

Stewardship at St Michael's, June 2024



Why I am asking you to read this leaflet

Whether you have been coming to St Michael's for many years or more recently, it's good from time to time to revisit what our faith and our church mean to us.

This leaflet explains why Stewardship of the gifts God has given us is good for us as individuals and good for us as a church – in fact, without it our faith will be half-hearted and our church will be in decline.

So please read, reflect, pray ... and respond!

Rev John Castle, Rector

What is Christian Stewardship?

In a nutshell, it's recognising that all we have, including our life itself, is a gift from God which we should use gratefully, generously and responsibly. It is summed up in the words we use in the service of Holy Communion, *All things come from you, and of your own do we give you.*

It's about appreciating the blessings we have received, and realising how they can be used for God and our neighbour. This releases the resources of our time, talents, energy and material assets for God's work, in the church and in the wider community. *It's a win-win situation!*

What does Christian Stewardship mean for St Michael's?

We are so grateful for the people who serve in so many ways in our church, some seen and others "behind the scenes". These include welcoming people at the start of services, keeping the church building clean and well maintained, arranging flowers, serving coffee, singing in the choir or leading children's groups, to mention just a few examples.

Those who commit to supporting the church financially are vital too – we receive no subsidy from the Church of England, the Government or local authorities, and our biggest source of income is from those who faithfully

give money month by month, especially the handful of individuals who between them donate *half* of our total planned giving income.

It's easy to assume that because the church keeps running, everything is already covered. BUT the truth is otherwise ...

Some hard facts

Volunteers

Many of our volunteers have been faithfully doing the same work for many years, and we need new blood. There are also vital areas of our work where we could do so much more – such as visiting the lonely, sick and bereaved. Work with children and young people is an essential part of our work of growing the next generation in the Christian faith. We could also do with new volunteers as servers for the communion services, and in other areas.

Finances

Our accounts in 2023 ended with a deficit of £6,000 – better than 2022 when it was £16,000! Our losses have been subsidised from the Mission Fund, which is intended for paying our Family Worker and other outreach work. Over the years we've pared back expenditure, sought cheaper suppliers and made savings wherever possible without cutting our core activities.

It's true that we are blessed with paid part-time office staff, who reduce the administrative workload of the Rector and Treasurer, and manage the use of the Pastoral Centre by outside organisations and private hirers. We are also blessed to have two professional musicians whose gifts and dedication enable us to have a choir and high musical standards in our Parish Communion and Evensong services. Cutting any of these would seriously affect the quality and nature of our work as a church.

The Parish Share (£74,875 in 2023) represents our relationship with the Diocese and the wider Church. In return we get a full-time Rector and his accommodation, as well as the expertise of the diocesan departments to help us with practical advice and courses on areas such as work with families and children, fundraising, safeguarding and legal matters.

In recent times our running costs have increased. In 2023 Gas and electricity for the church and Pastoral Centre cost £12,000, insurance £5,000, cleaning £4,700.

In order to make St Michael's sustainable in the future, we need more volunteers and a more realistic level of giving by our committed members.



My Response

Giving Time and Talents

If you are already contributing to the work of St Michael's by volunteering in some way, THANK YOU! We are looking to get more people involved, rather than ask a small number of willing volunteers to take on more work!

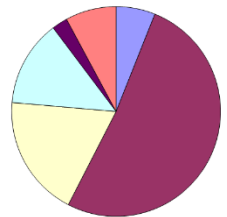
However, if you would like to get more involved, are there areas of church life where you think you could make a contribution? You may have specific skills that would help us expand our work or be more effective, e.g. marketing, computing, accounting, building. Being good with people or being a listening ear are valuable pastoral gifts. Being part of a team can be very rewarding, and training will be given where needed.

In the response form below, please indicate what you are interested in, and someone will be in touch to talk more about it with you and answer questions.

Giving financially

At the moment, regular giving to the General Fund (which pays for the day-to-day running of our church) averages out to roughly **£38 per month** per church member. In order to balance the books and put aside £10,000 per year towards future repairs, **we need this to increase by £10 per month.**

Of course, what people can afford to give varies enormously. Christian teaching about giving encourages us to calculate what we give as a proportion of our income – the Church of England recommends 10%, split equally between your local church and other charities.



You might also like to compare your giving to the church with what you spend on entertainment, membership of a gym, golf club, etc, and other regular commitments: does this comparison reflect your values and priorities?

If you are willing to respond, please turn to the back page!

STEWARDSHIP RESPONSE FORM



Name _____ Phone _____

E-mail address _____

Please tick all of these that apply:

To express my commitment to the work of St Michael's Church I will:

- Consider volunteering to help with this/these area(s) of church life:

- Offer my specialist skills (indicate what) _____
- Review my regular giving and consider increasing it by £_____ per month
- Join the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) by going online (see PGS leaflet)
- Join the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) by using a paper form (see PGS leaflet; forms are at the back of the church)
- Review my giving via PGS and authorise an annual inflation increase
- Make a one-off donation to general funds by PGS/ BACS/cheque
- Review my will and add a legacy to St Michael's (see separate leaflet)
- Something else _____

Comments and questions

It may be you'd like more information about some aspect of our church life or finances, or you'd like to comment about anything in this leaflet. Please feel free to write your questions or comments below.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and respond!