

*This paper was originally written in November 2014. Rather than revise it thoroughly I have just updated parts of it.*

*Fergus Pearson 23rd October 2021*

## **FUNDRAISING**

*The PCC asked Fergus and Si to review the fundraising in St John's. This document comes from a desire to go back to the Bible and assess our practice. This represents a starting point on what is a complex area.*

*In addition, the Bible has much to say on money and warns us about the dangers and emotions it can raise in our own hearts (1 Timothy 6:10). So please do read this paper prayerfully and with that in mind.*

## **Background**

St John's has a history of sacrificial giving. We can look back and see that God has provided when we have stepped forward and trusted him.

But we noticed a trend from around 2010 to 2014: without any intention or planning the number of fundraising events had increased, along with the number of requests for money in Sunday services. In the light of these developments it seemed sensible to go right back to the beginning and explore the whole subject from scratch.

## **A. Ten points from the Bible on financial giving**

These were the ten points on giving that Si shared in his sermon when he and Tim spoke in church on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2014. These points come from Ligon Duncan who gives what we might describe as '10 essential truths about Christian giving'.

(from <http://www.christianity.com/church/tithing-and-giving/christian-giving-11598443.html>)

1. The Lord Jesus expects and requires us to give (Matthew 6:2: 'when you give . . .').
2. The Lord Jesus wants us to give for the right reasons (Matthew 6:1).
3. The Lord Jesus wants us to practise kind charitable giving (Matthew 6:2–3).
4. The Lord reminds us that our giving is ultimately to the all-seeing heavenly Father (Matthew 6:3–4).
5. The Bible teaches that Christian giving is an act of worship (1 Corinthians 16:2).
6. The Bible teaches that Christian giving should be done in the light of the incarnation (2 Corinthians 8:9).
7. The Bible teaches that Christian giving should be done in accordance with our means (1 Corinthians 16:2)
8. The Bible teaches that the liberality of God's blessings to us is connected to the liberality of our Christian giving (2 Corinthians 9:6).
9. The Bible teaches that Christian giving must be willing giving—free giving (see refs above).
10. The Bible teaches that Christian giving ought to be cheerful giving (2 Corinthians 9:7).

## B. Where did the giving go?

(from <https://bible.org/article/biblical-principles-concerning-contributions-church>)

1. In the Old Testament the Israelites gave for the construction of the temple and for the on-going maintenance of its worship and ministry (Exodus 25:1-9; 35:4-9; 2 Kings 12:4-16; 1 Chronicles 29:1-17; Matthew 17:24-27).
2. They also gave to the poor and needy (Leviticus 19:9-10; Deuteronomy 24:19-22; Mark 10:21; Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-35; 11:27-30; Romans 12:13; 2 Corinthians 8 and 9; Galatians 2:10).  
Especially they gave to the poor and needy of the household of God—i.e. fellow believers (Galatians 6:10).
3. Old and New Testament saints also gave in remuneration for ministry which they received (see Numbers 18; Luke 10:1-9; Galatians 6:6; 1 Corinthians 9:1-14).
4. They supported those who ministered to others (Luke 8:1-3; 2 Corinthians 11:8; Philippians 4:14-19; 2 John 7-11; 3 John 5-8).
5. There was also ministry to those who were suffering and in need (even imprisoned) for the sake of the gospel (Matthew 25:35-40; Philippians 2:25-30).

## C. How was money obtained?

1. A collection was made on the first day of the week, the day of meeting (see point 5, section A above)
2. It was made firstly for those of the 'household of God', but not necessarily exclusively for them (see point 2, section B above)
3. Disciples raised awareness of specific needs (see point 2, section B above); the collection was administered by apostles (Acts 4:34–35) and 'the seven' (Acts 6:1–4)
4. As Christians we should meet our own needs (Acts 20:33–35; 2 Thessalonians 3:6–15; Ephesians 4:28) and the needs of our family, before going to the church (1 Timothy 5:3–8).
5. We should not expect money from non-Christians (See point 5, section A above; and 3 John 7–8)
6. We should not use money received from dishonesty (Acts 5:1–6) or where a person could be accused of profit-making (Matthew 21:12–17)

## At St John's: Short term goals

### 1. Prioritise better

We would like to streamline the amount of things that money is sought for in church—to ensure that money is sought for things that fit what the Bible sees as the church's task. In order to have giving that is centred on the gospel the most logical thing is to try and prioritise.

- a) A first step is to ensure from now on that anyone who wants to give a notice about money in the **Sunday service** will need to ask Fergus during the week before.
- b) It would be good for all financial decision-making to be filtered through our **Ministry Strategy** in order to ensure we are meeting our aims and not being diverted to other worthy causes. So for each thing that arises we would ask the question, Does it fit the aims of evangelism, discipleship or training? If not, then we should perhaps revise what we are seeking money for; or if it is a church member who wants to raise money for something on their heart we can ask them to speak to friends privately.
- c) If the money is being raised for a **fellowship** activity, or for an excursion, it is worth asking the question, Is there an alternative that can be arranged at minimal cost?
- d) Partly due to **changing times** there are some activities that we think we could consider stopping. This happened over the last two years with Harvest Supper and auction. We would need to have some more discussion on this.

## 2. Family first, where possible

It seems biblical, in the light of passages above, to ask parents to pay for children to take trips where they have financial capacity. Where not, we can go to the church—as has happened before.

## 3. From Christians only

We will keep making sure that we don't seek funds from non-Christians or charge for hearing the gospel.

## 4. Remain flexible

We need to remain able to respond to sudden need, e.g. Ebola, and other acts of compassion. The Christian community is our primary place of care, but we need also to have our eyes open to wider concerns.

## At St John's: Longer term goals

### To disconnect 'events' from fundraising.

The shorter term goals relate mostly to the **purpose** of obtaining money; the longer term goals relate mostly to the **method** of obtaining money.

It seems to us that 'fundraising events' are not something that the Bible has in mind as a means to raise money. Rather, when a need arises it is made apparent to the Church family, and freewill offerings are given in addition to regular giving. Events themselves, for fellowship, and so on, are very good things. But there is no particular reason for fellowship events to be tied to raising money.

It's not that we're saying there is anything wrong in itself with 'fundraising'; but for his people God calls us to exercise generosity directly. While we may not understand all the reasons for God's methods we should maintain that there is good reason for them and that they proceed from his wisdom for us.

*However, we recognise that over the last five or more years 'fundraising' has become for us at St John's a common practice. While it may be desirable to move to a system of disconnecting events from fundraising—and we hope to get there—we feel it may be wiser to move towards this goal gently over time. To change things quickly could be a considerable jolt to some people and it could end up being a distraction from the gospel work we desperately need to do this year.*

*For this reason we propose a continued discussion and a gradual process of change. This means that you will probably notice a slow move from fundraising events to free-will offerings that are disconnected from events. We have no time-frame in mind for this, but it will be gradual. It is also true that, like most things in life and ministry, making changes is not neat and tidy, and individual situations may occasionally need individual treatment.*

**October 2021:**

I think it's true to say that we have implemented over the years what we said here in these last two paragraphs in italics.

May I add here that when asked I have always said it is ok to 'fund-raise' for **CAP Whitehaven**. There are no perfectly neat boundaries, but it seems to me that church family is different from all other organisations or bodies. CAP Whitehaven is an agency connected to St John's (and other local churches) rather than an internal activity of St John's. Non-Christians are often keen to support (even when they are aware of its evangelistic nature) and it seems to me it is appropriate to look for funds for it in normal ways, beyond simply church members' giving.

Hopefully we are heading in a direction that honours God and we ask you to pray with us.

'God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply.' Hudson Taylor