

OFFERING RHYTHM

1: WHY IT MATTERS

As we seek to develop our own Rule of life within the CROWN framework we need not approach the elements in any specific order. The Offering rhythm expresses our participation and serving of God's big plan. And Along the way, I've had some really foundational experiences that have shaped my thinking.

The first was, when training as a vicar I went on a prison mission with our college, we were partnering with Holy Trinity Brompton, the home of the Alpha course, and it involved joining their prison team to lead a 3 day event where the gospel would be preached...

Before that, we had a training session with their team in London, and with a mix of nervousness and excitement travelled down for that meeting. Well, I couldn't quite believe what happened next.

The designated leader for the mission turned out to be quite the poshest woman I'd ever met. Posher than Rosie - ha ha!

She spoke with several plums at the back of throat, and I thought we were going into prison like lambs to the slaughter... I mean, who was going to take us seriously... I grew up in Grimsby, it has some notoriety as a tough town, and well, I couldn't see how these two cultures could possibly connect.

But what can I say, she was brilliant, she made a joke of her background and it disarmed people, and with an anointing from the Holy Spirit people were saved and transformed in the course of those days... It was so much fun.

Now, in the strange way these things can happen, I later heard another part of the story. It was a talk by the then vicar of HTB, Sandy Millar, and he described how in times of prayer the LORD seemed impress upon him, that he was calling this woman to prisons ministry.

It might have been the last thing he expected, maybe the last thing she expected but - it was no surprise to God. The rest is history.

It was a lesson for me that God can surprise us, and sees treasures within others, and potential we might overlook. *We look on the outside, but he looks on the heart.* The discernment of and use of Spiritual gifts isn't simply the application of 'best fit', there is an element of mystery to it only discernment and obedience can truly unlock.

My own experience of that mission was being released to pray for some of the prisoners. One guy, a dealer, was in agony, he said he'd not been to the toilet for around a month, maybe longer. Could we pray!

Well, what do you do?

So we prayed, but soon the guys were hurried out - activities were limited and it was back to the cells.

Anyway, next morning he walks in to chapel, and I catch his eye, gave him an enquiring look, and he gave me the thumbs up with a big grin. It would appear that he was on the loo most of the night! It certainly opened him up to then hear the gospel message that day.

But maybe some of my own rubbish was unblocked in that experience as well! God's agenda is to transform lives - just imagine what would have been lost for the Kingdom, if the vicar had simply given her the job of drinking tea with other poshies?

And there's a biblical principle here - it's in prayer, at a prayer meeting the Paul and Barnabas are sent out as missionaries - read Acts 13, it wasn't their idea, it was The Holy Spirit's - amazing.

So, you might ask, how does all of this connect with our theme of Offering?

An offering rhythm is one of service: *We value using our gifts as we join God's plan to renew all creation, bringing glimpses of heaven to earth.*

God's big plan is the healing the whole of creation - broken lives with the power of the gospel and a broken creation at what Jesus called the Renewal of All Things. We get to join in with that, the biggest plan of all, what a privilege!

Signs of that coming age are already breaking in - we see glimpses of his rule, manifest around us. That is the Kingdom mission of the Church, to increase the King's domain until it fills the whole of the earth.

We cover more of what this looks like in our foundation booklet on the Kingdom, but in simple terms it is something of heaven - breaking into earth. If that sounds a bit extreme, then, what was it Jesus taught us to pray?

Our Father in Heaven, Hallowed be your name, Your Kingdom Come, Your

will be done, on earth as in heaven...

That can look like various things, beauty, justice, peace, healing and it impacts the whole of society, not just 1030 on a Sunday morning. So, we describe this aspect of the CROWN rule in these terms:

All of our life is worship, an offering back to God of ourselves. We seek to call the treasure out of one another, to discern and use our gifts, in and through church but also in the wider world.

We acknowledge our work can play a part in the renewal of all things, as we live justly, glorify God in creativity and work for justice.

The privilege we have is that we get to join in with what God is doing. That was the learning of this prison mission for me, an offering rhythm is one that should align us with the big purposes of God, the plans he has for his church and people in these days, and the gifts he has released to see those things fulfilled.

So let me ask you a question?

1. When has it most felt like you were working with God, rather than just for him?

Think about that, talk to those around you, or leave you comments below... and we'll continue in a moment.

OFFERING RHYTHM

2: Why it matters continued.

So we've heard how God's purpose is to restore lives and renew the whole of creation. An offering rhythm is one that positions us to work with God and his Kingdom agenda, as we join with that big plan.

An Offering rhythm that is alive is one that has that sense of this bigger vision and purpose, and takes joy in discovering and playing the part we have been given using the gifts God gives us.

This Kingdom work is the purpose of the church as the gospel transforms lives, and glimpses of the coming kingdom of heaven break into our present. It's what we are here for. We, the church, are God's plan to reach and save the world. We are the only ones who bear the presence of the coming age to our surrounding communities and workplaces.

We are plan A, there is no plan B!

The Go-To place in Scripture for thinking about this is St Paul's description of the Church as a body 1 Corinthians 12. In verse 12 we read *Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.*

And Paul goes on to say:

- if a hand says I'm not part of this body it wouldn't be true..
- if we all were eyes where would the hearing be?
- God has placed each part just as he wanted to be.
- Every part is indispensable and the weaker parts are very much needed.

So the we are all needed. We each have a part to play. This is also expressed when Paul earlier explains the gifts God gives...

*1 Corinthians 12:7 Now to **each one** the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.*

Each one - now I'm no theologian, but my simple understanding is this - each one means each one, all of us, everyone gets to play! if you believe in Jesus and can breathe air, you can serve in some way...

And we do this for the common good - this is not just about me - when we play our part - everyone is blessed.

But the other point of the body is that it does things - it gets to work. This isn't

just what happens on a Sunday, or when we meet together, this is Jesus' body doing the things Jesus did, a body active and at work amidst the brokenness of the world.

So when we gather to worship we each play our part and God uses every one of us to contribute, but that's not an end in itself.

That's all part of the body becoming mature to look more and more like Jesus. This is why playing our part matters. If part of the body isn't functioning we're diminished, we limp... But when we all get going, then it's world watch out!

This mature body is more and more like Jesus, looking for and joining in with the things the Spirit is doing. We can look on, even criticise - but if the Church is the people, when you criticise it - you're really just criticising yourself.

We all have a part to play and if we don't we, the church, and the world are diminished, and worst still God is not glorified as he might be.

So we have to understand this isn't just about having powerful services or meetings. There are vocations into wider society, public service, business, culture and arts and for some, the role of the church is to equip them to be distinctly and dynamically Christian there. We need to resource, release and support them to be fruitful.

This is all part of shaping culture for human flourishing.

So an Offering rhythm has a personal dimension but a corporate vision. It's about playing our part to help the Body of Christ become all that God intends for it to be, so that the transforming work of the Gospel can bear fruit in our world.

Our part may change at stages of life, and around God's particular purposes for his church in any given season, but we will always have a part. When we play it - the church and the world is blessed and God is glorified...

So let me ask you a question?

If the church is a body, what part would you say you are?

Think about that, talk to those around you, or leave you comments below... and we'll continue in a moment.

OFFERING RHYTHM

3: Character - Servanthood

As we develop our thinking about the Offering rhythm, it can be easy to short-cut into action. After all, if God has this great purpose for his church if we are to bear his transforming power into the world, let's all find our part and crack on!

But the Bible is clear, God is more interested in our character than our competence. If we want to serve him well, then there is a deeper set of attitudes and foundations that God would lay, so that the stuff we do for him flows from a place of integrity.

There's an episode when his disciples are bigging themselves up - jockeying for position, and he gives them this stinging rebuke:

You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentile lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. Mark 10:42-44

So, crucial to character is servanthood. Jesus is our supreme example and inspiration. Famously, he demonstrated this when he washed his disciples feet - an act so shocking Peter said, No Never! It was a job reserved for lowest of gentile servants, not fit for the respectable Jew...

But this was more than a showy one-off example of faux humility - it was an overflow of his heart and nature. This was expressed in one of the earliest Christian hymns, which Paul quotes in Philippians 2:

5 In your relationships with one another,
have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

6 who, being in very nature^[a] God, did not consider equality with God
something to be used to his own advantage;

7 rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

8 And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself

by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross!

9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,

to the glory of God the Father.
Have the same mindset as Christ Jesus...
The same mindset as Jesus.

He took the very nature of a servant... Literally that's a bond-slave, someone with neither rights or status...
Legally that's someone's possession, more like an object than a person...

So what might this look like? It is an attitude more likely to:

Ask where am I needed, than what do I feel like doing?
Expressed in the principle of going extra mile...
It puts the needs of the body above personal preferences.

The truth is we can all serve, we can all do it.
We may have different availabilities - but we can all play a part.

And when we do, some interesting things happen.

Through genuine service we discover to be concerned about the audience of one... God loves a cheerful giver and we feel his pleasure in us because above all, what we do is for him... And we hear his well done.

Then, in the the topsy turvy way of his Kingdom. we discover,
Whoever humbles himself will be exalted, whoever exalts themselves will be humbled.

In serving we learn more about ourselves potentially discovering gifting you never knew...

In serving we get blessed. We have the joy of seeing him use us.... God raises us up.

This dynamic sets us free from comparison and competition because our focus is on God not others. It is all too easy to think wow - isn't this person amazing at that! I wish I could, pray like they pray - and so on.

An Offering rhythm might not just set patterns of serving, but consistently dedicate that service to the Lord, so we hear both his affirmation and see him use what we bring. That space to see him work is the dynamic that keeps things alive and exciting.

It might mean rather than just serving coffee you position yourself for conversation that welcomes the newcomer or draws people out at a point of need.

Serving works at work too - it subverts peoples expectations and shows a better way... How good is it for colleagues to know you are looking out for them and not just your own silo...

Character then is the real foundation for an offering rhythm. It reminds us that it is Christ we are serving. We'll continue to explore this with respect to calling, but let me ask a question as we close....

In what ways would you say you do and don't have mindset of Christ Jesus?

Think about that, talk to those around you, or leave you comments below... and we'll continue in a moment.

OFFERING RHYTHM

4: Character, Calling & Obedience

In thinking about building an Offering rhythm, we've seen the grand vision and purpose that God has for his church, we are the ones who get to bring foretastes of the coming Kingdom of heaven to earth.

But the truth is this Kingdom needs to come more fully in our own lives if we're to play a meaningful part. We're to become more like Jesus who came to serve and not be served and give himself as a ransom for many.

Servanthood is expressed in obedience and surrender to God's will and call. In the New Testament, the word 'servant' is used nearly 70 times. 50 of those mean "bond servant" often someone has been allowed to go free, but chooses to stay with his/her master as a servant.

The slave surrenders his/her rights, never to be free from serving. This is more than commitment, we can commit to many Christian virtues, giving, study, prayer, or commit to self improvement or diet, but with commitment we remain in control.

But surrender is different. Paul, Timothy, James, Peter, and Jude all describe themselves as "bondservants of Christ", like them we are to renounce all other masters. Why?

Well If you haven't figured it yet, this isn't all about you!

And again here, Jesus shows the way. He tells his disciples that he must suffer many things, be rejected and killed... Peter says No Way! To which Jesus responds:

Mark 8:34-35 34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 35 For whoever wants to save their life^[b] will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.

An offering rhythm is all about giving into God's agenda... So what does this look like in practice?

Perhaps one of the other images of the Church helps at this point - the family... when we get together we're on family business - and we all have a part to play... Now I don't know what images you have of family - but I think the idea is that in family - everyone mucks in to get the job done. We do the equivalent of the washing up - whatever that is, we get stuck in together.

When we're truly in it together, and every success is shared and delighted in.

This isn't always easy. God is constantly challenging us to grow. And maybe there's a little bit of Jonah in each one of us. We want to run the other way...

So another crucial element of character then is obedience.... It is more than just knowledge - in fact too much knowledge may just increase the extent of our disobedience.

Again, Jesus is our model, we read. "Although he was a son, he learned **obedience** through what he suffered, and once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who **obey** him."

Simon Guillebaud, in his book Choose Life, lays it on the line, quoting both A W Tozer, *Whenever you hear God's truth, God's Word, you will go either in the direction you are moved, or you will just wait. If you wait, you will find that the next time you hear the truth, it will not move you quite as much. The next time, it will move you less, and the time will come when the truth will not move you at all!*

It was Oswald Chambers who wrote, *We learn more by five minutes obedience than by ten year's study.*

Have you lived out five minutes of obedience recently?

So what does this mean for an Offering rhythm?

Well, fundamentally we are offering ourselves first to God. We are seeking his agenda and giving into that. That's not to ignore that the primary plan God has to advance his work is what, his church together, so if we are thinking about surrender and obedience what does this mean?

First, servanthood, surrender and obedience have to be hallmarks of the church as a whole. Are we together seeking God for our part in the big plan he has for the healing of creation? Do we then surrender to that and make it our family business.

If we are clear about that as a church together, then whatever part people play, it is all heading towards this wider purpose. What do you see needs doing to fulfil the vision? Start there. We are then in a position to discover more of his specific purpose for our lives.

The specific response is working out the call he has placed on our lives, or the purpose he has for the present season. Often this may reflect the shape and gifting we have - but sometimes we only really discover that as we step out beyond our comfort zones, and let God take hold of what we offer.

That's the most exciting bit. When we realise that he really does take hold of what we bring and that he *uses* that to his glory. That's when growth really happens. Don't create an offering pattern that is safe...

As we take those steps, something else begins to happen, we find we're invested. As Royston at St Mike's here put it, we have skin in the game... We own what is going on - We are excited when one part of the church is seeing fruit and breakthrough - and we care when others struggle.

Character matters. As you build an Offering rule of life, build from the foundation of first offering yourself to God. Once you are clear about who and why you should serve, you will be much better placed to determine the what.

So let me ask you a question?

If you look at your present commitments, to what extent would you say they were surrendered to God?

Think about that, talk to those around you, or leave you comments below... and we'll continue in a moment.

OFFERING RHYTHM

5: Charismata (Spiritual Gifting.)

As a new Christian I learnt a powerful lesson quite early on. I had started attending a midweek group, which was somewhat intimidating, and it was very tempting to think I didn't measure up - and so didn't really have a place there.

One time it was a real battle to go, I think I only turned up because I was given a lift and so couldn't get out of it. In a quiet kind of desperation I prayed in the car - *God will you use me tonight?*

In the course of the study, a guy on the edge of things shared how his experience was like watching football. The team got on with it on the pitch, but he was sat in the stands, maybe a substitute but definitely with the reserves.

I retorted, *There are no reserves on God's team.* It came out of my mouth before I knew it - and it was a shock to me and others! To him though, it was a challenge to which he realised he needed to respond. As a result he chose to get on the pitch and give his life to Christ.

A simple prayer, words that were not just my own, the power of God and a changed life.

It was that easy!

Later on, at a church we were part of in Oxford, the Kids leaders wrote a song, it was so so simple, and it reminded me of that early experience.

Lord, would you hear my simple prayer?

Use me today, use me today!

I will listen, and I will obey,

Use me today I pray!

There is nothing more exciting than experiencing God use us, and it's something that every Christian can expect. We need to come open to God and ready to be used. It's all part of this plan and purpose...

When was the last time you felt God used you? ***Maybe, more tellingly, when was the last time you asked him to?***

So it's at this point, having noted our dependency on God that I want to talk about Spiritual gifts. These manifestations of the Holy Spirit are the tools God

uses to build us up. There are several lists in the New Testament, and it is clear Spiritual Gifts are to be sought, discerned and used. Here's one -

1 Peter 4:8-11 8 Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. 9 Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. 10 Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. 11 If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

It's not hard is it to pick out some of the threads of what has already been shared, servanthood, relying on God's strength, a commitment to each other in love...

We also see again that each of us has been given a gift, something we can bring to build up the church. Other lists include Wisdom, Word of knowledge, Faith, Gifts of healings, Miracles, Prophecy, Discernment of Spirits, Tongues Interpretation of tongues, Serving, Teaching, Exhortation, Giving, Leadership and Mercy...

But when it comes these spiritual gifts we're instructed to steward them in serving others. How do we do that?

Simply - use them!

I can think of times I've shied back - and still ponder "what if?" - times I might have prayed, or shared something but didn't. I don't want any more of those...

But you might ask - what are my gifts? Surveys and inventories can help, but prayer is the fundamental - before God, and it's together others gifts are discerned and released. Our vocation heard in the secret place is discerned and confirmed by others.

So, as we look to build an offering rhythm, what does all this mean? How do we keep God at the heart of things, rather than become overwhelmed in busyness or stuck in routine and then just going through the motions. Above all, keep room for God. Maybe make that simple prayer, God, would you use me today, until it becomes your daily reality.

Bring expectation to when you serve, any service can be distinct when we let God in, as we read, serve in the strength God provides. What would an awareness of God bring to serving refreshments after church? Some of this thinking may reveal just how much do we do without prayer?

But we're also called to seek the greater gifts. Do you know what that might mean for you? In God's big plan to renew lives and heal creation do you have a sense of what his call to you might be? In your church's part in that work do you know where you fit in? Be seeking these things...

But you have to start somewhere, to have a go, why not explore that with others in the church you trust. What is the ministry or context you are being led to serve in? Are you doing things you don't need to - do you need Father God to prune your commitments for what is best?

An Offering rhythm positions us to play the part we have been given, drawing on God's strength - so that he gets the glory. We might discover our part in steps, what is the next step for you?

So let me ask you a question?

When was the last time you really asked God to use you? What happened?

Think about that, talk to those around you, or leave you comments below... and we'll continue in a moment.

OFFERING RHYTHM

6: Offering in Community

Last time we looked at the place of Spiritual Gifts in an Offering rhythm of serving. Lots of resources are available to help us discern our gifts and that can be really helpful, though, one limitation of a survey or questionnaire based on our responses is that it often reflects back our present reality.

Sometimes there is other potential God wants to unlock, and that can feel riskier as we step into new things. The other potential weakness is more at our end, we can individualise these things, something I think our culture always pushes us towards, but every context for Spiritual gifts in Scripture is Community, these gifts are neither yours, nor mine but ours.

We have a role to use our gifts, but also to encourage and draw out the gifts of others. A couple of years ago at St Mike's we'd had a school visit the church for Prayer Space experience. One of the activities included glitter and though most had been cleared up, it's impossible to get it all.

That Sunday as we were worshipping and the sun shone in, my eyes were drawn to this dazzling speck on the steps at the front... I moved to get a closer look, but then it had gone. I realised that I could only see the shining glitter because of the unique angle of the place I was stood converging with the sunlight.

I think the church can be like that. Some of us have the unique ability to see something dazzling and glorious in others, treasure we can call out, gifting we can release. Encouragement, naming gifts and qualities are all part of the culture we want to be creating.

This is important, because we seem to be able to make any excuse not to step into the works God has prepared for us:
I'm too old! Or too young...
Others will do it better.

You might ask yourself:
What do I rule myself out of?
Why do I do that? Are they healthy reasons?

Community is the context in which we can overcome these blockages and barriers. We can help each other become the people we were made to be.

Commitment though is not just in gifts, to offer our lives isn't just to offer our talents but also our time and our treasure.

At different stages in life we may find we are richer in one of these areas of capital of than another, and that's OK, an offering rhythm calls us to consider it all - but we can only give what we have. God is the one who multiplies the two small fish and five loaves of our offering.

We have spent much of the time talking about character and gifting, Godly character is by definition generous, we follow the God who gave everything for us. We **steward** the gifts he has set within us, but time and treasure matter too.

Time is the one resource we share equitably, though circumstances will affect our availability. Some of us may have more time than others, depending on our stage of life and wider responsibilities. We mustn't lose sight that our families are our first ministries, they are not to be sacrificed on the altar of ministry.

We also recognise that some of us are called to be culture shapers in the wider world, whether that's the arts, or public service being a voice for and witness to Christ. There may be little time for ministry in the local church, instead the community of the local church can support and empower this significant work helping those with such vocations to be distinctly Christian.

But whatever our capacity, we are called to use our time well, to redeem the time as the King James Version so wonderfully put it - because the days are evil. The NIV talks about making the most of every opportunity - I think you get the jist.

The other aspect of offering is to steward our resources or treasure. This is too short a time to unpack a biblical framework for giving, but how we spend money will often show what we really think is important. *Where your treasure is, says Jesus, there your heart will also be.*

If we think of church as a family, then the family business is the work of the Kingdom. We have a responsibility to play our part and contribute. The prophet Micah spoke of God's anger that the tithe was withheld even that this was akin to robbing from God. Rather than blessing, the people were experience curse.

Now, this isn't the place to discuss tithing or New Testament economics, but what offering are you bringing to God in this area? To give to the LORD is to express trust that all you have is his, and that he is your provider.

I remember a conversation I had with a businessman, he earned astonishing amounts of money, but it was his joy to give most of it away. That was his offering to the church - to the Kingdom, to resource and release ministry. *We tried to get him to join St Michael's - ha ha!*

But the point is this, some of us may have more money, others more time, we all have different gifting, but whatever we have, we bring it as an offering - and as we do, we help release the work of God's Kingdom in the community he has placed us in.

Obedient service surrendered to him, is the crucible for many and great things... I believe it is beautiful in his sight. Community is where this happens.

As you form an Offering rhythm, that brings talents, time and treasure to God, what impact will you make on your community, how can that community serve, empower and release you.

Let me ask you a question?

What does your church community need most of right now? Time, Talent or Treasure? How can you help?

Think about that, talk to those around you, or leave you comments below... and we'll continue in a moment.

OFFERING RHYTHM

7: Summing Up

So what is an Offering Rhythm? If one verse sums this rhythm up, it would be 1 Peter 4:10

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

It's worth picking out some of the key words:

Each of you - it's crystal clear here and elsewhere that there is no unemployment in the Church. God has a place and role for everyone.

There's both an expectation and an instruction to play a part, we **should use - the gifts** we have.

And, third, we have specific parts to play, using **Whatever Gift** or the **Various forms** God's grace he gives us. The Holy Spirit works in us differently, and if we don't bring that, then everyone loses.

Well, you might say, that's great - but I have no idea where to begin. I don't know what my gifts may be, but don't suggest you have none, that's to call God a liar.

Fourthly, these are gifts **received**, they are signs of **God's Grace**. We often hear language in the church today of using "my gifts" but that's not quite right, they are signs of Grace, his goodness and favour that we don't deserve. This isn't about us - it's all about him. That way we come like him in **servicing others**.

This is **Faithful Stewardship** - serving, obedient, doing the things he has given us to do.

Character then is the foundation for effective Christian service, the more our motives match those of Jesus, the more of him will be seen in what we do...

So, how do we translate this into an Offering rhythm?

Some things may need to die.

When confronted by the challenge of servanthood we may have to ask, who are we really living for? The spirit of materialism is inherently selfish - placing us at the centre of it all. Consumer choices become about what is best for us, what satisfies our "needs" most appropriately.

Giving of ourselves, our time and resources is counter-cultural, but are not giving into a vacuum, we're giving into the biggest plan of all.

Our generation may have blindspots too - Millennials seem unable to commit to anything - keep the options open, the "Interested" button of facebook - but that's hard to build consistency and run a group around.

Then again baby boomers can be so work driven there's no balance, friendships aren't valued and ministry isn't shared. How does your culture cut across the values of Offering? What might you need to lay down and surrender?

So, how might this feel like sailing rather than rowing?

Peter continues in verse 11, *If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

There is nothing more exciting than knowing God is using us? Maybe make that simple prayer "use me today" your daily discipline, until being used by God becomes your daily reality!

More than that - as we invest in God's renewing of all things, that work lasts, it will be evidenced in eternity - we will get to celebrate and enjoy it in the presence of God. What an awesome privilege.

And ultimately this is all for him, we try and express this in our volunteer agreements here at St Mike's

Taking on a role within the life of the church needs to be understood in the wider context of the Christian life. Distinctively, it is an act of service and worship to God expressed through church life, rather than simply supporting an organisation by volunteering.

As part of the wider resources at St Michael's our mentors and groups are equipped to help us form this. but the foundation is Jesus-like character.

An Offering rhythm begins by offering ourselves to play a part. That positions us to be useful to the LORD, as he takes what we offer, whether gifts, time or resources, he multiplies it - and there's no greater privilege than seeing him at work through us.

As we close, shall we pray?

Father God, we come as we are offering ourselves to you afresh. Shape in us the character and hunger that you can take hold of and use as you lead us into the plans you have. LORD, would you hear our simple prayer, use us today. We will listen, and we will obey - use us today we pray. Amen.