



Leaving a Legacy

There has been a Church on this site for a thousand years. It stands at the very centre of the ancient walled city of Oxford. As the University emerged in the thirteenth century, scholars from different colleges were looking for a space where they could meet, engage in scholarly debate, and house a growing library. They came to the Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin, which became the University Church.

This story continues to shape our commitment to prayer, learning, and hospitality.

A House of Prayer

St Mary's remains the spiritual heart of the University of Oxford. A diverse and lively worshipping community is drawn from the city and the University. Whether you come to St Mary's to join us for worship or simply to light a candle, we hope that you will discover the presence of God in this place.

A Centre of Learning

Set on the edge of Radcliffe Square, St Mary's is one of the most iconic buildings in Oxford. Some of the oldest University buildings lie within its precincts. Over the centuries, the relationship between the Church and the University has stimulated theological discussion and academic debate. It is a place where, in the words of St Anselm of Canterbury, 'faith seeks understanding'.

A Place of Hospitality

Today St Mary's remains a place of welcome and hospitality. Each year thousands of people visit us. Some come as tourists - to explore the beginnings of the University, to enjoy the café, to see the place where Oxfam began, or to gain one of the best views of Oxford from the tower. Others come as pilgrims – to walk in the footsteps of the Oxford martyrs, or the Wesleys, or St John Henry Newman, or C S Lewis.

A history of benefaction

Institutions like the University Church do not support themselves. They need continuous donations from generous benefactors to survive. Maintaining and enhancing such a magnificent building is expensive. Developing its role as a centre of learning, fostering debate, music, the arts and education of the young costs money.

Benefactors are as old as the church itself. In the fourteenth century, Thomas Cobham, the Bishop of Worcester, built the original Congregation House and Library in the churchyard with the consent of the then Rector, Adam de Brome. In the fifteenth century, the chancel was built by Walter Lyhert, Bishop of Norwich. When the Nave was rebuilt in 1490, benefactions flowed in from various sources. King Henry VII, who had visited Oxford in 1488, gave forty oaks from Shotover. In the seventeenth century, Ralph Bathurst, Vice-Chancellor, a noted physician and scientist, paid for the refitting of the east end of the chancel, when university ceremonies moved out of church to the Sheldonian in the 1660s. In the early nineteenth century, a number of benefactors paid for the installation of galleries and new church furnishings.

You could help to ensure the future of this vital institution in Oxford's life by leaving the church a legacy in your will. By doing so you would be making a vital contribution to an ancient institution. You would also be ensuring that this vibrant and inclusive Christian community can continue its mission for years to come. If you think you could leave us a legacy, please get in touch with the Vicar: vicar@universitychurch.ox.ac.uk

How your legacy could help

Your legacy could help us to

- Restore the fabric of the building, including exterior carvings and stonework
- Enhance the interpretation of our history to visitors using the latest technology
- Reduce our carbon footprint
- Support the performing arts at the University Church

Including a legacy to the University Church in your will

If you have already made a will, you can make a simple codicil (a supplement making a change or addition) to your will yourself. Alternatively, you can make a change to the existing will. We would always advise you to take legal advice if you are uncertain as to the best course of action.

The most common types of legacies are a straightforward gift of a sum of money or a residuary gift, i.e. the whole or a percentage of the residue of your estate after all other legacies have been distributed. It is also possible to give something valuable like a property, a piece of jewellery or stocks and shares.

The University Church of St Mary the Virgin has charitable status (UK charity number 1130491). Under current legislation legacies to charities reduce your inheritance tax liability.

If you do decide to make the church a legacy we would be grateful if you could let us know your intentions. Please talk to the Vicar if you want further guidance by emailing vicar@universitychurch.ox.ac.uk.

Suggested wording for a monetary legacy

‘I give absolutely and free of inheritance tax £..... to the Parochial Church Council of the University Church of St. Mary the Virgin, charity number 1130491 for (insert object of gift e.g. “for the maintenance of the fabric of the church” OR “for the general purposes of the church.”) The receipt of the Vicar or Churchwarden for the time being shall be a good receipt to my Trustees.’

It is suggested that you include the “general purposes of the church” as an alternative so that, if for any reason it is not possible to support your proposed project at the time of your death, then the PCC has discretion to use your legacy for some other church need.

Commemorating your gift

If you are not a regular member of the congregation we would like to invite you to attend a number of special events in church during each year. We can commemorate your benefaction in our Book for the Commemoration of Benefactors after your death.