

## Giving Generously

Before reading the passage from Haggai, a bit of context. Haggai prophesied to Israel, to those returning from exile in Babylon to rebuild the temple and start afresh, during the period between the completion of the foundations (Ezra 3: 8-10) and the final full building completion (Ezra 6: 15-18). A period of 16 years when, apparently, the returnees forgot their God and the temple rebuild, and focused on their own needs.

### Read Haggai 1: 3-11

Haggai delivers a plain and direct message, no mincing of words here. While the challenge delivered was primarily directed towards a sacred building project, the message was surely intended for wider and ageless interpretation. *What is the first and primary commandment?* Twice in this passage we find, 'give careful thought to your ways'.

*What do you see as the tensions between obeying the first commandment on the one hand, and our busy lives with commitments to families, work, leisure, finances on the other? How do you find a way to accommodate these tensions?*

The passage then suggests that unless the building of God's house (his Kingdom) is given priority we cannot expect our 'labours' to prosper, or our 'plans' to succeed.

*Is that your experience? How do you feel about those who have achieved much by todays reckoning yet would appear to disregard God?*

### Read 2 Corinthians 9: 6-11

Paul is writing to the church in Corinth asking for a financial gift for the church in Jerusalem, where their fellow Christians were suffering severe persecution. Generosity of gift was essential.

*Sometimes we feel we have been very, even over, generous. How did you subsequently feel?*

*Can you remember instances when your resources (not only money but other gifts) were running dry? Looking back, what do you think turned things around and began the recovery?*

*What criteria do you think should be used to determine 'generosity? Do any parables come to mind?*

*'In the end, generosity is the best way of becoming more, more and more joyful.'* (Desmond Tutu)

## Prayer

*Dear Lord, please give me the ability to see the needs of others and the resources to meet them. Help me to be a generous giver, always ready and willing to share my time, talents, and treasures with those in need.*