

St Peter's, Ealing  
Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2017

Launch of the Stewardship Programme 2017

The church is always asking for money!

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'Why is the church always asking for money?' is a question I have heard asked throughout my ministry. It's not a question born out of a lack of generosity but a lack of understanding. Congregations have through the years made assumptions such as:

The church has loads of cash, look at the silver on the altar!  
It's the richest land owner second only to the Queen.  
The clergy are paid by the government.

I am sure you know the clergy are not paid by the government. I agree the church is one of the largest land owners in the country...your sitting on some of the land. The church's silver comes from donations, as indeed does most of the things you see here in church today.

The Church is not funded by Government or the Queen. It is funded from the pockets of its members. And things must be paid for. We pay for our clergy, for their training, their housing, their wages and their pension. We pay for the repairs to our building, our heating and lighting in fact all our running costs, from cleaning the linen to clearing the gutters to paying for our administrator and director of music, to buying the candles, altar bread and communion wine. Worship costs and that cost is ours to bear.

The church requires more than just money. It also requires time and talents, our time and our talents. Yesterday over 20 of us cleared the church grounds and filled a skip. We realise the good old days of Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm work schedules have gone and what free time we have has become more precious, but still in giving to God of our time and the skills we possess is an important part of our Christian discipleship.

It is important we take time each year to raise the issue of stewardship. It is the practical response to the love showered upon us by our God and Father. Throughout scripture God calls to his people to have a deep and meaningful relationship with God. As people of God our lives are God centred. When our lives are centred on God we are encouraged to be good stewards of what we have; our good stewardship becomes a witness to that place of God in us.

To have a season of stewardship in church life is not just about separating you from your money. Indeed if we take stewardship seriously we shouldn't have to do that. A season of stewardship teaching draws our attention back to how we live of lives as Christians, what is important and how we share the blessings of our life with others.

Jesus used money a lot in his teaching. Not because he was fixated by money but he knew how important it is for us to have a right approach to it. He was keen to encourage good stewardship of all our resources. We are called as part of our faith to be good stewards of God's bounty; to live our lives enthusiastically and generously, giving of our time, our skills and our money efficiently, effectively and joyfully; sharing the good news of Jesus by the style of life we lead: In the words of Paul, "Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God through him." (Colossians 3.17).