

**E**ncouragement to be generous is the heading to Paul's second letter to the Corinthians chapter 8 in the Bible, the reference book that I use every day as I try to do what God has called me to do. Paul says, *we want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means and even beyond their means...*

On Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> September the service at All Saints will be about giving or to give it its current name stewardship. Stewardship, tithing, giving – or whatever you want to call it – is one of the most important and *productive* disciplines in a Christian's spiritual life. It is not only a discipline but a responsibility which is expected, required of every Christian by God. It is also something that I hate talking about, I've never been any good at asking people for money or help, but it is something that as your parish priest I am required to do occasionally.

On the facing page we outline briefly why we need money if we are to maintain our beautiful church and a vicar. Sadly the Church of England does not cough up the running costs of the church or the new gutters, drains and repairs to the structure, or people to run *Mini-Saints*, *Tweenagers* and the *Youth group*. This summer we ran a really successful free activity afternoon for the 5-11 age group, next year we'd like to run several



days but we need people to help and the resources to fund it.

We live in a materialistic and successful society, here in Datchworth we are truly blessed although we do not always recognise it and probably cannot comprehend what life is like for our brothers and sisters, or contemporaries in other parts of this country, let alone those parts of the world where drought, disease and conflict destroy life and breed fear.

Our spiritual well-being, yours and the spiritual health of our parish church as well as the degree to which we can support our neighbours and brothers and sisters in the world depend upon how seriously we take this stewardship/giving opportunity.

I want us to take it very seriously. It is a matter of *freedom*. It is a matter of *truth*. It is a matter of *trust*. It is a matter of *life*, real life.

*Coralie*