



Gift Day for Youth Ministry Sunday 22nd November 2020

Dear Friends

I am writing to you to outline the purpose and vision for our annual gift day which will be on Sunday 22nd November. I realise that 2020 has been a very difficult year for many financially and that a gift day in that context might seem inappropriate. However, I feel that even in the most trying of circumstances we should still look to be faithful in our obedience to God and that includes the area of giving. As I say every year, the gift day offers us an opportunity to seek God in the area of our personal finances and see if he wants us to respond in a specific way above and beyond our regular giving. Alongside this I believe that God is calling us at this time to invest in specific area of our church life which I will outline in a moment. But please remember as you read this that the scriptures tell us we should never feel under compulsion in our giving but always give freely and cheerfully. As with all giving to SMB I will not know what each person gives and I don't want anyone, especially given the current financial climate, to feel under pressure to give. I do however want to urge each one of us to seek God and to discern how he wants us each to respond.

As happens every year this year we can praise God for his provision and faithfulness to us as a church when it comes to our finances. We have lost a reasonable amount of income with the loss of our outside bookings, but our outgoings have also gone down as well thanks mainly to the furlough scheme. So we are projecting a small deficit at the end of the year that the gift day will partially go towards covering. However I am hoping that the bulk of the gift day - and so our main focus for this offering - will go towards investing in our youth ministry.

I have felt for a while that we should be stepping up our investment in our youth ministry. Young people today face huge pressure on them to conform to the thinking of the world around them, to discover and decide who they are now

and to pursue self-fulfilment as prescribed by the world. This pressure might have always been there for people of that age in every generation but today that pressure is particularly relentless. In Jesus we have the answer to the questions of identity and purpose and believe that in him is fullness of life. Knowing Jesus is the answer to all the big questions of life and whereas the message of the world promises big but so often falls short, the message of the gospel promises even bigger and delivers on it all. To help the young people of our city and church discover Jesus would be a wonderful thing to do and should be one of our key hopes as a church. Praying that they might not only receive all that Jesus has for them now but that they may also live the life ahead of them in partnership with Christ.

Before Lockdown I had the privilege of visiting a youth ministry in Bradford, this ministry centred around after school drop-in centres for young people, offering them a safe space where they can be themselves, chill out and build friendships. It was also a place where they could very gently be introduced to Jesus. This got me thinking about what we might be able to do as a church for the young people of our city and I also realised how uniquely placed we are as a church to do that in Canterbury. Of the six state secondary schools in Canterbury, three are in our part of town if not quite in the parish (Simon Langton Boys & Girls & St Anselm's) with most of the young people going past the church each day, another (Barton Court) is five minutes' walk away and we have a connection through assemblies with a fifth (Archbishop's). With the resource of our wonderfully flexible building I believe we are ideally placed to run a youth café/drop-in centre to serve the young people of the city.

We have also seen that the number of young people who are part of the SMB family has grown as they graduate from our growing Children's church ministry. These young people need supporting and discipling as well in the next few years and the years to come. To facilitate this, I think our investment into this ministry would be best served by recruiting a full time Youth Evangelist/Pastor to start around Easter 2021. The role would have three main areas to develop and invest in; firstly the discipling of the young people of our church family here at SMB, secondly to facilitate and run the youth café/drop in, so we might reach out to the young people of our community and lastly to help support Christian young people and teachers in the secondary school of the city, to stand firm and to share their faith.

My hope is that we would be able through this gift day to get a head start on the funding for this ministry. Though it is a ministry we would want to see continue well into the future and so funded by our regular giving as part of our annual budget it would be great to build up a fund to give it a good start. I feel we have an opportunity to really serve and bless these young people and to do what is the greatest service we can offer which is to introduce them to Jesus.

So please do pray about how God wants you to respond to this gift day. Again please don't feel under pressure to give but do please pray. Usually when gathered we would take up the offering at our Sunday gatherings which of course this year we are unable to do. So please could you either transfer your gift directly to SMB (details below) or send a cheque in to the church office clearly marked for the gift day. The PCC is really excited about this possible ministry and I hope that the whole church might be as well, really grasping this vision so we might be a blessing to the young people of Canterbury and beyond.

God Bless

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Barney', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Barney

You can either send a cheque payable to "Parochial Church Council of St Mary Bredin" to the church office or it may be more convenient to make a payment on line – for tracking please use the reference "SMB Gift Day" – to:

Lloyds Bank

SMB PCC

Sort code 30 91 60

Account number 00477227