

Something to think about: 21 February 2010

So what about taxes?

Apart from keeping within the law of the land, is there anything else we have to do other than pay taxes? Send our children to school, perhaps - but even here we have choices! Taxation is a contentious issue, and evokes major expressions of feeling ripped off by the government. Almost everyone feels they pay too much tax! Thinking this way suggests to me that we have fallen into the slough of individualism. This is contrary to the gospel invitation to understand ourselves as part of a community with the care and wellbeing of one another the concern of all members. If I think the money I accrue is a measure of my personal worth and wellbeing, then I will feel the government is taking what is mine without my permission. Again the gospel invites us to think about wealth and wellbeing in community terms: "as much as you do for the least amongst you, you do to me". This is a challenge, and can direct us toward wondering about the uses to which our taxes are put: a health system, education, housing, roading, and transport for example. Reducing the tax rate at the top income level and at the same time increasing GST on all goods and services, including basic food items, hardly seems equitable in the interests of community health and wellbeing. Personal self-interest is not a gospel priority! In a just society taxes become the fairest way to redistribute the wealth of the whole community to ensure that those with least amongst us are fairly taken care of. As we begin Lent, thinking about our attitudes as individuals and how we live as a community is an appropriate focus. **Susan**