

St. John the Baptist Parish Church  
Waterloo Road  
Crowthorne  
RG45 7NY  
June 2023

Dear Friends,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Stewardship Committee of the PCC to share with you the possibilities and potential of the upcoming few years, particularly in relation to the stewardship of our resources. Stewardship is a key part of our discipleship as a Christian, which causes us to give thanks for what we have, invest in what we have now, and plan for the future.

### **What are we currently doing?**

In our 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year, there is much to celebrate and much to explore moving forward:

#### **Children and young people:**

- We have seen an increase in our work with children and young people at our 10am service
- Come and See has been a success in enabling creative, inter-generational worship to take place
- Minus 5's continues to serve families in Crowthorne and beyond in a really special way.
- Easter was a fantastic time to see nearly 50 people (mostly children) involved in our craft morning
- We have seen Crowthorne C of E, Oaklands and Wildmoor Heath engaging with our Church over the last year.

We have a fantastic relationship with Crowthorne C of E school and would like to develop further relationships with other schools in the area.

#### **Occasional Offices:**

- We have some significant and very positive encounters with many people through weddings, baptisms, funerals and interments. We've been able to tailor every life event service to the needs of those we are working alongside, making for a very personalised and bespoke service.

**Pastoral Care:**

- We have a wonderful pastoral care team who look out for and care for those who would like. The LLMS and others regularly take communion and services at our local care homes and Woodmancote.

**Hospitality and Welcome:**

- Newcomers have said that they have been made to feel welcome, and a number have made their home among us.
- We have hosted a number of wonderful events throughout the year, which have provided both hospitality, welcome and fellowship.

**Worship and Music:**

- We have a fantastic choir wonderfully joined by our organists, Richard, Jennifer and Janet, alongside Penny, who is our choir director until July 2023.
- We have a great resource in our AV system, which enables us to be engaging, creative and flexible in our worship.
- Our Sunday morning services have grown and created space for people to come together to worship and be with one another.

**Missions:**

- 12.5% of our planned giving is shared with mission organisations across the world, including: Leprosy Mission, HopeZone, Corrymeela Community, Embrace the Middle East, CMS, Church Army. We also fundraise for Alexander Devine Children's Hospice, Christian Aid, and the Children's Society and Pilgrim Hearts among many more.

**Outreach:**

- St. John's partners with other churches and organisations across Crowthorne to engage with the Foodbank, Hopezone, Good Neighbours,

**The Church Building and Grounds:**

- The Church is used throughout the week for community groups such as craft clubs, line dancing, ballet, children's groups, bridge clubs and much more.
- The building is visited regularly in the week by those seeking solace, desiring to connect spiritually, pray and remember loved ones.

## **Connecting as a Community:**

As a Church, we come together as a community to care for, support and encourage each other in life's ups and downs...And much, much more!

## **Where are we heading?**

Over the next few years, we'd love to be able to expand and explore new ways of engaging with our local community here in Crowthorne and build upon what already is.

Might this mean investing in a new Music Director? A Youth and Children's worker? A Curate? Might we become a carbon-neutral church? How might we contribute positively to the issues of mental health and wellbeing? Could there be other new things on the horizon that God is inviting us to take part in?

As a PCC, we've been beginning a process of discerning where we might be heading together as a Church community. Whilst we don't have all the answers, our sense is that we are approaching a season of growth as we think about how to build on our foundations of worship, care, and hospitality as a Church whilst embodying joy and creativity in enabling everyone whom we encounter to flourish.

However, this is only possible with the resources to do so. Currently, the general fund here at St. John's is facing a deficit.

What follows is a simple explanation and key highlights of our current position:

**Forecast Income:** £113,532

**Forecast Expenditure:** £131,442

**Parish Share:** £79,918

**Missions giving:** 12.5%

**Forecast Deficit:** £17,910

The stewardship team have already looked at how we might cut costs, and where that's been possible, we have strived to do so. However, if we meet our forecast deficit, the PCC will have to seriously consider further cuts and focus on recouping costs rather than focusing on investing in the future of the Church. We would love to be in a position where new adventures are a possibility because of where we find ourselves financially.

## What can we do?

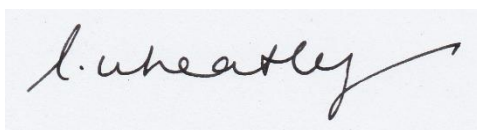
Over the next few months, the Stewardship committee would like to invite you to do the following:

- Pray individually and with others.
- Join us on the **25<sup>th</sup> June, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of July at 10am** as we begin a teaching series on Joy, Generosity and Gratitude as part of our thinking about stewardship of our money, passions and gifts.
- Join us on the **25<sup>th</sup> June, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of July at 6pm** to continue to pray for St. John's and Crowthorne.
- Consider signing up to:
  - o the Parish Giving Scheme at <https://www.parishgiving.org.uk/donors/find-your-parish/crowthorne-st-john-reading/>
  - o or Standing Order Scheme (Talk to Tracy Perrett who can give you a form)
  - o and Gift Aid scheme (Talk to Tracy who can give you a form)
- Re-evaluate your giving to the Church- are you giving too much or too little? If you'd like to change it, please contact your bank for standing orders, or contact the Parish Giving Scheme on 0333 022 1260.
- Join the Stewardship group, or feed in new ways of fundraising.
- Give thanks for all that has been and will be.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Laura (Vicar), Tracy (Treasurer) or a member of the stewardship committee (James Laverick, Julia Norton, Philip Foster).

We look forward to going on this adventure with you to see where God is leading us.

Grace and peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light blue background. The signature reads 'L. Wheatley' in a cursive script, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Revd Laura Wheatley Downs  
Vicar of St. John the Baptist Parish Church, Crowthorne.