

REGULAR GIVING SCHEME (RGS) 2023 LETTER

Every year we write to all the members of St Mary's to tell them about the church's finances and encourage everyone prayerfully to consider what financial support they can give towards the Lord's work at St Mary's.

Everything we have comes from God and one of the ways we express our gratitude and trust in him is through our giving. God loves a cheerful giver. He longs for all his people to give willingly, generously and proportionally. Jesus' comment to his disciples in Mark 12:41-44 reminds us that God knows all about our financial circumstances and that his judgement about the size and value of a gift is very different from that of the world's. For those with modest means no amount is considered too small or insignificant.

Looking back with thankfulness

During these financially challenging times many churches and charities have faced a large drop in their income. We give thanks to God for his provision for the ministry here at St Mary's. Our planned giving, donations and collections income reduced only slightly from £529,309 in 2021 to £526,312 in 2022. We are very grateful for the Lord's people at St Mary's who have given so faithfully and sacrificially. We have worked hard to control costs during 2022. This enabled us to end 2022 with a deficit of General Funds of £29,841 whereas the budget was for a deficit of £56,867.

In addition to paying for our staff team and all the running costs of the church, we continue to support the growth of God's kingdom elsewhere. We praise God that in 2022 we were able to give £133,943 to supporting other churches and mission partners.

Looking ahead in faith

I (Jon) am truly honoured to have been appointed as your Vicar. Since Will Stileman moved to his new post in February 2022 I have been acting as 9.15am & 11am Congregation Leader and also Staff Team Leader and now Vicar. Our challenge now is to rebuild the staff team to the February 2022 headcount. I am delighted that Ian Miller will continue on the staff as Associate Vicar when he finishes his curacy in July. Our desire is to appoint, as soon as possible, an additional Associate Minister, to work alongside Ian and the rest of the team. This will mean that once again we have a dedicated pastor for each congregation and I can give myself to the overall leadership of the church.

An independent trust has generously pledged two gifts of £20,000, one this year and one next year, in order to help fund this post. To make up the rest of the funding for this post will require an additional £20,000 per year in each of the next three years. We are asking everybody in the church to prayerfully consider their giving to see if together under God we can make up the rest of this funding. This is a significant request to make of the church family but one we are

convinced will serve the advance of the gospel and the growth of the church in Maidenhead and beyond.

From April of this year our financial relationship with the Diocese of Oxford will change. Because of recent teaching from our bishops and developments in the Church of England which are not biblically based, we are no longer able to be net financial contributors to the Diocese. We will reimburse the Diocese for the cost of our clergy who they pay, and for Safeguarding services we receive. Any other funds we would previously have sent to the Diocese will be distributed instead to other faithful gospel ministry. We want you to know that all money given to St Mary's is used in line with God's word and not to support activities in the Church of England that we believe are not biblically based.

If you are already a regular giver to St Mary's

Thank you for your ongoing faithful contributions. We praise God for his great generosity to us through his people. Please could you review your giving and consider whether you are in a position to increase your contribution to St Mary's, even for a short period of time.

If you are not yet giving regularly to St Mary's

Please would you consider contributing to the work of the gospel at St Mary's?

Most give to St Mary's through our Regular Giving Scheme (RGS). You can set up a standing order so that the payment is made automatically to the church bank account and that relieves you of having to remember it each month, quarter or year. It is also easier for us to plan our income and expenditure as we know what will be coming in. An RGS Resources area is available on the church website, www.stmarysmaidenhead.org/rgs containing more information, a self-service portal which has been designed to eliminate the need for paperwork. If you prefer hard copy forms please contact the finance team at finance@stmarysmaidenhead.org or via the office and they will post them to you.

If you are a taxpayer, please also complete a Gift Aid Declaration. The declaration is built into the portal, so normally no paperwork is required. The government via HMRC, gives the church another £25 for every £100 that you give to the church and you can also claim some benefit on your personal tax return. Last year we received £111,999 back from HMRC via Gift Aid.

If you do join the RGS and set up a standing order, you can change or stop it at any time so you are not locked in if your circumstances change.

If you wish to make a one-off gift

If you do not wish to join the RGS, or you wish to make an additional donation, you can make a one-off gift to the church by bank transfer into the church account, Sort Code 60 13 35, Account Number 64261883 and account name 'PCC of St Andrew and St Mary Magdalene.. There are

also collection boxes on each side in the Welcome Area as you leave the church where you can contribute in cash or by cheque.

Can you please tell the RGS secretaries what you plan to do?

It is best if you enter the data on the self-service portal. If you prefer not to do that, you can email them on finance@stmarysmaidenhead.org. We treat this information as confidential and it is only seen by the two RGS secretaries.

If you are struggling financially

We know that some are experiencing very difficult circumstances at present and we want to help where we can. As a church we are a family of believers and we seek to care and support one another. We do have a Care Fund and if you need help, or know of somebody who needs help, please do contact a member of staff or your Growth Group leader.

This comes with our sincere thanks for all that so many do to support the Lord's work here at St Mary's, not only in financial giving but also in prayer, in service and encouragement.

With very best wishes

Jon Drake
Vicar

John Blackbeard
Chairman of the Finance Committee