

ST MARY'S CHURCH TWICKENHAM

Dear Friends,

I am sure that each of you appreciates what St Mary's seeks to be and do here at the heart of our community. So many of you have expressed to me over the years how much you have appreciated the ministry offered you and members of your family, how through Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals, how through praying for you or your loved ones at important times in your lives and how through the welcome, encouragement and friendship you have experienced at our church, your lives have been enriched. So many of you also particularly appreciate all that we seek to offer children, through our special services for them, our school chaplain, the Sunday school and other weekday activities and groups.

The reality is of course that, as much as we would like all this to be a gift to you, which of course it is, it also needs to be paid for. Perhaps, because of our being aware of how many other demands on your financial resources there are, we have been over sensitive in sharing with you the realities that we are faced with, but this current year our income will fall short of our expenditure by an estimated £20,000. We have tried to economize, have stopped all but essential repair work on the building and are in negotiation with the Diocese about our payment to them to support not just our own church, but the wider Church through the Diocese.

I know that with your characteristic generosity you will all want to help us in the situation in which we find ourselves. Most of us find it hard to decide how much the Church means to us were we to express that in financial terms. In the Early Church members of the Christian Community were encouraged to "tithe", i.e. give 10% of their income. Nowadays people align what they give to the Church based on how much they pay per year for Fitness Centre membership, perhaps because of the spiritual health they are the recipients of through church membership and attendance, or base it on how much they would spend on lunch at a restaurant on a Sunday, perhaps because of the spiritual nourishment they have received through Communion.

In the Diocese of London, based on data from 2013, the average person who was signed up to planned giving pledged £20 per week/£80 per month before Gift Aid. Could I ask that you review your own financial commitment to the Church, remembering that we need to keep going on Sundays when you are unable to come along, thus making the Standing Order system the preferred option and Gift Aiding it if you are a UK Tax payer, thus reaping in an extra 25% from the Chancellor, at no cost to yourself.

St Mary's owes a great deal to many of you who give sacrificially and generously, and for that we thank you. But at the moment just 5 households are giving 25% of our income through planned giving, an incredibly disproportionate amount, as I am sure you will agree. Please could I ask all of you to reflect on what St Mary's gives you and prayerfully to consider how much you could be investing in return in its ministry and mission, so that we not only pay our way in the year ahead but are able to grow and expand our ministry and be there for people at times of celebration and thanksgiving in their lives, reach out to others in need and that all of us may experience more deeply the love of God at the heart of our church community.

With blessings and best wishes,
Jeff Hopkin Williams
Vicar