



St Mary's Vicarage,
3, St Leonard's Avenue,
Kenton,
Harrow HA3 8EJ

Sunday, 24 September
Our Lady of Walsingham

Dear friends,

With Gratitude and Hope - St Mary, Kenton Stewardship Campaign 2023

Earlier this year I wrote to members of our congregation and parish family to invite you to engage with our 2023 stewardship campaign, in support of St Mary's mission and ministry. I have been so encouraged by your response: regular congregational giving (as well as average Sunday attendance!) has increased by more than *one-third*, even at a time when cost of living pressures mean that finances remain tight for us all.

At the same time, working closely with the churchwardens and Parochial Church Council, we have been able to turn around an effective deficit in our finances of almost £10,000 at the end of last year into a balanced budget in the first eight months of 2023, even as we were challenged - for example - by an increase of around £7,000 in our annual utilities charges (despite reducing consumption by 57%). We have also so far this year successfully secured almost £10,000 in external grant funding.

Your generosity has already enabled us to achieve so much; however, we have further exciting plans for the future, including: innovative ministry to schools and young people; energy efficiency improvements within the church building, and the illumination of the church tower - to name but a few of our ambitions! As I mark my first anniversary in post as your parish priest, I am excited for what God is doing among us, and I reiterate my invitation to you all to join in *God's* mission, through *your* gifts of your talents, your treasure and your time.

Regular giving to St Mary's is the most effective way to support our work and witness. You can now set up a regular (or one-off) donation by Direct Debit via the *Parish Giving Scheme*, by visiting parishgiving.org.uk/donors/find-your-parish/kenton-st-mary-the-virgin-harrow/ or by telephoning 0333 002 1271, and quoting PGS parish code 230623484. If you would prefer to contribute by Standing Order or by weekly envelope, please speak to me or to David Griffiths. If our records indicate that we do not yet hold a Gift Aid Declaration for you, simply complete and return the enclosed form: if you are a UK taxpayer, we can then reclaim an additional 25% on your donations.

Everyone's circumstances are different, and no one should give beyond their means: however, it is important for all of us to make a realistic and sacrificial contribution to the Church, in an *attitude of gratitude* in response to the generosity of God. Could we, for example, offer our first hour's work each week to the Lord, by making **a weekly gift equivalent to one hour's pay?** (For

reference, the current National Living Wage is £10.42/hr.) Alternatively, would it be possible for you to **increase your gift in line with St Mary's congregational average**, of £13.45 per week, or just under £60 per month? Even **one extra pound per person per week** from all current regular givers would generate an additional £2,500 per year (and so cover completely next year's increase in our contribution to the Diocese)!

Next Sunday, 1 October, we will celebrate our Harvest Festival, when we give thanks for God's good gifts. In addition to your usual (and much-appreciated) donations of tinned and dried food, and long-life juices and squashes (for distribution by the *Harrow Food Bank*), I invite you, in response to the success of our 2023 stewardship campaign, to make a **one-off thanksgiving donation** to St Mary's, using (and completing) the enclosed blue Gift Aid envelope:

a donation of **£500** would cover the cost of the recent survey of the church's heating system;
a donation of **£250** would meet the church's electricity bill for a month;
a donation of **£100** would pay for broadband in church (for our live-streaming) for two months;
a donation of **£70** would pay for votive lamps to burn before the tabernacle for ten weeks;
a donation of **£50** would cover the postage costs for this final leg of the stewardship campaign;
a donation of **£25** would pay for Confirmation course books for two of our candidates, and
a donation of **£15** would cover our website hosting charges for a year.

Whatever you feel able to give, thank you, and God bless you. As I wrote to you in my earlier letter, giving to the Church isn't fundamentally about paying the bills - it's an expression of our Christian faith and discipleship, as an attitude of gratitude, and a way in which we more closely reflect the personality and character of our generous God. It's an expression of our love for one another, and for our community, and it allows us to put our lives at God's disposal - and play our part in His mission to the world. As the venerable Fulton Sheen once wrote, *'Never measure your generosity by what you give, but rather by what you have left.'* This letter is first and foremost an opportunity to thank you for all that you do in support of our parish; it is also an invitation to take your next step. I look forward to sharing the journey! Do come along to church next Sunday for our Harvest Festival, as well as - of course - with family and friends on Sunday, 5 November at 5pm, when we will also welcome Bishop Jonathan for a Confirmation.

Yours sincerely,



Fr Richard Norman



The Parochial Church Council of
St Mary the Virgin Kenton
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