

## Vicar's Letter

Dear Friends,

All those of you who are on our church's Electoral Roll should have received during May a letter from me about Christian giving. I take the opportunity of quoting from it here, because I know that many readers of Seek, whilst not on our Electoral Roll, feel yourselves very much part of the St Mark's community. You may therefore want to respond for yourselves to the message sent out in the letter (and also put forward in a sermon at the 10.00 am service on the 13th May). This is part of what I said:

'God has done so much for us, both as individuals and corporately, as the Church. As the wonderful old General Thanksgiving of the Book of Common Prayer puts it in a nutshell, we bless God "for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; But above all for [his] inestimable love in the redemption of the world through our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory."

Thanksgiving should be a keynote of our lives as Christians. And true thanksgiving is expressed "not only in our lips but in our lives".

Within our lives, money necessarily plays a large part. So I am writing to you to remind you that your Christian giving, both to the Church and to charities, can be not simply a response to need, but a joyful form of worship – a way of expressing your thanks to God. Giving in this spirit is part of the meaning of "Christian Stewardship". All that we have comes from God; of his own do we give him, not with anxiety, but in confidence.

By this stage of the year many of us will have seen in our pay or pensions the practical effects of the change of tax year. We have an idea of what our monthly income is likely to be for the next year. That is why we are asking you to reassess your giving to the church, and make a pledge for the coming year. If that pledge can be linked to Gift Aid - so much the better. It is an old tradition to aim to give proportionately from what we have. Some people like to aim for a tithe of their disposable income, perhaps divided between church and charities. Others feel they can afford more. Others can afford less. What you give should be a matter of prayer and serious reflection before God. Regularity and commitment in returning to him significantly more than the small change of our lives is a true form of worship, and shows that we take seriously the claim of Christ and his Church upon our lives.

For the Church's part, both in parish and diocese, we aim to use money wisely and creatively, to further Christ's mission both here and further afield.'

You will realise that this is a different kind of letter to the "Michaelmas Letter", which goes round the whole parish, asking for one-off donations. In that letter, we appeal to people who may hold an affection for St Mark's, whilst not necessarily feeling themselves to be very committed Christians; and, in that letter, we specify particular needs of the church. But now, I am speaking about regular giving as a spiritual matter - an expression of faith and commitment within this particular Christian community.

If on that basis you would like to respond with a reviewed or renewed pledge (perhaps giving under Gift Aid, if you are a taxpayer) please contact our treasurer, Tony Dathan, whose address is in the front cover of this magazine, and he will give you any appropriate forms or paperwork, and treat your pledge with absolute discretion.

On another subject – I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our Church Fête in the Vicarage garden on the 23rd June.

With best wishes,

Your friend and vicar,

Maggie Guite.