

“Our learning has been – and must be – a learning of Christ; our serving has been – and must be – a serving like Christ; our growing has been – and must be – a growing into Christ; and our loving has been and must be a loving in the name of Christ. It is a Christ-centred heritage which must lead us on into a Christ-centred future”.

‘Walking the Wessex Way’: A Story and Vision for the Diocese of Winchester

Everything we give - whether time, talents, or financial resources - is, before all else, **a gift to God**, from whom we have received everything that is good.

So, our first response as stewards of God’s gifts and disciples of Christ, will be gratitude. First and foremost, therefore, what follows is offered as a resource for giving thanks to God for His overwhelming generosity to us, whereby we are transformed by the saving grace of His Son.

The over-arching message is that *learning, serving, growing, and loving*, help us grow as disciples and see the world from God’s perspective – see the world as if through the eyes of God – and help us recognise that God’s unfathomable generosity demands that we live generously - because *God is counting on us to build a Christ-centred future*.

Dear friends,

I’m very glad to commend this excellent resource to you by introducing it with a few words of my own.

It’s been my privilege to visit Africa many times over the years. My first visit was to the town of Nakuru in Kenya in 2005. One day I went to the opening of a new church on the outskirts of town in a very poor community. To tell the truth the church building was a very simple structure: nothing more than a few wooden poles covered with corrugated iron.

But the thing that struck me that day was not the structure but the prayers of those at the opening ceremony. I speak very little Swahili but I do know that ‘Asante sana’ means ‘thank you very much’. And that’s what I heard time and time again: ‘Asante sana! Asante sana! Asante sana!’

I found it so striking that people who had so little were so grateful for what they had. By contrast we in the West who have so much always seem to want more. And yet nothing better cultivates an attitude of gratitude and of generosity than the recognition that what we have is not ours by right, but the gift of the God who loves us.

May these resources, by God’s grace, cultivate just such a grateful and generous attitude in us.

+Philip

GIVING TO GOD - LEARNING

Giving to God by Deepening our Discipleship as Followers of Christ

THEME: _____

By investing time in learning and growing in faith and discipleship, we offer our hearts and minds to God so that we may be transformed by His Spirit to be agents of His transformation.

PRAYER: _____

Blessed Lord,
who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:
help us so to hear them,
to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them
that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word,
we may embrace and for ever hold fast
the hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
(Common Worship)

KEY MESSAGE: _____

Jesus taught that caring for the stranger is vital if we are to follow Him. Discerning the will of God helps us deepen our discipleship as followers of Christ.

READINGS: _____

Job 28:20-28

²⁰ Where then does wisdom come from?

Where does understanding dwell?

²¹ It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing,
concealed even from the birds in the sky.

²² Destruction and Death say,
“Only a rumor of it has reached our ears.”

²³ God understands the way to it
and he alone knows where it dwells,

²⁴ for he views the ends of the earth
and sees everything under the heavens.
²⁵ When he established the force of the wind
and measured out the waters,
²⁶ when he made a decree for the rain
and a path for the thunderstorm,
²⁷ then he looked at wisdom and appraised it;
he confirmed it and tested it.
²⁸ And he said to the human race,
“The fear of the Lord—that is wisdom,
and to shun evil is understanding.”

1 Corinthians 2

Proclaiming Christ Crucified

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. ² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. ³ And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.

⁴ My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

The True Wisdom of God

⁶ Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. ⁷ But we speak God’s wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ But, as it is written,

‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the human heart conceived,
what God has prepared for those who love him’—

¹⁰ these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within?

So also no one comprehends what is truly God’s except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God.

¹³ And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.

¹⁴ Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are discerned spiritually. ¹⁵ Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny.

¹⁶ 'For who has known the mind of the Lord
so as to instruct him?'

But we have the mind of Christ.

Matthew 25:31-46

The Judgement of the Nations

³¹ 'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³ and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. ³⁴ Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.

³⁶ I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸ And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹ And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" ⁴⁰ And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." ⁴¹ Then he will say to those at his left hand, "You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴² for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me." ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?" ⁴⁵ Then he will answer

them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.”⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.’

REFLECTION:

When we grow in the knowledge of God, we see that He is counting on us to build a Christ-centred future. Yet He has given us the freedom to choose. We can choose to be self-sufficient, or we can trust in the wisdom of God and live as Christ did, generously, as witnesses to His love in the world. How can we become more God-reliant?

LEARNING IN ACTION:

Might God be asking you to deepen your discipleship through learning? Have you thought about joining a Bible study group, a discipleship course, or exploring further study options?

Could you support a Christian education programme? Perhaps there is a discipleship programme in your parish, or a parish nearby, that would benefit from your support as a volunteer or as a donor?

GIVING TO GOD - SERVING

Giving to God Through Christlike Engagement with Our Communities

THEME: _____

Christ calls us to serve others, and in doing so, we serve God.

PRAYER: _____

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.
St Ignatius

KEY MESSAGE: _____

"Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." (Mark 9:35)

Modern secular society tells us that we need to prioritise our own interests above those of others. But Jesus tells us the opposite; the world Jesus describes is radically different. It is a world where greatness and leadership have nothing to do with power. True greatness, Jesus teaches, comes from serving others. Jesus invites us to follow His example of humility and sacrificial love and embrace generosity as a way of life. When we dedicate our time, talents, and financial resources to meet the needs of those around us, we reflect Christ's love and fulfil God's call to serve.

READINGS: _____

Isaiah 6:1-8

A Vision of God in the Temple

¹In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. ²Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. ³And one called to another and said:

‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory.’

⁴The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. ⁵And I said: ‘Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!’

⁶Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. ⁷The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: ‘Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.’

⁸Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I; send me!’

Philippians 2

Imitating Christ’s Humility

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, ² make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵ Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

⁶ who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God

as something to be exploited,

⁷ but emptied himself,

taking the form of a slave,

being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,

⁸ he humbled himself

and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.

⁹ Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,

¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus

every knee should bend,

in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹ and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Shining as Lights in the World

¹² Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Luke 9:1-6

The Mission of the Twelve

Then Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. He said to them, ‘Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there, and leave from there. Wherever they do not welcome you, as you are leaving that town shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.’ They departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere.

REFLECTION:

We are ‘children of God’ (Galatians, 3:25), ‘God’s own people’ (1 Peter, 2:9). This wonderful identity calls us to a life of active discipleship, to serve our communities as Jesus taught. What does this look like in our church and in our community? What are the most pressing needs and how can we, as a church and as individuals, serve them?

SERVING IN ACTION:

Do you have time and talents that you could share with this church and local community? What might God be calling you to do?

GIVING TO GOD - GROWING

Giving to God for the Renewal of the Church as the Body of Christ

THEME: _____

As the Body of Christ, God is counting on us to contribute to the Church's renewal. When we give our time, talents, and resources to the Church, we are offering them to God for the renewal of the Church as the Body of Christ.

PRAYER: _____

Heavenly Father,
you have called us in the Body of your Son Jesus Christ
to continue his work of reconciliation
and reveal you to the world:
forgive us the sins which tear us apart;
give us the courage to overcome our fears
and to seek that unity which is your gift and your will;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.
(*Common Worship*)

KEY MESSAGE: _____

"He also said, 'With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.'" (Mark 4:30-32)

God invites us to seek Him, to trust his Word, and experience the peace and joy of abiding in His love. In practical terms this means that each one of us has a role in the renewal and growth of the body of Christ, His Church. Whether by volunteering, sharing our talents, or giving financially, we are giving to God. Even small gifts, when given to God, have miraculous effects. Our acts of love—through generous giving—reflect the love of Christ and contribute to making His presence known. In this way we participate in God's transformative work and make His love visible in the world.

READINGS:

Jeremiah 17:5-10

⁵Thus says the Lord:

Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals
and make mere flesh their strength,
whose hearts turn away from the Lord.

⁶They shall be like a shrub in the desert,
and shall not see when relief comes.
They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness,
in an uninhabited salt land.

⁷Blessed are those who trust in the Lord,
whose trust is the Lord.

⁸They shall be like a tree planted by water,
sending out its roots by the stream.
It shall not fear when heat comes,
and its leaves shall stay green;
in the year of drought it is not anxious,
and it does not cease to bear fruit.

⁹The heart is devious above all else;
it is perverse—
who can understand it?

¹⁰I the Lord test the mind
and search the heart,
to give to all according to their ways,
according to the fruit of their doings.

1 Peter 2:2-10

²Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— ³if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

⁴Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and ⁵like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶For it stands in scripture:

'See, I am laying in Zion a stone,
a cornerstone chosen and precious;
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.'

⁷To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe,
The stone that the builders rejected
has become the very head of the corner’,

⁸and

‘A stone that makes them stumble,
and a rock that makes them fall.’

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

⁹But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

¹⁰Once you were not a people,
but now you are God’s people;
once you had not received mercy,
but now you have received mercy.

Luke 6:43-49

A Tree and Its Fruit

⁴³No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; ⁴⁴for each tree is known by its own fruit. Figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. ⁴⁵The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil person out of evil treasure produces evil; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.

The Two Foundations

⁴⁶‘Why do you call me “Lord, Lord”, and do not do what I tell you? ⁴⁷I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them. ⁴⁸That one is like a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when a flood arose, the river burst against that house but could not shake it, because it had been well built. ⁴⁹But the one who hears and does not act is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, immediately it fell, and great was the ruin of that house.’

REFLECTION:

Every act of giving, however small, when offered to God, can lead to miraculous growth in His Kingdom. Our contributions to the life of the church, whether through service or financial resources, help it flourish and grow. God longs for us to be a part of the renewal of His church in our context and beyond. In truth, He longs for our obedience.

GROWING IN ACTION:

In the words of St Paul, 'Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it' (1 Corinthians 12:27). Each and every one of us has a role to play in the renewal and growth of the body of Christ, His Church. Whether by volunteering, sharing our talents, or giving financially, we are giving to God. Even small gifts, when given to God, have miraculous effects. What is God asking you to give?

GIVING TO GOD - LOVING

Giving to God by Making the Loving Presence of Jesus Known in Our Midst

THEME: _____

Our love for others reflects our love for God. When we give generously—of our time, talents, and treasure—we are saying to God that we want to draw closer to Him and make His loving presence known in our parishes and beyond.

PRAYER: _____

God, who of thy generous mercy didst send the Holy Spirit
upon thy Church in the burning fire of thy love:
grant that thy people may be fervent
in the fellowship of the gospel
that, ever abiding in thee,
they may be found steadfast in faith and active in service;
through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord,
who liveth and reigneth with thee,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
(Common Worship)

KEY MESSAGE: _____

*“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ”
(Galatians 6:2 NIV).*

Giving is a tangible expression of love, and when we give out of love for others, we give to God. Loving others through our gifts—whether time, talents, or financial support—is a profound way of honouring God and bearing witness to His loving presence in our lives.

READINGS: _____

Isaiah 58:6-12

⁶Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,

to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?

⁷Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

⁸Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you,
the glory of the Lord shall be your rearguard.

⁹Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,

¹⁰if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.

¹¹The Lord will guide you continually,
and satisfy your needs in parched places,
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters never fail.

¹²Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to live in.

I Corinthians 13: 1-13

The Gift of Love

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴ Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice in wrong doing, but rejoices in the truth. ⁷ It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸ Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. ⁹ For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; ¹⁰ but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. ¹² For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. ¹³ And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Luke 10:25-37

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

²⁵ Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. ‘Teacher,’ he said, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ ²⁶ He said to him, ‘What is written in the law? What do you read there?’ ²⁷ He answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.’ ²⁸ And he said to him, ‘You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.’

²⁹ But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbour?’ ³⁰ Jesus replied, ‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, “Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.” ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?’ ³⁷ He said, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’

REFLECTION:

God has shown us how much He loves us, and He longs for us to share His love. In fact, He wants each and every one of us to live generously for Him so that our lives bear witness to the truth that He loves not only those who know Him, but also those who, as yet, do not.

LOVING IN ACTION:

In the parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus taught that love in action means loving and caring for others, especially those in poverty and those on the margins of society. What might God be asking you to do? How might He be asking you to show His compassion in this church, this community and in the world?
