

A guide to supporting Christ Church financially

Before you read what follows, you might find it helpful to read 2 Corinthians 8 & 9 – a key text for this subject. You could also use an online tool such as BibleHub.com to explore more fully what the Bible teaches – search words like money, wealth, treasure, and giving ...

Why should I give?

Firstly, because the bible is clear that financial giving – alongside our giving of time, energy and gifts – is a key part of every Christian's worship and discipleship. Everything we give – time, gifts, money – is in response to what we've been given in and by Jesus, through whom we meet an extravagantly generous God. Jesus spoke about money more than just about anything else (e.g. Matthew 6:19-24), encouraging those who follow him to model themselves on the generosity of God. We give our best back to him so that, through his church, his Kingdom brings heaven's justice, mercy, goodness, healing, and restoration to earth. It's also clear that God promises to bless those who copy him in generosity – it's impossible to out-give God.

Do you tell church members how much to give?

No – we don't believe this is biblical, and no member of our church family should ever feel a human pressure to give. It's true that in the Old Testament, God's people were required to give 10% of everything they had in order to support the worship of the Temple; and that some churches today continue to teach that 'tithing' (as it's called) still applies. However,

- tithing was a fair system when everyone had the same as everyone else, but that's not the case today, when we have church members facing very different financial situations
- the New Testament doesn't teach tithing. Tithing was designed to support the work of the Temple under the old covenant – with Jesus comes a new covenant, making the old one (including the Temple, its sacrifices, and the system of supporting it) 'obsolete' (Hebrews 7:5-18 / 8:13)

What's the present situation?

We ended 2017 with a £40,000 shortfall, as the PCC followed the Lord's leading to make some significant decisions 'in faith' – employing our new youth pastors; investing in the Spire Coffee House; increasing our Diocesan gift (Parish Share – see below); offering our basement flat in Linden Gate to an asylum seeker free of charge; and a new partnership with TearFund.

In 2018 the shortfall between our weekly costs (£11,750) and income (£11,200) is about £550.

We have 3 'big ticket' items of expenditure (weekly figures)

1. Parish Share - £3,800: this is the figure we pay to our Diocese, from which our paid clergy (Vicar, Associate Vicar and Curate **) are funded. As a church which is well resourced, we pay in more than we receive, in order to fund ministry in places which otherwise could not afford it (e.g. Avonmouth and Lawrence Weston)
2. Staffing Costs – £3,400: what we pay our dedicated and wonderful staff team (who in turn are assisted by an army of amazing volunteers)
3. Support of specific Mission Projects and Partners – £1,700: our new strategic partnership with TearFund in Uganda chimes perfectly with our own vision of seeing the world transformed; we also support some incredibly dedicated individuals sent out by Christ Church over the years

*** Apart from these 3 posts, we fund every other part of our ministry and mission from our own giving.*

Provided it doesn't put anyone under human pressure, it may be helpful to know that

- If all 850 adults on our membership database gave equally, we would each need to give £60 per month to resource what we believe the Lord is calling us to do this year (of course, some will be able to give more and others less than this).
- If each one of our existing 220 regular givers (this figure includes some couples as well as individuals) increased their giving by 7.5% we would meet all our planned expenditure for 2018.
- Alternatively, 50 new givers each giving £50 per month would have the same effect.

In 1 Corinthians 16, Paul urges us to give 'in keeping with your income' – we want to be sensitive to individual situations, and informal advice can be given if requested. Please do ask.

So how do I work out how much to give?

The New Testament replaced the practice of 'tithing' with the principle of generous, sacrificial giving in response to the sacrifice Jesus made for everyone of us. Whereas the Old Testament specified how much everyone gave, the New invites us to ask the Lord what to give – 10% may well be just the starting point.

Whereas in the Old Testament, God's people gave in response to a legal requirement to give, the apostles stress grace and freewill. Christians are called to respond to God's grace, freely and without compulsion of any kind – It is clear that there is no hint of any compulsion, demand, or commandment to give under the Grace principle and this is why Paul writes as he does in 2 Corinthians 9:7

Everyone should give what he or she has decided in their heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver

It's important to note that 'Christian Giving' covers a far broader spectrum of our lives than simply what we do with our money. A Christian approach to giving must address the way we use our time, our talents and our energy, in addition to our money. Everything about who we are and what we do – including the way we view and use whatever material wealth we enjoy – is to be marked by the generosity and grace of the God who 'loved so much that he gave' (John 3:16)

So we simply ask that everyone who feels part of our church family to pray about how you should respond – what is the Lord asking you to give, in time, gifts, and financial support?

And how do I give?

Only 3 people will ever know what you give – our PCC Treasurer, our Operations Manager and our volunteer Gift Aid Administrator. All hold this information within the tightest bounds of confidentiality.

There are many ways to make a regular or one-off gift to Christ Church. For more details and a step-by-step guide to help you make your gift and claim Gift Aid, please visit www.ccweb.org.uk/giving. Alternatively please speak to one of the team at the InfoHub or contact the church office.

Just imagine what can be accomplished through a community of people who wholeheartedly backs God's vision of advancing his kingdom in the world. At Christ Church we are committed to playing our part in this amazing vision by becoming a community of people who reproduce the life of Jesus and bring the Kingdom of God into every sphere of life. We long for everyone to know and experience the unconditional love of God, and for Bristol to become a City of Hope. As we pursue this vision and give ourselves to it, God will do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine.

The key truth is that our giving (of self, time, talents and money) is a response to the wonderful love and grace we have been shown by God in the gift of Jesus Christ to be our Saviour:

'For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.' (2 Corinthians 8:9)

Paul Langham, April 2018