

A Parish Response to Rising Church Energy Costs

As I explained last week, we have received notification of our projected gas bills. Last year we paid £750 at All Hallows, this year the estimation is around £7,000. At St Mary Magdalene, our bills were around £200 and we are being charged an estimated £2,000.

As I'm sure you will understand this is of great concern to us. It is not right for us to spend all our money on heating when there are other things we need to support. Rising fuel costs are an issue which will be here for some time yet so we need to think about what to do. The status quo is not an option.

The Diocese has produced a toolkit to help churches in this position. We've studied it and realise we are doing many of the actions suggested already. We have draft excluded where we can, and have our heating on a timer. We will also make our signage more visible to help people understand we need to close doors and turn switches off, etc.

We are exploring whether we can gain additional financial help.

Last week I asked our Church Council (PCC) to meet to discuss this issue. We talked about how much it costs to heat our buildings. We agreed that we need to help our parishioners worship together, but we must reduce our heating bills. We agreed that we need to make changes.

With this in mind, the PCC agreed unanimously that we need to change the structure of our services for a short period of time in order to bring our heating costs down. This will be reviewed at the end of January.

I realise that this will be difficult for many people. Covid was relatively recently, and it is very comforting for us to have our sacred spaces to meet in, now that our churches are open. Remember, though, that the illustration of church in the Bible is not a building but a human body, where ligaments and joints are joined together and work together. One part of the body can't say to the other, I don't need you, as St Paul wrote. So your support is needed right now and we need to work together.

From 20th November, we will change our service times temporarily. Morning services will alternate between churches. When we meet at All Hallows, we will still have an 8am service.

Next week I will let you know of all new service venues, including Christmas services. These will also be posted on our website. Transport will be available for anyone who needs it.

If you can, I urge you to join us and not to boycott our church services. Change is challenging, but this short period could also be a time for us to deepen our relationships together and with God.

If you have any questions or worries, I am available for a chat and a coffee. You can also talk to any other members of the PCC.

Angela Hannafin