

Gracechurch

Revd Philip Sudell

Minister

Thursday 16th October 2008

Dear All

Gift Day – Sunday 19th October 2008

As you will know from my recent letter marking the 4th anniversary of Grace Church, this coming Sunday, 19th October, is the day that we have set aside for a Gift Day.

Why a Gift Day? – well, for two main reasons...

1. To give us an opportunity to make a **thank offering** for the last 4 years of God's goodness and grace towards us as a church.

One of the great marks of a people who know and understand God's grace to them in Jesus Christ is that they are a thankful people. Rom 1:21 reminds us that the great distinguishing mark of the godless, sinful heart is thanklessness! From the earliest days of the people of God thankfulness has often been expressed in generous giving. Paul reminds the Corinthians in 2 Cor 8:2 about the Macedonian churches in this way:

²Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity

2. To give towards **the extra expenditure** that will be required to support the new areas of ministry that we are seeking to develop, such as the afternoon outreach starting later this autumn at St Michael at Bowes, just beyond Bounds Green Tube.

This Gift Day is an opportunity to make one-off gifts as well as review the level of our regular giving and I want to encourage you to consider prayerfully the part that you might be able to play in this. Thank you to those who have recently reviewed their regular giving.

People always tend to ask me how much we need to raise when we have a Gift Day like this and while that is a good question (more about it a little later) I think that the more important question is what would cause us to consider the Gift Day a success.

A Gift Day's success seems biblically to be measured more in the response of our hearts (unseen but known by God) than just by the total given. 'God', says Paul in 2 Cor 9:7, 'loves a cheerful giver'. Not a reluctant giver.

In fact the bible reminds us that the amount given can be a very inaccurate measure of the heart attitude that lies behind the gift – The example of the widow that Jesus observes in the Temple in Mark 12:41-44 being a prime example.

So I am praying that God will cause us to be generous and cheerful givers rather than simply that we raise what we need.

However, it is important that as a church we are aware of our financial position and I am very grateful to those who work hard behind the scenes keeping our finances in order.

Graham Wright, our treasurer, tells me that our current situation is that we need another £10,000 to cover our costs this year. He expects our total expenditure to be c. £80,000, about £70,000 of which is already received or committed. This could be covered by a combination of one-off gifts and increases in regular giving that are then collected in the remainder of this year.

/ please turn over

For the year ahead, it would then enable us to cover our costs if we were able to lift the level of our regular monthly income from around £5000 to perhaps £6000 or even £6500.

I hope those figures give you a feel for where we are now – please do speak to Graham if you would like any more information.

The other question that I am sometimes asked around a gift day is ‘How do I know when I am being generous?’. It isn’t an easy question to answer because it is a heart issue not an issue of amounts. However the bible gives us a few pointers that might be helpful. Firstly, generous giving goes that extra step – Paul in 2 Cor 8:3,4 again..
....welled up in rich generosity. ³ For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴ they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.

Secondly, generous giving is often costly. King David understood this as we see in 2 Sam 24:24:

But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing."

So perhaps it is, as someone once said, down to the “Gulp factor” – If I don’t gulp when I see what I’ve written on the cheque then...

So as I finish can I remind you of what I said earlier about what might cause us to see this gift day as a success? Ultimately the issue is our hearts not the amount we raise. A gift day that raised a smaller amount, but an amount generated by the joyful generosity of us all could perhaps be considered a greater success than a gift day that raised a greater amount but from begrudging hearts not joyful ones.

Let’s be praying that God, through his word and by his Spirit, does his work in our hearts this weekend and may he as always have all the glory!

Yours in our Lord Jesus Christ



Philip Sudell

P.S.

There will be a formal opportunity to make a response during the service this coming Sunday. There will be plenty of Financial Giving forms available then but they can be downloaded from www.gracech.org.uk/media and should also be attached or included with this letter.

Please mark any envelopes for the attention of the treasurer as our principle at Grace Church is that, as the minister, I should neither know who gives nor the amount that individuals give.

If you are away this weekend please do either post any response to the treasurer at the address overleaf or bring it when you are next in church.