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Dear St Mary's Parishioner

We've all had a bad year: Covid 19, the uncertainty, the illness of some, the Lockdown effects on the economy and our freedoms, unemployment, worries about the future. St Mary's has struggled to rise above all this and continues to do so. Even when we were forced to close our doors we kept some Church observance in being. We made the point that our Church remained the centre of our Stoke D'Abernon community, as it has been for more than 1300 years.

Financially we have not done too badly in 2020; but our fixed costs continue, of course, and our income still depends upon the generosity of our parishioners. A disproportionate amount of this income is provided by a small number of regular givers. If you are not one of them, would you consider joining? By joining Planned Giving you will be helping us to plan ahead. Any regular gift, however small, greatly assists our administration and planning because it gives us some idea of what our future income will be. If you would like further information about Planned Giving, I would be delighted to pass your details to Stephen Chater. If you agree to join we will benefit hugely from your donation being Gift Aided if you are a UK taxpayer.

But we don't want only to service the needs of our Church, our Hall and our activities, important as these are. Our Christian Mission should also be to look outwards, to help where we can in our community and the wider world.

I know that many parishioners already contribute to local and other charitable causes. But as we approach the Christmas Season, may I ask you to consider making an additional financial contribution. Your PCC has proposed that half of what is received should be donated to St Mary's and half to two other deserving charities, Oasis and WaterAid, which would each receive 25%.

Oasis Children's Charity is a unique service based in Cobham and provides support to families across Elmbridge. More details can be found at: [www.oasischildcare.co.uk](http://www.oasischildcare.co.uk). WaterAid UK works to provide communities around the world with clean water and decent hygiene. Details at: [www.wateraid.org/uk](http://www.wateraid.org/uk)

You can donate by sending a cheque to the parish office made payable to: Parochial Church Council of Stoke d'Abernon and please write 'Christmas Appeal' on the back of your cheque. If you wish to make an online donation, the sort code is 60 06 03 and the account number is 343 11 211 and the account name is Parochial Church Council of Stoke d'Abernon and please, in the reference, write 'Christmas Appeal'.

This Christmas is going to be very different from anything we have ever experienced. Perhaps this is the time for us to consider those people both at home and abroad who have not got the things that we take for granted. Christmas is a time for families and hopefully this year we will be able to spend some time together. I commend this Christmas Appeal to you.

Some words from the carol 'In the Bleak Midwinter', by Christina Rossetti, spring to mind;

*What can I give him,  
poor as I am?  
if I were a Shepherd,  
I would bring a lamb,  
if I were a wise man  
I would do my part;  
yet what I can I give him,  
give my heart.*

I hope you have a happy and blessed Christmas.

Thoughts and prayers

*Godfrey*