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Mr Jim Murray  
Parish Clerk  
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10 May 2017

Dear Councillors

Whether you are a regular churchgoer or not, a comforting feature of the English countryside is the village church. Unfortunately the cost of maintaining such, increases with time and far outweighs its regular income. It is for this reason that I, as cashier of our local church (St. Edward's) am seeking your help. We believe it was originally built around the 16th century. It was enlarged around 1830 to the North then in 1889 it was renovated, enlarged again and a North Isle added. It is a beautiful Church and we are very proud of it.

As you may know our churches are subjected to five-yearly (Quinquennial) reviews of their condition and for some time now it was noted that hairline cracks had appeared around the north-eastern corner of St. Edward's. In 2013 these cracks had opened by 2-3mm then one of the arches shed some stone from the joints. It was also noticed that two rainwater drains seemed to be blocked and were overflowing. Our Insurance company was advised and they began monitoring the cracks and subsequently advised that we get a structural engineer involved, telling us that we were not Insured for subsidence.

Having studied the insurance company reports the structural engineer carried out more tests followed by a grounds survey by a specialist company. A beautiful Blue Cedar Tree planted about 30 feet from the Church in 1997 had been sucking the moisture out of the ground causing the soil underneath the church to shrink, (the soil is a very sticky clay interspersed with layers of stone which runs all along the Polden Hills). Sadly we had the tree and its stump removed and now have to wait for at least three years for the ground to recover. Our quinquennial inspection in November 2015 concluded that some of the lead and ridge tiles on the main roof be replaced as well as much of the guttering and drains. Tests done had established that the drains on the North side of the church were not working. Plans of the church in 1830 and 1889 showed drains running across the eastern end of the Church and away to the south-east corner of the churchyard. After an initial contract for the work was drawn up at £41,500 and a grant of £31,500 had been obtained from the Listed Places of Worship (LPOW) roof repair fund we found the drains ran in completely the opposite direction. We had to dig these drains up and test them to find they worked perfectly so all the plans were redesigned.

New drains on the North side of the Church are to be located underneath the paths where they would not cause a problem, this meant that the paths would have to be dug up and re-laid. Since the paths in the Churchyard have been cracking up for some time causing a trip hazard and the path up to the Sunday School is breaking away at the edges, it makes sense to repair all the paths that are dangerous at the same time.

The re-laying out of the drains and replacing the paths has now increased the cost from £41,500 up to £71,800. We are now applying to Viridor Credits for a further grant but we will have to come up with a percentage of the difference. We already needed £10,000 now it looks as if we must find another £5000. This is why I am writing to you, on behalf of the Friends of St. Edward's, to ask if you would be willing to help us with a donation.

Yours sincerely  
Chris Lush.