



# St Matthews

The Revd Mike Coe - Rector

St Matthew's Rectory  
9 St Matthews Road  
ST LEONARDS-ON-SEA  
East Sussex  
TN38 0TN  
T 07929717105  
E [mike@mikecoe.co.uk](mailto:mike@mikecoe.co.uk)

## December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2012 (Advent Sunday)

Dear Friends,

If you were at church this morning, you would have heard me preach an expanded version of this letter. If you weren't, you can listen to the sermon via the website.

Today is Advent Sunday, the official beginning of the church's year. It's a time when we think about new beginnings and new challenges as we look back to Jesus' birth and look forward to His return as the eternal King. It's therefore an appropriate day to tell you about a new significant financial challenge facing St. Matthew's, one that will have an impact on our long-term future.



Firstly thank you for the generous support, encouragement and service you are giving to St. Matthew's. Your regular gifts, donations and enthusiasm have allowed us to do the God-given work of mission and ministry that we are called to. I can't overstate how vital that support is. However, in the past few months, a significant issue has emerged that we need to address as a church family. It's not a financial crisis, but it could soon develop into one if things stay as they are.

Over the past few years, our finances have been relatively very healthy. In 2009 and 2010 our unrestricted income and unrestricted expenditure balanced. In 2011, this became a small deficit which, given the economic circumstances, was still encouraging. In 2012 our situation has changed significantly. Whilst our costs have increased as expected, our income has considerably decreased. As a result our deficit in 2012 is expected to be over £20,000, with the anticipated deficit for 2013 over £25,000, if things stay unchanged,

Why has this happened?

- *Some generous regular givers have left St. Matthew's.*
- *This year we have not received any rental income from 98 Sedlescombe Gardens.*
- *Whilst our costs have increased in line with inflation, regular giving has reduced in real terms, as many have been unable to increase their financial support.*
- *Since June we have also incurred additional costs associated with a curacy.*

Our financial reserves mean that we can (just) cover our forecast deficits in 2012 & 2013 - assuming that costs increase in line with expectation, that there are no unexpected costs and that our income remains unchanged. However, if our financial situation is the same or worse this time next year, the PCC would probably have to take the difficult decision to reduce our annual Parish Contribution.

The annual Parish Contribution is the money we give to the Diocese towards having a full-time vicar at St. Matthew's. In recent years, we have given around 88% of the full amount. If we reduced our contribution to 'balance the books' in 2013 and beyond, this would drop to around 60%. Such a move would not be well-received by the Diocese who are facing their own significant financial deficit. In fact they are actively encouraging all churches to increase their Parish Contribution each year with the aim of paying 100%.

Whilst I am the Rector, a reduction in our Parish Contribution would not greatly affect us. However, when I leave (which will happen at some point!) and St. Matthew's future is being considered, our Parish Contribution payment record will be a significant factor in the deliberations.

## **DON'T PANIC!! St. Matthew's isn't going to close!**

However,

- *The Diocese cannot indefinitely sustain a substantial financial deficit.*
- *The obvious way to cut costs is by reducing paid clergy posts.*
- *Inevitably, financial viability will be scrutinised when a parish vacancy occurs.*
- *If our Parish Contribution is consistently significantly less than 100%, the possibility of being combined with other parishes as part of a 'team ministry' cannot be ruled out. (This has happened to other churches in the recent past.)*

This scenario is pessimistic, but it is **not** inevitable. The greatest influences on St. Matthew's future are the decisions we make, individually and together in the coming months and years. How can I be so sure? Because every year .....

## **Over 80% of our annual income is directly related to personal giving.**

Whilst there are other measures we can take to increase our income (*i.e. increasing bookings at the Church Centre*), the long-term solution to our financial situation will be found in the personal giving of the church family.

Therefore, please prayerfully consider the following steps you can take.

### **1. Start giving**

- I'm convinced that we actively support the causes closest to our hearts.
- If you come regularly to St. Matthew's, see yourself as part of the church family, and are committed to our mission and ministry, one of the ways you can express that commitment is by giving regularly.
- If you don't already, please consider giving regularly to support our work.

### **2. Give efficiently**

- The best way to give to St. Matthew's is by regular bank standing order because ;
  - *It helps us to plan ahead with greater confidence.*
  - *If you pay tax, we can make a 'Gift Aid' claim increasing the value of your gift.*

- If this isn't possible, the next best way to give is by the blue envelopes (another planned giving method).
- If that isn't possible, then giving via the collection plate is great! Even then, if you are a taxpayer and use one of the special blue Gift Aid envelopes, we can reclaim the tax thereby increasing its value.

### **3. Give via the church website**

The new church website includes the opportunity to give regularly, or make a one-off donation via our account with 'Charity Giving'. Click the '**SUPPORT US**' button on the front page of the website, or go direct to <http://www.stmatts.co.uk/support-us>

If you do this, it would be helpful if you could let Tom Morgan (Church Treasurer) know for his records. His email is [t.morgan14@btinternet.com](mailto:t.morgan14@btinternet.com)

### **4. Give generously**

It's always difficult to talk about money and to encourage people in their financial giving. This is particularly so in our present financial climate. However, the responsibility for funding the future mission and ministry at St Matthews is predominantly ours. We all need to respond in a way that we believe is honouring to God and an expression of our commitment to St Matthews.



### **What should I do now?**

- If you are planning to give via the church website, go to the '**SUPPORT US**' webpage and follow the instructions.
- Please fill in, if appropriate, the 'Advent Appeal' Response for, the Standing Order form and/or the Gift Aid form, all enclosed with this letter.
- Please put your completed forms in the '**Advent Appeal**' green envelope the envelope and place it in the '**Advent Appeal Response**' box at the back of the church, or send it to the Church Office.
- We will then take any appropriate action in line with your expressed wishes.

Whatever you decide, please continue to pray for the mission and ministry at St. Matthew's? The best way for our income to increase is by more people coming to faith in Jesus and becoming active members of the church family.

If you have any questions about this letter, please to talk to either myself or Tom.

Thank you again for your continued support and encouragement for St. Matthew's.

Yours in Christ

**Mike Coe - Rector**