

We come this morning to celebrate the 129<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this magnificent church building; to give thanks that our benefactors gifted to us a gem in which it is a pleasure to worship and say our prayers. One of the unique things about St George's, at least at first sight, is that we have before us pretty much what Mitchell, Spence and Pennefather planned, designed and created.

Of course, if we let our eyes linger long enough we see that this is no museum but a living, evolving and developing church building; there is the nave altar and its Evett's frontal, the redesigned Lady Chapel, crosses and candlesticks, vestments and painting – many of which have been generously gifted to us (often in memory of former worshippers). All in all it is an outstanding church building.

On this Feast of Dedication we begin by giving thanks for all our benefactors who have made this place so awesome and awe inspiring.

All of that, so far is what accountants would call in modern-day language, “Capital” – it is the Plant, the Fabric, the stones, mortar and furnishings of St George’s.

But we know well enough that just as a house needs people to make it into a home, so a church building needs a congregation to turn it into a living temple. And this is where today’s Stewardship Campaign and the associated Parish Giving Scheme come in, as we think about what the accountants would call our revenue stream.

We need to put the heat on; we need to insure this fine building and the fine people who pass through it; we need to train new Readers and Ordinands; offer a reasonable stipend, housing and pension to our stipendiary priests and we need to ensure that there is money to do all the things we want to do: nurture our children, sing God’s praise, tell the Gospel, reach out to the community of Jesmond and beyond in mission and service.

And as I say all that is about our revenue ...for as we have been recently told elsewhere there is no magic money tree! SO if we want to be about God's business in our own time and place we need to find the cash to do it.

I leave it to the finance committee to go into the details, the figures and the accounting and accountability (and I welcome Rachel Jobe who will introduce you to the Parish Giving Scheme over coffee) but I need to say this (bit I would wouldn't I):

- We give because we have received. Because we believe that all things have come from God we recognise a human and certainly a Christian imperative to give. This is not surprising since God gives, and we are made in God's image, it is in our nature to give generously.

- We give because we believe that giving in a planned and committed way reveals the inner working of our heart (Christian discipleship in other words calls us to put our money where our mouth is!). As Billy Graham once said, not someone I quote very frequently, “Our chequebooks, bank and credit card statements are theological documents in that they reveal where our heart is”.
- We give in order that we might sign up to sharing God’s mission to the world: and this is of course a never ending task...and one for each generation.

I know that I am teaching grandmothers to suck eggs and that St George’s will have thrived over the years because of committed, planned, tax-efficient and above all else generous giving. And for that I want you to hear me say “thank you”.

But refreshing and renewing our revenue stream is a constant and continuous task ...therefore if we are committed to worship, discipleship and service we will welcome this opportunity to prayerfully review and renew our giving.

This renewed commitment is not for us alone – St George's is not an inward looking, isolationist parish: we will want to play a full and fuller part in the life of the deanery and diocese.

For, in this regard, an outstanding church building deserves an outstanding congregation, transforming it into a living temple...which is even more awesome than the place.