

Text of a talk given at weekend Masses on 29 and 30 June 2024 on behalf of the parish Finance and Fabric Committee

We are here today to make a special appeal to you which is central to the future wellbeing of our parish. This talk follows one that we gave after weekend Masses back in February and is part of our commitment to help parishioners understand the parish's finances and its financial position.

St Erconwald's parish has a mission to serve the local community of Walton on Thames spreading the Good News of Christ. The FFC aims to support the parish in achieving its mission through ensuring its financial stability. It's our job to make sure that the parish has the resources it needs

- to meet parish running costs;
- to maintain and improve the fabric and facilities of our buildings,
- to support and promote the spiritual and pastoral life of the parish and local community.

You may have seen that the [accounts](#) for the last year have been published on our website. Our accounts are not always easy to understand, so I want to bring to your attention some of the key points for our parish.

The parish has bounced back from Covid in a strong fashion, with overall attendance at Masses increasing significantly.

***[See bar chart slide.]*** However, in spite of this and throughout the year or so with general inflation at well over 10%, our regular income from weekly and monthly offerings has barely risen at all since 2020. So our regular income no longer covers the parish's month to month costs. We are operating with an unsustainable deficit. Last year, our costs increased by over £18,000 whereas our income fell by about £300. And that deficit continued to build in the first quarter of this year.

The great news is that our fundraising activities (such as the highly enjoyable Spring Ball) are proving very successful and this is really helping, but the money raised from that will need to be targeted primarily at repair work on the church and hall.

Let me bring this together:

- **First**, the parish's funds are wholly dedicated to supporting our mission to Grow in faith, love and community.
- **Second**, our aim together must be for income from weekly donations, monthly standing orders and other similar items, to match or exceed the parish's regular running costs, including the diocesan levy. The need to remedy this is urgent.
- **Third**, we must also build up capital reserves which will allow us to invest in the repair and maintenance of our church, our hall and the presbytery to bring them up to modern standards and to make them safe and comfortable places for worship and all the other activities that make up our parish mission. Some of this is also urgent. We will need to return to this issue in the autumn.

**[See second slide]** So, to the main headline: what can we do to reverse our operating deficit and return the parish to financial stability? The quickest and most important thing which

each of us can all do and which could make a huge difference is to look again at our own weekly offerings at Mass and our monthly standing orders and see if we can afford to regularly give more – even just a little. For example, if each household in the parish were able to increase its general offerings on average by just £2 or £3 per week – less than the cost of a cup of coffee in any local cafe - that alone could raise up to £20k or more additional income for the parish per year. There are several easy ways of donating to the parish:-

- Cash in the plate at Mass
- Regular monthly standing orders from your bank
- Dona machine at the back of church or the QR codes on the benches
- Online through the parish website.

To make your donations go further, please consider Gift Aid if you are a UK tax payer. Under the Gift Aid Scheme, the Parish can reclaim 25 pence for every pound that you donate. That means for every £1,000 donated to the parish, it can claim another £250 back from His Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

You can understand how this can make a significant difference to the parish.

All you need to do is complete the Gift Aid declaration.

**Please now do what you can so that we can continue to grow our parish's mission in Walton.** Thank you for your attention.