



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

Sunday, 2 March

Dear friends,

Pilgrims of Hope - St Mary, Kenton Stewardship Campaign 2025

With your support, and by God's grace, we achieved so much together in 2024: *thank you*. I write in particular to thank you for your *financial* support to St Mary's, without which so many elements of our mission and ministry could not be undertaken effectively. Our regular giving as a congregation last year totalled almost £40,000 - and this meant that we were able, among other things, to welcome Ryan Davey as our full-time pastoral assistant for a year; to continue to subsidise our Youth Group outings and the participation of three of our young people in the Walsingham Youth Pilgrimage; to welcome 400 children and young people to church at Christmas, and to continue to maintain and enhance our beautiful church building and grounds, to the glory of God. Gratitude, generosity and blessing - as we know - go hand-in-hand, and at the same time as resourcing so much here, you also supported *other* charities and projects - through St Mary's - to the tune of more than £12,000 throughout last year. A *giving* parish is a *living* parish, as a wise priest once said.

However, our £40,000 in regular giving covered only 25% of last year's total parish expenditure. Concerningly, this figure decreased by £2,000 on the previous year - due largely to the sad loss of former members of St Mary's, who died during 2024. As we look forward to the year ahead of us, we face not insignificant financial challenges. Our greatest outlay remains our "common fund" payment to the Diocese, which (i) puts a priest in our parish; (ii) supports other parishes in need, and (iii) funds the central services which assist our parishes' mission. This year, we have committed more than £55,000 to the Diocese - but are also conscious that the *true* cost per parish works out in fact at over £100,000 a year. This means that *other* parishes are underwriting *our* ministry, and *this* is not sustainable in the long-term. Our church building is a wonderful asset, but also costs a great deal to maintain: last year, around £30,000 was spent on the building - *before* utilities payments and insurance premiums are taken into account. For the time being, we have lost the support of *Community Payback* - which may soon engender further gardening and maintenance costs.

But we have no ambition simply to stand still, and to maintain things only as they are and always have been: for we also believe that God is calling us to things new and greater. Among our dreams for 2025 - possible only through your financial support - are: further work with schools, uniformed organisations and our own young people (including a repeat visit to the Youth Pilgrimage); social action outreach, with our ecumenical partners, to our local hospital; the redevelopment of our memorial garden; a parish conference, and new lighting in the Blessed Sacrament chapel. *This* letter is to ask your assistance, to make those dreams come true. *Please turn over to discover how to help.*

As we approach the beginning of a new financial year, I invite *all* supporters of St Mary's to consider the following:

Giving for Growth

Our church is not exempt from increased prices and rises in the cost of living. Could you consider, from 1 April, raising your regular gift by 5%, or by £2/week - whichever is greater?

Giving Efficiently

As you may be aware, bank branches are fast disappearing from the high street, and our economy is becoming increasingly cashless. Each time we pay in cash donations at the bank, we are charged an administrative fee: last year, St Mary's paid £541 simply to deposit our own money! We can avoid many of these processing charges if you switch from giving by cash or cheque or envelope instead to giving by Standing Order. If you use online banking, this is very straightforward to do; otherwise, you can set up a Standing Order by telephoning your bank, or visiting a branch. Our account is in the name of *ST MARY THE VIRGIN PCC KENTON*; account no. 30334960; sort code 20-37-16.

You can also use the Parish Giving Scheme to give securely online or by telephone, regularly or to make a one-off gift. Simply visit parishgiving.org.uk/donors/find-your-parish/kenton-st-mary-the-virgin-harrow/ or telephone 0333 002 1271, and quote PGS parish code 230623484.

Our contactless giving equipment has recently been updated: you can use the terminal at the welcome desk to make a donation by card or smartphone.

With the complete revision of the Electoral Roll, we also invite you to complete and return the enclosed Gift Aid Declaration, if you are a UK taxpayer. We can then reclaim an additional 25% on your donations, at no extra cost to you. Last year, Gift Aid gained a further £8,000 for St Mary's.

Giving for the Future

Please, finally, consider remembering St Mary's in your will. As Christians, we believe in life after death, and face the future with hope. By remembering St Mary's in your will, you will ensure our ongoing work and witness for generations to come. Speak to your solicitor if you wish to include a gift to the parish in your will: the formal name of our charity is "*The Parochial Church Council of St Mary the Virgin Kenton*", and our charities registration number is 1132234. An "unrestricted" gift is most helpful, but money can also be left to support a particular element of parish life, e.g. music. Just last month, we received £500 from the estate of a family who used to be associated with St Mary's - and this money can now be put to good use, as described above.

Thank you again for the many and varied ways in which you support our parish, and God bless you!

Yours sincerely,



Fr Richard Norman

The Parochial Church Council of
St Mary the Virgin Kenton
A Registered Charity, No. 1132234

