



## Message from Bishop Paul to the congregation of St Mary's Nottingham

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> October

Dear Friends at St Mary's,

Back in March I had the opportunity with Archdeacon Sarah to join you at St Mary's to explore a proposal to establish two new parishes out of the present City Parish: St Mary's Nottingham, and St Peter's with All Saints' Nottingham. This had been developed with the support of the Revd Christopher Harrison and in consultation with the churchwardens and PCC. I know that a good number of the present congregation of St Mary's were able to attend the evening and there was a fruitful and wide-ranging discussion around the proposal. Since then things have progressed well and we are now at a stage when it may be helpful to outline how things will proceed towards the formation of the new benefices.

First, a little more background for those who were not able to attend the evening in March or may even have joined the congregation since that time. The intention behind the proposed formation of two new parishes has been shaped by a commitment to ensure that each church is well-placed to fulfil its distinct mission within the heart of our city, looking to the future. Each church has a rich spiritual heritage and history for which we are deeply thankful, and on this we seek to build prayerfully and creatively to the glory of God.

The proposed formation of St Mary's as a single parish benefice will enable the new PCC to work with me and a new incumbent to develop an ambitious plan to grow and extend the ministry of the church. This is well-aligned with the strategic plans for the diocese and the aspirations of the wider Church of England.

We anticipate that the Pastoral Scheme creating the new parishes should come into effect in the New Year, subject to the approval of the Church Commissioners. The Revd Christopher Harrison is named in the Measure as Rector designate for the Benefice of St Peter with All Saints. Over the next weeks I will be working closely with the churchwardens and archdeacon to identify a suitably qualified and experienced priest to be appointed Vicar designate of St Mary's.

I am immensely grateful to the Revd Stephen Morris for providing pastoral oversight for St Mary's during this time of transition. Many of you will know already what a gift it is to have Stephen and Jean supporting the life of the church through their prayers and spiritual encouragement.

The outline plans for the development of ministry at St Mary's have not changed since I met with the congregation in March. The priorities for the future are four-fold:

1. **Build on the present ministry strengths of St Mary's**, ensuring that the liturgical and choral tradition continues to flourish and grows as an essential part of the church's ministry in the city centre. While it is my hope that we shall find innovative ways to make new spiritual connections with the diverse people who live in our city, I cannot emphasize more clearly that whatever new forms of service emerge, these will be complimentary to the present choral tradition and in no way diminish or displace its core significance to the distinctive mission of the church.
2. **Develop the unique role of St Mary's in relation to the civic life of the city and the wider mission of the diocese.** This would include fostering the partnership with the City Council, Lord Lieutenant, High Sheriff and judiciary. As the ancient parish church of Nottingham St Mary's has been extending its mission to the city for at least a thousand years. Church-planting and grafting is nothing new. As we seek to further grow and revitalise churches across the city and diocese it is my prayer that St Mary's will become a centre of spirituality and excellence in worship, teaching and hospitality that is a blessing to all Christian people. This is often what is meant by being a 'resource church'. Closer

partnership with the Cathedral will be an element in fulfilling this role, along with continued collaboration with St Peter's and All Saints, as well as St Nic's and the recently started Trinity Church. Each will have a distinctive part to play in a diverse city.

3. **Establish the place of St Mary's as a centre for mission engaging with the arts and education, forming new worship services to reach a diverse city.** This would include the creative use of the sacred space for exhibitions and performances, as well as seeking to nurture faith and initiate services that provide fresh and innovative ways to connect with those who are not normally engaged with a church. For example, this might take the genre of a gospel-jazz service.
4. **To develop St Mary's as a centre of prayer and spirituality for the city,** whether people are dropping in for a moment of quiet reflection or drawn to a large service or special celebration. It is my hope that a prayer community of younger people might be established at St Mary's, drawing on the experience of the St Anselm Community recently formed at Lambeth by the Archbishop of Canterbury. This might have a strong emphasis on serving in the city, especially in caring for the poor, most vulnerable and excluded.

These are four of the priorities that I hope can shape the future development of St Mary's. They are not intended to be comprehensive or definitive. Further consideration will need to be given by the PCC with a new incumbent to ensure that a more detailed plan is formed and other possibilities uncovered. There is no blueprint. However, we can learn from the ministry of parishes like London's St Martin-in-the-Field. Alongside the commitment the diocese is already making to help resource the development of the parish we will be seeking some additional support from the Church Commissioners Strategic Development Fund. This will provide some financial resources for new appointments that can support the growth, for example an Operations Manager and an Associate Vicar for Mission.

With this in mind, the priority over the next few months will be the appointment of a Vicar-designate. I have already been liaising with the churchwardens as we seek to identify a suitable candidate.

The next step will be for the St Mary's members of the PCC to nominate two people to act as Parish Representatives to share in this appointment with the archdeacon and me, this might ordinarily be at least one of the churchwardens. To support the discernment process any candidate would have an opportunity to meet a slightly wider group of people who reflect different aspects of parish life. In preparation I am asking the churchwardens to produce a short introductory statement that captures the present life and ministry of the parish. This will stand alongside the future priorities I have set out above as we seek to make the appointment. You will understand that we are seeking someone with a unique set of gifts and experience in ministry and therefore we will in the first place be considering sole candidates through a process of head-hunting rather than advertising.

No doubt there will be many further thoughts, ideas and questions that this paper raises. The Revd Stephen Morris has indicated that he is willing to respond to any concerns or questions, and would be pleased to host a wider meeting for those in the congregation who would like to find out more. In the meantime thank you for your prayers as we move towards what I am sure will be a fruitful and flourishing new chapter in the story of St Mary's, as also for St Peter's and All Saints.

With gratitude for our partnership in the gospel.

*Bishop Paul*



Bishop of Southwell and Nottingham

