

ONE LIFE

you only live once

SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT PLEDGING

Because this is a new approach we want to be as clear as possible in communicating what it involves and why we are doing this

1. What is a pledge?

A pledge is simply a recognised commitment to give a **regular** amount each week or month. We want this whole process each year to be a means of expressing thanksgiving to our Lord for what he has blessed us with: *"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich."* 2 Cor 8:9

2. How will it actually work?

In the fourth term (especially at our Vision Dinner on 7 November) we will outline some of the plans for the short and long term at St Peters. Everyone who is part of St Peters has received this information pack on all of this, including a "Commitment Card" which has all the detail you need to record your pledge. We ask everyone to return that card during Term 4. We'll be sure to explain the pledging system clearly but it starts (as all decisions do) with you prayerfully considering the amount that you can afford to commit cheerfully, generously and sacrificially.

3. Is this pledging different to my existing "tithing" / giving?

No. It's just your regular giving being communicated to the church in advance, to assist us in setting realistic budgets that will be appropriate for the next year.

4. Is this biblical?

God's Word encourages Christians to decide, as individuals, what we are going to give: *"Everyone should give what they have decided in their heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."* (2 Cor 9:7). Considering your monthly/weekly pledging in advance will certainly help with this.

This verse also reminds us that no one should ever be forced to give but that it should emerge as a joyful obedience to his commands and a cheerful response to the God who has himself given so much.

For more biblical principles about giving go here: <http://www.stpetersfishhoek.org.za/how-to-get-involved/giving/>

5. What happens if my circumstances change and this affects my finances?

We understand that people's situations can change in these uncertain times. If that happens, it is appropriate that you reconsider your original commitment and if it cannot be met, then you must feel free to change it.

6. Will the money be used wisely?

It is our belief that by starting to have a more accurate idea of our potential income in advance, we will be better able to present the church with a much more reliable budget. Over time, say 2-3 years, we are confident that our budget will be accurate enough that we will not have recurring shortfalls later in each year.

We've also been rigorous this year in managing our regular expenses and finding ways to control and reduce these where possible. This is an ongoing process.

7. I believe that my giving is between God and myself. Is the pledge amount tracked in any way and who knows what it is?

The amount is counted by the Treasurer to achieve a total for the overall pledge given. He will be the only one who knows any individual details. The total figure is what we will use to help calculate our budget for the following year. Once this is done the details are not kept or tracked in any way. No one on the pastoral team will see the pledges. No one will be individually "tracked".

Signing your name on the pledge is important as it reinforces the nature of our personal commitment. It helps us focus individually on God and be stretched in our faith, as we trust Him in all aspects of our lives. We also want to avoid people recording unrealistic anonymous pledges, which might give us a false indication of where we are at.

8. Can I choose to give via direct debit from my account?

Yes, in fact we would like the majority of our congregation to give this way, if possible. It saves the church money in making deposits and it saves you money in making extra cash withdrawals. It's safer than having lots of cash being carried around and it helps people to prayerfully consider what they would like to give and then act on that in private.

9. What about giving to other Christian projects outside St Peters?

It is right to prioritise giving to the local church community at which you and your family are cared for spiritually. Over and above regular giving to the local church, some may also be in a position to give to other gospel initiatives and projects.

10. What if I can only pledge a small amount? Is it worth it?

Every person who has Jesus as Lord is called in the Bible to give what they can. The issue of giving for every Christian is not 'amount' but 'proportion'. We know of the widow in Luke 21:1-4 who gave much less in actual amounts than others but much more proportionally to what she had. That is, she gave out of her poverty.

God doesn't ask us to give what we don't have but to each give what we can, and then to examine whether that amount is both willing and sacrificial.

11. What if I am self-employed and my monthly income is not easy to predict?

You'll notice on the pledge card that you can identify a quarterly or annual pledge amount. It might be easier to estimate your pledge amount based on those time frames.

12. How long will my pledge last?

Twelve months. As a church, we will be making our pledges each year in November for the following year. This gives us the chance each year to consider our ability to give and to make the appropriate changes.

13. What happens if I decide not to pledge?

We understand that this process is new to many of you and some might not be comfortable to make this change initially. However, the reality is the more in the congregation who pledge, the more

accurate our financial planning will be for the following year.

14. Doesn't St Peters have plenty of money?

As mentioned above, God has provided for us in wonderful ways but we've also had some very difficult financial seasons, as we've looked to grow the ministry. Given the size of our congregation and our location in a (relatively) high income area, we actually should be in a healthier financial situation. There could be a few reasons for this:

- Perhaps some don't understand the clear biblical instruction to give regularly to support the work of the local church?
- Perhaps some don't quite grasp the financial resources required to keep on reaching more people and grow a church?
- Perhaps some have just never thought about it or have just never "got around to it"?

15. If our church is financially tight, how can we be looking to start new things and hire new staff?

Of course, we don't want to be irresponsible in committing to things we can't afford but our considered approach over the past ten years, has been to faithfully invest in new ministries and new workers in the hope that this will lead to gospel growth. God has been so faithful to us in providing that growth and we are excited about what he might do in the future.

One of the benefits of pledges is that it will help us to more clearly see what the financial capacity of the church is, and then budget accordingly.

16. Can't I pledge my time and my spiritual gifts, instead of my money?

Jesus calls all of his followers to join in his mission to reach the lost: *"...go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing 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. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* (Matt 28:19-20).

As part of this mission he wants us all to be serving him with our time, energy and money. Just like every Christian can play a serving role in the church, so every Christian can play a giving role, even if the amount is small (see question 10 above).

Do please speak to Murray (Senior Pastor) or Craig (Church Treasurer), with any questions or concerns you may have. In the Fourth Term, we will also be visiting many of the Fellowship Groups to outline these plans and address questions.

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