

So what is the challenge we face at St Mary's. What is the call on our generosity?

Our last Stewardship Appeal was in 2015. We were then facing a deficit on the church's income and expenditure account of around £20,000. In the year before that there had been a deficit of around £37,000. In response to that appeal, our regular giving increased by £20,112.50 per year.

So why am I standing up here again?

Reason No 1: sadly, but inevitably dearly loved members of our church family have died. We have since 2015 lost around £7,000 in regular giving as a result of deaths.

So, we went up £20,000 on the ladder and came down £7,000 on the snake.

Reason No 2: we have increased our contribution to the diocese 2% in each year.

In 2016 we contributed £167,000, in 2017 this increased to £169,000 and for 2018 we have pledged a further 2% bringing us up to £172,000. So an increase of some £5,000. We went up £20,000 on the ladder and are now down a total of £12,000 on the snake.

Reason No 3: Charlie our children and youth worker. Do you remember, we appealed specifically for funds for a youth worker? We raised enough for two years. We have been able to fund Charlie to the end of this his third year from surplus income from Kitson Hall. Kitson Hall is unlikely to generate enough surplus income year on year to fund Charlie. So now we are now nearly down to the foot of the ladder.

Our expenditure, apart from the contribution we make to the diocese, is kept under tight control. We rightly increase salaries in line with inflation. Inflation is set to rise in 2018.

Our Treasurer forecasts that to break even this year we need another £10,000. We could have covered that from Kitson Hall but we decided to keep Charlie instead!

So what is our target?

It is to do what we did in 2015 again.

To increase our **planned, pledged and regular annual giving by at least £15,000.**

It says at the end of the leaflet, this challenge is not going to be easy.

But it also says, with your help we believe it can be done.

This is our church. I don't need to say that it matters. We responded with wonderful generosity in 2015.

In an uncertain world, when the Christian message of love and mutual care and support is needed more than ever, please if you possibly can be as generous again.