



Last Sunday we had two speakers, the first being Joe Silcock from Reigate St Mary's Church. Joe is a volunteer worker for Tear Fund, which is one of the main Christian Charities St Paul's supports. TEAR Fund stands for **The Evangelical Alliance Relief Fund** and works among the poorest and most deprived people in many countries: across the world 795 million people still face hunger daily because of failed harvests. Starvation leads to unemployment, it takes children from school, ransacks relationships and robs families of joy and hope. Hunger is often the reason a teenager or even a child ends up trafficked into slavery.

Tear Fund's aim is to identify Christian organisations already on the ground and offer to partner with them with two objectives:

- To take the Gospel Message to each individual: that they are **loved by God**. Whole communities are transformed.
- To work together to relieve poverty in a sustainable way.

Joe has been involved with the work in N-E India including Bihar and Assam where Tear Fund have partnered with Emmanuel Hospital Association: a group of Christian Mission Hospitals who offer health care to the most vulnerable, the Musahar, the 'rat eaters'. Trafficking was soon identified as a major source of these peoples' mental and physical illnesses. Even if he/she escapes, a trafficked person is damaged and no longer accepted in their community: and so the cycle is reworked. EHA spots a vulnerable person, Tear Fund provides books and uniform so they can go back to school and the family are taught new farming techniques for land blighted by the changing climate, soil erosion and overuse of chemical fertilisers.

Bihar is in the news: it has been swamped by catastrophic floods. Tear Fund's organised response is to: 1) Set up Community kitchens on the High Ways. 2) Set up Health camps for treatable diseases. 3) Set up Distribution Centres for food and seed.

It is so inspiring to hear how money raised by this church is funding projects that make a real difference to other peoples' lives. Then we had the third Vision Sermon which looks at St Paul's teaching on Courageous Financial Giving. 2 Corinthians 9: 6 – 15.

What is Generosity?

- "Generosity is giving – when you don't have to and when there is a cost to yourself". (Thanks St Paul's Schoolkids.)
- We all understand it with our minds: we just don't want to do it, because we are all, by nature, selfish. We all need a Divine heart transplant to replace our selfishness with God's extraordinary self-less generosity.
- There are many ways of being generous, but the reading is about financial generosity and this is relevant to our Vision for the next few years, because mission and ministry cost money. We need to find an extra £30,000.
- The majority of our congregation don't 'need' another Youth Minister, their 'children' have moved on. Nor will they be reaping the benefit of the technological equipment needed at St Martin's. But be inspired by our reading!

1. Christian giving is 'duty free'. It is not a grudge but a grace. 2 Corinthians 8: 1-5, 9: 9: 15.

- The background to our passage starts from the beginning of Chapter 8 where the Macedonian Church, whose own circumstances were dire, begged and pleaded to be allowed to give money to famine stricken Judeans. They saw giving not as a reluctant duty but as a grace because they understood the indescribable generosity of God towards them in giving His Son for their salvation. Chapters 8 & 9 are all heading towards **9:15**: Paul's outburst of thanksgiving for the Divine Gift which inspires all gifts, the gift of God's Son, the indescribable gift of Jesus.
- **John 3: 16.** God the Father gave His only Son to be the one perfect sacrifice for our selfishness and sin. Then we can receive forgiveness and begin to live with a new heart of generous love. Giving is a sign of His grace in our lives

2. Giving is Sowing. 2 Corinthians 9: 6 – 9.

- V.6. Think of giving as sowing, not as money which is spent and gone for good. As a farmer invests in seed for sowing, so we are investing in people and things to further the kingdom of God. And, like the farmer, the more generous we are with the 'seed'/our money, the bigger and better will be our harvest.
- V.7. Giving is a really personal matter and each one of us has different circumstances so, give what feels right in your heart. If you can, join one of our giving schemes or if you already give consider an uplift; but whatever you do, be cheerful about it, not reluctant. In fact in Greek the word is *hilaros*: God loves a hilarious giver!

3. Sowing Courageously for a Harvest in Christ's Kingdom. 2 Cor. 9: 11.

- 'Your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.' In the future, people we never knew will be thanking God for us and it will all be for the glory of God. We are grateful recipients for the generosity of those who built this church. Investing in our youth ministry and in St Martin's will result in souls saved and God being praised.
- However we came to faith in Christ, someone will have spent money, time, energy or all three on us: thanks be to God. May we be a church joyful in the privilege of giving and abounding in the grace of hilarious generosity. Amen.

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1. Pray for the desperate people of Bihar: for protection from traffickers and disease and for the safety of Tear Fund workers.
 2. Do we sometimes think we don't need to give money as long as we give time, talents or material possessions? Is this OK?
 3. Do we have any reservations about the plans for Youth Ministry or for resourcing other churches?
 4. Have we experienced the blessing of giving beyond our comfort zone? Have we been blessed by someone else's sacrifice?
 5. What do we think of this new vision for our 'Growing Community of Grace'?