

## On the Community of St Michael's Beaulieu sur Mer

*Whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me; for the least among all of you is the greatest* Luke 9:48

*Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul...* Acts 4:32

Societies are often formed according to certain models and their characteristics of identity and function are based upon and reflect the principles of the model. The Church is first and foremost a *Body* or community that has for its model the person of Christ. Because of the indivisible nature of Christ, the Church subsists in each local community of the baptised: *Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there.* (Matthew 18:20)

The community of St Michael's, as a church, is composed of people united by the Holy Spirit to worship God in Word and Sacrament, according to the rites of the Church of England, and to serve one another and the wider community by following the teaching and example of Christ.

However, because we are also a human society we are dependent on resources. We need people and their time to pray and to lead in prayer, to maintain the church to suitable standards, to organise services and hospitality, to manage church resources and to provide the funding necessary for St Michael's mission of worship and discipleship. It is evident in the Scriptures that the Apostles and early church communities relied on the generosity of many others.

The community of St Michael's therefore incorporates all who wish to contribute to our overall mission. This is stewardship in its widest sense and is guided by the following: *For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.* (Romans 12: 3-8)

The community of St Michael's, therefore, comprises

- A core of weekly attenders at services
- Frequent but not weekly attenders at services
- Seasonal attenders at services e.g. temporary residents
- Occasional attenders at services e.g. visitors
- Residents who are unable to attend services e.g. housebound
- Those who are associated through family or by being married at St Michael's
- Those who are associated as benefactors e.g. Friends

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Each person, regardless of attendance, residency or association, should be welcomed and made to feel part of St Michael's and be encouraged to participate and support as they are able to in their particular circumstances.

Some people make very considerable and sustained 'hidden' contributions to the support of St Michael's, in keeping with the teaching:

*Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. (Matthew 6: 1-4)*

However, the contribution and support from each member of the community of St Michael's will also be relative and always a personal challenge since:

*Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. And he said, "Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on." (Luke 21:1-4)*

The religious and spiritual leadership and the guide in worship for the community is the responsibility of the priest; and the governance and management of the material aspects of the church is the responsibility of the elected Council members. Together, they share in the same mission of worship and discipleship of St Michael's and must be committed in their respective roles and appreciative and supportive of each other's roles in serving the whole community:

*Do not seek your own advantage, but that of the other... do everything for the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10: 24,31)*

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