

Dear Parishioners

Firstly, we hope you are all keeping safe in these very difficult times. We know that the current restrictions are affecting everyone in our parish community in different ways. Many parishioners will be struggling financially as a result of furloughing, loss of employment or the effects of lockdown on businesses. We ask that you keep all our parishioners in your prayers, especially our incredible key workers working in our essential services and schools, as we continue to fight the spread of the virus in our community and beyond.

As you will remember, in March we had to close our parish churches. During this time our YouTube and Zoom masses were well attended. This was followed by the re-opening of our churches for Masses with COVID restrictions in place. We would like to thank everyone who has helped to make this possible by volunteering to open our churches. Without your kind efforts it would not have been possible. We are writing to you during the second period of lockdown when we are once again unable to attend masses in-person. From 2nd December churches will be open again but yet again numbers will be reduced.

All parishes and charities are finding their sources of income severely reduced as a result of the pandemic and the measures necessary to control it, and our parish is no different. We are writing to you today to update you on the current situation of our parish and to ask for your support. The simple fact is that we use all our money to run the parish and we pretty much run a deficit or break in normal times. But between the end of March and September 2020 the money generously donated to the parish dropped by over £18,000 compared to the same period last year. This represents a decrease of over 25% in our annual donations. We anticipate that the losses over the 3 months (October to December) will see a further reduction of £9,500, resulting in a loss of £27,500 for the year. If restrictions continue into next year, then the impact will be greater with anticipated reduction expected to be a further £15,000.

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone in the parish who has kindly changed their method of donation from envelopes and the collection plate to standing orders. These donations are greatly appreciated and, because we can rely on them, are making a huge difference. If you usually contribute with cash gifts in the collection plate and can set-up a standing order instead, this would be incredibly helpful. If you do internet banking, you can do this online, using our bank details: Our Lady of Kirkstall, sort code 40-27-15, a/c no: 21017888. If you don't, you can either email Su for a standing order mandate, or call into one of our parish offices for one.

If you are a UK taxpayer, the parish may also be able to recover an extra 20% in gift aid. For example, a gift of £20 per month becomes £24 with gift aid. All you need to do is fill in a form, which are available at the back of the churches, or from the parish offices, and return them to Amanda or Su.

We fully understand that many people will be struggling financially now, and we would not want to cause any further hardships to anyone. If, however, your situation is such that you would be able and willing to set up a standing order or if you are in a position to increase your current one, please get in touch with Su or Amanda in the parish offices. If you prefer to make a single donation or you put money in a collection box on a regular basis, you can donate at either of the parish offices or in the churches if you are currently attending Mass.

We would like to thank you for your generosity in supporting Our Lady of Kirkstall. Without your prayers, actions and generosity, the amazing work across the parish would simply not be possible.

Please keep safe and we will look forward with hope to being together again as a parish very soon. We all pray that the Lord will continue to guide and help those brilliant people who are working so hard to support others so that life can return to normal.

God bless,

Geraldine Comaish (Chair), Richard Cavadino and Ben Oldham on behalf of Parish Council and Finance Committee