

Dear Friends

A 'steward' is defined as one who manages and looks after what has been given to them by another. In our Christian context a steward is a person who manages what has been entrusted to them by God. God has provided us with our lives and our talents.

A talent was originally a measure of weight or a gold coin. However, the meaning has developed into a sense of the gifts and abilities that God has given to each one of us. This theme is developed by Paul in his New Testament Letters (Romans 12: 3-8; 1 Corinthians 12: 1-31) when he refers to Christians as different parts of the body of Christ and encourages them to use their particular gifts for the glory of God.

The Christian giving of talent is concerned with each of us identifying our particular gifts, skills, and strengths – knowing what we can do well (and what we can do less well); recognising that everyone in the congregation, from the youngest to the oldest, has gifts to use. In this way we can reveal the pool of ability available in our congregation: available for involvement in the worship, mission and service of the Church, and also in our community.

In identifying our individual skills and strengths we may find some that are people-orientated – children's ministry, pastoral care, and leadership, for example; and others of a more practical nature – maintenance of buildings and grounds, music, administrative tasks, and organising events.

We read in Colossians 1 v 10 that the stewardship of talents is built on the precept that God expects all Christians to produce good work: 'so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God'.

So, how will we do this in St Michael's during 2017, our 775th anniversary year? We are inviting our members to consider their talents, and how they might use them for the church, the community, and the wider world. Or you might share with other members and friends what talents they have (this will overcome the problem that some of us are too modest to admit our own talents!) When you've identified your talents and gifts, decide which you can offer, and where, and then make the move! I am happy to have the conversation with you.

The church website may be of service (<http://www.stmichaelsparish.org.uk/>) or the Sunday intimation sheet for things that need done in the church, like making teas in between the services on a Sunday morning or helping on Open Church. Also consider how you might volunteer in the town or in a wider context, and seek out opportunities to do so.

We appreciate that circumstances change and that you might also decide to give up doing something that you have done for some considerable time, whether within the church or elsewhere. It might even be time to try something new!

We will join together at the Harvest Thanksgiving service to offer God our talents for the work of our church, our community and the wider world. Please consider prayerfully what talents you might offer to each, and act accordingly.

Your friend,

Stewart Gillan