

Faith & Generosity



Living Faithfully and Generously as People of God

A Resource for Parishes



Foreword

It is undeniable that in recent years, both locally and nationally, we have been talking increasingly about money.

At the same time we recognise that over many centuries, Christians have responded to the call of faith by living generously – firm in the knowledge that giving, whether it be ministering to the poor, supporting the ministry of the Church, or giving to charitable causes – is the inescapable response to a trusting faith in our generous God.

One response to the need to talk about generosity has been to view this through the lens of stewardship – the responsible management of God’s gifts to us. This is a worthwhile approach and yet there is an alternative which may be more fruitful; this is to learn to live generously, to live ‘in tune’ with God, as Christ did.

God has given us a choice - we can choose to be self-reliant, self-sufficient – a choice which distances us from God - or we can choose to be God-reliant, choose to trust God and grow closer to Him.

This resource examines some of the practical steps we can take together to live faithfully and generously as ‘people of God’ (1 Peter 2:10). The great news is that travelling together helps us grow in the knowledge of God, grow in the understanding that generosity is fundamental to our faith and trust in Him whose immeasurable love for us is our Salvation.

Introducing this Resource

This resource is designed with a small group of people in mind. This might be the PCC, LCC, or a group representing different facets of church life.

The resource considers four qualities:

- ~ **Encouraging Generosity**
- ~ **Living Generously**
- ~ **Sharing Impact**
- ~ **Faithful Generosity**

Each of the four qualities explored starts with a **Vision Statement**, a short description of what it might look like when this quality of church life is well established.

For some, realising one or all of the **Visions** will be, as yet, an aspiration. On the other hand, as you consider the qualities, you may find that your parish/church is pretty much there, or thereabouts.

The following steps are suggested:

- Step 1 Reflect on the four 'Visions'. Celebrate the ways in which your parish/church already lives out each one
- Step 2 For each 'Vision' identify and agree new areas which can be explored and developed
- Step 3 Identify and agree how to develop and enhance what is already happening
- Step 4 Agree a plan. What can be done now?
What can wait?
- Step 5 After an agreed period (a year perhaps), assess progress and maybe start the process again.

Encouraging Generosity

Vision: Giving our Time, Talents and Treasure is Easy

“Information about *why* and *how* to give is readily available and it is easy to understand. We encourage our worshipping community to volunteer as much as they feel able. We are part of the Parish Giving Scheme and raise funds through contactless, online and text giving. Some members give through standing order, and we also make it easy for those who want to give cash donations. Our Gift Aid processes are thorough. New members of our congregation(s) are invited to give in any way they can. We encourage legacy giving too”.

For Discussion

- Are opportunities for volunteering encouraged regularly?
- Are financial giving methods simple and accessible?
- Are current giving methods sustainable long term?
- Is available technology like contactless readers being fully used?
- Which groups are not currently invited to give?
- Is a legacy policy and information on legacy giving in place?
- How might a newcomer learn about generosity and church life?
- What ensures newcomers are invited to consider planned giving?

Plans for Encouraging Generosity

- Designate a member of the church to encourage volunteering
- Run a volunteering ‘bazaar’ as part of Sunday worship
- Promote the Parish Giving Scheme to support planned giving
- Offer a contactless card reader (or is an additional reader needed?).
- Share giving information via all appropriate media
- Ensure information is always clear, accessible, and visible
- Introduce text giving
- Establish a legacy policy and provide legacy literature
- Create a process for inviting newcomers to give (e.g. welcome packs, events, one-to-one conversations)

Living Generously

Vision: Living Generously as Children of God

“We talk about generosity and giving; we frame it as part of our journey of faith. We think about specific ways in which we can live generous lives. We have explored faith and generosity as a congregation and in small groups too. Generosity is taught through preaching and group resources. Together we explore ways we can live out generous lives. Faith and generosity is at the heart of our church life. We encourage new members of our church to explore generosity with us”.

For Discussion

- Over the past year or so, what teaching have we shared on generosity? Sermons, discussion in small groups, courses?
- What other opportunities have we offered our congregation(s) for reflecting on generosity – have we offered a half or day retreat, for example?
- Do we help new members of the congregation to learn about and grow in generosity, whether it be time, talents or treasure?

Plans for Living Generously

- Plan a themed sermon series on living generously, perhaps the Diocesan resource ‘Giving to God – Learning, Serving, Growing, Loving’
- Use the lectionary to draw out the theme of the generosity of God and our response to this
- Provide themed resources for small groups
- Run a short retreat with the theme of living generously/generous discipleship.
- Include generosity in courses for new Christians and those preparing for confirmation
- Teach generosity (time/talents/treasure) in children’s & youth groups

Sharing Impact

Vision: Communicating Well is Second Nature to Us

“Our congregations(s) understand the Common Mission Fund and what we need to support our mission locally. Most of us understand the income and expenditure streams of our church(es). We are clear about the difference we make as a church, and we regularly communicate this to the congregation and wider community through various media. All our materials explain why support is needed. Materials for the wider community show how the church provides support beyond our church walls. We have a regular pattern of saying ‘thank you’ to all who give their time, talents and financial resources. We have found that our donors trust us to make good choices”.

For Discussion

- How often is gratitude expressed to givers, and is the impact of their giving communicated?
- Is generosity clearly and appropriately connected to vision and ministry plans?
- Is financial information shared in a clear, accessible, and engaging way?
- Are stories regularly shared to show the impact of generosity?

Plans for Sharing Impact

- Consistently express thanks for all forms of giving
- Involve the wider church in key decisions and priorities
- Connect generosity to a compelling vision for future ministry
- Provide examples to show how, in practical terms, a range of regular donations, including small donations, support your parish/church
- Explain the church’s needs for financial and other types of support
- Present regular financial updates in an engaging and understandable format
- Share stories of how living generously reveals God’s love in action

Faithful Generosity

Vision: Generosity is Elemental to our Identity as Children of God

“Generosity is woven into all aspects of our church life, from hospitality to meeting agendas. We spend time considering the response we will make to our generous God, and what we need to do to become more generous as a church community. We have an ongoing programme in place to make this happen. Our finances include regular planned giving to charitable causes, both local and beyond. Generosity shapes our vision and mission plans, and it is reflected in our worship, including the Offertory. We practice generosity in a way that is faithful to our church and community context”.

For Discussion

- Is there regular, planned giving to charitable causes locally and beyond, and are these decisions communicated to the congregation?
- Do financial giving decisions reflect the diversity of the church community?
- How often has generosity featured on PCC/LCC or other meeting agendas in the past year?
- Does Offertory liturgy reflect the intended culture of generosity?
- What message might the Offertory send to someone new to church?
- How are stories and expressions of generosity from different cultures shared and learned from?

Plans for Faithful Generosity

- Periodically review Offertory liturgy to ensure that it reflects your message over time
- Highlight generosity in church vision and mission plans
- Plan regular reviews of the PCCs/LCCs generosity programme to ensure it continues to meet expectations
- Regularly celebrate generosity; encourage the sharing of personal reflections on generosity as part of everyday faith
- Review the church giving policy. Is this generous or is the policy to give what is left over?

A Prayer of St Ignatius

*Lord Jesus Christ,
fill us, we pray, with your light
that we may reflect your wondrous glory.
So fill us with your love
that we may count nothing
too small to do for you,
nothing too much to give,
and nothing too hard to bear.
Amen*