

Have you ever thought of how this building speaks of sacrifice? People had a vision, but to make it a reality they gave of their money, their time and talents. When it was dedicated no doubt there was much joy and thanksgiving, and those who had given were proud to say “I had a share in it”

Generations have preserved, adapted and added to the building to meet their needs. Now, as we look around, it begins to look tired, it's cold and uncomfortable, the sound system is inefficient, we can't always see what is happening and there's a lack of space in certain areas especially near the West door. We have the privilege of sharing in not only preserving the building for the next generation but developing and beautifying it for our needs today.

We are stewards of all that God has entrusted to us, including the church building, but also our money, our possessions, time and talents. God calls us to be good stewards with a responsibility to care for the building and to be faithful in the way we use all we have on trust, to fit in with his will and purpose.

As we consider our giving for the reordering of the church, we ask ourselves why, what and how should we give. I can't answer it fully now but let me give you one or two pointers.

From OT times God's gifts were given for our own needs and for us to enjoy, they were given for the good of others - the poor and needy, and they were given for the church, its ministry and mission. Those principles haven't changed.

In the strict rules of the OT 10% of the best of everything-land, money, harvest produce and animals had to be given to God with sacrifices and freewill offerings on top. The NT doesn't give us rules and a specific amount to give, so how do we decide, what motivates us? Christian giving begins with our response to the extraordinary generosity of God. We see it in creation, the Israelites saw it in a land flowing with milk and honey and God continues to constantly give and provide for us. The most important statement in Scripture related to giving must be "God so loved the world that he gave his Son" - overflowing love. God can do no other than give and give because God is love and the essence of loving is giving (eg our families) "This is how we know what love is, Jesus Christ laid down his life for us" Albert Schweitzer tells of a man who had a restaurant. One day after having a meal he was astonished to see a 6inch nail among the cash in the till. The man explained "It reminds me of the price Christ paid for my salvation and of what I owe him in return."

Christian giving is a response of gratitude and thanksgiving.

When Noah came out of the Ark he had very few resources with which to start a new life but the first thing he did was to offer to God the very best of his animals and birds as a sacrifice of thanksgiving for saving him, for bringing him safely through the flood,

Generosity is the spirit of Christian giving.

The widow in the Temple gave two small copper coins, not much, but it was all she had to live on. She could have kept one or even both but she didn't. She gave generously, sacrificially and Jesus said she had given more than the rich people who put in large sums. What did he mean? God doesn't measure our giving by the amount we give but by what it costs us, what we keep for ourselves.

Amounts will vary, we are to give according to how God has blessed us, according to what we have; even if we have very little the same applies.

A missionary in Korea saw two men one pulling and one pushing a simple wooden plough up and down the field. He said "Those men must be very poor" "No" said his friend "They are Christians. When their church was being built they wanted to give so they sold their only ox, they had nothing else to give.

Christian giving is the will of God. Jesus said "Freely you

have received, freely give” and in Hebrews we read “Do not neglect to do good and share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.” It is God himself who enables us to give willingly, generously and joyfully-the opposite of reluctantly. God loves a cheerful giver.

Christian giving is an act of grace. It is the result of God’s free grace at work in our lives. It’s a sign of our faith, of our belonging to the Lord, a sign of the sincerity of our love.

Paul, in the second reading wanted the Corinthians to excel in the grace of giving, especially in freewill offerings to his project to help the saints in Jerusalem. He tells them of how the Macedonians, though desperately poor and persecuted were such channels of grace that their giving was not only according to their means, it was extravagant giving, a work of grace in their hearts, God’s generosity flowing through them.

Christian giving means trusting God. Most people find it easier to depend upon their own possessions and savings than on the promises of God yet he promises “If you sow sparingly you will reap sparingly, if you sow bountifully you will reap bountifully” or Jesus words “Give and it will be given to you” Can we believe that? God is promising, as we give generously he will supply what we need. More than that, we heard read “God is able to provide you with

every blessing in abundance so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work” Enough to continue to give. God is faithful to his word, we can trust him. Are we faithful stewards?

The project to reorder the church, to restore the beauty and to revitalize it will, we hope, soon go ahead by drawing substantially on the Humphrey Bequest, but in order to do everything, it needs you and me to say I want to have a share in it. I will give generously. Are we up to the challenge to raise maybe £50,000, maybe £100,000, maybe more, .so God will be glorified.

There are special envelopes available, but prayerfully think what you should give, what would be pleasing to God.