

Dear Friends

Thank you so much to all of you who give to the life and work of the church in our parish, prayerfully, financially and in many other ways. As we reflect on God's goodness to us, we give thanks for all the blessings of the past few months, and the joy and encouragement of new beginnings.

My first few months in post

It is just over four months since I started as vicar, on September 20th last year, and with the ending of the vacancy, we are ready to prayerfully consider the future.

During these past few months, your PCC has been reflecting on what God is placing on our hearts, and we sense a longing to go deeper in our relationships with God, with each other and with our communities - strong foundations of faith upon which to build mission and ministry for the years to come.

There is much for which we can be grateful and we look forward to exciting and challenging times under God.

Jesus said, "the harvest is plentiful...", and as we look forwards, we see huge opportunities and needs today all around us, both in this physical parish of Kingsdown, and also in the many places where we live and work. We long to respond to these needs. These include...

- nurturing and encouraging the Christian faith of our church family
- developing our church services, so we can offer worship and teaching for every age
- continuing to resource our children's, families and youth work and reaching out to families and young people in our communities
- caring and ministering to the lonely, the bereaved, the lost and broken
- bringing the Good News of the Gospel to a society that so much needs to hear 'Good News.

And there are many, many more...

When Jesus saw the needs of the people around him, he also had compassion for them, a love stirred to godly action, to share God's love and to make a real difference.

Becoming stronger disciples and what this means

As a Christian church, we are called to become stronger disciples of Jesus Christ so that we can more effectively reach out to all those in our community who are in need and to take the good news of Jesus Christ to all corners of Kingsdown and to the frontlines of our own lives.

All of this needs to be resourced, both practically and, financially, and the enclosed document concentrates on financial giving.

It has been several years since the parish did an in-depth review of its financial giving, and this year we face a big challenge. During the past few years, the level of planned giving to St Matthews has declined considerably, resulting in a large deficit in our income over expenditure for the last year and a forecast of an £18,800 deficit in the year to come (or £362per week).

Action to reduce this deficit has included the decision both last year and for the year to come, to very regrettably reduce the amount of parish share that St Matthews pays to the diocese, both to support ministry here and also support ministry in areas of deprivation elsewhere in the diocese. We long to recover this support, recognising how vital and valuable St Matthew's contributions have been over so long.

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The future

Looking to the future, our need is to dramatically reverse this recent trend to be able to respond to the needs and opportunities mentioned above and have the financial security to be able to do so.

The financial challenge ahead of us is a considerable one.

We are therefore praying for an increase in our regular monthly planned giving of £20,000 a year (or £385 per week), to help get us back onto a stable financial footing and to begin to rebuild the ministry of this church.

I and your PCC faithfully believe that, by God's grace and with His help, we can and will achieve these aims, and together, begin to build again, a church that reaches out with heart and hands, to all parts of our communities.

This is the right time for us to be bold in putting in place foundations for future growth.

I am so thankful and grateful for you all, and for the richness of grace, love and faithfulness that we have found here. I am full of hope and expectancy for what God has in store for us.

Our response

Please would you join with me and my colleagues by faithfully praying for our church and about your personal response to God's grace and love as we look afresh to the future?

Please respond as you can. I hope that you will find this document helpful as we consider our response to the exciting challenges and opportunities before us, and if we can be of any help, please do speak to me or to our Treasurer, Andrew Wood.

Please know that my care and support to you as Vicar will never be affected by financial giving. I will never know what individuals give. This is strictly confidential information given to the Church Treasurer only.

We should be grateful if you are able to return your pledges and details by Sunday 24th February.

We shall have a Service of Thanksgiving for God's grace and love for us on Sunday March 3rd. Thank you so much, for your friendship, help and support.

Yours in Christ



Revd Ian Tomkins
Vicar, St Matthews & St Nathanaels.