**3 Small Steps – Growing in Generosity**

Being a keen gardener, I eagerly anticipate the first harvest of runner beans, cucumbers and courgettes from our small garden. Space is limited to a few pots and a patch among the flower border but even so, with the right care, we can be fruitful. The same is true for your church; however small or tucked away, you can produce *something* and these 3 small steps will help create the right environment for fruit to come.

**Step 1: Plan ahead and plant a seed.** My gardening doesn’t start in September with the picking but in April and May with the sowing. 2 Corinthians 9:7 says, “Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give…”. The word ‘decided’ has the sense of something which is planned thoroughly in advance with a determination to see it through. We also see that financial giving is not the responsibility of a few but pertinent to each and every one. We can water the seed with prayer, not necessarily needing to ask how much to give, as Jesus encourages the tithe (10%) as a minimum but asking God to help us to be obedient and faithful according to Isaiah 32:8, “Generous people plan to do what is generous, and they stand firm in their generosity”.

**Step 2: Keep the atmosphere warm.** My little seedlings love to be surrounded by warmth and moisture and quickly respond by germinating and putting on leaves. The Generous Giving team promote and encourage mechanisms in churches to enhance financial giving such as QR codes, contactless devices and PGS but the greatest growth will come from creating the right environment. I have walked into empty churches and felt a spiritual ‘warm hug’ despite the stone cold of the physical building. How does your church make people feel when they enter? Is the love of God and refreshing of the Holy Spirit tangible among you? Are regular worshippers thriving and joyful? That atmosphere will attract others and encourage everyone to grow up strongly.

**Step 3: Successive sowing.** …And then there were none! On my first attempt at growing lettuce in Launceston, I scattered the whole packet at once and had a bumper crop! So much so that I went to every house in our road, begging them to take a lettuce. Unfortunately, after just 2 weeks, the whole crop had gone – or gone to seed! For a continual harvest there needs to be a continual sowing. We cannot just give a donation once a year and think, “That’s it”. We need to cultivate a culture of generosity in our own lives, which keeps on giving – financially, spiritually, prayerfully and practically.

Neither can we speak on generosity once a year, tick the box and presume the message has now permeated the church. It has been evidenced that people need to hear a message seven times before they really take it in. Jesus’ life was a continual lesson in generosity, actively demonstrating his love for us. Are you continually, actively demonstrating your love for God and for others?

**One final note:** Our fig tree has established its root system over 30 years and year after year produces fine fruit, only requiring regular watering and summer warmth. When we put our roots deep into Jesus, allow the Holy Spirit to transform our lives and establish patterns of generosity, there is no effort involved in our producing abundant fruit!