a mere handful of parishioners. All who call themselves Christians are bound by Christ's command to His would-be disciples to go and preach the Gospel to every creature. If they are hindering the carrying out of this command by lack of sympathy, prayers or financial help, they are guilty of neglect of a solemn duty."*

Revd Harvey explained that the church tried to give as much help as possible to three Societies, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the Church Missionary Society and the Colonial and Continental Church Society. In order to arouse interest he arranged some missionary lantern lectures during Lent. A Missionary School was held for a week in 1926 with lectures on the work of the church overseas and was described as *"an educational adventure"*. The following year the Missionary Association created a new missionary library in the baptistry and every month included information about what it was doing in the news section of the magazine.

In 1953 there was particular concern felt by St James's for the needs of the parish's older residents and, following the deliberations of a church commission on 'The Wider Church', a meeting was called in the parish hall to which representatives of interested associations were invited. As a result, the Hampton Hill Old Peoples' Welfare Committee was formed. This proved of great benefit in augmenting the work of the already existing 'Darby and Joan' club, and the now lapsed 'Three Rs Club', which latter used to meet until 1962 in the Fitz Wygram Club Room.



Wayside

The Wayside Monday Centre was set up in 1975 to be a *"listening post for the anxious, lonely and those under stress"*. It consisted of a team of helpers who welcomed those who were experiencing any of the many and varied difficulties of modern living. These helpers, both men and women, aimed to provide a form of lay one-to-one counselling which supported and encouraged but did not advise. By this means people were able to consider their problems and difficulties in greater depth yet still come to personal decisions of their own.

In the 1980s, through contacts with USPG ('U' stands for 'United') made by Hannah Stanton, a prominent member of the congregation, St James's became associated with St Luke's Mission Hospital, Milo, South West Tanzania, a long-standing link that continues today.

In 1988, following deliberations about the use made of parishioners' financial contributions to the church, there was consideration of how best to use people's contributions of time and skills. The Spire reported: *"Time and abilities or 'talents' also belong to, and come from, God. Some time and skills, like the money we return for 'God's use', could be used directly in and around 'church'. Fellowship groups, church services and private prayer times are obvious. Any reader of 'The Spire' will be aware of the need for gardening, DIY, cleaning, flower arranging and catering skills within the church building itself and the properties owned by the church. It may be that your skills and preferences are less directed churchwards and more to your fellow human beings. There is a great need for a Youth Group in our church. The Scout and Guide Groups can use all sorts of time and skills. Community Care and the Old People's Welfare Committee will put offers of visits and car driving to good use. Action is already being taken on forming new discussion groups to increase our understanding of practical Christianity."*

In April 1997 the nationwide Jubilee 2000 campaign was launched. It proposed a one-off cancellation of the backlog of unpayable debt by the world's poorest countries on a case by case basis by the year 2000. *"What better way to commemorate the arrival of the new millennium than by exercising the Old Testament principle of Jubilee."* Parishioners at St James took part in many actions on behalf of the campaign. Campaigning on the unfinished business of Jubilee



2000 continued with the launch of the Jubilee Debt Campaign (JDC) on 24 March 2001. An international day of action, World Debt Day, was held on 16 May 2004.

Then in 1998 our parish took an active interest in ALMA, a new partnership link between the Diocese of London and the Anglican Church in Angola and Mozambique. As well as supporting the general aims of ALMA and its Lent Appeals, St James's has helped churches in Teddington with their link parish of Santa Maria Madelena in Pemba (on the north-east coast of Mozambique).

The £2000 in 2000 appeal was launched in 1999 to welcome the new millennium by raising at least £2000 for a Christian Aid Health Education project in the Diocese of South West Tanganyika (in a district neighbouring the area served by St Luke's Hospital in Milo). The project was to provide clean water, sanitation and basic health facilities where very few existed at the time. Thanks to various fund raising events and some generous donations the appeal raised £10,000. This allowed the parish to give £9,000 to the Christian Aid project and £1,000 to St Luke's Hospital in Milo to build a hostel for visiting relatives.

St James's has never left its charitable giving to chance. Every year it continues to set aside several thousands of pounds in its budget for charitable grants, both in this country and abroad, particularly in Africa.

In September 2000 the United Nations General Assembly produced a set of Millennium Development Goals, with the year 2015 as the target for fulfilment. One goal was to halve the number of people living in extreme poverty (less than \$1 a day) - about one quarter of the world's 6 billion plus population. All charities and organisations concerned with world development were determined to hold world governments to these goals. They were a benchmark against which national and international decisions can be rated.



A wide coalition of faith groups, charities, trade unions, campaigning groups and celebrities started MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY in 2004. The coalition included the Church of England alongside all the other major denominations, Traidcraft and The Fairtrade Foundation. MakePovertyHistory aimed to be the most powerful coalition ever against world poverty, calling for urgent and meaningful policy change on three critical and inextricably linked areas: trade, debt

and aid. It had been said that dropping the debt was impossible; people would not understand the concept and governments would not entertain the idea. But campaigners forced it onto the political agenda and the UK was at the forefront; \$88 billion of debt was cancelled. However the developing world still needed the church's voice to help bring an end to debt.

### ***Mission Action Plans***

Mission Action Plans, or 'MAPs', have been part of the life of the Diocese of London, and this church as part of it, since 1993. They are, quite simply, a local church's way of not simply carrying on as it always has, but rather setting out some priorities and the actions that result from them. At the core of a MAP is mission. Mission comes from a word that means 'to send'. Jesus was sent into our world, and then sent out his disciples. Today we are part of the company of disciples sent out into the world with the news of the love of God in Jesus. A MAP expresses something of how a local church views this mission. Mission Action Planning is a tried and tested way of putting flesh on to what we say of ourselves as a church and parish, exploring our strengths and the challenges that face us, and putting together a realistic plan for the way forward that God is calling us to. It is integral to strategic planning and delivery of effective mission and ministry.

The Mission Action Plan is used to focus on the priorities that we have set for ourselves - priorities for the future which build on the past, but that also contain an openness to developing further. It is a plan which seeks to move a church community forward and not simply maintain its current activities, however good they may be. The vision behind the proposals is rooted in this concern, and is in the spirit of the direction of St James's Church over a number of years since 1993. Behind any vision for a church must be a vision of God. Our Mission Action Plan should reflect an understanding of God. God does not ask us to remain the same, but to step out on a journey with him that involves new discoveries and endless possibilities.

Read all our previous [Mission Action Plans](#).

The above information covers the period from when any records could be found until November 2016. This was when Revd Derek Winterburn became St James's tenth vicar and from this time onwards any new information can be found on the main site.