



Church of St Mary the Virgin, Piercing Hill, Theydon Bois, Essex CM16 7JN

16th March 2025

Dear friends in Christ,

We are writing to you as members of the PCC of St Mary's Theydon Bois, in the season of Lent, to ask you to prayerfully consider the difficult question of financial giving to the work of Jesus Christ in our parish.

As the cost-of-living crisis deepened a decision was made last year to pause our stewardship drive. However, significantly increased financial pressures mean that we are running the stewardship drive again in this season of Lent. With regards to this, the following are of particular note:

- We have run around a £16,000 operating loss in 2024. This was reduced to just over £10,000 by Legacies but is clearly unsustainable.
- A recent structural survey identified around £36,000 of critical work required to preserve the fabric of St Mary's. This would eradicate our Building Maintenance reserve and much of our general reserves.

We are therefore asking each individual and household to join all members of the PCC in reviewing their financial giving to St Mary's. Enclosed with this letter is an explanatory leaflet, a paper response form and envelope. Please either complete the online Google Form detailed in this leaflet or return the paper response form in the box by the font, before the end of the drive during the services on the 13th of April.

Lent is traditionally a period where self-denial, study and preparation for Easter takes place in the life of the church, and it is also a time to consider how our self-denial may bless the work of God. Our thinking and praying about our giving should begin with God who gives to us abundantly and graciously in creation and redemption and in sustaining life, day by day. Scripture shows that God's giving is characterised by extravagance. Jesus' birth, death and resurrection and his breathing the Holy Spirit on us reveal to us the astonishing depths of God's generosity toward humankind. The challenge for us as followers of Jesus is to be prepared to do whatever is needed to align ourselves with ways of living and giving that release rather than obstruct the flow of God's generosity. God brings in His kingdom through us, creating a social order that not only provides for the needs of all, but also redefines abundant living away from the accumulation of consumerism and consumption to the fulfilment in Christ.

Throughout history the worshipping community has been dependent on the participants for its income. In the Old Testament, the people were expected to devote a tenth of their income to God as part of their worship (Leviticus 27.32) but in the New Testament, there was much more emphasis upon giving voluntarily, for example, "*Each of you must give as you have made up your minds, not reluctantly or under compulsion for God loves a cheerful giver*" (2 Corinthians 9.7). Our giving to St Mary's is about more than money; it is, fundamentally, about our ministry. It is every service we hold, every family welcomed and supported at any point of life, and every individual hearing the Gospel. God calls the church to take risks for Him, sometimes that may mean not being as financially prudent as the wider world would think wise, and this is a challenge we face as a corporate body as well as individually. Faithful following means the same, asking us in our giving to the church to go above and beyond what may be seen by others as "reasonable" in response to the God who went to the cross for us all.

Yours in Christ,
The PCC of St Mary's Theydon Bois

GIVING FINANCIALLY TO ST MARY'S THEYDON BOIS

Christians are called to love God and their neighbour. Our financial giving is an expression of that love, alongside the time given in acts of service.

Given that St Mary's faces considerable, and growing, financial pressures, increasing our giving has the potential to be of enormous benefit. For example, an increase in giving of around £10 per month by every adult member of our congregation would negate our current, unsustainable operating loss, but of course not everyone contributes.

We ask that you consider the following:

- Join the planned giving scheme with weekly envelopes or a standing order.
- If you are already on this scheme, increase your planned giving.
- If you pay tax, optimise your giving using Gift Aid.
- Give proportionately - a percentage of your income given to fund ministry.

How much to give is a thoughtful, prayerful decision only you can make. Love is generous, love is kind and love is selfless - we see that in all God gives to us.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the financial position of the Church in 2025?

The church is expected to run an operating loss of around £18,000 in 2025. An operating loss of this magnitude is not sustainable and it is vitally important that action is taken to tackle it and to fund essential building maintenance.

What does it cost to run the Parish?

In 2024 the total expenses of the parish were around £117,000. The main item of expenditure is the Parish Share. This represents St Mary's contribution to the ministry costs of the Diocese of Chelmsford (which pays for ministry costs and assists other struggling parishes). It will be just over £79,000 in 2025 (in 2024 it was £75,000).

In addition, rising bills and building maintenance place a heavy burden on finances. As previously mentioned, 2023 saw our Quinquennial church survey conducted. This has resulted in £36,000 of essential work being contracted through 2025/26 in order to preserve the fabric of St Mary's. If you wish to donate specifically towards this, please indicate on your response form.

How much does the Parish receive each year?

In 2024, donations from collections, planned giving and donations amounted to around £73,000. There were additional legacies and income from other sources, for example renting out the Church Hall.

Who knows what I and others give?

The PCC has appointed Sally Taylor as Gift Aid officer, and for the purpose of claiming back Gift Aid from HMRC she is aware how often and how much an individual donor gives. The names of regular givers are also known to the PCC Treasurer for the purpose of communication and Carole Fenton has been appointed to manage the distribution of regular giving envelopes.

Can I continue to regularly put cash in the collection services?

Yes, but please consider also joining a regular giving scheme, and committing to give a set amount per year as it helps the church to be aware of incoming resources and budget for future years.

All donations are gratefully received, by any method. It is possible to donate to St Mary's Theydon Bois through payroll giving through your employer, as we are a registered charity number 1128901.

St Mary's Theydon Bois PCC Bank Account details are:

Barclays Bank, Sort Code 202986, Account Number 20868329

Finally - please complete an online or paper response form to indicate your giving

Thank you for considering your giving. As part of our worship on Sunday 16th March, there will be a collection at all services of response forms as part of our worship. If you are not in church on that day, there will be a collection point in subsequent weeks at the back of the church. You can alternatively submit your response form online using this link:

<https://forms.gle/Bzy2yYaSHJ51Vdju9>.