



The Church of England

Chelmsford Diocese



Christian Giving Strategy



The aim of the strategy is to liberate the gifts of our faithful people to resource God's mission through the Church in the Diocese of Chelmsford.

*King David said,
"But who am
I, and who are
my people, that
we should be
able to give as
generously as
this?" "Everything
comes from you,
and we have given
only what comes
from your hand.
Chronicles 29:14*

*Jesus said,
" Give, and it will
be given to you.
A good measure,
pressed down,
shaken together
and running over,
will be poured
into your lap.
For with the
measure you
use, it will be
measured to
you."
Luke 6:38*

Introduction

At the heart of the faith of the Church is the grace of God, undeserved and unearned, to which our giving is a Christian response. This giving is of our whole selves. Christian stewardship is, therefore, not only about giving money but also about the discipleship to which each baptised Christian is called.

What we teach about the giving of money must be concerned with God's mission to make and develop disciples and not just with shoring up a human institution. This is consistent with the Bishops' **Guiding Principles** January 2006, which provides the theological framework for our parish and deanery visions.

Christian stewardship is understood as part of our relationship with God and the call to respond to that relationship in the way we live our lives. Poor giving is usually a symptom of a spiritual problem. The 'giving of money' should be addressed as part of the nurturing of discipleship, within the household of faith. We should resist the purely pragmatic approach which involves appealing for funds when a church approaches a financial crisis.

This policy and strategy offers a practical way forward towards addressing issues relating to the stewardship of money.

Context

The context in the Chelmsford Diocese for addressing increased funding through Christian giving is as follows:

- ◆ People new to the Church usually take time to understand their giving response. It takes a while for their *belonging* to turn to *believing* in their journey of faith
- ◆ Opinion among some that increased giving is the responsibility of 'someone else' who should solve the problem – for example the Church Commissioners are still blamed for losing money
- ◆ Some parishes have to contribute more to the parish share than they get back in ministry resource.
- ◆ Reducing numbers of stipendiary clergy, but a welcome increase in lay ministry
- ◆ Parishes that hold back finance because they feel the parish share is not well spent and those that resent the attitude of others who don't play their part in paying their share in full
- ◆ Parishes that have a history of shortfall going back many years. They sometimes seem unconcerned that others are 'carrying' them and they seem comfortable in the knowledge that nobody can force them to pay
- ◆ People caught in the spiral of personal debt. This is a prior responsibility to be addressed first
- ◆ The burden of listed buildings to maintain



- ◆ Many of us fail to make the connection between discipleship and giving.
- ◆ Three quarters of parishes pay their share in full but many of these could be more effective if they also had funds available for new mission initiatives.
- ◆ Members of a subcommittee of the Finance Executive are analysing the funding of parishes in depth to make sure it is fair and reasonable. They are targeting problems in some deaneries and working on rescue packages to assist parishes towards greater financial health.

In addition to Diocesan staff, each of the Episcopal Area Teams has a Mission and Parish Development Adviser to help churches address these issues. Parishes that have developed good practice and where there is a positive attitude to giving, are encouraged to share this with others. In parishes where 'stewardship' is seen to be a 'tired' concept it needs to be refreshed in its rightful place within Kingdom values.

The diocese has subscribed to the TRIO package from the Southwark Diocese which, in a formalised way, seeks to help church people to understand the Church's finances and enhance the level and patterns of giving.

Other resources* may be found at:

www.stewardship.cofe.anglican.org

www.givinggrace.org

www.parishresources.org.uk

www.parishresources.org.uk/rural.htm

www.cofe.anglican.org/info/funding/

Aim

- ◆ The aim of the strategy is to liberate the gifts of our faithful people to resource God's mission through the Church in the Diocese of Chelmsford.

This is a broad aim that encompasses all the work of the Mission and Parish Development Advisory Group as well as the Ministry Advisory Group. Since the giving of money cannot be separated from the giving of ourselves, that overlap is to be expected.

Policy

To inspire Church people to see Christian giving of both money and ourselves as inherent in the life of discipleship. The specific aim is to raise the average giving from just over 3% of disposable income to 5% in line with the General Synod's policy.

The policy of the General Synod:

- ◆ Parishes to seek out and own the vision God has for them in their communities, in order to inspire and unite them in purpose
- ◆ To recognise a sense of thankfulness to God for his generosity to us
- ◆ To challenge ourselves to give in proportion to our income, noting the continued pressure on the finances of the Church and the call to growth
- ◆ To move closer to an initial target for giving to the Church of 5% of disposable income.

The General Synod and Diocese endorse the biblical guideline of the tithe and encourages at least 5% of the tithe to be given through our parish church.

On seeing a widow give two small coins to the temple, Jesus said to his disciples, "All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

Luke 21:4

Paul wrote, "On the first day of each week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with their income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made."

1 Corinthians 16:2



*Paul wrote,
"Each of you
should give as
you have made
up your mind,
not reluctantly
or under
compulsion,
for God loves
a cheerful
giver."*

2 Corinthians 9:7

*Paul wrote,
"Thanks be to
God for his
incredible
gift!"*

2 Corinthians 9:15

Strategy

- ◆ **Help** parishes to find God's vision for themselves. To be outward looking and focus on mission rather than the accounts and to resource that mission
- ◆ **Identify** parishes with good stewardship practice and encourage them to share it with others
- ◆ **Continue** to invest in and resource Advisers at Episcopal Area level
- ◆ **Provide** training opportunities for clergy, readers and others in preaching and teaching on aspects of giving within a theology of grace and discipleship
- ◆ **Make** full use of conferences and training opportunities outside the diocese
- ◆ **Continue** to make the TRIO package available, helping parishes to operate it and pointing parishes to other programmes available to encourage giving (*see **Other resources** on previous page)

- ◆ **Use** the Diocesan Communications Unit to provide targeted, printed material and web-site information to communicate the message and monitor progress annually
- ◆ **Keep** Christian stewardship alive in each parish and help parishes see the difference between Christian giving and fund raising.
- ◆ **Encourage** parishes to review their Giving Strategy each year and support people burdened by debt.

Experience suggests that the parishes who would benefit from the assistance of Advisers are the least likely to make use of them. The strategy will only be a success if Bishops and Archdeacons promote the necessary contacts. The strategy will be seen to work as it contributes to a reduction in the shortfall of parish share payments, as a practical expression of a growth in discipleship.

As the strategy takes effect more and more PCCs will be able to pay their share in full and on time each month from their planned giving and design a development budget for growth.

The Chelmsford Diocesan Vision

- Our passion:** Jesus - proclaiming and living out God's love for all people
- Our aspiration:** To be a transforming presence in every community, open and welcoming to all, serving all
- Our resources:** Faithful people, prayer and worship, visionary leadership, liberating gifts.

Mission and Parish Development Advisory Group

Lead Bishop: The Rt Revd David Hawkins, Bishop of Barking

For more information contact the Episcopal Area Advisers:

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