

20 May 2022

Dear Friends

Season of Generosity (22 May – 5 June 2022)

Our God is so generous and we are called to be generous disciples. We know that God will supply all our needs as we do His will. God's word calls us all to give generously of our time, talents, money and resources, so we may glorify God and lead others to Him. This letter is an invitation to both serve and give generously.

We recognise that we are living in testing times. There are tangible cost of living challenges and also many people are weary from the trauma of the last few years of the pandemic. So, there is much grace and no compulsion in this letter; only freedom, peace and a simple invitation for you to respond as God leads.

We believe that in this challenging season the church is called to be different. We are confident in God's goodness and are called to live generously with what we have and to share with those in need. This is a time for us to be generous with the gospel, with love, kindness, serving and with our possessions and finances. In that life-giving generosity we are living out our trust in the Lord and as everyone serves and gives generously, the practical needs in our church will be fully met. During this month we have been exploring these themes and we are grateful that so many people already give and serve in this generous way.

Serving and giving makes a huge difference

It really does! Your serving can change lives. No act of loving service is too small. We ask every person to serve as God leads. The needs are great. For various reasons, we currently we have less than half of the Café Hope volunteer opportunities filled. Our children and youth teams are around 30% down from 2019. The Living Hope team is similar and the worship team is over 50% less than it was then. The @5 team are blazing a trail of serving that I would love the entire church to follow. Everyone is serving in some way and making a difference.

What about your regular giving? It really matters too. Your giving goes towards supporting outreach, mission and all our regular activities, as well as paying for essential insurance, salaries, utilities and maintenance. Your regular giving keeps the church open six days a week and able to reach so many people. Our footfall this March was 4,000 people! It may help you to know that we don't receive income for the Church of England. In fact, we regularly give into the wider church to support struggling churches, train clergy and much more.

St Mary's monthly outgoings average around £31,500. Even with careful budgeting, we currently spend roughly £5,000 more than our income each month. We do have some reserves which keep us going, and have a policy of keeping three months of expenditure in

reserve. Without increasing our regular income, our finances will soon become unsustainable. However, we have proved time and again at St Mary's that nothing is impossible with God. This is a generous church. We raised over £1m for the Hope Centre! Our God is able to provide through His generous people.

The trustees of St Mary's (PCC) review our finances very regularly and have discussed implementing a number of helpful recommendations.

- Make reasonable savings in our budget and exploring new sources of income.
- Improve communication about church finances, including biblical teaching.
- Better use of technology such as online or card payments, as well as cash.
- Encourage more people to give regularly and sign up for Gift Aid where possible.

How can I respond generously in giving?

The Season of Generosity is from **22 May - 5 June**, when we ask everyone to make their response. This is also part of our 150th celebrations on 5 June! We are preparing to take the church into its new season! Here are ways to give:

- Start regular giving by setting up a new Standing Order to St Mary's for first time. St Mary's bank account details are on the [Giving page](#) of our website. We currently have 87 donors and would love that to grow to over 100.
- If you already give, please review your giving according to your ability to be generous. To update your giving, simply complete a new giving form, which will supersede the previous one.
- If at all possible, make sure to use Gift Aid so we can claim an extra 25% from HMRC. Email Zach Cook, our Gift Aid Administrator with any questions. Please email giftaid@stmarysloughton.com
- Make a one-off gift in the church offering on our website giving page. Perhaps you could consider giving extra from any annual bonus.
- Include St Mary's in your Will. We have really benefited from legacies.

Please ask any questions you might have to Rich Milne, our church Treasurer. You can email Rich on treasurer@stmarysloughton.com

How can I respond generously in serving?

There are so many opportunities to serve in Living Hope, Café Hope, ignite, Sundays, worship team, prayer ministry, pastoral care, practical help, Life Groups and much more. Did you know there are 85 children and young people who are part of ignite? They need us to help them follow Jesus. Café Hope is buzzing again with people longing for community. They need us to help them discover Jesus. Living Hope is caring for so many people with community, food, and sharing Jesus. There are spaces to visit the elderly and bring them meals and much more. There are opportunities to visit people in need, lead a Life Group, bake for café Hope, prayer with people and so much more! There are so many opportunities to serve.

You can register your interest online [HERE](#) and someone will get back to you with how you can start serving. Do have a look and register your interest. If you feel unsure and would like

some support or a chat to help discern how you might be able to serve, please call Malcolm on 07821 011435 or email malcolm@stmarysloughton.com

Thank you so much for all you're giving already and now again. Last year people gave £45,000 towards seven areas of church life. That giving is still being spent over this and next year. Due to various issues (i.e. contractor waiting times), this has taken longer than expected to work through. We are continuing to work this and it is being monitored by the PCC. That was wonderful generosity from this church family!

As we invite people to serve and give, we are very conscious of the need to also make time for family and sabbath. This is so important and we encourage wellbeing and balance in life so everything remains sustainable. Plus, there may be some who may need to seek assistance due to hardship. Again, we will always do all we can to help and support people going through financial hardship. There are ways we can help, so please let us know. We want to be very clear that there is no compulsion to give and if you are struggling financially, please just let this pass by. There may be other ways for you to serve.

Finally, we want to say again how thankful we are for everyone giving and serving so beautifully. We are a blessed and united church family. We want to see Jesus lifted high. We want to love one another. We want to see people transformed by God's love. We want to see every person, every place saturated with God.

You are an amazing church family!

This comes with our sincere thanks and love.

Yours in Christ

Revd Malcolm Macdonald
Vicar

Richard Milne
Treasurer