

CHRIST CHURCH, DARTFORD

Monday 3rd October 2022

Dear Christ Church community,

If you were able to attend Christ Church for our harvest festival (2nd October) you will be aware that I launched our new **Giving Campaign**. This letter is to support that campaign, clarifying the **Vision**, the **Challenge** and the **Way Forward**.

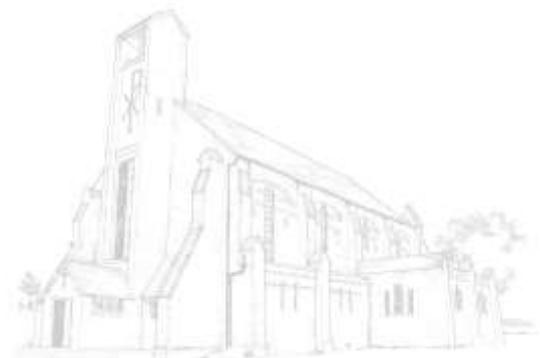
1. VISION: So what is the vision for Christ Church? Our vision statement is 'To be a house of prayer, a healing place and a training place.' But what does that look like coming out of a pandemic at a time of great uncertainty and need? Fundamentally we face a choice to shrink back and become self-focused or to look outwards to the needs of the community and bring Christ's healing in both practical and spiritual ways. It is that second way that we are pursuing.

Our summer Fun and Food project brought together families from church and across the neighbourhood providing friendship, fun activities and a meal, as well as offering clothes from our clothes bank and food from the Tesco food waste reduction scheme. Moving forward we're looking to offer something similar after school one evening a week. This will give individuals and families a warm place to spend the evening and provide food, fun and friendship. Alongside this we continue to offer the Toddlers and Refresh Café, Youth Club and other events for church and community. Our school's work brings Christ's message to literally thousands of children and young people each year and underpins our extensive community contacts. It was interesting that when I was preaching on 'Call' at the start of September, and asked the congregation how they saw God's call on Christ Church, it was the word 'Community' that came up most often.

2. CHALLENGE: So, in order to pursue that vision, what is the need? The great challenge we face is that our church has been running at a growing deficit for several years and has been relying on investments from a legacy to offset that. Our deficit this year is anticipated to be around £50,000. At this rate we can carry on for perhaps two years before making radical cut backs, which may include cutting back staffing and reducing the reach of our community work. So, my aim for this campaign is to cancel that deficit. I envisage that will happen, in part, by increased monthly giving and, the remainder, by individual donations. In fact we have already had two donations totalling £6,000, which gives me good hope to achieve this aim.

3. WAY FORWARD: So how are we going about this? We have a three-pronged approach:

Firstly, we are giving out pledge forms to help people think through their decision about their financial giving and to let us know what they intend to do.



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Secondly, we are promoting prayer to submit all our plans to God's care and provision.

Thirdly, we will hold a Thanksgiving and Offering Service when we can return our pledge forms and offer our gifts to God, in the context of praising and thanking Him for all that He has done for us. This will be on **Sunday 30th October**. We will invite testimonies, and I trust it will bring joy and enlarge our vision of God as well as meet the practical needs. The aim is for this to be the centre-piece of a **Prayer, Thanksgiving and Offering weekend**, details of which I will send out shortly.

I'm hoping to hold similar Thanksgiving and Offering services from time to time. When we discussed the finances at PCC there was a strong sense that we need to talk more about finance, to be honest about the needs and keep people informed but also to create opportunities for people to respond, not out of guilt or pressure but as a natural part of growing as a Christian and worshipping God.

In these challenging times a lot of people reading this will simply not be able to give any more than they do, and, indeed, may need to reduce their giving. I fully accept that and want to be supportive of anyone facing hardship. (In that regard, please be aware that we operate a Community Fund which can be drawn upon to help individual specific needs.) But there will also be others who are in a stable financial situation who can draw upon their income or their savings to help us face this challenge. It is the generosity of church members that enables Christ Church, already, to be such an active and vibrant community. My hope is that, with this extra sacrifice, we will be able to secure a strong future for the church, enabling it to be a beacon of hope for generations to come.

I enclose a pledge form for your prayerful consideration. Please return it, either at the service on 30th October, or in any way convenient to you. Please do not hesitate to get back to me with any queries. Thank you so much for giving this your attention and may Christ richly bless you as you seek to listen to and follow him

With love, and God bless you all,
Richard
(Rev Dr Richard Mortimer)

