

All Saints Alive

VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

Christian Stewardship



Dear Friends,

Those of us who have struggled with learning music and playing an instrument know well that it is not simply a case of reading a book, or even attending a few lessons, but of spending time practising and even immersing ourselves, so that we can really know the music and bring about a permanent improvement in our ability to play or sing...and even allow it to become a life enhancing experience!

A similar programme of education needs to be undertaken with our Christian Stewardship. Sometimes, in the past, it has been regarded as a means of extricating a parish from its financial problems, as a "crash course" for a week or two, and not as a way of life in response to God, a steady programme of growth in Christian discipleship.

Christian Stewardship is a response to God

The Christian understanding of Stewardship is derived from our understanding of the nature of the generosity of God.

God the Creator

Because God is the Creator and has given men and women a special place in his purposes on earth and dominion over all other living creatures, men and women are called:

- to worship God and to give thanks for his goodness
- to use the natural world and other living creatures in the service of God and all people, and not for self-interest and exploitation.

God the Saviour

Because God has made himself known most fully in Jesus Christ, and has acted uniquely and decisively in him to save the world and to give forgiveness, grace and eternal life, men and women are called:

- to put their trust in God and live in companionship with Jesus Christ
- to follow Jesus in showing love to others; to use their minds, bodies and possessions to glorify God, and to give practical help to people in need.

God the Holy Spirit

Because God has formed the Church, entrusted the Church with the Gospel, and given gifts to men and women through the Holy Spirit:

- the Church is called to make Jesus Christ and the Gospel known.
- individual Christians are called to use their gifts in his service.

A response in active giving

To describe our response and love we use the words "Christian Stewardship". We do so because the word "steward" is used in the Bible to express the concept of responsibility for the use of material possessions and spiritual powers.

Christian Stewardship may therefore be defined as the response which we the Church, collectively and individually, are called to make to God for all that he has given us and done for us, above all in Jesus Christ.

Our response in Christian Stewardship is therefore active:

- as we respond to God in praise and thanksgiving
- as we look on the universe as God's creation
- as we treat the earth and its resources as God's provision for the needs of all mankind
- as we seek to consecrate our personal wealth to God
- as we regard our lives, our powers and possessions, our money and material wealth as gifts from God to be enjoyed and used in his service
- as we seek to be "Stewards of the Gospel" and to share in Christ's mission to the world

Unless our gift has cost us something, it is not really a thanksgiving but more like a tip! One of the tensions in our discipleship lies in whether we live our life and give to God the odd crumb, or whether we give to God first, and then manage the rest. If we as Christian disciples do the first, we will never be satisfied: If we do the second, we will always have enough.

Yours in Christ,

Jo

Last month's "Sits Vac"

Last month, although I had asked for extra help with parish administration, an ad was put in All Saints Alive asking for more support for me. Well meaning as it doubtless was, I would like to reassure everyone that I do not need support to "read and manage papers..... given her eyesight difficulties" as I have the equipment on my computer to magnify documents etc. It would in any case be inappropriate for others to read my letters, whether personal or professional, for confidentiality reasons. I have also striven to deal with the visual challenges, and I have accepted that it is part of who I am.

I believe that we all face some challenges in life, whether it is physically, mentally or emotionally and that this by no means

makes us less able to cope than anyone else. It can, however, when we hear of other people's challenges, lead us to make some mistaken assumptions that they can do the job less well.

I feel strongly that we should always ensure that help offered is appropriate to a person, and that we should check that any help would be wanted and welcomed. Jesus himself followed this principle, for in St Luke 18.35-43 his mercy is implored by a beggar. "When he came near, Jesus asked him 'What do you want me to do for you'?" The question is borne of the insight that any healing or help is a response to an expressed need. Intervention with an attitude that we know what is best can be painful. Any person whom we perceive to be in need has the right to accept or reject assistance, and the right to their dignity. Jo

Thank you for the Music Brian and Martin!

While Chris Benham has been on sabbatical for three months, Brian Bromley and Martin Penny have been working very hard ensuring that the high standards of music have been kept up. Brian looked after the Boys' choir practice on Monday nights and Martin looked after the Girls' practice on Tuesday nights and together they made sure that the combined large choir practice on Friday nights went very well indeed.

They ensured that the music on Sundays was always of a very high standard, that everyone was valued for their contribution to it and that the choir is in very good heart.

They have been extremely generous with their time and utter commitment to All Saints. They have been in church practically every day of the week rehearsing or ensuring that services go smoothly!

I really want to thank them both for their love, devotion and passion that goes into everything they do for All Saints.

Jo