

All Saints Church – article in January 2017 Village Views

At the time of writing, we are just about to start the Christmas celebrations in All Saints Church with our Carol Service on 11th December. The church has been festooned with holly, ivy and candles and the Christmas tree has been decorated. The East Garston Churchwardens and PCC wish all readers of Village Views peace and happiness as we celebrate the joyous occasion of the birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

We are currently holding our Gift Appeal in East Garston asking for generous support for our parish church. Why is it necessary? In 2015 we were fortunate because our income exceeded our expenditure but the forecast is that for 2016 our income will not even match our expenses and there is likely to be a deficit of several thousand pounds. In 2016, our general collections, ad hoc donations and fund raising are all currently less than they were in 2015. There was no fete in East Garston this year and so we are missing that as one of our major sources of income.

The cost of sustaining the clergy (the Parish Share which goes to the Diocese), keeping the church clean together with the normal bills for electricity and insurance, maintenance costs for the organ, clock, lightning protection, fire prevention, etc. are considerable and increasing, even without carrying out general repairs to the fabric of the church. However, the income for the church is limited to what is in the collection plate, regular promised giving, the response to appeals, grants and the proceeds from fundraising occasions. The State currently helps by allowing us to claim Gift Aid on all donations received from UK taxpayers (25p for every pound donated) and on small amounts given by non-taxpayers.

When the Parish Council held its survey several years ago, over 80% of the parishioners replied that it was important that the church building was there for baptisms, weddings and funerals. However, the church needs to thrive, rather than struggle to survive, so that it can be there for everyone whenever they need it. We hope that our parishioners will respond generously to the Gift Appeal and also consider regular giving in future via standing order/direct debit to assist us to prepare the budget for 2017 with greater confidence that there will be sufficient funds available to meet the forecasted expenditure.

**Bob Briant
Churchwarden**