

St Thomas à Becket parish strategy 2023-2027

Version 2: as adopted by PCC January 2023

Introduction

We believe that God loves Ramsey. We long for the Kingdom of God to spread in our parish, changing more lives through second-chances, inclusion, encouragement and hope. And we look to see our whole town, as it grows and changes, more and more following God's just and merciful ways.

Therefore, our plan for the coming five years is focused on growth. By 2026, we hope to see twice as many people exploring their discipleship through our activities. Our plan is to prioritise and invest where we see God already acting, responding to changes already happening.

We believe that, through God's generosity over many years, we already have a growth-model: in the form of a culture that people want to join, which draws them closer to God and enables them to serve. This is embedded in our church's Values. Everything we do should support these Values. We look for growth in the form of new mini-Thomases: new groups and communities, doing new things, meeting in new places, but sharing our Values, and knowing they are members of our church family. To help us remain one family, even though we become a more diverse family, we will invest to improve the overall coherence of our communications, and in our governance.

Values

FAITHFUL. We give our time, money and love to continue a 1000-year tradition of worship and service.

WORSHIPFUL. We love gathering to learn about and meet with God, and our activities are supported in prayer.

LOVING. We serve others, trying to give the attention and help each person needs.

INCLUSIVE. We are here for everyone in our community.

ENCOURAGING. People feel better for joining in with our church.

RELEVANT TO RAMSEY. We are shaped by our here and now.

Plans

Worship

Our key aims are i) to serve varying preferences, as the town's only CofE church, and ii) to look outward.

- We will continue to invest so we offer liturgical worship within a central Anglican tradition, with a high standard of music. We will seek to enhance the beauty and variety of these services (appealing to all the senses, processions, acknowledging the whole church year and lectionary).
- We will continue to invest in worship for families and children. This means not just Sundays, not just in church.
- We will invest in training and development for worship leaders.
- We will explore informal services aimed at adults.
- We will explore using 5th Sundays more imaginatively: outdoors, pets, processions, Taize...

- We will explore using venues for worship across the whole of the parish's geography.
- We remain committed to a good-quality online offering each week, and will explore live-streaming as well as recorded services.
- We will continue to invest in food and drink around worship, exploring how eating together relates to our praying together.
- We will develop a parish prayer diary.
- We will invest more in letting people know about our diverse menu of worship opportunities: the more diverse, the more vital effective communications become.

Children and families

Our key aim is to be genuinely multi-generational. In practice, to achieve a generational balance we will need to grow the younger part of our church family considerably, so attracting more children and families to pursue discipleship through our activities is a high priority.

- Worship
 - Continue to invest in high-quality family services and Sunday Fun
 - Invest in growing and training our leadership
- Schools
 - In our primaries, establish a regular pattern of assemblies (including Open the Book), school services in church, and Experience Easter/Christmas events. This ministry to be developed on a benefice-wide basis, in partnership with SPU/RSM.
 - Abbey College: develop relationship as opportunities arise. Establish a relational ministry with Abbey students (e.g., weekly drop-in).
 - Primary-age after-school club (located in school or church)
 - [Later] teenage craft-nights, film nights
- Outdoors
 - Fen church, pilots from Nov 22
 - Outdoor Lent course in 2024

Premises

Our key aim is to ensure that each of our activities happens in 'fit for purpose' premises. Our historic building is a key asset, but we also need suitable premises for children/youth work, administration, hospitality-based work.

- St Thomas à Becket parish church
 - Replace inner doors with glass doors – by 2025
 - Remove all pews, including choir stalls – by 2027
 - AV screen in church - by 2027
 - Establish action-plan for net zero in this building – see Creation Care plan
- Re-locate admin and other activities into Scout Hut for 2023.
- Establish a Parish Office with a town-centre 'shop window' – by 2024.
- Establish a Parish Centre with meeting rooms by 2027.

Creation Care

Our key aim is to pursue the A Rocha bronze/silver/gold Eco-Church programme. Action plans at this stage are 'draft' until we understand better the implications of this programme.

- 2023: Achieve Bronze A Rocha accreditation and define plan for Silver. To include:
 - form eco-group

- audit refreshments and cleaning products
- use only recycled paper, and reduce paper use
- put 'animal homes' (hedgehogs, birds etc.) outside
- 2023: explore options to operate our historic building with 'net zero' emissions.
- 2024: Get to understand better the implications of climate change (notably flood risk) for Ramsey parish (e.g., through relations with Great Fen project)
- 2025: Achieve Silver A Rocha accreditation. To include:
 - build explicitly into our annual worship cycle
 - tree planting locally
 - cycle-rack outside church
 - eco-fair
- 2027: Achieve Gold A Rocha accreditation

New Housing

Our key aims are i) to keep Ramsey's social fabric strong and united by integrating new arrivals and ii) to involve residents on the new estates in our church life.

- Form a task group, we hope including people living on each estate who want to participate.
 - Gather data – how many houses on each estate, when completed etc
 - Aim to change the narrative about new housing in Ramsey – replace moaning about what isn't happening, with welcome for new people, and welcome for growth of the town
 - Hold events, e.g., family fun day. Maybe hold one event on each new estate in 2023?
 - Define and manage a budget for these activities. (Hoping both for some PCC support and also fund-raising for these activities.)
- By 2024, establish a 'home group' or 'house church' offshoot on each estate, with support from STaB and contributing to STaB's wider life
- BEGIN – e.g., carol singing on Wagstaffe this Christmas.

Social need and pastoral care

Our key aims are i) to sustain existing ministry (to seniors, our relationship with Uganda) and ii) to support Ramsey Foodbank as it expands the range of its work.

- Pastoral
 - We will continue to invest in and train those who support Becket Seniors lunches, care-homes ministry and home communions.
 - We will look to develop a pastoral need register (to keep track of people we have reason to be concerned about).
- Uganda and other mission
 - We will look to build and broaden our relationships with people in North Kigezi, so it includes but is not limited to funding the orphanage ministry.
 - The PCC will review to as to improve the coherence and impact of the various range of causes we support.
- Foodbank and Revive Ramsey
 - Recognising that Revive is a standalone charity, we will seek to improve St Thomas' links to its operation and expand the numbers who support it with time or money.

Operations

Our key aims are i) to strengthen governance as we grow and become more complex, and ii) to modernise our communications around a single 'brand'.

- We will adopt a single logo and family of fonts/colour to unify our communications.

- We will develop a membership and contacts database so we can track how many individuals we reach (i.e., eliminate double-counting).
- The PCC will review its own operations, how it keeps in touch with the full range of parish life, how it ensures its decisions are respected, etc..
- We will ensure key areas of church life know the financial resources available to them, and that sound financial controls are in place for all spending.
- We will include teaching about stewardship and financial support for church and good causes in the annual liturgical cycle and in the programme for all our activities.
- We will build our capacity to apply for grants to support our operations. By 2027 25% of our budget should come from grants or commercial revenue.