

# Friends of St. John's Parish Church Yeovil

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BA22 8SA

16<sup>th</sup> December 2011

Dear Friend of St. John's,

It does not seem that it is 12 months since my last Christmas letter. Time seems to go quicker as you get older, it must be one of the signs of old age. We held three fund raising events during 2011. In May we had another successful Brimsmore evening which raised £240, this was less than in previous years due to lower ticket sales and an increase in the cost of the meal which we did not fully pass on. Our next function at the Swan theatre was a joint event with Somerset Area Cruse Bereavement Care which raised £425 for each charity. The plays, Single Spies, were extremely well acted but the subject was not to everyone's taste and we did not manage to sell all the tickets. The final event was a barn dance in September and raised £273 and we are very grateful to Keith Stevens for once again being our caller and getting everyone dancing from the start to the finish.

I am conscious that these are not large sums but it is extremely difficult to find events that we can put on without involving a big outlay with the expectation of being able to sell enough tickets. Most of our support comes from members of our congregation who are already very committed in their support for the church both financially and in so many other ways. With the downturn in the economy it is becoming increasingly difficult to sell tickets. Once again we are always open to suggestions for events which are likely to be popular but not too expensive.

Two projects paid for by the Friends were completed in the year. The final window guards were installed at a cost of £6,791. This is a project started in 2003 and has resulted in guards being fitted to all the stained glass windows. However the church is still subject to vandalism and recently someone tried to pull one of the guards away from a window.

The new sound system to which we contributed £7,000 has been in use since the autumn and is a very big improvement on the previous system and we are very grateful to David Matthew and Keith Ovenden who have been largely responsible for its specification and installation and they have saved a considerable amount of money by doing it themselves. After paying for the above we currently have £9,000 in the bank towards future projects.

The next big project for the Church Council is likely to be the restoration of the tower which we hope will be started in 2013 but the date will be very much determined by raising sufficient money. At the moment a detailed estimate of the likely cost is being prepared but it is expected to be in the order of £300,000. This is an enormous sum which will require a considerable amount of fund raising. It is hoped that English Heritage will make a grant but this will certainly be matched funding which will require the church to raise a significant amount of money ourselves. A church membership of about 250 cannot be expected to raise this money themselves and therefore assistance from other charities and the wider community will be sought.

Registered Charity Number 1040550

President: Cllr Ian Martin  
Secretary: Mrs Chris Ball

Chairman: John Brookes  
Treasurer: Vacancy

Although I am sure that the Friends will support this I would like to think that we can have our own projects as we have done in the past. One particular project which has been discussed by the



A view of the south transept

Church Council is the possibility of erecting a glass screen to the south transept. This will particularly enable the south transept to be used as a crèche during services and as a private area during the week which could be used for such things as “a listening ear” and other small meetings. The matter has not been taken any further as there is at present no money to pay for it, as it is likely to cost in the region of £25,000. There is some support for the project from amongst the congregation and some have expressed a willingness to make a donation towards the cost. If this is something that you would be prepared to make a contribution towards then please let me know? I am a firm believer that if enough people want something to happen then it will happen.

It was with great sadness that our treasurer John Beable died during the year. At the moment we have not found a new treasurer and so if you would like to volunteer, or know a suitable person who we could ask, then please let me know. This also applies to the committee in general as we are an extremely small committee and could do with some more help and new ideas. I am very conscious that I have been chairman for approaching eight years and feel that it would be good if someone else would take the Friends committee forward, although I am fully committed to supporting the Friends in the future.

Once again I would like to thank the committee on your behalf for their hard work, particularly when it comes round to selling tickets and providing and preparing food for our AGM and some of our other functions. Also thank you for your financial support during the past year. Although we do not raise large sums of money we have raised over £65,000 since the Friends were started by Dr John Mitchell and this has enabled us to pay for a number of improvements to the church which may not otherwise have been done.

May I wish you all a very good Christmas and every blessing for 2012.

Yours sincerely,

John Brookes

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