

WHAT IS COMMITMENT SUNDAY?

LIVING WITH THE END IN MIND

Sternity

PHILIPPIANS

THE 2009 COMMITMENT SERIES

By Scott Muir

Making followers of Jesus by
being followers of Jesus

 CENTRALCHURCH IPSWICH

THE 2009 COMMITMENT SERIES

I realise that the Commitment Series has been new, but I hope that so far, it has been helpful. The aim has been to encourage the whole church to move in the same Christ-focussed direction. I'm feeling blessed to be pastoring amongst a group of Christians who are excited about Jesus and who are also excited about his mission.

The Commitment Series concludes on Sunday November 8, which we are calling Commitment Sunday. On that day, I will be inviting each person who calls Central Church their home church, to partner financially in the mission and vision of the church. I realise that many of you are already doing this, and for that I give thanks to God. But Commitment Sunday is designed to call on everyone to be purposeful about what they are contributing to God's work in Ipswich. I realise that in the hustle and bustle of life, what we give to God's work can be an afterthought and therefore, not very well thought through.

In the week leading up to Commitment Sunday, I am asking you to prayerfully consider your financial commitment to the life and ministry of Central Church.

Is this about raising money? Is it about checking up on people? No is the answer to both of these questions. So why are we doing it? Because faith and finances are closely related. In the eyes of the Session and the Committee of Management, this is a faith-raising exercise, as the people of Central Church join together to celebrate God's wonderful blessings to us, and therefore, to commit ourselves to be faithful managers over what He has given us.

The Commitment Card has a place for you to indicate your commitment to provide a regular week by week offering for the Lord's work. It also lists some special projects. Details of these projects can be found on the next page. We are inviting you to also contribute a particular amount to one or more of those projects, if the Lord places it upon your heart to do so. Your contribution to the Special Project can be made as a single payment or over the course of the year (note however, that the money for Special Project 3 - the Johansons - will be needed early in the year). Your contributions to these projects will need to be clearly identified by either clearly noting the project name on an envelope or clearly identified via direct debit.

Note also that you may choose to complete the card as an individual or as a family.

Still got questions? There are answers to some common questions on the back of this document. There will also be the opportunity to talk it all through at Homegroup this week.

SPECIAL PROJECTS FOR 2010



PROJECT 1 - AUDITORIUM REDEVELOPMENT

As we grow in health as a church, we're going to need space to minister to one another and to our city. In May 2011, we will have the opportunity to reclaim the front of the Video Ezy building, giving us twice as many seats, a foyer, more parking and much more. In order to be able to afford the fit-out and the loss of lease income, we need to start saving now. Our first Special Project is an Auditorium Redevelopment Fund. By 2011, we would like to have \$100 000 saved. Let's make room for all those Ipswich citizens who will hear about Jesus from our lips and will, God willing, join our worshipping community. Your contribution will make room for them.

\$100 000



PROJECT 2 - PROJECT HOPE

The team at Ipswich Assist are committed to helping people in our city and they realise that the best help they can give is to introduce them to Jesus. Project Hope is about doing this more effectively. The team would like to be able to commit more time to developing Bible-based relationships with people by employing a person in such a role and to pay for associated costs. Because this is a 'religious' role, there will be no government funding or tax deductibility for it. Our second special project is to raise \$20 000 to fund Project Hope. Your contribution will help introduce people in Ipswich to the life and claims of Jesus.

\$20 000



PROJECT 3 - SENDING OUT THE JOHANSONS

The Johanson family has had a year back with us in Ipswich, but they will return to the Philippines in 2010 to continue their missionary work with New Tribes Mission. The Johanson family are our family. Their ministry is ours and so we are responsible to support them. Obviously the flights are a significant financial burden and there are many other related costs. Our final special project is to raise \$5 000 to help the Johansons get back to the Philippines. Your contribution will partner with them in taking the gospel to all nations.

\$5000

COMMON QUESTIONS

1. Is this a way of checking up on us?

No, not at all. In fact, we have no way of knowing if you are giving what you indicate on the card. That is a matter between you and God. I will not be making judgments about the figure you have written down. The exercise is more about your willingness to formally express to the church your commitment to God's work amongst us.

2. What if my circumstances change and I am not able to honour my commitment?

That's not a problem. We understand life is unpredictable. Feel free to talk to me if that happens. You can also feel free to give more than indicated on your card if the Lord should bless you so.

3. Who will see my commitment figure?

My personal assistant and I are the only ones who will see the Cards. We will most definitely keep the Cards private and confidential. Only the total figure from the congregation will be passed on to the Committee of Management.

3. Why should I sign my name?

Simply as a way of indicating your seriousness about the issue. God's people often committed themselves to certain standards in a formal covenant where they signed their names. In signing your name, you are not making a contract with the church, making an oath (ie. swearing on the Bible or the name of God) or binding yourself in any legal way. It is simply an expression of intention and signing your name to that expression and showing it to the church pastor expresses your seriousness about it.

4. Shouldn't I keep my left hand from knowing what my right hand is doing?

This saying of Jesus is not about secrecy, but about humility. If you sign a card to boastfully show how much you give, then I would prefer you refrained from giving anything at all. The context of Matthew 6 is all about motives. Jesus' warning is that we do not fall into the trap of praying, fasting, giving etc... *so that others will see us and be impressed*, but he nowhere says all these things must be kept secret. In fact, in the same sermon he calls on us to *let your light shine before men so that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in Heaven* (Matthew 5:16). Too often we use privacy as an excuse to refuse to let anyone challenge us where we might need to be challenged.

5. What if I give to other things as well?

That's great, and I encourage you to keep doing so. God's people are always generous in various areas. But please recognise how important and valuable the ministry in the local church is and reflect that in your deliberations.