

Gospel Giving

A handbook on giving at The Lakes Church



The Lakes

Introduction

The Lakes Church began in January 2002 out of a desire to see God's name glorified by many more people on the Central Coast and beyond would coming to know Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

The vision was a bold one: to win 10% of Australia and so 10% of the Central Coast to Christ. It is amazing to see how the Lord has been answering our prayers. Hundreds have come to know Jesus and had their faith nurtured and deepened. At the same time we've raised up and sent out brothers and sisters to plant new churches and serve Jesus in far-flung places.

The vision remains the same today. It's huge and will only become a reality if the Lord works in us and through us by his Spirit. The way forward is the same as it has been from the beginning: the careful, consistent proclamation of the gospel in prayer and fellowship together.

Integral to our growth has been the generous financial support of The Lakes church family. It has been

critical that so many have caught the vision and given sacrificially to see those who are still lost in darkness be rescued and deepened in their faith.

This booklet is designed to explain how you can glorify God, be spiritually enriched, and partner with your church family in growing God's church, through the simple act of being generous with the resources God has given you.

In Part One we look at what God's word says about giving. Part Two answers some of the more practical questions about giving at The Lakes.

We hope you find it informative and helpful as you prayerfully consider these things.

PART ONE: A brief theology of giving

But who am I [asked King David], and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.

1 Chronicles 29:14



Why do 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 gift from him. On top of this we know that, 'God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son' (John 3:16), 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 Cor. 8:9). We give because God first gave to us.

2. Renewed minds and changed hearts

The Spirit's work in our hearts will be seen in our financial priorities. For example in 1 John 3:18 we read, '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?'. The love of money has been a stumbling block for many. Jesus warned that it is impossible to serve both God and money (Matt. 6:24). One evidence of us serving God is by giving our money to the things he holds dear.

3. Eternal priorities

The Bible makes it clear that this life is brief and the one to come is eternal. Jesus warns us not to store up treasures on earth that are temporary but rather to store up treasures in heaven that never wear out (Matt. 6:19-21). As Christians in a church family that is focused on God's great purposes we can invest our money in things that will endure forever. How good is that!

4. For God's glory and our good

The Apostle Paul refers to the financial gifts of the Philippians as 'a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God' (Phil. 4:18). In other words, the act of giving our money away is a spiritual act by which we worship and glorify God. Paul also recounts Jesus' words to the church leaders in Ephesus that it is more blessed to give than receive (Acts 20:35).

5. To make disciples

We live in the age of the great commission of Jesus: to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:18-20). Jesus is accomplishing this through his church by his Spirit today. In the New Testament we see that financial support has accompanied this great work. Paul received financial support from several partner churches (Phil. 4:15-16) which freed him from the need to work and to therefore be freed to make and mature more disciples. He also told Timothy, 'the elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in preaching and teaching' (1 Tim. 5:17). By financially supporting gospel work, we can free up the necessary people to lead, teach and administer to enable us to work together to grow God's church.



How much do we give?

The New Testament never names a specific amount that we should give.

Rather, it simply tells us to be generous in proportion to our income (1 Cor. 16:1-2). This means that a widow's coin can be more generous than a rich person's gift, even if the widow's coin is a smaller amount (Luke 21:1-4). God wants our giving to be cheerful, sacrificial - flowing from thankfulness, faith and love for him and others.

What does generosity look like?

In the Old Testament, God's people were encouraged to give a tithe (10%) of their income back to him. This idea is first introduced in Lev. 27:30. A tithe included everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees. It belonged to the LORD and was to be set apart for him.

An additional tithe was also given once every three years to support the poor. On top of this, the Israelites voluntarily gave free will offerings to God as an expression of their faith in God and thankfulness for all that he had done for them.

By the time we reach the New Testament, a new principle is introduced - that of sacrificial generosity. Sacrificial generosity replaces the Old Testament principle of tithing. So, rather than being commanded to give 10%, Christians are now called to show generosity in response to God's grace shown to us in Jesus Christ.

So how much do we give?

Even though the New Testament does not lay upon us the old law of 10%, it would seem odd to think about giving any less than 10% under grace. God's people still need to set aside those who will lead and teach, and the mission of the church is much bigger than that of Israel. The grace we know in Jesus ought to mean we lift the bar on generosity rather than lower it.

As those who have been enriched in every way by the generosity of Jesus, the New Testament helps Christians to see the tithe as a guide from which we can launch into sacrificial generosity. In other words, if you want to know what generosity looks like, why not try starting with a tithe and see if you can build up from there? Let the tithe be your springboard for generosity.

Do we have to give 10%?

The tithe isn't a law that applies to us, under grace. Some of us can give much more than 10%, while there

may be times where, for various reasons, this is not possible for others. As 2 Cor. 9:6-7 reminds us, our giving is ultimately a matter for prayerful consideration before God. At the end of the day, our finances are just one of the many areas that we must bring before God in prayer as we consider how to worship him with all that he has so graciously 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 Matt. 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 we 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:



1. The local church

Making disciples locally

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

The local church has a high priority in God's purposes. It is the base for our mission to the Coast. It is the context where you, your family and your brothers and sisters are nurtured in their faith. Just as Israel needed to set apart the Levites, we need to set apart some of our number who will lead, teach and organise 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 grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink the milk? Do I say this merely on human authority? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned? Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because whoever ploughs and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? (1 Corinthians 9:7-11)

When John Piper was asked about giving to his local church he gave this response:

*'Well, I think it's a helpful rule of thumb to say that, considering that 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.'*²

This reminds us giving to the local church isn't selfish giving. It is about fulfilling our first responsibility to make disciples locally.



2. 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 out to preach the gospel locally, nationally and overseas. At The Lakes we have the privilege of many partnerships with brothers and sisters serving cross culturally and we are also committed to supporting the planting of new churches in Australia.



3. The Christian poor and others in need

(1 Corinthians 16:1-2, James 2:14-17, Galatians 6:10)

There is a clear responsibility for Christians to care for the Christian poor in the church family and beyond. A particular expression of this at The Lakes is our support of the work of Compassion with over 100 children being sponsored. Beyond this, there is a responsibility to do good to all people as we have opportunity.

²desiringgod.org/resource-library/ask-pastor-john/should-all-of-my-tithe-go-to-the-local-church

PART TWO: Giving at The Lakes Church

“...go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you...”

Matthew 28:19-2

Giving at The Lakes

Planning to give

How do I decide how much to give? The practical part of financial partnership is pretty straightforward. Simply get out a calculator, work out all your income streams (weekly/monthly pay packets, bonuses, windfalls, other sources of income) and then figure out what 10% of that is. Eyeball that figure, and then prayerfully ask God to help you use it as a springboard for generosity.

At The Lakes Church we ask you to consider giving in four keys areas:

1. **General Ministry** - to reach and grow people;
2. **Ministry Training** - to raise up the next generation of church leaders and missionaries;
3. **Ministry Centre Giving** - to provide facilities that will allow us to reach and grow people;
4. **Missions Giving** - to support mission and church planting beyond The Lakes.

Other giving

Compassion Australia: Support for the children connected with poorer churches on the island of Sumba, East Indonesia.

Interest Free Loans: Loan amounts over \$10,000 which generate income by reducing our loan interest costs.

The Lakes Bequest: The support of gospel mission through your will.

Helping Hands: To support church members and others in need.

Informal: To support the needs of church members as we hear about them.



Giving and membership

In 2 Cor. 9:7, Paul stresses that nobody should ever feel like they are 'under compulsion' to give. While we do encourage all of our members to be generous, any member can participate in and benefit from our ministries regardless of whether or not they participate financially. Our paid ministry staff seek to model Christ-like generosity.

Confidentiality

All giving information is kept confidential. Individual giving is not tracked unless a receipt is requested.

Annual review

We ask our members to review giving at the start of each year.



Key areas of giving

1. General Ministry

Ministry giving supports the work we do to reach people with the gospel and to then grow them as God's people here on the Central Coast. This giving provides for our staff team and all the day to day expenses of church life.

We have staff that oversee and lead the teams who teach over 100 kids each week, along with producing the program materials. Other staff give their time to organising the church gatherings for hundreds of people and of course there are energy and water bills to pay.

Again, other staff focus on raising up and training Growth Group leaders so that hundreds of people can prayerfully gather around the God's word through the week. Admin staff serve the massive needs of organising a large and growing family. And these are just a few examples!

2. Ministry training

The Ministry Training Strategy (MTS) has been a foundation piece of The Lakes' ministry from the beginning. Trainees work alongside the ministry team who mentor and train them.

It is about raising the next generation of church leaders and missionaries.

3. Ministry Centre

We have invested in the The Lakes Ministry Centre to provide a base to reach the children, youth, and adults of the Central Coast with the good news of Jesus. It has been a strategic and necessary priority in recent years to relocate our ministries onto our land at Tuggerah Business Park to enable us to grow our church and preach the Word of God with freedom. This has meant incurring a large debt which we are eager to pay off in order to free up money to invest in growing our ministries.

4. Missions

The Lakes has the privilege of partnering with a number of missions and church planting initiatives locally, nationally and globally. Targets are agreed in consultation with them.

We have targets to support:

Central Coast

- Local SRE - teaching God's word in our local high schools (tax deductible)
- Ourimbah Christian Students (supporting our local AFES work)

Australia

- Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC)
- CMS - Matt and Lisa Pearson (Northern Territory)

Overseas

- CMS - Norm and Janelle Gorrie (Kenya)
- Pioneers - Jeremy and Miri (Asia)
- Indian Pastors Network (Northern India)

How to give

All the details of how to give are also on the *Giving* page of our website: thelakes.net.au/giving



Direct Deposit

Most people give by arranging direct deposits from their bank account. This is our preferred method of giving.

General Ministry giving

All direct deposits go to General Ministry unless otherwise specified.

Ministry Training giving

Tag your direct deposit: MTS
Or specify by name, eg: MTS ERIN

Ministry Centre giving

Tag your direct deposit: MINISTRY CENTRE

Missions giving

For overseas: MISSIONS OS
For Australia: MISSIONS AUS
Or specify by name, eg: PEARSONS



Credit Card

If you prefer to make payment via credit card, please visit the *Giving* page of our website.

Bank Details

Account Name:
The Lakes Church
BSB: 704-922
Account: 100017667



Cash or cheque


Cash or cheque giving can be made through collection in Sunday services. Cheques should be made out to *The Lakes Evangelical Church Incorporated*.



Bequests

Another way to give to support the mission of the gospel is to make The Lakes Church a beneficiary in your will. If you are creating your own will, we suggest the following wording;

I give \$_____ to The Lakes Evangelical Church of 6 Pioneer Ave, Tuggerah for the general purposes thereof and the receipt executed on behalf of The Lakes Evangelical Church shall be sufficient discharge for my Trustee and my Trustee shall not be bound to see the application of the said gift.

A man with short brown hair, wearing a blue button-down shirt and khaki pants, stands behind a clear acrylic podium on a stage. He is smiling and gesturing with his hands. A microphone is positioned in front of him. In the background, a drum set is visible against a blue curtain.

“We want Jesus’ love and God’s Word to so fill us and overflow from us that everyone in our region has compelling reason to follow Jesus.”

A message from Dave

It’s easy to forget that it takes finances to make disciples.

Few people, apart from our Treasurer, get excited about covering the cost of rent, electricity bills, staff wages or office supplies. In many ways, these feel uninspiring and disconnected from the work of ministry. But we must not forget that they are a means to an end, and the end is the urgent work of making and maturing disciples!

God has already used the generosity of our members to grow his kingdom. Many people have come to faith in Christ and many others have been deepened in their faith in him. As the years go by, it is our bold prayer and confident expectation that God

will continue to use the ministry of The Lakes to call hundreds of men, women and children to himself, and grow hundreds more in their love and knowledge of him.

This is the vision we want our church to be compelled by and this is the vision we want to invite all of our members to give to. We can’t wait to see what else God will do as we partner together in the work of his kingdom!

Yours in Christ,

Dave Sheath



The Lakes

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