

Revd Michael Burns
Christ Church West Wimbledon
Sermon : May 19th, 2019
“Fifth Sunday of Easter”
Stewardship 2

STEWARDSHIP SERMON 2 – 19 May 2019

Last week I spoke in the first stewardship presentation about money – if you missed what I said it’s on the website or there are a few copies in the cross aisle. This week the second presentation is going to look at our time and our talents and gifts. This is often an element of stewardship which is overlooked. It is not hard to see why. Many people – though not all – can contribute financially in some way to the life of a church. But not everyone has the talents and gifts – and more significantly – the time to offer for the ongoing life of the church. In my last parish I remember the vast amount of time and effort it took to organise the Christmas Fair which raised about £2,000. One member offered to pay all this as it was cheaper for him than having to be involved!

Yes, time is such a remarkably precious commodity and we all have to work hard at achieving a proper balance in our lives between work, family, leisure and so on. What we do in our everyday life matters to God. So do not underestimate how important it is to acknowledge if your main priority – your main work if you like – is caring for a partner who increasingly needs your support. Or children who need your full-time attention. Or grandchildren who need child care. Or a demanding job that takes you away from your family enough as it is. Or....I could go on. Yet at the same time we are also regular and committed members of this church. We enjoy being here and might like to do more. But – for some here, it is enough that they make time to come to worship – but for all sorts of reasons they can do no more. For some here, they are involved but for all sorts of reasons they can do no more. For some here, you may be looking for something in which you can get involved. We’ve done a bit of work on this recently when many of you filled in a questionnaire – if you were able to spare the time – and those results are being studied. What I suspect they will show though

is that only a few can do more than you are already doing – and that is nothing peculiar about life here at Christ Church. It is a fact of modern day life.

But many of you are already involved in the life of the church – and you do it for nothing. Last week we were reflecting on how much things cost us to run our church – and realised that it costs £2,700 per week to run the church. But imagine how much greater the cost would be if we had to pay – for example – those who work each week to decorate the church with flowers. Yes we buy the flowers but we pay £0 in labour. We don't pay people to clean the church, to serve refreshments, to run our Traidcraft stall, to act as welcoming stewards, to sing in our choir, to prepare and serve at the altar, to administer the chalice, to read the lesson or pray the intercessions, to lead and teach our children, to run our teenage youth group, to serve on the church council, to look after our safeguarding, to create our quarterly parish news and our publicity posters, to look after our website, to organise our social events, to be involved in the caretaking and running of the hall, in pastoral care and visiting, bereavement support, in gardening, DIY and cutting the grass, in giving lifts to older members, in organising the monthly Thursday gatherings, in leading the small groups and book club, in counting and banking the collection money, in delivering leaflets, in being a licensed lay reader or a churchwarden – what have I missed out – I could go on I am sure. But all of these tasks and more costs the church absolutely zero – £0. Indeed it is a remarkable fact that there are only four people who are paid to work in the church: me (the only one who is full time), and three part time members of staff – the Director of Music, Administrator and Bookkeeper. That is remarkable and so an enormous THANK YOU to all those who do so much work for the church out of love and for zero wages.

I should also acknowledge, of course, and pay tribute to the fact that many of you are also involved in all sorts of other voluntary organisations apart from the church. It might be good one day to list what people are doing. I think we might all be surprised at the wide range of interests that occupy many of us here on a voluntary basis.

But – and of course there is a but – here at the church, as with most other voluntary organisations, we are always on the lookout for more to offer some of their time and talents or gifts to keep the current things running, never mind about trying to expand our mission and do more. For the truth is that we would like to do more. For example with our new refurbished hall opening in September it would be good to restart a parents and toddler group – but it would be a big commitment to run that week in and week out in term time. It would be good to be able to open our church more –

but again that would be a commitment and, dare I say it, another rota! We need some help with creating a new website. We need fresh singers to join the choir, we need new volunteers to clean the church, one more to help with grass cutting etc, etc.

However in saying all this today, I want to be at pains as I was last week to say that I am not in the business of making busy people feel guilty if they cannot give more financially or if they cannot offer more of their time. But if any of you can, please do think about it and tell us. But one word of caution – you may have lots of good new ideas but we may need you to be prepared to take a lead on them. Our mantra as a church recently has been ‘to do a few things and to do them well’. This shouldn’t prevent imaginative new ideas – but somehow these have to be properly thought out and properly organised and properly resourced.

I finish as I finished last week, reminding us that St Paul tells us the church is the body of Christ and that it was Teresa of Avila who helps us to understand what this means in her prayer:

‘Christ has no body on earth but ours. No hands but ours. No feet but ours. Ours are the eyes through which is to look out Christ’s compassion to the world. Ours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good. Ours are the hands with which he is to bless all humanity now’. ‘Yours Lord is the greatness, the power, the glory, the splendour and the majesty; for everything in heaven and on earth is yours. All things come from you and of your own do we give you’.

Amen.