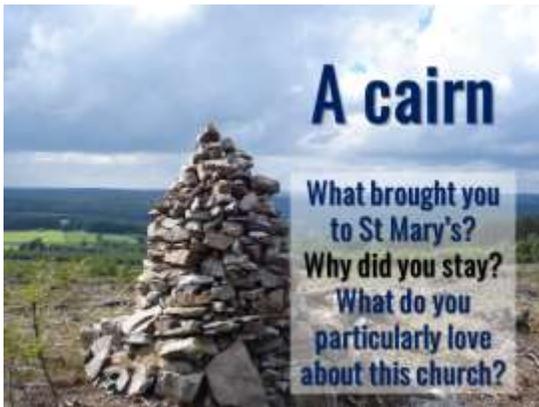


## Vision Day Report

On 16 November 2019 there was a vision morning at the Wilson Centre. 26 people came. The day started with breakfast and Morning Prayer.

### 1. Reviewing How Far We Have Come



We each took a stone and created a cairn to represent our thankfulness for all God has done in our lives through the ministry of Saint Mary's. This was a visual reminder that Saint Mary's means a lot to us all.

We then noted some stats that show how Saint Mary's Sunday attendance has grown numerically by 32% since 2010.

When we add the growth of Sunday children's work, the much-appreciated ministries of Community Lunch, Little Ted, Drop-In, Tuesday at 10, Home Groups, Messy Church, Godzone and school assemblies etc. we have much to be thankful for.

### 2. Identifying What and Who We Are

We then had a Bible-based reflection comparing the inspiring passage about the earliest church from Acts 2.42-47 with this parody of the same passage.

*Occasionally, they spent time listening to the apostles' teaching. When they could, they met for fellowship, breaking bread and prayer. Awe came upon precious few of them. To be honest, there was a notable absence of signs and nothing wonderful ever happened at all. All who believed were separated into groups and kept themselves to themselves. They hoarded their possessions, showing total indifference to anyone in need. Day by day, they went about their lives as individuals, perhaps meeting weekly or fortnightly if they got around to it. They broke bread at home alone and ate their food with cold and empty hearts, giving token thanks to God. No one really noticed them. And little by little their numbers dwindled for few, if any, were being saved.*

People got into groups to discuss the questions below before reporting back.

**How are we doing?**

- What does Acts 2.42-47 tell us about what Christian community can or should look like?
- Which bits reflect where we are now?
- Which bits reflect where we think God would like us to be?



We saw that Christian community should look generous, joyful, inspirational, dedicated, prayerful, considerate, sacrificial, biblical, a daily phenomenon that is bigger than the building, with a notable emphasis on fellowship and food.

Saint Mary's is not perfect, but it does aspire to be more like what we read in Acts. People are thankful for there being no barriers, for faithful service, for generosity (e.g. steady increase in Parish Share), for regular gatherings in midweek, not just Sunday, for hard work and humility, for some increase in numbers, for a family feel to the church and that there are opportunities for growth through occasional attenders and Messy Church.

We are thankful for answered prayer (e.g. when Little Ted attendance dropped and then dramatically increased again), for the growth of children's ministry, for more villagers in church, for greater involvement in schools, for a higher visibility of the various ministries and for the impact wider afield from Saint Mary's (e.g. through charitable giving and people living outside the village living out their faith in their own communities).

### 3. Exploring Where God Is Leading Us

After a reflection, the following words were shared to indicate our aspirations and priorities:



A younger church, community, school, more contemporary music, purpose, outreach to all, spiritual growth, prayer, communication, peace, openness and supporting Christians in other churches.

We listed all the places where we meet up with people who are not regular churchgoers. Where are our spheres of influence? School, neighbours, work, gym, cafes and restaurants, the hairdresser, walking groups and book clubs etc.

We listed all the obstacles we think inhibit people from considering faith in Christ or trying church. Or what is it about Saint Mary's that might hinder us from inviting a friend or neighbour?

Answers included: people's lifestyle not fitting with church, our and others' busyness, inhibition, technology, the formality of church, lack of opportunity, lack of prayer, old age. All these things might be explored as barriers to overcome. Perhaps we feel the need for training for growth in confidence in sharing our faith naturally.

### Conclusions

We ended the morning with some tentative conclusions from our time together. What would like Saint Mary's to look like in 5 years' time? The following objectives and desires were suggested. PCC will discuss all this over the next 4 months.

- A voice for everybody
- More roles for lay people
- Spiritual growth
- Prayer
- Stay vibrant
- Space for the Holy Spirit to work
- 10 new families in church
- Use the Wilson Centre for kids' space
- Transition to make all services more open to the children
- More for older children and youth
- Modernisation in musical accompaniment
- Outreach for all
- Becoming better at listening
- Dealing with difference/reconciliation
- An ashes wall in the garden of remembrance