

Dear Friend

One of our fundamental needs is for shelter. One of the most important things St Matthew's does each year is take part in the Croydon Churches Floating Shelter. Most of us have no idea of what life is like when there is no roof over our heads. I have slept outside under the stars on a few occasions in my life, but this was my choice, invariably while on holiday. There was something of a sense of adventure about sleeping outside - especially on one occasion being woken up by some gentle drops of rain, which fortunately didn't persist!

God commanded the people of Israel to build first of all a Tabernacle, which was at the centre of the camp during their wilderness wanderings, then when they had settled in the Promised Land, a Temple. These were, in one sense, a roof over God's head - the place where the ark of the covenant was to be housed and to be symbols of the Lord making his dwelling place among his people. The roof of the Tabernacle was made of rams skins dyed red, which speaks of the blood of Christ which covers our sins and protects us.

We are greatly blessed by the huge variety of church buildings which grace - in the true meaning of the word - our landscape. From the smallest village church to the grandest cathedral, each one stands as a symbol of the presence of God on earth. Of course the Lord has never been contained within a building. When Solomon had finished building the temple he said these words:

"But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!"

*1 Kings 8.27*

Nevertheless there is something special about a beautiful building that is designed to show something of the splendour and majesty of our God, as well as being set aside and dedicated for prayer and worship. Now we can reenter churches for personal prayer, I think we are more aware of how special and important these sacred spaces are to us.

When I first came into St Matthew's, I couldn't help noticing a row of multi-coloured plastic cups above the double doors into the foyer. I was told they were there in order to catch the drips when it rained! The church roof has leaked from the time it was built in 1972. In fact, it's leaking less now than at any other time - this is good news. However, the bad news is that our roof is nearing the end of its life, and we have to face the fact that we need to replace it. Much work has already been done, which has assured us that the timber that supports the roof does not need replacing, which is a great relief, and we have an indicative cost of this work of around £500,000. This is a huge figure, and it is extremely unlikely that the congregation will be able to raise this amount unaided. We have established a fundraising team to focus specifically on this project, and one of the first tasks was to see what grants etc. might be available. In order to access grant funding we will need to have raised a significant sum ourselves.

A fundraising appeal will be launched in September, but I am writing to you today to ask you to commit to do just one thing at this stage: pray.

We will only succeed in the task which God has given to us, to ensure that there is a church in Park Hill for future generations, if we place our whole trust and confidence in his provision and in his promises. I am sure that God, out of his glorious riches, will enable us to meet this great challenge, but we must all play our part, and the first and the last thing we must focus on is prayer. You may find the following prayer helpful:

"Dear loving heavenly Father, you are the Creator of the ends of the earth, and the whole world belongs to you. Lord, you know our needs, and you have promised that you will meet those needs out of the glorious riches of your grace. As we face this challenge, help us to look to you and to trust in you, and to thank you. Just as you provided all that was needed to build the Tabernacle and the Temple, in all their splendour and glory, so we believe you will provide all we need to enable future congregations at St Matthew's, and all the many other users of the church building, to have a roof over their heads. And may you help us to have generous hearts, so that we might all join in with our contributions to enable this challenge to be met and this task fulfilled. In the name of him who is your greatest gift to us, and who covers us with the shelter of his precious blood, Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord, Amen."

Verse for today: "My God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen."



*Philippians 4.19*

A thought to make you smile:



The only thing which normally has a roof, and is improved by not having one, is a car!

With my love and prayers

Simon