



# LINK UP!

'Honour the LORD with your wealth and with the best part of everything you produce.' Proverbs 3:9 (NLT)

## Paul Holmes is retiring!

After more than 27 years at Parkstone Baptist, our dear friend Paul Holmes is retiring next month! The deacons have invited us to his final service on 26th September at 10.30am and/or a buffet lunch afterwards at 12.30pm - it does coincide with our Harvest, sadly, but if anyone wants to go to say cheerio to Paul, that is, of course, absolutely fine! Anyone wanting to go to the lunch should contact Jenny Bastock on 01202 745825 or [jenbastock@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:jenbastock@hotmail.co.uk) by Sunday 12th September so they can get an idea of numbers. The deacons are also collating expressions of thanks, thoughts and best wishes that folk might have, and plan to put these in a book which they will give to Paul and Debbie. They can make the book available for people to add a message on Sunday 26th September, but you can also send a copy of your message to Jenny Bastock who will make sure it is added to one of the pages in the book.

## Prayer Times:

Just a reminder that Jill and Dick Dyke will be opening their home for prayer from 7.30pm tonight (Weds 25th) and next Wednesday (1st Sept), so do feel free to go and join them at 53 Nansen Ave, Poole.

*Dear church family,*

What's the best present you've ever given anybody? I love it when you can find out what a loved one would really like, and then manage to get it for them without them knowing! The look on their faces when they open up that present that they'd longed for just gives you a warm, fuzzy feeling, doesn't it?

I wonder if we think about giving to God in the same way? I'm not just talking about financially (although that is an important part of being a disciple - the old biblical system of 'tithing' ie giving a tenth of your income to God's work, is a good guideline; and below you'll see a letter from our church treasurer Stephen outlining Longfleet's current financial position), but in terms of our time and our attitudes too.

Covid has made us all re-evaluate how we spend the resources that are available to us - resources that include time, energy, finance, sharing our possessions etc. But as we make decisions about how we spend and use the resources that God has given us, let's ask our generous Heavenly Father to help us to reflect that generosity in our own lives. Let's be generous with God's love and pray for a new enthusiasm for finding new ways to share Him with others.

Keep trusting!

With love, your Pastor

## **From the Treasurer...to everyone at Longfleet Baptist Church...**

[This is a precis of my report at the most recent church members' meeting]

It's fair to say that, over the past 18 months or so, like many small churches, LBC has had its share of challenges to face, particularly when it comes to finances. We may not have been meeting on a Sunday but bills still had to be paid and it is thanks to the continued faithful giving of the fellowship we were able to do so. But as we come out of lockdown, it is time to look forwards and face up to the future challenges. At the end of June 2021, our general fund deficit stood at just over £4,000. This means, in the first six months of the year, we spent £4,000 more than we received just on general day-to-day costs. It would be easy to put this down to the effects of the pandemic and the lockdown, but this is not the case.

On average, it costs between £3,700 to £3,800 each month just to keep LBC running and opening each Sunday with a full-time minister. These are only the basic costs – stipend, church building costs and manse costs. Maintenance, stationary, photocopying, music, even tea, coffee, and biscuits – are extra. On average, LBC giving is about £3,100 each month – this comes from monthly standing orders and the Sunday morning collection. We claim tax back through the Gift Aid scheme so, when you add this in, it means LBC giving averages about £3,600 to £3,700 each month. This means, in broad terms, LBC giving falls short of basic LBC spending by about £100 to £200 each month. LBC does get extra income through hiring the premises out, but spending has, over recent years, consistently outstripped income. It has been in the fortunate position of having savings to fall back on, but these are slowly being eroded. At the moment, we think LBC will run out of money during 2025 when you factor in the cost of demolition of the annexe later this year.

### **What does this mean?**

Simply put, LBC needs to close the gap between what it receives and what it spends – if it does not, or indeed cannot, some very difficult discussions will have to take place over the next couple of years. Personally, I believe LBC controls its expenditure very well. Those who spend LBC money do so wisely and carefully; they are not profligate, and I do not think there are any areas where LBC can cut back any further. This means we must see whether we can increase our income and, in particular, the regular giving it receives from its membership and wider congregation. This is the challenge I put before everyone who came to the church meeting and I do so again now.

I guess all church treasurers, from time to time, find themselves having to make such a plea. It's not a pleasant thing to do, I promise you. I recognise everyone has their own financial challenges in their lives and charitable donations are a very personal thing. For some people, LBC may be one of many charities they feel called to support and I would not want to say LBC should take priority over those other charities people may feel a

personal connection to. Neither would I want to say charitable giving should take priority over making sure bills are paid and food is put on the table. Nevertheless, we are where we are and it is necessary for me, on behalf of all the Deacons, to lay out, as clearly as I can, what the financial position of LBC is and then trust it to the care of the Lord.

I would ask each of you to pray about this situation and seek the Lord's guidance on what He might have you do, as an individual member of LBC, but also collectively as a church. For example:

- If you don't already, can you commit to a regular monthly standing order? (Remember: you control the standing order and it can only change on your instruction – it is not the same as a direct debit.)
- If you already give by standing order, when was the last time you reviewed it?
- Do you pay income tax? If yes, have you completed a Gift Aid declaration which allows us to claim back 25p on every pound you donate to LBC?
- Do you know about GASDS (Gift Aid for Small Donations Scheme) – a scheme which enables us to claim back 25p on every pound of each single cash donation of £30 or under (not cheques). This is a valuable source of extra income for LBC – it means a single cash donation of £20 is worth £25 to us.

In September, I will bring a budget for 2022 to the church meeting which the members will be asked to adopt. But adopting a budget inherently means committing to helping generate sufficient income to meet the budget. A budget for expenditure needs a budget for income. In October, all being well, we are likely to see the demolition of the annex for which we have set aside a budget of £25,000. This includes a contingency fund, and we hope the final cost will come significantly under this budget. Nevertheless, this cost will further eat into our savings.

Next year will be a year of opportunity as, hopefully, we can put COVID-19 behind us and look forward in a more positive way. But there will be challenges. At present, we think we will declare an end-of-year deficit in the region of £7,000 and this cannot continue.

I want to end this rather tricky note with something more positive. It's long been one of my favourite verses and no doubt many of you will list it among your favourites as well: *"In their hearts, humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps."* (Proverbs 16:9). At the end of the day, if the Lord desires Longfleet Baptist Church to thrive and grow, He will supply all we need regardless of what is (or isn't) in the bank account. He simply asks us to commit to Him and trust Him. Let's do that together!

Stephen