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*The Parishes of Branscombe, Colyton with Colyford,
Musbury, Northleigh & Southleigh*

May 2024

Dear Friend and Parishioner,

A Season of Stewardship *your gift will make a difference*

We are fortunate to be a part of a lively church and Mission Community where we have the opportunity to engage with a range of worship and activities. We thank God for the variety of gifted and deeply committed members of our church. Maintaining a bustling and diverse programme of services and events, keeping our church buildings safe, warm and welcoming, open every day for all, comes at a price. What we manage to do by God's grace and the resources and the goodwill we have at our disposal, is incredible. It costs over £2500 a week to run this parish and its ministry. Every penny is raised locally—despite the common misconception that parish churches such as ours receive external funding from the central Church of England or Government.

Continuing repairs and maintenance of our church buildings has been possible thanks to groups such as the Friends of St Andrew's and the Friends of St Michael's who have made significant grants to the PCC. Through specific legacies we have also been able to improve certain aspects of the churches and provision. Yet many of our funds cannot be used for general running expenses. In recent years, fundraising events and the hugely successful Lantern Shop have helped us to keep going. Thank you for your energy, generosity and hard work in facilitating and supporting our various avenues of fundraising and giving.

If you have attended our Annual Meetings over the past few years, you will not be surprised by the news that both St Andrew's and St Michael's are running at a considerable deficit. Our income has been insufficient to meet our expenditure for a number of years. The shortfall has been met in various ways in the past, including the disposal of assets and, in recent years, the PCC have had to make the difficult decision to reduce our contribution to the Diocesan Common Fund in order to pay other essential running costs. In 2021 we paid 50% of our CF request; in 2022 we paid 75%. Last year we were only able to pay 45% of the amount requested owing to the pressure on finances. This level of deficit is unsustainable going forward and we need to address our financial situation urgently.

One area in which we could make a real difference to the life and future of our two churches is by increasing our regular, committed giving and legacies. The Christian understanding of stewardship is rooted in the knowledge that our lives, our gifts and talents are given to us by a loving,

providential God. All things come from him, and of our own do we give him (1 Chronicles 29.14). We are called to consider what we have, what we can do, and to use what we have been given not simply for ourselves, but for the benefit of those around us and as an offering to God in gratitude. Each of us is called to take stock and decide to give according to what we have, and not reluctantly or under compulsion (2 Corinthians 9.7).

Thank you to all who give regularly, by standing order, envelope or via the Parish Giving Scheme. However, as you will see in the enclosed leaflet, as a church our average level of regular giving is limited both in terms of the number of those who have pledged to give regularly, and the average amount pledged. If more people were able to commit to giving regularly according to their means, it could possibly transform our future and enable us not simply to survive, but to thrive.

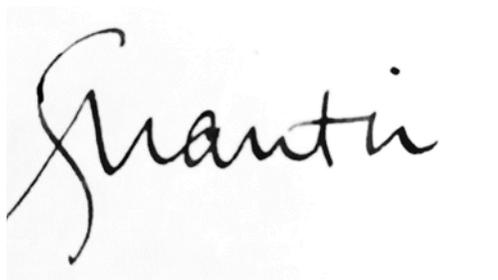
We are writing to ask if you will consider becoming a regular giver or, if you already give, to review the amount you give. Your gift, however large or small will make a difference. All that we ask you to do is to consider your resources, your own income and expenditure, and prayerfully and realistically consider what you may be able to offer as a regular and sustainable gift to the church.

- Could I increase my regular giving by an additional £3 a week (the price of a cup of tea or coffee in a shop)?
- Could I afford to give an extra £7 a week (the cost of a cup of tea and a cake)?
- Could I afford to give £14 a week (the cost of buying a weekday newspaper)?
- Could I give £20–£30 a week (the cost of keeping a dog or cat)?

Please pray for the life and health of our parish and churches; take time to look at the information enclosed, which has been put together by our Stewardship Committee.

There is a response slip in the leaflet for you to fill out and return. They are confidential and can be placed in the response box in church. We shall also be holding a special service at St Andrew's on Pentecost Sunday (19th May at the later time of 10.30am) and at St Michael's, Colyford on Trinity Sunday, 26th May at 11.15am, to give thanks for the pledges received and celebrate our church life together. You are warmly invited. The services will be followed by bring-and-share lunches. Please check the pew sheets and newsletter or see your church or chapel warden for details.

With every good wish and blessing,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Fr Steven Martin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'S'.

Fr Steven Martin.