

There is a certain satisfaction about attending finance working group. The team works so hard to record, forecast, question and then there is a report, and then there is a budget. They are thorough and I am grateful. I don't want to sit on our laurels, but sometimes there is a moment to celebrate and sometimes there is a moment to dream.

People here are generous, really generous. We have caught up to our preCOVID reserves which we need to have so that we can weather a bit of a storm, we have been in the black, not always by much, but still in the black for several years. Thank you, everyone.

Please don't get me wrong, we have challenges this year. Fuel bills will rise, and we will need to get busy with some fund raising for our three most affected stained-glass windows, but our finances are stable. Healthy finances are so important. They underpin what we can do as church. This is what I mean; this is what I am celebrating today:

...We have nearly completed the Brambleton Hall development project. Sue, Jeanette, Shirley, June, Jane, Joyce, Gwen, Iris Yvonne, Joyce – thank you for your patience. Thank you for coming here. There is decorating and a community art project and outdoor work, but the structure is there, the boxing ring is out of the hall and we can begin to populate the building with

activities that will benefit the community, some that are put on by the church, but some provided by people who need space to rent. And there will be children's birthday parties again. The community have truly missed this.

...We are drawing in record numbers of people to our Tuesday communion and coffee morning. There are rarely fewer than 50 for coffee, many of whom see that as the highlight of their week.

...Over the school holidays we are again feeding children whose family cannot afford their lunch. There is so much need around us.

...We are saving food and household goods from landfill while helping people in need in Farnham to make ends meet at the Community Fridge and Warehouse. This kind of work also allows us to help people who are homeless, who are just leaving one or another shelter, who are struggling with isolation, who need financial guidance, who need love and cake and other people. We are working with other charities across Farnham in making a real difference to people's lives

...And we have new people on Ministry team, Rachel Sturt, Haydon Wilcox and Ben Cahill Nicholls who will soon start at Tilford this summer.

...We have recruited more choristers as a result of Jordan's recent and continued efforts which makes our worship beautiful, but it also gives us the chance to welcome new people to church and to give them something of great value.

...We have a lovely Ministry Intern who among other activities has started a boys group with Frances Garland and there is pizza here to be eaten – a girls group must follow

...We have almost come to the end of our Foyer groups – although you are allowed to meet informally if you want, of course you are, and we will use this growing in love for each other to go deeper with God, ourselves and our neighbour in the Lent course. People have really valued this opportunity to grow together

...And Lent – there are concerts and lunches already planned.

...There are people volunteering for all kinds of groups and roles we need to continue and doing so well

...And we are growing in number.

I could go on and on and on

Like Peter, John and James, can you see God in all of this? God at work all around us? Do you see God inspiring each person here to worship and to bring their faith and gifts and money into

all of the week, every week. Sometimes we forget, we are used to our blessings until something really tough happens in our lives and we realise how essential God is and how important our church is to us; until we catch a glimpse of our loving Lord, perhaps shining whiter than white or offering himself in love for us in death. And when we see God, there is gratitude. I feel it every Sunday, but none more so than today. We are church here together doing what church should do every day. Thank you God for each one of us here gathered together

Of course God leads us and inspires us, but our giving is what provides us the privilege to do God's work here as church while it grows our own generosity and beauty. All that we celebrate today is underpinned by stewardship.

And like Peter in our gospel this morning, when we see the love of God, the power of God, the reality of Jesus, we have to do something. For me, this having to do something is looking around on a Sunday morning. Who is missing? Who is under-represented? Who didn't come back from the pandemic. In our case it is the families, young people, children, young adults. Yes, our families that worship here are wonderful, but this is the one demographic that is under-represented, has not reached pre-COVID numbers.

To me and probably to all of us it is clear, culture is always changing and this is most apparent in our younger members of church, our younger people in the parish, but we also used to have a youth and children's minister who worked with families. We have the funding to pay a salary and if our giving continues to be generous we will have the funding to help with this minister's accommodation and the confidence in our general fund to be able to recruit. Imagine the new life this will bring, how God will use us.

So today, I am not asking you to build tents for Elijah and Abraham and Jesus because they do not need them. I am asking you to take time in gratitude and prayer to consider your giving. To join me in giving thanks for all your giving and that of everyone here and all it brings to the lives of the people in the Bourne and surrounds.

I am asking that if you are able to continue to give as you do, to consider the Parish Giving Scheme if you don't use that and perhaps to tick the box that allows your giving to increase or decrease automatically by the current economic climate, but please continue to give.

I am asking that if you are able to increase your giving to allow us to move to the next level of ministry in this place, please do so, we need to grow, and

I am asking that if you are less able to give than you have been that you give less knowing God simply looks at you as he does all of us while saying this is my son or daughter my beloved and simply be glad.

Pass out chocolate (if you are reading this, maybe you could go and get a piece of chocolate or something delicious and begin to eat it) Thank you for your goodness. So good we can taste it. Direct us each in prayer as we consider our own finances and Use us Lord in our gratitude