



DIocese OF TRURO
Diocesan House Kenwyn
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STEWARDSHIP MATTERS

Advent 2009



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Monday - Thursday at Diocesan House

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What is generosity?

At the recent Diocesan Roadshows Bishop Tim spoke about the generous God whom we worship, and how we respond to that generosity. How we respond and what we do has implications for our daily lives, and our relationship with God and other people.

Generosity is giving something valuable to us away. At Christmas we see this most clearly in God giving his precious child to human parents to care for. God's generosity is shown in giving part of Godself to us, knowing both the best and the worst that humankind is capable of. We do nothing to earn or deserve this gift; it is an offering of pure generous love.

We cannot attain this level of self giving generous love, but that should not stop us from aspiring to be more like it.

How do we do this? An important place to start is remembering that generosity is giving something valuable not something I can spare. Giving a surplus jumper to a charity shop is a good thing to do; it means something I can't use might be used by someone else who needs it; it also prevents yet more stuff going into landfill sites. But is it generous to do it? I didn't need it, so I am not giving anything valuable away. Giving my favourite warm jumper to a houseguest from Africa who is cold and not expecting it back is generosity.

From this perspective generosity can be practiced by anyone, not only those with something to spare. Some of the most generous people I have met have had

practically nothing by our standards. In Bangladesh it was clear that people had offered the best they had to their guests. This was sacrificial giving and truly humbling generosity.

Generosity is sharing money, time, skills and resources that you could have used for yourself but chose to give away. It is something that doesn't always come easily. But it is a bit like riding a bicycle: it becomes easier with practice and is something that once learnt is never forgotten. The example of generous parents and grandparents to children is a gift for the future.

Building up the habit of generosity is part of our discipleship, of learning of and from Jesus and other Christians. We can start by asking God to guide us to being his generous children. We can look at our giving, of money and time and hospitality, and our circumstances, and ask how much what we give out reflects God's generosity to us. The Giving for Life materials given to every parish can help us do this.

The habit of generosity is also not something we attain and then forget about. What is generous for us changes in the different seasons of life. This is why regular review of our giving and lifestyle is so important. Personally I review my giving at least once a year, and pray about it. I ask if my attitude to others is open and caring or closed and self serving. I also ask if I really need something before I buy it. The opposite of generosity is having so much we value none of it, but still hold onto it fiercely. That way leads to full hands but empty hearts.

Happy Christmas.



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Avoiding problems in uncertain economic times

Although the talk is of the economy emerging from recession soon, there is still a need to be careful in our stewardship of the resources of the church. Here are eight practical steps that can help prevent problems occurring:

1. Preach and teach regularly on money, stewardship and giving issues.
2. Ensure that you help people connect their giving with the mission and ministry that arises from it.
3. Encourage church members to review their giving at least once a year.
4. Write to your givers once a year to say thank you.
5. Monitor income and spending more closely than usual.
6. If necessary, review your priorities for spending.
7. Have a push on Gift Aid.
8. Check your utility bills.

The Giving for Life resources given to all parishes, and the Diocesan Vision Mission Money? stewardship pack will help with some of these steps.

It is good practice to prepare an annual budget for the church and an updated guide to budgeting is included with the treasurers' mailing.

Pastoral Resource Fund grants

If you are considering applying for a PRF grant to help with your Common Fund commitment please note that a submission without a budget or stewardship plans will not be considered by the PRF Committee. For more details about PRF grants please contact John Caff at Diocesan House on extension 230 or email john.caff@truro.anglican.org

From an accounting point of view please be aware that PRF grants are not income and should not be shown on the accounts or on the Return of Parish Finance form. If you prepare receipts and payments accounts the actual amount of Common Fund paid should be shown on the accounts and the ROPF. This includes payments of arrears as well as payments for the current year's call.

New Year practicalities

The New Year brings that time when the annual accounts of the PCC are prepared.

Here is a brief list of the documents and forms that should be submitted by each parish:

Annual Accounts
Annual Report
Independent Examiners Report on the accounts
Return of Parish Finance Form (ROPF)

Annual Accounts and Report together comprise the Financial Statements.

Guidance about the form of the accounts, the legal requirements for the Annual Report and an example of an Independent Examiners Report can be found in the book "The Charities Act and the PCC 3rd Edition" that was sent to all treasurers towards the end of 2006. Further copies are available from me.

The Return of Parish Finance must include incoming resources and resources expended on general and restricted funds, but should exclude transfers between accounts (e.g. from a deposit account to a current account) and Pastoral Resource Fund Grants.

All Financial Statements and returns must be submitted by **28th May 2010**

Income over £100,000 in 2009?

If your PCC income is going to be over £100,000 for 2009 and you haven't already registered with the Charity Commission please do contact me as soon as possible.

Changes to Gift Aid – claim time limits

Up until now charities have been able to claim Gift Aid on donations made in the previous six years where there is a valid and correctly worded Gift Aid declaration. However after 31 March 2010 claims must be made no later than **four years** after the end of the accounting period to which the claim relates. Now is a good time to review your Gift Aid situation and make any claims for past Gift Aid before the rules change and the chance is lost.