

St Stephen's Ealing

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Dear

*'Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give,
not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.'
2 Corinthians 9:7*

This is the time of year when we as a Church have to look at our finances as we seek to set a budget for the coming year. We are acutely aware that the last two years have been difficult for us all and inevitably that has had a knock on effect on our church income. Before going into the details however we want to say a massive THANK YOU for your ongoing generosity and support for St Stephen's.

At the beginning of 2020 our finances were in a good shape – our collective committed giving was at an all-time high and other income was coming in as expected. After March 2020, things started to change. Some faced furlough, job loss, reduced income and as a result had to adjust their giving. A few others made the decision to move away. The church building was closed for lengthy periods during the various restrictions and three periods of lockdown and so the usual income from letting the hall was significantly reduced. At the same time, because of the restrictions, we found that our usual levels of expenditure were also reduced and so at the end of 2020, by God's grace, we found that we were able to balance income and expenditure.

In 2021 we have again seen a loss of income of both planned giving and hall rental. Of course, this drop in income has again been combined with a long period when the church was either closed or restrictions prevented us from running our usual activities and so expenditure has again dropped from its usual levels. We are hoping that at the end of 2021 we will again more or less break even.

Despite the challenges, throughout the pandemic we have:

- continued to invest in mission both within our Parish and beyond – we have maintained our Common Fund payment to the Diocese (at the level committed in 2019) to pay for our own clergy and also to support other Churches who cannot afford to pay their way
- continued to support our mission partners by giving away 10% of all that we have received
- put in place a high quality livestreaming kit to enable us to be part of church both in person and at home.

BUT

- we have recently changed to a reasonably competitive mainstream green energy supplier as part of our environmental strategy but with the recent unprecedented price rises for business users the annual cost (even with us heating the building less) will be significantly more than in past years
- we hope that 2022 will be a more normal year of activities which will mean our expenditure will rise compared with that of the past two years – we will not be able to fund this without our income increasing
- during the pandemic, we have not put aside the sums that we would usually do for ongoing maintenance to our church building and a recent survey has shown that in the coming months and years there is important work to be done to repair our roofs and ensure that the building is kept to a reasonable standard. We currently have no funding for these works.

What this means for 2022 is that we will need to see an overall increase in our planned giving of at least £15,000 per year just to stand still (continuing to employ our staff and running various activities and events as we seek to grow the Kingdom of God). If we also want to make provision to maintain our building (say repairing the roof or mending the heating) we need further sums – in the past we have set aside at least £10,000 per annum for this purpose.

£15,000 to £25,000 is a large amount to raise but we believe it is possible if we all respond. We are asking all those currently in the Planned Giving Scheme to look at their own giving and increase it where they can, and those not yet in the Planned Giving Scheme to start giving regularly.

Whilst some of us have suffered financially during the pandemic, others of us may have found that we have actually saved money as our income was maintained but expenditure slowed. The Bible teaches that we should care for one another especially in times of hardship so if you are one of those who is better off as a result of the pandemic maybe you can increase your giving in order to support someone who has had to reduce theirs? Or perhaps you could consider making a one-off gift to the work of St Stephen's?

For the cost of a couple of cups of coffee each week your giving could make a significant difference to the life of St Stephen's. For example:

- if just half of those currently in the Planned Giving Scheme increased their giving by, say, £10 a month that would generate £7,500 inc. Gift Aid
- if five new couples or family units could start to give just £50 a month that would generate £3,750 inc. Gift Aid
- if five new individuals started to give £25 a month that would generate £1,875 inc. Gift Aid.

Of course, these are just illustrations and some will be able to give much more, others less. But whatever your own circumstances we are asking you to prayerfully consider helping us plan for the year ahead.

What next?

- Giving money to the local Church is a response to God and a tangible expression of our love for Him. If you are not yet a member of the Planned Giving Scheme please join and help us in our work for God's kingdom.
- We are asking you to commit to being *a regular* giver, preferably by means of a monthly Standing Order (but if you'd prefer you can give by means of weekly/monthly envelopes in church).
- If you are able to, consider making a one-off gift, either using the same bank account details as your standing order or through our website.
- If you are a UK tax payer we are also asking you to Gift Aid your donation and increase the value of your gift by 25% without any additional cost to yourself.

Legacies

Can we also point out the significance of legacy planning? During 2019 we received two significant legacies –10% of the estate of a former member and £15,000 from another. These made a huge difference to our finances and in particular enabled us to make the early repayment of the loans taken out to facilitate our new toilets and meeting room. Might you be able to include St Stephen's in your will so you can benefit future generations? A separate leaflet is available explaining more about how you can leave a legacy – do ask any one of us for more information or see the website (<https://www.ststephens-ealing.org/Groups/266098/Legacies.aspx>).

Your response

Please respond by completing the enclosed Pledge Form (your pledge is confidential and will be passed, unopened, to our Giving Co-ordinators and not seen by the clergy or other leaders). We enclose an address label so that you can reuse your envelope to return your response, simply place it in the special collection box in Church. Please return your pledge by Sunday 21st November 2021 (earlier if possible) and do reply even if you are not able to increase your giving.

If you would like to discuss any particular aspect of this pledge pack, please speak to one of us. Thank you in advance for your response.

Steve Newbold
Vicar
Treasurer

Caroline Jamieson
Churchwarden

Mary Ann Auckland
Churchwarden

Sanjay Joshi