



Time, Treasure and Talents All 3 areas have to be given serious prayerful consideration. This is an important spiritual exercise. We need to be realistic in all 3 areas - to see things as God sees them and then to work out what we have to offer and how that might be done. There are obvious times in the course of each year which might lend itself to a thorough check up with our Stewardship - Advent (when the Christian Year begins); January (secular new Year but also a time of thanksgiving for the presence of God in our midst); Lent (a time of spiritual discipline or homework); Easter (full of the joys of resurrection life); Pentecost (full of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit); Harvest (thanksgiving for the abundance of Creation).

We need a good long and prayerful look at the three areas and also how they work together in our lives. I may come to see that I am poor in income but can offer time. I may be able to give generously with money or a personal skill but have limited time so I must then identify the best use of what I can offer.

We are not a church with a lot of money - spiritually that is good for us even if we have worrying moments trying to make our books balance - but we are rich in many personal resources. We enjoy a quality of community life and worship in which we are truly blessed - it is not perfect but then this is not yet the Kingdom of God in all its fullness. It is in recognition of this real quality in our life in Christ that spurs us on to give generously and willingly in time, money and skills as we grow in our understanding of our calling to follow Jesus in bringing good news to the poor, the trapped and those in darkness.

We all know this business of stewardship is a challenge and you will find the Treasurer, Barry Hollman is a good person to discuss any of these matters with you.



Stewardship

Stewardship is of vital importance - for us this is a a vital spiritual focus. It is a key way of expressing our fundamental relationship with God and each other - a way of showing our response to what God has done for us.

Stewardship includes money (and there is a Financial Giving Form in this Welcome Pack) but this is only a part of what Stewardship is about. Just as we are varied in terms of background, education and age so we are just as varied in terms of income and occupation. A significant proportion of our regular attenders are under 16 years old yet they already participate in Stewardship which is as much about our time and skills as money.

But the real place to start is with God - who is the Creator of all things, the one who gives generously - the planet is teeming with life after all...the one who saves (Moses, Elijah, Jesus all show God



providing with an open hand in vast quantities)...the one who blesses (not just one gift or one fruit of the Spirit but many). At the root of our Stewardship is an acknowledgement that all that we have and all that we are are from God and given by God. Stewardship is our response to that abundant love poured out upon us in so many ways.

From time to time we remind ourselves of these things in deliberate ways and reflect on our stewardship collectively in our life as a congregation but equally the theme is constantly there for exploration all the time as we ponder our response to insights and events within ourselves or beyond.

Time, Treasure and Talents

These are the 3 usual headings and they just help us get started with the how and what aspects of our response to God's generosity.

Time: We are pretty poor when it comes to handling time in our society. We are always overly busy, with over crowded diaries and so much to get through. We always feel we could not possibly take another thing on. For some of us a job or family (or both) means this may well be true. Our contribution to God may well be 2 or 3 hours spent just making it to church on Sunday - do not though underestimate the importance of being in church...

For many of us we will realize we need to show more of a response and that when we really think about how we apportion time and to what, we could re-arrange our lives a bit and spend our time differently. Perhaps volunteering for a Sunday task at church or even standing for PCC or stewarding or serving in the sanctuary on a regular basis. It might also mean spending time as a volunteer for an organisation such as a charity or agency in the community.

There are many events that go on with St Michael's as the centre but we also deliberately resist filling up every evening with church meetings or gatherings because we know that an important insight into our stewardship is that we exist not just for ourselves but to serve those who do not belong.

Treasure famously the Bible urges us to tithe our income = give away 10% but should that be Gross or Net and should that be after food, housing and other essentials have been paid for? It is also very easy to become attached to our wealth (this is not about having lots of money to be miserly over) and possessions. There is a spiritual art in understanding the difference between what we want and what we need and then sharing that difference with others.



We all find this giving of money a tough one and there are a number of differing approaches: some do tithe and give half (5%) directly to St Michael's and donate 5% to other charitable causes.

Others find 10% is just not possible (the less you earn the greater this proportional sacrifice becomes and you may have responsibilities to others in your household) but give the maximum they can afford (often to church alone but also reserve something for charity).

This is not really about the actual sum given but about us being realistic with the income we have and doing the maximum good with it. Some of that good needs to be for the benefit of those beyond our households and it will vary according to our circumstances and over time (incomes go down and up as we all well know...).

Talents: the famous British reserve means we often under estimate our own skills - we don't often list what we are good at and when asked many of us apologize for not being good at anything. Once again there is a spiritual art in all this. Are we really saying God has created us useless? Can we walk, can we help, can we join in? It sometimes helps to think about the things we really enjoy doing and get most out of. Transfer some of this to doing something similar in a wider sphere. Even something as basic as housework may be satisfying - why not do a bit of church cleaning / join a Saturday clear up at church? You might also like to consider some of the tasks on the "How do I volunteer?" leaflet. Prayerfully consider at depth each role and ask yourself calmly whether you might do this or give it a go.

