

Why Do I Go To St Francis?

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I attend St. Francis in particular, as it is the Church in the community where I live. I feel that it is important as a Christian to attend my local Church and to be of service and witness here where I live. I am not a traditional Anglican by any means (though, if you can believe it, I was a choir boy in local Parish Church for 9 months when I was about 10!). I class myself as a Christian that just happens to attend an Anglican church.

However, it is necessary for my own spiritual support and personal growth that I receive from the Church I attend, good biblical teaching and that it offers me an environment where I can feel God's presence and get to know Him more and what He requires of me. St. Francis I find offers me this, especially through the passionate commitment of Angus and Janice and the support of so many members of the congregation.

We are all blessed to live in such a pretty place in such a safe country and to have good health and resources for us to live a good life. For these reasons alone I can thank God.

Personally, to feel truly fulfilled as a Christian, I need to be actively involved in my Church and I believe that unless I am active in the Church I attend then I am not responsibly using my talents and the blessings that God has given me.

We are all a family in this congregation and like many families we do not necessarily hold the same views about everything. As a family I feel that we are tolerant of the views of others but sometimes of course we do fall out. However, what we must all come back to is the understanding that we are here to worship God and seek what is His will and that requires us to work in harmony, love one another, forgive each other's faults (as we see them!) and seek to work together to expand God's Kingdom.

The Stewardship Campaign at this time of year is something that we can see as being all about money and of course part of the reason that it is held now is because this is the time we plan next year's budgets and the Wardens and Treasurer need to know what we can expect by way of commitment and pledges from all of us. Its aim is to ask us to give back to God as we feel led and are able. However, the stewardship campaign should not be seen as a one-off time to decide what we are going to give to the Church. This should be on our mind throughout the whole of the year.

Our Church, and of course we are not alone in this, has significant challenges in respect of finance. As I am currently a Warden I do get to see our financial position every month (although with staff and coding changes this year, it has been difficult to monitor on a monthly basis exactly where we are at). I can say though that to date, our budgeted expenditure is well under control and indeed is lower than where it was projected. So good job in that we are not spending more than we said we would. However, our revenue (our income) remains challenging for us and currently at this stage of the year, we are falling behind where we were expecting to be. Two-thirds of our revenue comes solely from giving, by us, the congregation, with one third budgeted to come from other sources, the main ones being the rent we get from the Montessori School, which is predictable and the others from Weddings, funerals etc, which are much less predictable. So it is important to know therefore that most of what we want and need is down to us and our giving.

I had a quick look at what the Bible says about giving. In the time of Moses tithing was 10% of goods, but it was increased by a quarter to 12% if it was given in cash. On many occasions, when they were particularly blessed, people would give much more than this and indeed on one occasion I read that after Moses had asked people for donations for the Tabernacle, people were so generous that he actually had to tell them to stop giving!

Now I am not suggesting that we necessarily follow the 12% rule as indeed in Moses day a lot of this money was spent for social needs, which today we all contribute to partly in our taxes. However, the principle was if you felt that God had blessed you, then you give something back to the furtherance of God's work.

The bible is also very clear that God honors those who give to Him and in Proverbs chapter 3 verse 9 we read that he repays "with barns that are full and vats that are bursting with wine"! (That might particularly motivate some of us).

It is up to each one of us personally to determine how much money we should give back to God. Some of us can give more this year. Some of us have changed circumstances and can give no more. Some even may have to give less than they have done in the past.

Whatever our financial position though, we can give to the Lord, not just by cash but also by our time and our talents. We still have vacancies and needs for many positions in the Church. We have a need for a Communications Coordinator and a Writer/editor for resurrecting the Church newsletter. We also need a Facilities Coordinator and deputy and volunteers to work with this person. We would also benefit from the talents of a marketing coordinator to make St Francis better known in our community, especially to newcomers. Ask yourself if you can give of your time and talents for these and any other volunteering opportunities.

Our Church does not run on cash alone. It is the commitment of time and energy also that makes us a vibrant and growing church.

So back to why do I go to St Francis? It is now more than just because it is my local community Church, it is also a place where I can show my love for God by giving of my time, my talents and my money. After all Jesus gave his life for me and has blessed me with a good life, living in this beautiful place, with family and friends. I want to see the work here at St Francis continue and for this Church to be a beacon in our community. For it to thrive and grow and continue as a Church where I and others can find a place to pray, to worship to celebrate, to study and be in fellowship with my neighbour. For this to be so, then I have to play my part in supporting it. I hope you will join me in supporting this campaign, not just today, but throughout the year and in whatever way you feel able.