**3 Small Steps: Opening the Box**

As a child, I was very excited to be part of a live audience recording of the Westward television gameshow, ‘Treasure Hunt’ hosted by Keith Fordyce. I don’t remember the finer details but eagerly anticipated the moment when Keith would ask the contestant, “Do you want to open the box or take the money?” At which point the whole audience responded by shouting out their advice. There was the thrill of the unknown versus the security of what they already had in their hand.

I wonder what you would answer if asked the same question in your church? Would you like to open the wall safe or other box at the end of the week to be surprised (or dismayed) by its contents? Or would you prefer to know for sure in advance what is in your hands to steward?

I keenly recall the disappointment of those who ‘opened the box’, only to find it contained trifles - or worse, nothing at all! Is financial uncertainty really a thrill? Ask anyone who has run their own business whether they enjoyed the troughs and peaks of sales and success or whether they would have preferred a steady income stream come rain or shine, summer or winter, in a downturn or market surge.

While a church should be wise in trying all ways to receive gifts and donations, the primary emphasis should be on those who regularly attend. As followers of Christ we are called to lay down our own lives, pick up our cross and follow His example daily. Shouldn’t this also refer to our giving? What 3 small steps could your church take to encourage regular donations?

**Step 1: Mechanisms.** Ensure you have the systems in place to enable people to give regularly. For me, PGS is a no-brainer; paid for by the Diocese, free to the individual church or parish, administered independently, gift aid collected automatically and every penny remitted each month. Even if PGS does not appeal to you, Standing Orders or Direct Debits can be encouraged. Equally for the traditionalist, regular envelope giving can work – provided they are faithfully brought or faithfully collected.

**Step 2: Promotion.** Many wonderful Biblical truths seem to be ‘well-kept secrets’; the resurrection (is the world really aware that Jesus is alive today?); the Holy Spirit (do Christians know that the One who raised Christ from the dead lives in power in them?) Make sure that your regular giving mechanisms aren’t another of these ‘secrets’. Ask new members if they would like to give in this simple, helpful and convenient way. Make it clear who to contact to find out more. Display a link or QR code for your PGS listing. Teach generosity and first-fruit principles of giving.

**Step 3: Thanks.** I cannot remember a time in my life when I was thanked too much! Much of the time what we do and give, rightly goes unseen as we live to please the Lord, not looking for recognition from others. That is why saying “thank you” to regular givers is so important; but does once a year really cut it? Every week their gift sustains the ministry; every week they continue to be faithful; every week they have chosen to give their tithes and offerings to you instead of some other ministry. Be continually grateful. Or you may end up relying solely on “opening the box”.