

Passion and Partnership

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 March 2021

Preacher: Colin Dow

[0 : 00] It may or may not surprise you to know that there are certain topics upon which this minister does not like to speak.

At the top of that list comes giving. Most ministers I've spoken to, myself included, worry that they will be misunderstood by their people as being greedy for more money.

The reality is, however, that I've yet to meet a minister who is genuinely greedy for more money.

Nobody goes into the Ministry of the Free Church of Scotland because they're looking to get rich.

I would have stayed in my previous employment if I'd wanted to do that. So let's take this off the table at the very, very beginning. Preaching on giving is not a minister's cunning way of picking your pocket so that he can eat caviar while the rest of us eat porridge.

Rather, ministers preach on giving because it is an indispensable part of Christian discipleship. It is an indispensable aspect and expression of our gratitude to Christ for all that he's done for us in his living and his dying and his rising again.

[1 : 14] In previous years, when I've spoken about this topic, I've always referred to it as the grace of giving because that is exactly what it is.

We give by the grace of Christ, on account of the grace of Christ, and in the grace of Christ. Every year I preach on this topic, but this year, more than any other year in my ministry, assumes a higher priority.

It is more important that as a member of the family of believers we call Glasgow City Free Church, all of us heed the word today than at any other time in our recent history.

Well, why is that? Well, we're praying for and searching for a new building to call home. A building of our own, which we can use for gospel ministry in the city centre of 21st century Glasgow.

We trust that God's going to answer our prayers in amazing ways for the glory of his gospel and for the good of Glasgow. And yet God uses means to accomplish his ends.

[2 : 29] And one of these means is our money. The finance group, Donald Morrison, at the end of this, is probably going to explain this more clearly.

But we have an unprecedented opportunity right now, in the middle of this pandemic, or towards the end of this pandemic, hopefully, to excel in the grace of giving, to invest in the life, the ministry, and the future of this church.

But more importantly, to invest in the greater purpose that God will cause Glasgow to flourish and prosper by the preaching of his word, the praising of his name.

Now, the Apostle Paul broaches the subject in Philippians 4.15 when he writes, And you Philippians know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only.

Paul seems to have fewer reservations about giving than we do today, but perhaps that's because he saw more directly the correlation between the generosity of God's people and the progress of the gospel among those who are not yet Christians.

[3 : 46] And so today, I want to allow God's word to challenge us, to go deep with us, concerning just how invested we are in the process, in the progress of the gospel among us and from us.

And as I say, this year assumes a higher priority than at any other time in the recent history of our congregation, because I trust on account of our godly ambition.

For the glory of God's name in Glasgow. Well, let me suggest that motivated by grace, we consider giving sacrificially to this project.

Note, sacrificially, for the following two reasons. First, a passion for the gospel. And secondly, partnership in the gospel.

Passion for the gospel, partnership in the gospel. Now, please don't consider this to be the equivalent of a Christian Ponzi scheme or a salesman hard sell.

[4 : 49] Please take this in the spirit in which it is preached, which I trust and hope is a gospel spirit. First of all, then, passion for the gospel.

That's the first reason we're to give sacrificially. A passion for the gospel. Paul begins this verse with the words, the beginning of the gospel. Central reason why the Philippian church engaged in financial generosity to the apostle Paul and his ministry was out of gratitude for the gospel. Remove personalities and remove ministries. They gave because of Jesus and his gospel. No good news, no generosity, no gospel, no money.

And so a passion for the gospel is the driving force behind our giving. A passion to see others experience the forgiveness of their sins and peace with God.

A passion to express our gratitude to God in solid, concrete ways. Now, the exact language Paul uses in speaking of the beginning of the gospel is deliberately ambiguous.

[5 : 56] He often does this. What could Paul mean by these words? And therefore, for what are we to be grateful? Well, our financial generosity, driven by our passion for the gospel, is an expression of three things.

First, gratitude for the cross. Second, gratitude for conversion. Third, gratitude for mission. Gratitude for the cross.

The beginning of the gospel, gratitude for the cross. One of the reasons that we have such a passion for the gospel is that we have seen with our own eyes, with the eyes of our hearts and minds, the Son of God dying in tortuous agony on the cross.

We've seen him who the angels worshipped, beaten and mocked. And in iron nails driven through his hands and his feet. And he stretched out his hands on the cross in love to embrace a world lost in sin and darkness.

We've seen the blood running down his face from the crown of thorns they drove into his head and the mark of the Roman spear in his side. With the ears of our hearts and minds, we've heard him crying out for the forgiveness of those who were crucifying him.

[7 : 14] We've heard the most terrifying cry in all of human history. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? We've heard it, we've seen it, and our hearts are filled with gratitude.

Many of you will have seen the film Saving Private Ryan. Tom Hanks plays an American officer who was tasked with rescuing Private Ryan in the days immediately following D-Day.

As Hanks, having saved Private Ryan, lies dying from a Nazi bullet, he whispers into Ryan's ear, Ernest, Ernest.

Hanks and his troops died to save Private Ryan. Now he's telling Private Ryan to express his gratitude by making the most of his life. When we see the dead body of Christ being taken down from the cross, I'm not suggesting that we hear the voice of Christ saying to us, Ernest, because no matter how good a life we live, we'll never earn what Jesus did for us.

But I am suggesting that we hear Christ's voice whispering, Be grateful for this. Be grateful for this. And our gratitude for the cross of Jesus translates into transformed gospel living, in striving for meekness and humility, for love and obedience, for righteousness and compassion.

[8 : 44] But it also translates into selfless and sacrificial giving. For yet there are hundreds of thousands of people in our city. Beside us as we go shopping in Morrisons and Asda and Tesco and Sainsbury's and Waitrose, who though they have heard that Jesus died on the cross, don't know why.

They've never heard that God so loved the world that he gave us one and only son. That God loves Glasgow. And Jesus died for us. Are there any among us who are willing to selflessly and sacrificially give out of gratitude for the cross of Jesus?

Second reason, second passion, second thing about the beginning of the gospel, gratitude for conversion. Gratitude for conversion. Well, it's all very well that Jesus died on a cross, but it happened on a hill outside Jerusalem 2,000 years ago.

You know that the cross only becomes real to us. When the Holy Spirit of God in powerful conviction moves in our heart and opens our eyes to the truth that the blood of Jesus shed all those years ago is for us.

The New International Version, in its translation of Philippians 4.15, plumps for this understanding of the phrase, the beginning of the gospel.

[10:15] It translates it as, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel. In other words, when the gospel stopped being merely objectively true, as it is, and became subjectively real.

Or to put it another way, when they believed it for themselves and became Christians. Well, it's not everyone who can remember when they believed the gospel for themselves the first time.

When they could not merely say, Jesus died on the cross, but they could say, Jesus died on the cross for me. But for those of us who can, remember how in an instant the guilt and shame dropped from our shoulders.

Remember how in an instant the light in our hearts began to shine and we began to experience what Jesus calls our first love. It's not the experience for which Paul is calling us to be grateful, but the subjective truth that once I was a child of darkness, but now I'm a child of God.

Like the Philippian jailer, you believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and were saved. Like Lydia, that seller of purple cloth from Thyatira, the Lord opened your heart.

[11:40] Like that slave girl possessed by an evil spirit, the Lord freed you from your bondage. Are you at all grateful that whereas once you were headed for a lost eternity, now your destiny is eternal glory in the presence of the Father?

How many Glaswegian people, unknown to themselves, are just waiting for us to share the gospel with them so that they can believe in Christ for themselves?

Are there any here who, because they are so grateful for how God has worked in them to bring them to Christ, are willing to give sacrificially and selflessly?

And then thirdly, when it comes to the beginning of the gospel, we have gratitude for mission.

Gratitude for mission. Because this is the other way of reading this phrase, the beginning of the gospel.

Namely, the progress of the mission of the gospel. In other words, the Philippians are grateful that God sent the apostle Paul to them, who at great risk to himself and his mission partners, Timothy, Epaphroditus, Silas and so on, proclaimed Christ to them.

[13:03] And now being so grateful, they want to express their gratitude by funding Paul and his companions to go to other cities and other places to proclaim the gospel there also.

It's gratitude not just for the gospel, but for the mission of the gospel, for those whom God has called to proclaim Christ. You know, as you read through Paul's letters, you are struck by the man's sheer energy and enthusiasm for the preaching of the word.

He'll go anywhere, even to Rome and as far away as Spain, so that the name of Christ can be heard and believed upon. Now, Paul was a fallible man and at the end of his life confessed that he was the chief of sinners.

And yet in this, he was exceptional. His missionary zeal. Many secular commentators, never mind Christian commentators, have said of Paul that he was the most outstanding mind in all history. Yet it was a mind wholly driven by and devoted to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Not his own gain, but Christ's.

[14:19] Now, we're going to come back to this in a moment. But do you suppose that the ultimate reason that we're trying to find a new building is because we want our seats to be more comfortable?

So our bottoms don't hurt in church. Or that we want our parking to be easier to find. Or do you suppose it's because we are driven by and devoted to the mission of the gospel of Christ in Glasgow and beyond?

Are you grateful for those God has called to proclaim the glory of Christ to you? For the vision that captured their hearts? Are you grateful for the mission of the gospel? If they've given their lives looking back over hundreds of years sacrificially for the sake of Jesus, then is it really too much that we sacrificially and selflessly give of our God-given money for the mission they proclaim?

Aye, what drives us as Christians to give isn't duty as much as it's delight. It's not legalistic merit. It is loving generosity. It is the gospel from beginning to end. That's why I said at the very beginning that a passion for the gospel is the driving force behind our giving.

[15:46] A passion to see others experience the forgiveness of their sins and peace with God. A passion to express our gratitude to God in solid, concrete ways.

And now, March 2021, is the most opportune time in generations to sacrificially and selflessly give. Passion for the gospel. Secondly, a bit more briefly, partnership in the gospel. Partnership in the gospel.

Paul uses a highly evocative phrase in the second part of verse 15. Partnership with me in giving and receiving.

Partnership with me in giving and receiving. Now, you will know that the word partnership is that from which we get our word. Fellowship. For Paul, fellowship wasn't a nice fuzzy feeling of being together and talking together.

[16 : 46] It was a solid, concrete expression of our oneness in Christ. In today's world, more than at any other time in generations, we need to think in terms of partnerships and fellowship in the gospel.

That's why we intentionally partner with Adam and with Suraj, with Katrina and with Langham, to name but a few. Because as we partner with them, they are enabled to proclaim the gospel of Christ in places we could never go.

And to people we could never meet. That's why we partner with other congregations in our denomination and beyond. But these are not the partnerships to which I want to refer today. In fact, I don't think I've ever referred to today's partnerships before. But given that I've been a minister here now for 17 and a half years. And I'm devoted to serving you for as long as the Lord gives me strength and still wants me to.

Having turned down, even in the last few months, invitations to preach with a view in other congregations. I feel qualified to be just a little congregational in my approach.

[17 : 54] We need to invest in partnerships as Glasgow City Free Church. And that's why the leadership of this conlegation, Session, Deacons Court, everything, are calling upon us all to sacrificially and selflessly give to the acquisition of a new home for this conlegation.

A new boat from which to fish for the souls of men. And the partnerships I'm calling us to invest in are threefold. The Glasgow City Free Churches of the past, of the present and of the future. And I want you to use your imaginations a bit. Partner, first of all, with the Church of the past. Partner with the Church of the past. Today's Glasgow City Free Church is made up of two congregations.

One called Hope Street Gallic Chapel and the other Milton. The first of these, Hope Street Gallic Chapel, was founded in 1824. And its first minister was a man called Alexander Beeth.

Its most famous 19th century minister was a man called Walter McGillivray from the island of Eilie. He was an outstanding preacher and a devoted pastor. I'm studying some of his long lost writings at the moment and enjoying it greatly.

[19 : 15] The second of these, Milton Free Church, was founded in 1839. And its first minister was a hearty Aberdonian by the name of John Duncan.

Duncan, who became known as Rabbi Duncan, we'll find out more about him tonight, had a passion for the Jews. And his writings today have influenced thousands of Christians to start praying for the conversion of the Jewish people.

Think of all that's passed since 1824 and 1839. Think of the tens of thousands of people who have been members and adherents of Hope Street and Milton.

Think of all the churches which were planted by Hope Street over the centre of Glasgow in the 19th century. For example, Tradeston Free Church, the Gorbals Free Church.

Think of the billions of pounds sent to support missions both at home and abroad by both congregations. Think of all the prayers sent up to God for the conversion of children.

[20 : 17] And think of all the lives which were changed for the eternal betterment. Think of the daring spirit these congregations had. The can-do confidence in the gospel.

These are the kind of churches I want us to partner with today and express our fellowship with. I've said it before, I'm going to say it again so it sears into your memories.

The best days of Glasgow City Free Church are not behind it, but ahead of it. But that's not to say the days behind us weren't good. In fact, at times they were awesome.

We don't even know the half of it. This is the kind of church we want to be going forward. The innovative, daring, missional churches from which we were born.

Hope Street and Milton. And that's why today your leadership is calling you all to radical, self-sacrificial giving. So that at the end of our lives, we will not have embarrassed our forebears.

[21 : 21] Abandoned their legacy. Or tarnished our heritage. We want to partner with the church of the past.

We want to partner with the church of the present. The present. Again, forgive me, I've been here 17 and a half years. I'm in the bricks and mortar of the place. I'm one of you. Today's Glasgow City is fairly representative of what we've been for the last 20 years.

Every age profile is represented and children are a blessing from God. We have many causes for joy. A robust prayer meeting. Good attendances on our Sunday services.

Gifted leaders. A strong missionary and church planting ethos. But we also have many causes for concern. For the Glasgow City Free Churches, representative of what we've been for the last 20 years, were not as ethnically or socially diverse as we were even 10 years ago.

Then our second language was Chinese. We had a strong ministry to overseas students. We had a preaching station in the east end of the city in Cambus Lang, which at times had an attendance of nearly 40 souls.

[22 : 36] Both of these are gone. The average age of our church session is probably not far off about late 60s. We desperately, desperately need new elders.

Think of the church of today. Look around you at the faces on the screen and ask yourself, not just who's here, but who isn't here. We lack a solid emphasis on mercy ministry.

We lack a focus on other parts of the city. We lack a focus upon overseas students, as well as many other things. And that is partly why we want to move building.

For good or for ill, our building on St Vincent Street has drained the emotional energy out of generations of our office bearers. Discussions concerning this church building have caused many more arguments than any other topic in my time here.

Do you really want our children, those children whose faces you see on the screen and those who you pray for, those children who will be tomorrow's leaders in Glasgow City Free Church to be burdened by the upkeep of this crumbling building, to become leaders in church courts which argue incessantly about it and to think somehow that serving the Lord consists in being a curator of an ancient building?

[24 : 07] Do you not want them to experience for themselves the joy of serving the Lord in mission to overseas students, to Glasgow's peoples, to the disadvantaged in our city?

Think upon the church of the present and realise we have no laurels upon which to rest. If we have money saved for a rainy day, today is that rainy day.

The skies are open and the rain is falling. Now's the time to invest in partnership with today's Glasgow City Free Church. And then third and lastly, now is the time to invest in partnership with the church of the future.

The church of the future. I honestly believe that our best days are ahead of us, not behind us. So in three years, we're going to be celebrating the three, the 200th anniversary of the founding of our congregation.

Its first minister was Alexander Beeth. Now, think ahead 200 years. I know I'm asking a lot, but we're a generation of dreamers who escape into the fantasy of social media.

[25 : 13] So just go with me on this. Our minister isn't from Oban, like Alexander Beeth was, or from Galsby, like I am, but from Glasgow. He ain't chalky white like me.

He is mixed race with a rich heritage of Asian, African and European blood. In short, he's an average 23rd century Glaswegian. He was born in a Christian home and he believed in Jesus for as long as he can remember.

He loves Jesus. He loves the gospel. And he and the congregation of Glasgow City Free Church, or whatever they call themselves in 200 years time, are at the heart of Glasgow's redevelopment as a city known all over the world for its fairness, its cultural diversity, and its prosperity.

Glasgow has flourished over the previous 200 years by the preaching of the word of God and the praising of the name of God. And who knows, and perhaps I'm being a bit silly, but then I'm sure Alexander Beeth would have thought us silly for having services on Zoom today.

Perhaps our descendants will be thinking of church planting on a human colony on Mars. And as the people flood into Glasgow City Free Church, they're going to look back on 400 years of faithful witness to the city, and they'll reflect especially on the events of 2021.

[26 : 32] When the people of Glasgow City, with their backs against the wall, gave above and beyond their means to secure an exciting missional future for the congregation.

John Buchan, son of the Free Church himself, once wrote, The only way we can pay our debt to the past is by placing the future in debt to us.

The only way we can pay our debt to the past is by placing the future in debt to us. Think and allow yourselves to imagine what will we be like in 200 years?

Dream of a sermon like this preached then. And for the congregation to say, see that church of 2021? That's the kind of gospel church we want to be in partnership with today.

Is this all pie in the sky fantasy? Well, if I had Alexander Beeth and John Duncan on my left here, they'd say no. If anything, they would criticize us for having too small a vision and for our dreams being too mean.

[27 : 53] They'd say, you know, if Jesus can save sinners like us, he can do even greater things for the city we love. And then to my right, I have this 23rd century Glaswegian minister.

And he's talking about how much he loves Jesus and how the congregation of Glasgow City, whichever it's called then, is planting a new church on a human colony on Mars.

And he's talking about how those in 2021 dared to dream, dared to dream big and dared to invest big. Here's the question. We know these guys existed 200 years ago.

What you have to decide in your minds today is will this guy here exist in 200 years?

Will this man to my right, 23rd century Glaswegian man, minister of Hope Street, Milton, Glasgow City Free Church, will he exist? Dream big.

[29 : 01] Give generously. Let's worship Jesus in the gratitude of his grace. Not just with our mouths, but with our money.

You know, I think at this stage, I'm going to hand over to Donald Morrison. Great. Okay, thanks, Colin. I'll just take a few minutes and just kind of summarise where we're at for everybody's benefit. Back in September 2018, that GCFC Leaders Away meeting, it was unanimously decided that our future wasn't in our current building in St. Vincent Street.

And in fact, as Colin's mentioned already today, it was a bit of a distraction to the vision of the congregation. Probably, as most of you are aware, we then had a really good attempt at securing the property up in Townhead.

But that wasn't to be, and we've learnt quite a lot from that process. But just a quick reminder of what our vision is as a congregation.

[30 : 12] In summary, we really want to be an equipping church, and our goals are to help us to be the best Christians that we can be at home, at work, and in society as a whole.

And as Colin said on a number of occasions over the last few months, we're now at the stage where we really need a new boat to fish from. So hopefully, you all this week received a copy of the Funding Our Future document.

If you didn't get one of them, if you can email Laura, our administrator, and she'll get one out to you straight away. We deliberately put that out in hard copy.

You know, there have been a few silver linings to the last 12 months of coronavirus in terms of how we work and how we communicate. I think we're all pretty fatigued with digital communications. I certainly am. And we were keen to give you something hard copy that you can all hopefully just absorb and take some time to read. So that document really highlights where we want to go as a congregation at this stage and what our financial goals are that Colin's been mentioning this morning and how we're looking to achieve them.

[31 : 27] And it also talks about our finances and how we want to purchase a new building and have sufficient money left to do all the other aspects of our mission.

And we have looked at whether we purchase or whether we rent and consulted with others and we definitely believe purchasing is the way forward. We have looked at the cost of rental, you know, our own space or just even, you know, a lecture type space week on week and our funds would really be very rapidly depleted if we got into that kind of space and it wouldn't give us the kind of flexibility that we want for the future as a congregation and to be able to do some of the things that we're longing to do again like church lunches and just have that space for us to use.

So the leaflet talks also, you know, around what we are doing about reviewing our costs in the congregation at the moment. If you turn to page five of it, you'll see some of the examples of things that we've started doing as a finance group at the moment just to optimise how we spend our money and then also hopefully gives you some challenges around, you know, how much can you give?

So there's lots of different ways around how we can maximise what we give such as signing up for gift aid. That's probably one of the greatest ones and it is really just that simple.

All you need to do is sign up and we explain about that on page 10. So for those of you who are maybe haven't had a chance to look through the leaflet yet, unfortunately, we can't do an online quick quiz or poll here, but I'll just tell you, last year we raised £28,000 just from our gift aid claims. [33 : 10] So if you're a taxpayer and you're not registered yet with the congregation, there's no limit to how much gift aid we can claim. So that's a really key one for us.

We can also, if you're, you know, in full-time employment, we can do payroll giving and there's some details of that on page 10 and there's also ways that everybody can contribute through their online shopping and through things like Amazon, et cetera, and there's some details of that on page 11 of the document.

And I think it's really key here that everybody has a part to play, that we recognise that everybody has a part to play. At the bottom of page 6 of the document, we give you a couple of examples of just the impact of giving £2 more a week or £20 more a week.

Now, I like a good analogy and one of my favourite reference points for, you know, how you actually improve something is a guy called Sir David Brailsford.

I'm sure Matthias has probably heard of him. Sir David Brailsford was the UK Olympic cycling coach back in 2012 when the UK Olympic team won almost every cycling medal there was to do in the Olympics.

[34 : 26] And David Brailsford was asked, well, how did you do that? And he said, it was the aggregation of marginal gains. It was everybody in the team doing their own wee bit. It was about their sleep pattern.

It was about their eating. And everybody's got a part to play here. It is from the £2 more a week to the £20 more a week to the one-off donations. One of the other key things that we're looking at here now as a congregation is actually just how we allocate givings.

Now, for most of you, you probably just give maybe on a weekly or a monthly basis and you don't really think of how we then allocate that funding. There's some really great detail on page eight and nine of the pots of how we intend to allocate all the money that is given to the, that you give to the congregation in the future.

So we get that balance between central givings to pay for the salaries of our minister, the administration of the free church centrally, our mission work and what we want to do locally with mission work, how we support Laura's salary, how we, you know, look at all these different facets of the congregation.

So hopefully the analogy of the pots there and the illustrations will give you a really clear indication of how we intend to act as the stewards of your money moving forwards.

[35 : 52] We are, the recommendation from the deacons court is that everybody does go with how we're recommending the give there. Unless you want to contact us to say, no, you're not happy with that, I'd like to direct my givings in a different way.

But the recommendation of the leadership is that you go with the allocation here. So Laura's going to be available this week. for one-to-one sessions on Zoom for face-to-face discussions, on Monday between five o'clock and six o'clock, on Wednesday between three and four o'clock, and then lastly on Friday between ten and eleven.

And there's details of those arrangements on page eleven of the document. Or call Laura directly on the new church mobile number. And these are all really confidential conversations.

Laura is the only one who knows the allocation of individuals' givings on a monthly basis. So, you know, we'll treat those discussions with absolute discretion.

There's also a really good questionnaire on the back of the leaflet on page twelve. And we don't want you to return that questionnaire. We want to just use that maybe as a personal challenge that you can look at in your prayer life at the moment around how much can you give and ways of maximising your giving.

[37 : 17] With regard to the pots I mentioned a couple of minutes ago, Colin's going to be preaching more on this evening on the biblical basis for having pots or chests of money. You know, I've seen the sermon already and, you know, thanks to Hamish just for identifying that kind of thinking and then for an anticipation calling for the, you know, what we're going to hear from him tonight on that and that biblical basis for it.

So I'm almost finished. You know, the big challenge for us is what do we actually need? So again, in the document, hopefully we've made that reasonably clear on page four.

Overall, we're looking to generate about £950,000. So a huge amount of money. But we've already got about £500,000 of that from just some savings and assets in the congregation.

We're pretty confident that we're going to get a loan of around £150,000 from the Free Church centrally. So what we're looking for to bridge is a gap of about £300,000.

As Colin said, you know, I think it was providential that we didn't get the town head property. We're starting to see some really good property come to the market at the moment just because of the impacts of the pandemic.

[38 : 38] and we expect a lot more to come in the coming weeks. So we'd really like to be in a position to move quite quickly now as property comes up.

So we really need, we'd encourage you, you know, to consider your position prayerfully at this stage. So just in summary, from my perspective, then I'll hand back to Colin in a minute.

You know, we need to be really honest, you know, with ourselves at the moment about our givings, you know, what are those priorities that we've got on a week-to-week basis? A lot of us will have saved money over this period just from not having some of the kind of more routine expenditure that we've perhaps had prior to the pandemic.

What could we do with that? Could we sacrificially give to some of that? As Colin said at the outset of the sermon today, you know, giving is an integral part of a Christian service.

Do we really realise that? And, you know, can we excel in that grace of giving that Colin talked about also at the start of the service today? So, you know, I'd ask you to prayerfully reflect, you know, on the questions that we've put at the back of the document.

[39 : 46] And last but not least, I've got a few thanks to give here. You know, Laura's done a brilliant job of the document with some input from the rest of the finance group, to Hamish and I for collaboration just in terms of preparation of this and, you know, in anticipation for Colin's ongoing teaching and Phil, you know, just on the future mission for the congregation.

I think we're at a really exciting time here and I would really encourage you all to think carefully about this. Thank you.