

April 17, 2020

We expect some of our members to experience financial uncertainty and even loss this year. So, I'd like to tell you about our church finances, place our decisions into a biblical context, offer some hope, and share some ways that you can still give, if you are able.

Our Budget

Our church income for a typical year is \$740,000. \$670,000 of that comes from giving.

We spend about \$330,000 on salaries for 14 members of staff ranging from those who work just two hours a week, through to about 70. On top of that, there are payroll taxes, benefits, and other expenses. We spend about \$150,000 on paying bills: insurance; taxes; repairs; and supplies. We give away about \$100,000 to our diocese, and other partners. Although the current situation is only having a small impact on our expenses, we are doing all that we can to reduce spending where we can.

We try to run a balanced budget most years. Lately we have done well, saving the surplus for capital projects and emergencies like this. We have also applied for a low interest loan (very hopefully to be forgiven under the government's stimulus package).

Let me say as clearly as I can, we trust God in our finances as we trust him in everything. Our job is not to control things, it is to be faithful with what we have. In that respect, nothing has changed.

Biblical Giving

Biblically speaking, the proportion we are called to give is not impacted by the wealth of the nation, nor by our personal income. God consistently asks for 10% of our income as a start and then for more as our hearts mature in generosity.

The proportion we are called to give has not changed. But the amount might have. If you have a biblical pattern of giving like this, and your income has gone down, your giving might need to go down as well. God knows that, and the staff team here will do their best with what we have, trusting Him.

But if your pattern of giving is quite different from what the bible teaches, this could be time to make some changes. There are many times in the bible where God's people found themselves in situations like ours where the economy was destroyed, but in such situations, they often continued to give, in fact sometimes they repented and increased.

I would not be surprised if, like those in the bible, some of us increased our giving proportions this year. That sounds completely counter-intuitive, but the gospel is. Sometimes when the world is turned upside down, people re-evaluate their priorities, reorient themselves towards the kingdom, and grow in faith.

Of course, we recognize that some of us are hurting right now, many of us have seen our income and pensions reduced, some of us have lost our jobs, and we may yet face bereavement as well. If you are giving faithfully, and you find yourself in that position, please do not feel bound by the pre-estimate of giving you made back in 2019 when things were going well. As we said back then, it was just your best guess with what you knew at the time.

Indeed, you might need money from the church. We have a small fund for that and if you need financial help, or something more practical, please don't be afraid to ask.

Hope

There are many bible passages that we can turn to for hope. In fact, some scholars calculate there are over 2,000 verses in the bible about money. But one that really stands out is the verse I sometimes use over the offering plate as it comes forward in church.

“For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you. For we are strangers before you and sojourners, as all our fathers were. Our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no abiding. O Lord our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand and is all your own.” 1 Chron. 29:14-16

It reminds us that this temporary and fallen world is not our home and that one day we will dwell where we really belong forever. Perhaps this time of suffering and loss has shaken our faith in a world that was never meant to last, and stirred up a longing, for some eternal.

The temporary things of this temporary world all belong to God and in his generosity he has given us a taste of the world to come – a double blessing: (1) we get to keep and use most of it now on whatever we like, and (2) we get to invest a small and symbolic portion in eternity.

Ways to Give

If you are still able to give and want to know how, with restrictions on meeting and travel, the best and easiest way is to have your bank mail regular checks to us. There are no fees for this type of giving. Alternatively, you can mail checks to us yourself.

We also have several new and easy ways to give online, using our app and website. In times like this we are blessed to have such a competent team looking after our church finances as we do all the usual things, in new and unusual ways.

Thank you for reading this. We're trying to call every member to see how you are doing, but if you would like to talk and pray about anything, especially money, I'd love to hear from you as well.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'Alex', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Alex