

Parish Appeal 2026

10:00am Holy Communion – 20th September 2026

1 Chronicles 29:10-13

The Lord spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying: Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: When you enter the land that I am giving you, the land shall observe a sabbath for the Lord. For six years you shall sow your field, and for six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in their yield; but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath *of complete rest* for the land, a sabbath for the Lord: you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. You shall not reap the aftergrowth of your harvest or gather the grapes of your unpruned vine: it shall be a year of complete rest for the land.

Matthew 6:19-24

‘Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

‘The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

‘No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

<Prayer>

Just recently I attended an evening lecture in Westminster Abbey, where a group called *Theos* gave a wonderful presentation on the topic of *faith in democracy*. Theos are a sort of theological think-tank for matters of nation, church and people. Just my sort of thing.

If you have ever been to Westminster, you cannot fail to be awed by the architecture. Could we moderns even attempt to recreate something as holy and beautiful out of stone using just hand tools, as the Saxons and Normans did. I very much doubt it. But for me the grand prestige of the place is in its history. Yes, many of the monarchs crowned and buried, but what I'm thinking of is the continued presence of the Church (in its widest sense) amongst people for what must be approaching 1,000 years. **Society is always shifting, usually quite slowly, sometimes by immediate crisis, yet despite it all the Church remains steadfast and present throughout.** Meanwhile, mortal flesh just comes and goes.

I often come into our churches quietly and alone, when I'm sure I shall have the space to myself. I will bring prayers for the place, the ministry, the people, and the future, **knowing that all things are in the hands of God.** Usually, I bring a confession for the many times I have acted as if I were God myself, when mistakenly thinking that being Rector means this whole edifice must pivot entirely upon me and my actions.

In those prayerful moments I have a habit of drawing my prayers together in a form of words which I have burned upon my soul - **'Yours, Lord, are the greatness the power the splendour and the majesty; all things come from you and for your own do we give you.'** It's an ancient phrase from the chronicles of deep time, where anyone who carried the expectation of people, must always acknowledge the supremacy of God, **and that with out him we can do nothing.**

<pause>

The books of the Chronicles found in the Old Testament run parallel with the books of 1 and 2 Samuel. Here is wonderful narrative history of God's struggle with mankind. You should try to read them, they are better than any novel.

What defines God people, that's all of us from the ancient Israelites until now, is a common story. Around 1,000 years before Christ, the life of King David was tumultuous. From simple beginnings he was chosen, guided and blessed by God through more upheaval in his society than we could possibly imagine in our own uncertain times. **Yet he prevailed by God's plans, and usually came unstuck when following his own misguided plans.** What marked David out as the faithful hero of Israel's history was his faithfulness and humility before God, who he knew as his only Lord.

'Then King David blessed the Lord in the presence of all the assembly. 'Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our ancestor Israel, for ever and ever. Yours, O Lord, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty. All that is in the Heavens and on the Earth are yours. It is my own prayer.

David wanted everyone **to see and know** his own *merely secondary* place before God, his limited and Earthly rule, so that all the people gathered before him would themselves know God as their *one true king*, from whom all blessings shall flow. **But it is clear, such blessings will only flow to them, if they first acknowledge God as sovereign Lord, above all else. That remains true for us too.**

<pause>

It's an enduring theme of the Bible that we share certain assurance with God – commitments, promises and covenants. It's amazing how God will react to our searching for Him with His own great love for us. Give him a little, he gives you a lot. **What we bring to God he shall return to us in such great measure.**

We learn as children how promises are of such great trust and value. Promises are so honoured because they are assured by our own good conscience, and the knowledge that those we promise to, will be so pleased with their fulfilment and so hurt when they are not.

This promised commitment we share with God is the forerunner of our own relationships and behaviours towards each other – friendship, families and society. **Investing in kept promises, as God first showed us to do, shall see the result of us living more and more each day in the Image of God.** King David knew that well:

'Riches and honour come from you, O Lord, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might; and it is in your hand to make us great and to give strength to all. And now, our God, we give thanks to you and praise your glorious name.'

What we bring to God he shall return to us in such great measure.

<pause>

It has been four years since our last Parish Appeal in 2022. The covenants and promises you have made to Haslemere Parish by your regular giving have sustained us through some very busy and creative times. Across the years, the leadership of the parish, sustained by us all, has sought to grow and deepen our ministry in

the church and across Haslemere. The greatest value we have is our people, generous with their giving, talents and time. **All I seek to do is to set the right conditions for God's people to be disciples in His name. Faith must lead to action but can only do so if the chance is there to serve.** The range and reach of our ministry are really quite something. **So, I want to claim that we are a pretty healthy parish. What we give is used well, not wasted. It all goes to the ministry, our ministry.** Thanks be to God, and thanks be to all of you.

But we all know what can happen across the years. Some will join us, and I want to say we are churches of welcome and hospitality. We have seen no decline. Some, sadly, will leave us - we have said goodbye to those we have loved. And as always, good old inflation will do its relentless thing. So, four years on, now comes the time again to remind us what God has already taught us - **what we bring to God he shall return to us in such great measure.**

There are a number of things I would like you to see as part of this Parish Appeal. Many of us will receive an envelope through our doors this week. However, you may not have been added to the great Parish address database as yet, so if you are not sure then please take one of these from the box by the church door. I would hate for anyone to miss out!

Within this envelope is a **letter** to you, just one page, a **leaflet**, and a **form** to help you to respond. The leaflet makes many claims, and I can assure you it's all true! **At the center of our parish life is the worship of our loving and generous Father God.** On that strong foundation is our **Pastoral Ministry** of home visiting, nursing homes, invitations to gather, and The Hearing Champions. This week we shall be launching a new initiative to invite school parents to come into the Link before and after drop-off time.

Our **Children and Families Team** I think is the strongest in the whole of the Guildford Diocese. We teach and demonstrate a Christian attitude to society and service. I'm especially pleased to see young leadership coming through. That extends onto some of the things we hold dear as part of our church life – confirmation, first communion, young bell ringers, and the junior and youth choirs. Young people serve in worship as acolytes, and from time to time we give the whole service to children to run. Our connection with St Bartholomew's school has gone from strength to strength, and we have always had a full set of foundation governors.

Outreach into the community remains strong, with the town chaplaincy. We have remained very supportive, through events, of many other charitable organisations in the town. **What you give to the church remains with the church**, but with fundraising events we are often able to generate an extra £10,000 annually specifically for local charities.

By **encouraging good leadership**, we are able to double the size of the clergy team. Marion will be ordained in November, and Victoria continues her training. The effect of that for Justin and I is that it gives us more time to concentrate on all other areas of ministry. I've been in leadership long enough to know, when things are well led then others will wish to join him. Leadership is another sign of great health for us.

Last, and certainly not least, is the **care we have for our buildings**. It scarcely needs to be said that our good situation has allowed such incredible ambitions as the Link Community Hub. **That work is all paid up**, as a parish we carry no debt whatsoever. The fabric of our buildings is well maintained, and will always continue to be so. The parish remains committed to ensuring that what is given as legacy in the names from those who have died, shall be dedicated to the care of our churches.

All of this has to recognise that we are a charity ourselves, responsible completely for our own finances. We have no central support from the Church of England. Everything which comes to us is by the generosity of people, and the sound care of the assets we hold.

What I extend to you is the offer and invitation to be a regular supporter of your church. Many of you already are, so at the same time I would invite you to think about a review of what we you give. Like me, the basic sum of which may have remained the same for four years.

My pledge and guarantee to you is that everything you give will be used very well, for the ministry we all share. We want to care for you at all ages, in the name of Christ. **What we bring to God he shall return to us in such great measure.**

On the back page of the leaflet is some interesting guidance about how regular gifts are given to the church through the Parish Giving Scheme. **How much do people typically give?** Do please have a look at that, and you may find it will help you to set your own response. An easy decision to make, and one which many people have not chosen to do, is to set your regular giving as index linked so that there is an annual increase automatically in line with inflation. We also make the very greatest use of Gift Aid. **I hope you also know that complete privacy is maintained at all times.** Even I, as Rector, have no idea who gives what – it will remain that way.

So it is never easy to talk about matters of money in the church. I'm not always comfortable to do so myself. Today Jesus reminds us of that slight discomfort, that makes us question. In his own challenging and direct style:

‘Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.’

When you come up here to the step in just a little while, to receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ, I am only interested in what blessing I can bring to you. **But quietly in your hearts, give thank with me for all we share together.** My prayer is that the amazing generosity of God's gift to us by his, the Son of David – will keep this ministry and our churches for even as long as Westminster Abbey.

Do please look to find out more at the Parish Appeal webpage on the parish website – www.haslemereparish.org/appeal

God bless you all.

Amen