

Giving with the right attitude

Dear BPCWAians, Over the past two weeks, I have written about why we need to have a church extension, and the Biblical principle of giving. In giving to God's work, we are not giving to the church, or to please man, or even merely as a philanthropic community work. And we definitely should not give just to get someone off our back, as some do when they are approached in public for donations to charities. If we have such ideas, we will shrink back from giving to a building fund. We think that the money is ours and someone is trying to get it from us. Those who have such ideas are those who Christ says will "will hold to the one, and despise the other" (Matt 6:24; Luke 16:13). Instead, for God's work, we are simply returning to God what He has predetermined for us to give for His work.

How should I give? Even when we give, we must have the right attitude or we will give wrongly too.

1. Give willingly. "The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the LORD, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work, which the LORD had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses". (Exo 35:29) God reminds us, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." (2Cor 9:7) Only when we truly come to the full realisation that God gave us ahead of time for safekeeping as stewards, not for our own use, then will we return willingly. Also, only when we realise the time has come for us to have the privilege to be part of God's work, then will we be willing of heart. If you truly have assimilated the principle of giving as stated above, your heart will naturally be willing and ready instead of grudging. And when the time comes, you will cheerfully return what He has given you, not out of necessity, but out of love for the work of God and for the generations now and to come.

2. Give in faith. Some are unwilling because they fear about their own future. Give honestly as the Lord has enabled you to do so. Giving is a test of faith, "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (2Cor 9:8). God will provide when you give back to His work. And those who give generously will reap bountifully, "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. (7) Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2Cor 9:6-7)

3. Give without desire to be known. Our Lord Jesus teaches, "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven" (Mat 6:1), and "But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly" (Mat 6:3-4). Even when we are willing givers, let us not fall into the temptation and trap of giving with a desire for others to know we are giving. To help you, we made sure you do not have to hand envelopes containing cash or cheques to anyone in church but only need to drop it into the offering bag instead. But our proud hearts can be creative in wanting others to know that we or our family is giving. Let us guard and plan carefully. Let us not lose our true blessing in giving. So beware. Plan carefully how you will not fall into the temptation of wanting to be known.

4. Give above your normal giving. Your current tithes and offerings are needed for the ongoing operations and maintenance work of the church. It also supports the mission work. Hence, giving to the church extension project does not mean reducing current giving, which can result in impacting our operations. Yes, it may mean tightening our belts on some things we are used to spending that are good to have but are not necessities. You can do that even as a student. Going through self-

denials for the Lord will bring a new experience of joy. For heads of families, teach your spouse and children and come together as a family to plan how to give. This is an invaluable experience. And the example you set for them will become a lifetime lesson. Giving over and above our tithes and offerings may cost us difficulties and inconveniences. But it is a test of our love for God's church, His Kingdom's work, and the future generation here.

5. Give and pray. Remember that there are 4 types of people. First, there are those who give and hence want to have a big say in everything. Second, there are those who do not give but still want to say much. Third, there are those who do not want to give so they avoid everything. Fourth, there are those who give willingly and bountifully and ask how they can pray for the project. Let us all be the fourth kind of people. We are not against objective questions and inputs. But none must give and expect that the church does what he wants.

6. When do I stop giving? There are 2 phases in our church extension project. As I mentioned during the update on the church extension, the church's immediate need is to provide more rooms and space for Bible studies and fellowships. This is what we termed as "Phase 1", where the need is to raise \$1.3mill so as to build a new adjoining building fronting Canning Highway. But it does not end there. If God is pleased to grow the church further, our existing Worship sanctuary is insufficient, as we are already filling the fellowship area outside the kitchen. Should God should direct us toward having separate English and Chinese Worship services, we cannot use this additional space because there will be other activities happening concurrently while one Worship Service is on. Furthermore, as we are one church, we must hold combined Worship Services with both congregations coming together during key events. While phase 2 is not an immediate priority, we envisage that an extension of our current Worship Sanctuary will be needed in time. This will be the Phase 2 of our church extension project, and is likely to require an additional sum of several million dollars. So I hope that we will not stop giving even if Phase 1's goal is reached. Remember the person who gave generously some 30 years ago was not our worshipper and does not even live in Perth. We enjoy the fruit. It is our time to give now to the future work of God.

God has been pleased to draw many to His church here to worship Him, grow spiritually, and to serve Him. Satan does not like the church to grow and expand. Hence, it is no strange thing that church building projects often end up in big disagreements in church and even splits. Then the work of God dies, not just the project. Let us not be used of Satan as his tool to be a trouble maker as the church expands. We welcome helpful and genuine questions. The building committee is not perfect but we have been and will continue to work hard and do our best due diligence. This we do because we know we are accountable to God. We need your prayers.

Finally, my brethren, we often exhort one another to seek the kingdom of God (Luke 12:31). This is your opportunity, in this time, in your generation, to "provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth." (Luke 12:33)

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Luke 12:34)

I pray that everyone of us will love the church and God's work enough to give to our building fund.

Yours in our Lord's service
Pastor

以正确的态度奉献

西澳笃信圣经长老会亲爱的信徒们，在过去的两周，我编写了有关我们为何需要扩建教会以及奉献的圣经原则。当我们奉献于神的圣工时，我们不是捐献给教会，或是讨人的喜欢，甚至也不是仅仅做些社区的慈善活动。当我们奉献时，我们更不应该为了回避某些人而奉献，好像在回避那些在大庭广众间接洽我们来捐献给慈善机构的人。我们若有这种的想法，我们就会退缩不奉献于建堂基金。我们认为钱财是属于我们的，并且有些人试图从我们手中夺取。拥有这种想法的，正是耶稣所说的那些人，他们“就是重这个，轻那个”（太 6:24；路 16:13）。相反的，对于神的圣工，我们只不过是将在神预定要我们奉献于祂圣工的财物归还给神。

我该怎么奉献？ 我们奉献时，我们必须持有正确的态度，否则我们也会在奉献上犯错。

1. 奉献须要甘心乐意。 “以色列人，无论男女，凡甘心乐意献礼物给耶和华的，都将礼物拿来，做耶和華藉摩西所吩咐的一切工。”（出 35:29）神提醒我们，“各人要随本心所酌定的，不要作难，不要勉强，因为捐得乐意的人是神所喜爱的。”（林后 9:7）唯有当我们真正完全意识到，财物是神预先交给我们作为管家来保管的，而不是让我们自己享用的，那我们便会甘心乐意地归还。此外，只有当我们意识到我们蒙福分参与神圣工的时候到了，那我们才会存心乐意地奉献。倘若你真的理解以上所述的奉献原则，你内心自然会愿意并准备好奉献，而不会觉得受为难。当时机来到时，你会乐意归还神所赐予你的财物，你不会勉强奉献，而会出于爱主圣工的心并为着这一代及未来一代着想。

2. 奉献要凭信心。 有些人不愿意奉献，因为他们为自己的未来担忧。你应该诚实地按着神所赐予你的能力来奉献。奉献是对信心的考验，“神能将各样的恩惠多多的加给你们，使你们凡事常常充足，能多行各样善事。”（林后 9:8）当你奉还于神的圣工，祂必会供应你。凡慷慨奉献的就必多收，“少种的少收，多种的多收，这话是真的。各人要随本心所酌定的，不要作难，不要勉强，因为捐得乐意的人是神所喜爱的。”（林后 9:6-7）

3. 奉献不引人耳目。 我们的主耶稣教导说，“你们要小心，不可将善事行在人的面前，故意叫他们看见，若是这样，就不能得你们天父的赏赐了”（太 6:1），以及“你施舍的时候，不要叫左手知道右手所做的，要叫你施舍的事行在暗中。你父在暗中察看，必在明处报答你”（太 6:3-4）。即便当我们是位甘心乐意的奉献者，让我们也不要跌入试探或圈套，一心想要别人知道我们参与了奉献。为了帮助你，我们确保你不用将装有现金或支票的信封交给教会中的任何人，你只需要放入奉献袋。然而，我们骄傲的心可以非常有创意，想要别人知道我们或我们的家庭参与了奉献。让我们谨慎并仔细地计划。让我们不要失去奉献的真正祝福。因此，我们应当注意。你当好好地计划，确保自己不会跌入力图引人注目的试探。

4. 奉献多过你惯常所奉献的。 教会需要你目前的十一奉献及奉献来维持教会的持续运作及维护工作。这也用于资助宣教工作。因此，奉献于教会扩建工程不意味着减少目前的奉献，这将会影响我们的运作。的确，这或许意味着我们需要在某方面减省开支，意即一些有益处，但却不属于必要性的事物。甚至作学生的，你也可以做到。经历为主舍己能带给你喜乐的全新体验。作为一家之主者，你要教导你的妻子及儿女们，并且策划一家庭全体该如何奉献。这是无价的体验。你为他们所设下的榜样会成为他们毕生的教训。奉献多过我们的十一奉献及奉献或许会给我们换来许多的困难及不方便。然而，这是考验我们是否爱神的教会、祂国度的圣工、以及我们教会的未来一代。

5. 奉献并祷告。 记得有四类型的人。第一类型，奉献之后在凡事上都要有说话权。第二类型，不想要奉献但却要给许多的意见。第三类型，因为不想要奉献而避开一切。第四类型，乐意且

多奉献，并且会询问他们该如何为这项工程祷告。让我们众人都作第四类型的人。我们并不反对客观的疑问及意见。但是，任何人都不应该在奉献后指望教会照他们的意愿做事。

6. 我几时停止奉献？ 我们的教会扩建工程分为两个期段。就如我在教会扩建工程的最新汇报中提到，教会目前的需要是提供更多的课室及空间给查经班及团契聚会。这就是我们所谓的“第一期”，这需要募集 130 万元以致力于能够在面向 Canning Hwy 的隔壁建造一个全新的建筑物。但是工程不就此结束。神若愿意使教会继续发展，我们目前的敬拜大堂是不足够的，因为我们已经坐满了厨房外面的聚会厅。神若带领我们分开英文及中文的崇拜聚会，我们就不能使用这多余的空间，因为当某个崇拜聚会正在进行时也会有其它的活动同时进行。此外，由于我们还只是一个教会，我们必须能够在特别节日时，足够两个聚会的会众同聚一堂进行联合崇拜聚会。即便第二期不是目前的优先目标，我们预测一段时间后便会有需要扩建我们目前的崇拜大堂。这将会是我们教会扩建工程的第二期，且预料须要额外的 100 多万元。因此我盼望大家不会在第一期的目标达到之后就停止奉献。要记得，那位在 30 多年前慷慨奉献的人并不是我们的敬拜者，甚至也不住在柏斯。我们却享用其结果。现在就是我们奉献于神将来圣工的时候。

神已经乐意带领许多人到祂在此的教会来敬拜祂，在属灵上成长，及事奉祂。撒旦不喜欢教会成长及扩展。因此，不要以为奇怪，教会建堂工程经常导致教会中有很大的意见分歧，甚至分裂。结果不只是工程失败，神的圣工也停止。让我们不要成为撒旦的工具，在教会扩展时被祂使用来成为肇事者。我们接受有帮助及真诚的疑问。建筑委员会不是完美的，但我们已经努力做工并克尽职守，并还会继续如此行。我们如此做是因为我们知道我们是对神负责任。我们需要你的代祷。

最后，我的弟兄姐妹们，我们常彼此劝勉要寻求神的国（路 12:31）。这是你们“为自己预备永不坏的钱囊，用不尽的财宝在天上，就是贼不能近、虫不能蛀的地方”（路 12:33）的机会，时候就在你这一代。

“因为，你们的财宝在那里，你们的心也在那里。”（路 12:34）

我祷告盼望我们众人都充满爱教会及神圣工的心，奉献于我们的建堂基金。

为主服事，

牧师