



St. Mary's Parish Comber  
The Square, Comber, Co Down, BT23 5DU

## RENOVATION WORKS – Gift Day

Dear parishioner

No one quite knows when Christians first began to gather for worship on the site we now call St. Mary's. Over 800 years ago the Abbey was built, surviving for 350 years. Almost 70 years after its destruction, it was replaced with a barn-like church built within the walls of the old Abbey.

It would take a further 200 years before the construction of the Church tower we know today; additions have been made ever since. Within the last 100 years or so, we have seen two new church transepts, two new church halls, and three different rectories!

*Of course, our buildings are not the full story of our church!*

The heart of St. Mary's, is centuries of ministry, mission and worship by the people of our Church Family – and that includes you!

One ministry in particular (quiet, unsung and vital), has been carried out for centuries:–

*the ongoing renovation of our buildings.*

Thanks to this work, our buildings have been an asset to the parish for generations.

It may not be glamorous, it may go unnoticed, but

**Renovation Works !**

In more recent history, we have found ourselves in difficult times. Four years ago, we were without a rector and we could not afford a new one. Our rectory was in need of refurbishment (around £200k) and all of our other buildings required vital renovation works. Since then, we have faced a global pandemic, and now the cost-of-living crisis.

*That's the bad news!*

The good news is that, by the grace of God, we have been making our way out of that valley. Our giving has increased steadily, and we are well on the way to covering our yearly costs. The difficult decision to sell the old rectory, allowed us to buy a new one, and avoid the high cost of refurbishment. Because of these steps we now have a new rector.

*There is a 'but'.*

We have underspent on our building renovations for a *long* time. We have a lot renovation works to do: from stonework and roofs, to heating and flooring.

Over many months, a great deal of time has been spent to estimate the cost – it is a *big* number – more than £250k. That is a long way to climb in difficult financial times!

*We do, however, have reasons to be hopeful.*

As we remember how far we have come in the past few years, we can see how God has been guiding our way, and realise he has done so for centuries. *This is God's church.*

Thousands of years ago, God's temple in Jerusalem fell into disrepair (a number of times). The solution was for God's people to make a plan, and get on with the ordinary work of renovation. It is a hard task and rarely remembered, but it is essential.

Our hope is that over the coming 5-7 years, we will be able to bring our buildings up to scratch, with a plan to keep them that way. We will be exploring many routes as we climb towards our goal, including fund raising events and grants. Thanks to some generous legacies, we already have a large chunk of our total.

*So what's next?*

All this information will be a surprise to many of us – perhaps even a shock. It is however, important that we know where we stand as a parish. Before our journey continues, we have decided to have a **Gift Day**, *Advent Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> November* – an opportunity to boost our efforts as we make plans to raise the funds we will need.

*Here's what you are being asked to do.*

1. Don't Panic! This is God's Church.
2. Thank God for how far we have come to date.
3. Pray that God will show us the path to renovating our buildings.
4. Consider whether you are able to give a gift towards our renovation works.

*These are difficult times, please **do not** feel under **any** pressure to give financially!*

**Finally** – Thank You...

... for being part of St. Mary's, for contributing to our parish and for reading this letter.

No one knows the future God has planned for St. Mary's. As we make our way out of the valley, we can trust the one who has brought us safe thus far; by his grace he will lead us on.

Rev. Sam

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## Ways to Give

### Envelope

You can use the Gift Day envelope  
(cash/cheque)

### Online

You can use online giving portal –  
[stmarysparishcomber.com/giftday](http://stmarysparishcomber.com/giftday)

### Bank Transfer

ST MARY'S PARISH CHURCH (Development Account)

Account Number: 30029777

Sort Code: 95-02-81

Quote reference as: surname.initial.RWGD e.g. *Bloggs.J.RWGD*

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St Mary's Parish Church, Comber is a registered charity in Northern Ireland (no NIC 102535),  
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