



CHRIST CHURCH, GEORGETOWN

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The Reverend Timothy A. R. Cole, MA BD, MTh (QHC), Rector

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My Dear Friends,

On Sunday, September 23, I preached a sermon about Stewardship. If you didn't hear it, please go to the Church website and read or listen to it.

Giving is as much for us as it is for God. What we do with our most precious things; our time, talents and money, reveals the truth about who we are and what we really believe. Giving is an affair of the heart and soul. We tend to give most to what we love most and value most. Jesus said, "By their fruits ye shall know them." (Matthew 7:20) By what we give we show who we are and what our priorities are.

For the Christian, God comes first. A Christian life is a grateful life, and thankfulness begins in the acknowledgement that everything we have comes from God. "All things come of thee, O Lord, and from thine own have we given thee." (1 Chronicles 29:14) By our giving we give thanks for our lives.

Of course, the gifts we offer to God are not just given through the Church. To give to the poor and those in need is Christian giving also. Yet, we must first make sure our spiritual home is in good order. The bright beacon of Christ Church is the source of our strength, and how so much of our work is done for the poor all across our community and beyond. It is not just the 20% of Church income that we give away each year to support our mission partners and the mission of the wider Church, it is also the nurture of the faith and lives of our people that helps them to do so much more. Almost every good cause or charity in the wider community relies on the support of Christ Church parishioners. We make Christ Church strong first, so we can all do more.

How do we decide how much to give?

What would you say are the six most important things in your life? If you were given a bag of stones and asked to build six cairns, one for each of the central things in your life, putting the most stones on the most important, which would be the biggest cairns? Think about how much time, talent and money you actually give to each. The biggest cairn should have the largest pile in front of it. If it doesn't then, either our idea of what we think is important is wrong, or, as is probably often the case, we simply haven't been looking too closely at how we spend our energy and resources. These cairns are not made up of all those things about which we have no choice, like tax, mortgages, food, school fees etc. They are made up of the things that we love and choose, and in which we find meaning and purpose.

When we decide what to give as Christians, we just have to look at what we are offering to God and the Church, and try to make sure we are giving of our time, talents and money in proportion to where the Church comes alongside the other things we hold dear. If there is large cairn with little in front of it, that should give us pause for thought.

Tithing, giving one tenth of our income is a noble and Biblical practice and some of us do this. Tithing is a choice and by no means a requirement. What I would say is that to think in terms of percentages is good. If everyone in our congregation prayerfully gave between 2 and 5% of their income we would be able to sustain the Church of the present without having to rely on the giving of the past as we do now. We are currently supporting only 75% of what the Church does. For the other 25%, we rely on the giving of the people who came before us. In such a prosperous age we should not really have to do that.

Indeed, the particular needs of the Church should not make any difference to what we give, because our decision is based on what we feel called to give. That said, it is true that this year, Christ Church really does need your support. We have been dealing with a substantial legacy debt over the last two years, our number of people who pledge has dropped significantly from six years ago, and we currently have the second lowest average pledge among our peer churches in the Diocese. We can and should do better.

I would simply ask us all to prayerfully consider these things. Let us look at what God and life have placed in our hands, reflect on what matters most to us, and what we love the most, build our cairns, and then check how much of our most precious things, our time, our talents and our money, we are placing against each. I invite you to make Christ Church's cairn as large as you can, and to raise it as high as you can on your list of many priorities. The test for all of us is if, once we have done that, we can say to ourselves and to God that we have done what we could.

The challenges and opportunities God sets before us are how we grow. There is a risk in committing our hearts and our substance. Jesus promises that God will honor the good stewards who venture what they have been given in his service. (Matthew 25:14-30)

May God bless you and our beloved Christ Church.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy A. R. Cole". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

The Reverend Timothy A. R. Cole
Rector