

As we come into May, the lockdown measures are beginning to ease and we can at last start to meet friends and family in small groups outdoors, looking forward to when we can also meet in our homes in just a few weeks' time, if all goes to plan. It has been a long and difficult time for everyone, and Colin and I continue to hold you all in our prayers. This time last year the weather was unseasonably hot, but as I write, we had snow earlier this week! If I venture to one of our village pubs for outdoor refreshments, I think I'd prefer coffee to beer in this weather!

The Pandemic has really affected us as a church in the villages too. Numbers attending Church Services have declined, as some people are still wary of being in an indoor space with other people, with a corresponding decline in collections too. Weddings booked for 2020 have been moved - in several cases twice, now in 2022 - so we have lost that revenue for 2 years running. Fundraising events have not been possible, so like all charities, we are feeling the loss. This is equally true of the Friends of the churches, who also have not been able to fundraise for a year now. Expenses however do not go away, just because there is little money coming in! In addition to quarterly electricity bills, we need oil for heating, and now need to replace the boiler at Findon Church urgently. Our other two churches in the Parish also use very expensive electricity. Then there is the maintenance necessary to keep up our three ancient heritage buildings, an ongoing challenge. We really need your help!

We are fortunate that a number of people had already joined out 'Parish Giving Scheme', which gives us a guaranteed source of income and we can regularly claim tax back through Gift Aid, if the donor is a taxpayer. Regular giving helps us in planning ahead for what we can afford to do. If you might be able to contribute in this way, or are in a position to increase your current donation, please contact Ian Hollyhomes (07774 643548) or the Parish Office (873601).

The other way that you can help is by leaving some money to the church in your will, through a legacy to the Parish Church Council. As a charity, any gift to the PCC is tax exempt, thus reducing the amount of inheritance tax on your estate. Through the generosity of past worshippers, essential work on the buildings and improvements to what we can offer through them has been made possible in the past.

As we look back over this past year+, we have much to be thankful for. Our God is a generous and loving God, who gives us so much more than we need or deserve. In Acts Chapter 2 and Chapter 4, we read how the first believers shared their possessions, so that none were in any kind of need. Please consider prayerfully whether you could make a regular commitment to the Parish Church.

We are there as a church community for everyone in the Village, not just those who attend. Everyone is prayed for; each road in the Parish in turn is held in prayer for a week in rotation through the year – anyone Colin or I hear of who is in need is prayed for daily by us, with more public prayer if this is appropriate and requested. Prayer is our conversation with God, and can take place in any situation, any time! Teresa Street, who lives in Clapham, gave me permission for her lovely poem about prayer to be included in the magazine. I hope this encourages you also to pray!

Also, everyone living in Findon, Clapham or Patching is automatically entitled to be baptised or married in the churches, or have myself or Colin to preside at the funeral of a loved one (whether in church, crematorium or Funeral Chapel). Please do get in touch via the Parish Office if you want to know more.

As the weather gets warmer, I hope to see many of you again as I walk around the village!

Every blessing,

*Helena*