

Dear Friends

Happy New Year! I trust that you are refreshed after the Christmas and New Year break and looking forward to what God is going to do in 2010.

As is our custom we begin the year with a GIVING SERVICE when we;

- give thanks for the monies given in the previous year;
- share something of the vision for the coming year that has informed our planned budget;
- present an opportunity for each of us to review our financial giving.

Giving for Life.

Our practice has been affirmed by the latest recommendations in General Synod's report '*Giving for Life*' which provides a framework to respond to God's generosity. We have narrowed this years Giving Service to financial giving providing a later opportunity to consider the giving of our time through the new series '**What can I give him?**' which will commence at Café Church on Sunday 17th Jan. I strongly commend this new series to you as a means of considering the giving of the whole of our lives to God which includes our time as well as our finances. The series will be interactive on the night and also provide materials for further study for groups and individuals and an opportunity to commit to an area of service and ministry.

Thank You!

In regards to monies given last year we want to **give thanks for an estimated income in 2009 of approximately £209,000** as this was in **access of our Budgeted income by approx £8,000** and reversed the trend of the previous year when income was less than the expected budget. It is particularly pleasing to note that monies given through gift aid have risen and this has consequently seen a rise in monies returned from tax refunds. This is remarkable given the financial recession. The Charities Aid Foundation recently reported that 88% of the CEO's of leading charities expected a drop in their income. Therefore on behalf of the PCC I would like to express our heartfelt thanks for all of those who have given sacrificially in 2009. These monies have been used to support the staff that we employ and it is particularly pleasing to have appointed Tricia as our first Associate Minister in the summer and Tracey as our Outreach Children's Worker in the autumn. Both these appointments have been made in line with our strategic planning for growth in number and depth of discipleship and we are already seeing the fruits of their labours. Staffing costs, contribution towards the work of the Diocese and financial giving to mission activity beyond our control were the three largest areas of expenditure in 2009. Nearly all other areas of ministry stayed within their budgets which are a testament to the financial control of budget holders especially as they were all asked to reduce their desired budgets for 2009 by 10%. From our capital reserves we have also just purchased a house to accommodate our Associate Minister before Christmas as this was a better long term use of our monies rather than renting premises.

Budget 2010

At our AGM on Sunday 25th April a full set of accounts for 2009 will be produced and the figures above clarified and I will give a broader review of the year. Each year the PCC asks each budget holder to review their work and estimate the budget for what they believe God is calling them to undertake for the coming year. As a Standing Committee we then prayerfully consider all the proposals alongside the strategic plans for the Church and produce a budget for 2010 which the PCC accept. The 2010 budget has been set with the **challenging target to increase income by at least 10% as we estimate we need approx £230,000 from regular giving to meet our estimated costs.** This is the first year that we have to bear the full costs of the additional post of Associate Minister as well as pay an increasing contribution to the Diocese. In the coming years it is possible St John's and Bredfield will be requested to contribute an even larger amount to the wider mission of the ministry of the Church of England in this area. We have continued in faith to budget for the continuation of FORM hoping for four more students to commence in autumn 2010 under new leadership when Ben has moved on. We are seeking to redecorate a bay of the Church and complete the external redecoration of the Old Vicarage both via internal working parties. Plans are already in place to replace the existing stage lights so that we do not have to use portable lighting and the PCC has agreed to apply to move the sound desk downstairs to improve the ability of our sound engineers to perform their valued ministry and minimise the setting up required as our services continue to vary and expand. We have been able to offer a small increase in funds allocated to Just 42 and plans are well underway for this years **Alive Festival 'Living the Life'** which benefits many.

As our reserves are considerable depleted we cannot set a budget that includes any major deficit and have therefore been very careful in keeping proposed expenditure within the limits of our available resources. Significantly we have delayed by a year the proposed complete redecoration of the church, reduced the generous amounts of previous years we have been able to offer to other mission organisations, held staff pay to 2009 levels and kept all other expenditure to the reduced budgets of 2009. Consequently we are seeking a substantial increase in income. **If this was to exceed our expectations some of the items we have had to delay or reduce we can seriously consider reinstating for 2011.** I am confident that God will be gracious to us and supply all that we need to undertake the mission and vision he has called us to.

Personal Review

On behalf of the PCC I would ask us all to review our personal financial giving for the year to St John's in the light of the needs outlined. This is only a part of God's mission for his world but Biblical teaching reminds us that we should respond to God's grace and generosity by paying attention to this area of our discipleship. We need to do so carefully and responsibly. To that end I would be most grateful if you would please complete the enclosed **St John's Church Giving Card.** Please do so after prayerful consideration of the particular responsibilities and commitments that God has given to you and in the light of the monies you have direct control over. I am aware that many of us may have already done this but I believe it is something we should consider on an annual basis in the light of our own changing circumstances. If you have joined the Church in the last 12 months then I would urge to consider giving on a regular and systematic basis. This commitment will be treated confidentially and only signifies intent as circumstances might change. If you wish to make a direct contribution to some specific item then please indicate this by making that clear in writing. If you are able to give via gift aid then this is the most tax efficient way to do so.

With every blessing

Dave Gardner