

Grace-Fuelled Giving

Introduction

Taree Presbyterian Church (TPC) is a gathering of believers from all walks of life, united by a single purpose: we are compelled to see lives transformed for Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit, for the glory of God.

Pause for a moment and reflect on our mission statement. It is our reason for existence and implies two things. First, our vision is vast. We aim to align ourselves with the mission of Lord Jesus, which is to bring everyone under his Lordship (1 Corinthians 15:27). Everyone, everywhere, should trust in Jesus as their saviour and king.

Specifically, we at TPC want every resident of the Manning Valley to embrace faith in Christ and be transformed in his name. We aspire to extend this mission from Taree by training, equipping, and sending missionaries and workers across our country and the globe. Our vision is immense.

Secondly, our mission is action-oriented with a specific goal. We are not a league or a country club. Nor are we an aid agency or charity. If TPC were to stop making disciples, we would lose our purpose. Straying from this mission would mean defying Jesus' great commission in Matthew 28.

TPC has an immense mission to see lives transformed for Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God.

The generous financial support of the church family is integral to the growth and sustainability of the mission. Throughout the church's history, many generations have given sacrificially to help rescue those lost in darkness and deepen their faith.

This booklet explains how giving generously to this mission is integral to your journey as a disciple and the mission as a whole.

May it bless you as you read and consider your giving in light of our saviour's great love for us.

Vaughan Smith

A Brief Theology of Giving

Why Should We Give?

The Bible gives multiple reasons why we should give. Here are five important ones:

1. God Gave First

We are loved by a generous God. He is our creator, and everything we have is his gift. On top of this, we know that "God loved the world in this way: he gave his one and only Son" (John 3:16 CSB) so that we might be forgiven and gain eternal life. Paul motivates the Corinthians to give by reminding them of "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). We give because God first gave to us.

2. Renewed Minds and Changed Hearts

Our financial priorities reflect the Spirit's work in our hearts. As stated in 1 John 3:18, "If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?" Indeed, the love of money has been a stumbling block for many.

3. Eternal Priorities

The Bible emphasises that this life is short-lived and the afterlife is eternal. Jesus cautions us against accumulating earthly treasures that are transient, and instead encourages us to store up heavenly treasures that are everlasting (Matthew 6:19-21). As Christians who are part of a church community dedicated to God's grand designs, we have the opportunity to invest our resources in things that have eternal value.

4. For God's glory and our good

The Apostle Paul describes the financial contributions of the Philippians as "a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God" (Philippians 4:18). This teaches us that giving our money away is a spiritual act that allows us to worship and glorify God. Paul also quotes Jesus' words to the church leaders in Ephesus, saying, "it is more blessed to give than receive" (Acts 20:35). One cannot fully worship God without giving.

5. To make disciples

We live in an era defined by Jesus' Great Commission: to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20). Today, Jesus carries out this mission through his church, assisted by his Spirit. In the New Testament, financial support has always been a part of this essential work.

Paul received financial assistance from several partner churches (Philippians 4:15-16), which allowed him to dedicate his time to making and maturing more disciples. He also advised Timothy that 'the elders who lead the church well deserve double honour, especially those who labour in preaching and teaching' (1 Timothy 5:17).

By financially supporting gospel work, we can allocate the necessary resources to those who lead, teach, and administer, thus enabling us to collaborate in growing God's church.

How Much Should We Give?

The New Testament doesn't specify an exact amount for us to give. It advises us to be generous according to our income (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). This means that a widow's small contribution might be more generous than a larger gift from a wealthy person (Luke 21:1-4). God desires our giving to be cheerful and sacrificial, stemming from gratitude, faith, and love for Him and others. So, what does generous giving truly look like?

In the Old Testament, God's people were commanded to give a tithe, or 10% of their income, back to Him. This concept first appears in Leviticus 27:30. A tithe encompassed everything from the land, including grain from the soil and fruit from the trees. It belonged to the Lord and was designated for Him. Every three years, an additional tithe was given to aid the poor. Moreover, the Israelites freely offered additional contributions to God, reflecting their faith in Him and gratitude for His blessings.

In the New Testament, a new principle of sacrificial generosity is introduced, replacing the Old Testament principle of tithing. As a result, instead of being commanded to give 10%, Christians are now urged to demonstrate generosity in response to God's grace as shown to us through Jesus Christ.

So how much should we give?

While the New Testament doesn't impose the old law of 10% tithing, it seems unusual to consider giving less than 10% under the principle of grace. God's people still need to allocate resources for leaders and teachers, and the scope of the church's mission surpasses that of Israel. The grace we experience through Jesus should encourage us to enhance our generosity, not reduce it.

The Old Testament command to tithe was based on the fact that everything Israel possessed belonged to God. With the understanding that we are doubly owned by God (both created and redeemed), shouldn't we be even more generous in our giving?

The New Testament guides Christians, who have been enriched in every way by Jesus's generosity, to view the tithe as a starting point for sacrificial generosity. In other words, if you want to understand what generosity looks like, begin with a tithe and aim to increase from there.

Let the tithe be your springboard for generosity.

Do I have to give 10%?

The tithe doesn't directly apply to us as it did to the Israelite nation. Some of us can give more than 10%, while others might not be able to do so due to various reasons. As 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 reminds us, our giving is ultimately a matter of prayerful consideration before God. Our finances are just one of the many areas we should consider in our prayers as we decide how to worship him with all that he has generously given us.

Our use of finances reflects the priorities of our hearts. If we value the eternal priorities of God, this will be seen in our giving. This world is not our home, so let's take seriously what Jesus says in Matthew 6:19-21:

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Who Should I Give To?

While all of our giving is ultimately a gift given to God, the Bible highlights a few key people groups that Christians can and should give to:

THE LOCAL CHURCH - Making Disciples Locally

(Galatians 6:6, 1 Timothy 5:17-18)

The local church holds a high priority in God's plans, serving as the foundation for our mission in the Manning Region. It's the environment where individuals, families, and fellow believers are nurtured in their faith. Like how Israel set aside the Levites, we too need to designate some among us to lead, teach, and organize our church family life and mission.

Paul writes:

Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its fruit? Or who shepherds a flock and does not drink the milk from the flock? Am I saying this from a human perspective? Doesn't the law also say the same thing? For it is written in the law of Moses, Do not muzzle an ox while it treads out grain. Is God really concerned about oxen? Isn't he really saying it for our sake? Yes, this is written for our sake, because he who plows ought to plow in hope, and he who threshes should thresh in hope of sharing the crop. If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it too much if we reap material benefits from you? (1 Corinthians 9:7-11 CSB)

When asked about contributing to his local church, John Piper responded, 'Well, I think it's a helpful rule of thumb to say that, considering this is your family of believers with its own set of needs and that you benefit from the church and give your life to it, starting with a tithe here is a good idea. And from there you can give more here and more elsewhere!' This statement reminds us that donating to the local church isn't selfish. It's about fulfilling our primary responsibility to make disciples locally.

MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS - Making disciples beyond

(Philippians 4:16, 2 Corinthians 11:8)

The Bible also shows a rich partnership between churches and those they send to preach the gospel. At TPC, we are privileged to partner with brothers and sisters serving cross-culturally. As such, a percentage of what is given to the church is passed on directly to missionaries supported by the church. These missionaries are chosen and approved of every year at our Congregational meeting.

In addition to your church giving, why not consider a cross-cultural mission team or family to support financially?

THE CHRISTIAN POOR AND OTHERS IN NEED

(1 Corinthians 16:1-2, James 2:14-17)

Christians have a clear responsibility to care for the Christian poor in the church family and beyond. Paul writes:

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith. (Galatians 6:10 CSB)

Just as every Christian has a responsibility to use their time and talents to bless their neighbours, so to do our finances fall under that responsibility. Additionally, there is a priority given to who we care for. First and foremost, we work for the good of those who 'belong to the household of faith,' that is, Christian brothers and sisters in need. Jesus says:

"And the King will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'" (Matthew 25:40 CSB, emphasis added)

This giving love for the Christian poor should flow outward to all as we see need.

HOW TO GIVE TO TPC

There are two ways to give to TPC: in our weekly collection or online.

Face-to-face

Every week we take up a collection in Church. The money collected here will go to ministry purposes at TPC, with a proportion sent to support our missionaries. The weakness of giving face-to-face in our gatherings is that it is often inconsistent and reliant on us being organised and actively bringing money each Sunday. It's no surprise that a large proportion of our congregation gives online.

Online

Giving online has the benefit of being automatic, consistent, and generous. There is no need to bring cash on a Sunday, nor is there any 'double handling' of giving. To give online, you can set up a direct deposit weekly, fortnightly, or monthly to the bank account details given below. This is the best and most effective way to give.

We want to assure you that the leadership of TPC does not scrutinise your online giving. The minister and elders aren't aware of who gives what, and all records are kept in the strictest of confidence.

TPC's Bank Account Details

Name: Lower Manning Presbyterian Church

BSB: 032587

Account Number: 590201

You can also use our direct giving site, found at taree.church/give (a small percentage of this giving is taken out to pay for the giving service we use, make sure to click 'cover the fees').