



Parish of Esher
**GROWING
TOGETHER**

In Faith, Hope & Love

Parish of Esher, Christ Church, Esher with St George's, West End

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The Parish of Esher is for everyone

The two church buildings, Christ Church and St George's West End, have been beacons of faith, hope and love in this area for well over a century. Generations have come through the doors to celebrate their marriages, welcome their new-borns and grieve their losses – all of it embraced by the beauty of the worship offered in these houses of prayer week in and week out.



Even when the pandemic temporarily closed the buildings, other means of being 'church' opened up. New ways of gathering remotely, broadcasting services and staying in touch kept the bonds of community strong through the toughest of times.



Now, with a return to in-person worship as well as a continuing online presence, there's a renewed sense of purpose. It's not so much 'building back better' as building back bolder, with a fresh confidence in the gifts we have received and which, in turn, we offer: a thoughtful Faith, a hard-won Hope, a generous Love.

These pages outline some of what we already do together as a parish, as well as what we'd like to do in the future. I ask you, please, to consider how you might support this work.

If you can give a new, or increase an existing financial gift, thank you. If at this moment you cannot, thank you for considering it. If you can give more time through volunteering in particular ways, thank you. Every contribution is needed, gratefully received and truly valued.

God bless,

Let's remember what we've achieved

Since the first 'lockdown' in March 2020 we in the Parish of Esher have, amongst many other things:

- Broadcast dozens of Sunday services on YouTube, SoundCloud and Facebook, with close to an extraordinary 20,000 combined 'views.'
- Offered pastoral care and support to those affected by the pandemic, those in distress and those grieving lost loved ones – conducting some 50 funerals at church, graveside or crematorium.
- Distributed 1000s of Easter cards and Christmas cards to practically every home in the parish – bringing messages of comfort and hope to the community.
- Introduced weekly assemblies for Esher Church School – initially online and now in-person – nurturing the faith of hundreds of students and their families.
- Continued Music on the Green concerts, supporting musicians and streaming online when the church was closed – with over 1,500 YouTube 'views.'
- Used Zoom to sustain community through Book Group and Lenten discussions, Bible studies, prayer fellowships and family-friendly events.
- Supported charities including the East Elmbridge Food Bank, Kingston Church Action on Homelessness, the 'Link to Hope' Christmas shoebox campaign and a technology appeal for local school children.
- Retained our wonderful staff, who worked tirelessly to support the parish's mission and ministry and keep 'the show on the road.'
- Re-opened the churches when safe to do so – welcoming back Sunday congregations as well as school groups, concert goers, baptism parties and wedding celebrations.



A selection of some of the many 'Heart Stones' left at the church during lockdown. Pebbles were painted with words and images of hope, gratitude and encouragement.

How did this happen?

All of this was made possible by the generous financial and practical support of so many people. Just imagine the thousands of volunteer hours spent preparing, cleaning and disinfecting the church, planning and live-streaming services and events, keeping in touch with the lonely and generally putting faith into action. It's little short of miraculous!

What's next?

In addition to building on the work of the past 18 months, we have identified three particular priorities for the coming year:

- **Carry out crucial fabric repairs and internal electrical work at Christ Church.** This landmark church in the centre of Esher is a resource for all the community and keeping it 'fit for purpose' is key to its future. Upgrading the interior lighting and electrics is essential and will make the building more welcoming, safe, energy efficient and available to host more events.
- **Recruit a new Children and Families Worker.** The pandemic has had an enormous effect on the lives of many of our young people. We want to expand our work with families and children, offering opportunities to learn and to question, to have fun and grow in faith.
- **Undertake the necessary renovation of Saint George's Church West End.** This beautiful 'tin tabernacle', built as a temporary structure in 1879, needs its corrugated iron external walls completely stripped back and repainted so it can continue its unique role at the heart of West End village life.

How we do it?

To sustain and grow the parish, and undertake these priority projects, will require a significant increase in regular giving to the church. We have ambitious plans, but they are achievable.

- The church's planned giving scheme is the simplest way to make regular contributions by standing order.
Is it time to join, or reassess your level of giving?
- Donating through Gift Aid means the parish can claim an extra 25p for every £1 you give, at no extra cost to you. **If you're a UK tax payer, then why not join?**
- Many of us have regular monthly expenditure on media subscriptions, technology or entertainment. **Where does giving to the work of the Church come in our list of priorities?**
- The Church of England encourages us to consider giving 5% of our after-tax income to our parish and a similar amount to other good causes, although the wealthy might give much more. **Is it time to give a percentage of what you receive?**

At the end of the day...

How much we give is a thoughtful, prayerful decision for each of us to make. The Bible speaks of giving according to our means (2 Corinthians 8.11) but more than that it points, on every page, to the God who is only love – giving and giving not out of a sense of obligation, but simply because that is what Love does.