



Be Holy and Be a Blessing

I am writing to you to let you know about the upcoming Gift day on the 26th November. As always as I look back on this last year I am so thankful to God for his leading and provision. Through your obedience as a church family, God has provided what we have needed financially as a church, doing this primarily through your regular giving. So as always we have much to be thankful for. One of the standing items on our PCC agenda is encouragements. This is always our first item and is a place where we can share encouragement and joys that we have had from the life of the church since our previous meeting. We are never silent in this time as there are always things to praise God for that are happening in and through the church family here at SMB. From the Cap debt centre to café lumen all of what happens at SMB is made possible because of your obedience as a congregation in responding to God and giving to his work. So thank you.

Gift day 2023

We knew at the beginning of the year that there would be a financial challenge with inflation meaning the rising costs that face us all in our households are also being faced for us as a church. In our budget for the year we did have a reasonable deficit expected and the plan was always that this gift day as in previous years would be a way of bridging the gap. As it stands at this point in the year our giving is slightly above budget and our costs slightly below which is great but wonderfully we have also received recently an unexpected one off amount through gift aid arrears that means that we will break even financially for this year which again is amazing and something to praise God for. However, the challenges for next year will be the same and so our gift day now is an opportunity for us to be ahead of the game for the coming year as we continue to seek God's call for us in all our ministries.

Regular Giving

Every gift day whether it is for a specific project or just an appeal to help with the general costs of our shared ministry I ask you to take time to pray and to seek God about what he might be calling you to do, but this gift day as well as that can I also ask you something that we usually ask around our commitment Sunday and that is to review your regular giving. I make it a principle never to know what anyone gives in the congregation but one observation that our treasurer Simon Webster has shared is that though our income through regular giving has remained steady it hasn't adjusted to the realities of the increased costs that we face. Now I know those costs hit each of us at home as well, but could we ask you to really think and pray

about matching your regular giving to inflation or if your regular gift has been static for a while it might be changed to match the principles that you first set it up to match.

For me two principles I find really useful from scripture to guide our regular giving are the principle of first fruits and the principle of a tithe. First fruits is the principle that God gets the best rather than what is left over so we plan what we will give and give that first and not wait to see if we have anything left to give. The tithe which is 10% of our income was God's way of keeping the people of God in the OT faithful in his command to give. For us we are not under law in the same way but we still look to be obedient to God and the tithe gives us a base level for our giving. With the tithe which was traditionally given to the community of faith as our starting point we know we are within God's will as we look to honour him with our giving.

Gift Day 2023: A Love Offering

So please this gift day do please take time to pray about your regular giving and see if it needs adjusting but I do want this gift day to be a genuine 'love offering'. The unexpected payment means that the original need for this gift day is no longer there and so it is an opportunity for a love offering. Alongside our tithes (regular giving) scripture also speaks of offerings or 'love offerings' where each of us seeks God on a one off basis to see what he would like us to give as a response to all he has given to us. Not responding to a specific need but responding to God's leading. It is a really good spiritual discipline and a brilliant exercise of trust, of faith.

So for this gift day in light of God's faithfulness and provision to us as individuals and as a church, I am asking you to set aside some time to pray and to seek God as individuals and families, to see how he is calling you to respond. Our giving is one of the few places in scripture where God invites us to test him (Malachi 3:10) and I can testify again and again that when we have stepped out in this area God has responded with a flood of blessings and the provision of all our needs.

The money raised through this love offering will enable us to close the book on this year but also give us a launch pad for another year of financial challenge next year. Knowing from our experience this year that that if we continue to seek God in obedience then alongside the challenges will also be excitement, joy and blessing.

SMB is an amazing place full of amazingly faithful people and I am completely humbled to be the vicar here. So, we mustn't take our foot off the pedal or ever be tempted to settle but continue to press on into all that God has called us to be, embracing the challenges so we can receive the blessings as we continue to look to be Holy and be a blessing.

God Bless and thank you.



Barney

Test me in this,' says the Lord Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. Malachi 3:10