

Some stories from the church family

"I first came to St John's back in the 80s and used to watch the bag circulate and I would dutifully add my small coin. One day, I received an unexpected bonus of £500 and to my horror I felt God say, 'I want my share!' I talked it through with the then vicar. We discussed tithing and prayed about how I might respond. We also talked about a gradual journey towards giving in a similar way with all my income. It was a huge culture shock, but I've learned to let go more and more, and God has proved faithful."

"I started by giving odd change in the collection. Realising that the church benefits from Gift Aid, I set up a monthly standing order that was roughly equivalent to my weekly giving. The real change happened in my heart, when it clicked for me that honouring God in all areas of my life included my giving. I am married to someone who isn't yet a Christian, and currently have no individual income, so this is a difficult challenge – one that many face. I found talking about this to my husband was hard, but it was a conversation I felt had to happen. I tried to explain it in a way he could make sense of, comparing it to his golf membership! It gave me a chance to explain why giving was important to me as a Christian."

How might you respond?

We ask you to review prayerfully your giving.

Chapters 8 & 9 of 2 Corinthians are great to reflect upon as you do this.

A personal response may include any of the following:

- / Starting a conversation with one of the church leadership, or Treasurer, about anything that this leaflet may have stirred;
- / Change the way you give to help us manage our budget more effectively;
- / Begin regular giving, or adjust your existing commitment, as a response to the spiritual impulse to be a 'generous giver';
- / Consider leaving a financial legacy to the church as a way of investing in the future mission of St John's.

This material has intentionally focused on moving towards faithful generosity. Nevertheless, there are times when a prayerful assessment of your giving may mean that it is appropriate to reduce your level of giving.

Equally, debt can complicate these decisions. If you are struggling through such issues then we are here as a 'family' to help you with that - either directly, or by pointing you towards well-informed help.

Please contact someone in the church leadership if you would like this assistance.

Giving
at
St John's

"God loves
a cheerful giver"

What are we talking about and why?

We are aware that many of you give a lot of your time and energy to support St John's, for which we thank you. Here, we are talking specifically about financial giving.

It would be misleading to say that budgetary considerations aren't a part of why we talk about money as a church. However, our primary motivation is not about resourcing St John's, but lies with the spiritual dynamic that is involved in giving.

Jesus spoke a great deal about money. There are many reasons why he did, but here are just a couple:

- / He knew the movement of our money expresses the movement of our hearts;
- / He understood that being created in God's image means we will be most fulfilled when we reflect His generosity.

We believe that it is part of being a healthy follower of Jesus to review our giving at regular intervals. We thought it might be helpful to outline what we are aiming at, especially if you are new to St John's, or have become a Christian more recently.

Legalism is the death of generosity, so these are simply guidelines. We hope this leaflet gives you a helpful frame of reference, but we want you to come prayerfully to your own decisions about what to give.

As it says in 2 Corinthians 9,

'Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.'

Spirit-Inspired Generosity

Growing in generosity is a life-long adventure. It's likely to involve a number of incremental steps to get to the place where we take bold, faith-driven decisions with our money.

A generous and grateful spirit is not defined by sums of money given. Yet, the context out of which giving and generosity is discussed in the New Testament is challenging.

What is Tithing?

Tithing is a concept derived from the Old Testament. God's people gave back to the service of God 10% of what they owned – crops, herds, etc.

In addition to that tithe, the Israelites gave special offerings on specific occasions, and alms to the poor as needed. This was the minimum commended to God's people in scripture.

Is it still relevant?

Today when you hear people talking about tithing, they are typically referring to giving 10%.

However, there is only one reference to tithing in the New Testament. The language around giving becomes much more exciting, shifting to extravagant generosity, with Christians sharing everything they had with each other.



What does that mean for us at St John's?

It means that if we're asking 'is a tithe on my gross or net income?' we've probably missed the spirit of the matter!

To provide an anchor point, many churches around the world have a basic expectation that people will commit to their local church the equivalent of a tithe. But as people who want to be inspired by God's Spirit, we hope to sit lightly to the idea; and certainly not let it become a glass ceiling to our generosity.

How does regular giving help our Mission?

In short, it makes a significant difference to how we operate as a church. Regular giving allows us to:

- / Budget and be good stewards of our resources;
- / Pay for active mission to people of all ages;
- / Be generous to other projects / partners around the world.

Specific details of how we use our money are available from our Treasurer and the PCC minutes. We hope you are glad to be sharing in funding this work and we are enormously grateful for your sacrificial support.

