

## **Stewardship challenge.**

There is a story about a man out walking one night when he fell over a cliff. Reaching out in desperation he grabbed a sapling and clung on, terrified. He shouted out, 'Is anyone there?' 'Yes, God is here' said a distant voice. After a few seconds pause the man shouted again, 'Is anyone else there?'

How much are we prepared to change in God's direction; hand over our lives to him; trust him in all the changes that we make? This is the challenge of Lent – to re-evaluate our relationship to God. If it is a cold or sterile relationship then perhaps we need to change if we are to be *'exceedingly fruitful'*.

The stewardship renewal programme [which some parishes are running this Lent] is a further way of assessing our dependence upon God, domestically, professionally, recreationally and financially.

For instance, over 60 of us in this benefice are following Sr. Wendy's Lent book this year. Last Thursday, the painting chosen was "*The Magdalen Reading*" by Van der Weyden. It is of a woman sitting and reading the scriptures. Sr. Wendy suggests that it is not just the reading which is important but the gaps between the reading – the silences – which take us into a deeper union with God as we reflect upon His activity through scripture. Here is a change suggested to us: moving from meditation to contemplation in our life of prayer. It will take more time but will produce greater fruitfulness of life. That is a domestic challenge.

Again, financially, it is not what we give on the plate but how we give it. Do we give grudgingly or joyfully? Do we give to cover our absences or do we believe in a loose change God?

Yet again recreationally, do we buy a ticket for the Harvest Supper or throw our weight into making it happen?

There are challenges here for all of us, opportunities for change. It is never too late, as Abraham and Sarah discovered. It was through change and trust that their lives became *'exceedingly fruitful'*.

God said, *'I will make you exceedingly fruitful'*. Amen.