



RENEWING
Ministry

Getting the Giving right in MMAs some guidelines



Diocese
of Derby

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INTRODUCTION

This toolkit material is intended to enable the organisation of congregational Giving within the new MMA structure. While for some churches there will be little new in what follows, especially where the Diocesan **TALKING MONEY Manual** has been used, it is recognised that this may well be a novel concept for many who have been used to old ways of fundraising and to ad hoc Free Will Offering schemes.

MMA's are a new concept. They are about one church with, in most cases, a number of congregations. New situations call for new cultures, new ways of doing things, change and firm leadership. Vision, discernment, cohesion and direction are the proper concerns of leadership and ought to inform the strategies of our MMA's, not least in the area of teaching about Giving and enabling by it a greater commitment to personal responsibility in resourcing, i.e., paying for our missionary endeavour. Renewing Ministry will have failed if all we have is just another version of just 'carrying on as normal' – whatever that means! The vision of Renewing Ministry will be made or broken by the wholehearted commitment of clergy and congregations, to the working out of our core values in relationship to our Lord's missionary imperative – "Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age" (Matthew 28: The Message version)

Investment in the organisation and equipping of such matters will be vital to the successful working of an MMA as envisioned in Renewing Ministry.

GETTING GOING – A PLAN OF ACTION

MMA's are about imagining a new way of being church where gifts are shared and deployed across territorial, parochial boundaries for the benefit of all. We are seeking to become a church which is more to do with its corporate life than with territory.

On the face of it Renewing Ministry is about creating a more efficient church but now with fewer resources – clergy and finance. It is being implemented at a time when there is probably greater ministry potential than ever before in recent history, and therein lies the greatest hope for success. However, efficiency is not the end; the end is effectiveness. We want to be a more effective church. That means people being transformed by the power of God in the presence of Christ, people learning to live in a growing relationship with God through the crucified, redeeming, risen and ascended Jesus, and seeking by how they are to be demonstration models of God's grace – its verifying data!.

Renewing Ministry seeks to put before us the need to find structures fit for purpose. We hear it condemned already in some quarters for seeking to turn clergy and lay leaders into Managers, as though that were a dirty word. To manage is simply to seek to organise with purpose. Surely we all ought to be about that task

Renewing Ministry, seeks to engage with questions of the delivery and **resourcing** of ministry (i.e. paying for it!) in the future in the light of further anticipated restraints on numbers of stipendiary clergy and a supposed reluctance on the part of congregations to provide increased funding locally. Experience in many churches is that reluctance diminishes in direct proportion to the local sense of purpose. Some may see the project as yet more evidence of problems and panic. We believe it is actually a healthy sign of the vitality of the church and an indication of God's hand in his evolving purpose. It is evidence that the church is able to be an instrument not just of change but of transformation. The present situation creates a climate of new possibilities and less dysfunctionality. It is about pioneering in different communities more effective ways of 'being church', even new ways, all of which are valid and equally acceptable among the MMA congregations. However, in seeking to achieve that, we face the mighty task of shifting congregational culture. This remains a major challenge in the area of congregational Giving.

It is about **Ministry for Mission**. (See Toolkit Paper 11 Developing the Ministry Team in a MMA). It is ministry on purpose, ministry to enable the building up of the Body of Christ as a company of disciples with a mission.). We remember that God is a God of Mission. He is also a God of surprises. Building his church is His work. Remember the Church is God's idea; a community of those called out and dearly loved. It is born of His initiative. With such an understanding we begin to re-imagine our Giving as a privileged contribution to making Jesus' plan for us expressed in his commission a reality, rather than just an irksome chore.

As you think about a strategy for giving in your MMA, it is suggested that you appoint a **Christian Giving Adviser**. This would need to be someone with a clear enthusiasm for Christian Giving, who would need to be supported by a small group to enable the better teaching of and challenge to the various congregations which will make up the church in the MMA.

SOME PRINCIPLES

(Much of what follows can be found in *Talking Money, Christian Disciples learning together*, a Christian Giving Manual produced by the Diocese of Derby, published 2000, and revised in 2006. Details from the CDDM Office, Church House)

At a local Funfair, the strong man challenged all comers to squeeze water out of a sponge after he had done so. Five pounds would go to anyone who succeeded. Young blades queued up to have a go. Each paid his 20p and each failed, with monotonous regularity, to extract so much as a single drop. Then a man of mature years came up, paid his 20p and squeezed. Out came a fair amount of water! The strong man was amazed. "How did you do that?" he asked. "Well", said the man, "I've been a church treasurer for many years..." Enough said!

Stewardship and the area of teaching about Giving are often seen as a difficult ministry. For many clergy and treasurers in particular they are seen as a 'can of worms' and an area likely to cause upset. Part of the problem is that the issue is often dealt with in isolation when there is a sudden crisis of finance, whereas it needs to be placed properly within the whole context of the vision and strategy of the local church

We believe God is calling us to growth, to the building of his kingdom in terms of both the deepening of our faith and the seeking to serve others. We are essentially in the church growth business. We are not simply about keeping the institution going but about enabling the creation of a context for Kingdom people. We are not really in the business of preserving institutional piety but that of creating, under the Holy Spirit, a context and a people for the proclamation of the Gospel. Essential to growth is the encouragement to focus on purpose and direction. We have in our training programme focussed much on the need for discernment in this area and the need for a united approach from all the constituent congregations of the MMA. Of course the growth of which we speak cannot be produced by humans; it is God's doing. It is always a sovereign act of God. However we have our part to play. Don't ask what will make a church grow but rather, what keeps it from growing? For growth can so easily be hindered by us. Often lack of growth indicates an unhealthy situation, even a disease. Church growth is the natural result of church health. And church health is indicated by the extent of our desire to bring our lives under the sovereign rule of God. Does God rule for us?

There are no quick, slick solutions to the matter of church finance. In our new MMAs the church is a substantial 'organisation' which incurs considerable costs in terms of stipendiary ministry, buildings, maintenance and mission. A large proportion of parishes in the past have been inadequately resourced; as the pattern of lurching from one crisis to another is perpetuated. This is because many, even the majority, of committed members have not given realistic consideration and thought to their giving or to the vision for mission. People are not intentionally mean about giving. It is just not something many have thought about properly because they have not had to. Many of the assumptions by which giving is undertaken have remained unchallenged. This omission needs to be remedied.

The essential ingredient is Vision. Vision is the picture you have of a preferred future. We need to understand that the foundations for growth are laid by clarifying exactly why the church exists, what are its core values, and what it is supposed to do – morale and mission go together. It is important for each church to ask, "What are we trying to achieve and why?" And, "How do we resource that aspiration and ambition?"

Money is usually neither the problem nor the solution. The problem is often precisely in this area of perception and understanding. The solution will be found in addressing these areas.

Finance follows vision – rarely will it be vice versa

There is a world of difference between teaching about giving and asking for money. Responsible church members will give anyway but if all they are asked to do is to support the usual church expenses, or if they feel that aims and priorities have not been identified, there is a strong chance that they will give more to other causes which seem to have clearer aims. (General Synod Report – Receiving and Giving 1990).

The overriding principle will be that 'it is the responsibility of God's people to resource God's work' with time, personal gifts and FINANCE.

- The matter of giving to resource God's work is **primarily a concern for the household of faith.**
- it is the responsibility of those who are regular members to give because they are the ones who understand and own the vision and are prepared to support it financially. Part of that vision must be to welcome visitors, and not push collecting plates at them!
- The issue is one of **resourcing mission not merely 'balancing the books'**. The mission is not so much to get more believers into church as to have fewer unbelievers in the parish! God expects faithfulness and fruitfulness. A willingness to take risks will require faith and the desire to accomplish as much as is possible with the resources available. A 'balance the books', accountancy model on its own leads very quickly to questions like, "Where can we cut back?" "What savings can we make?" There is a sense, too, in which, when we seek to resource the mission, we will never have enough! God is always calling us much further than our limited vision can conceive! It must also be said that it is a fact that most of the MMA Share raised locally is to pay for ministry. It does not take long to realise thus that mission and ministry have some connection, a fact which raises issues about the focus and direction of local ministry and leadership!
- **Giving is an integral dimension of being a disciple.** A disciple is always a 'learner'. The word –discipulus means a pupil. One question which this raises is, "Who is responsible for teaching disciples or seeing that they are taught?" The answer has to be

the incumbent as leader. Therefore it is a 'cop out' to say, "The vicar shouldn't talk about money". Many clergy feel that in talking about money they are being asked to sing for their supper. As it happens, in most parishes the Vicar is often among the highest Givers – so the vicar is already paying for the Starter him/herself!!).

THE OVERALL AIMS

Here are five aims that a MMA could adopt that can be agreed and regularly reviewed:

- To create (or renew) the local mechanism for laying a proper ongoing and lasting foundation for the financial resourcing of the local church's mission.
- To increase substantially the amounts given by the committed – from token to proportionate giving.
- To reduce the dependence on outside funding and fundraising events to finance the ordinary expenditure of the local MMA.
- To inform the local MMA about its financing – its costs and how they are met.
- To involve as many of the local congregation as possible in a serious facing up to the issue as part of their growth as disciples rather than merely to meet a financial crisis - actual or potential.

THE STRATEGY

To achieve the above aims, the following strategies could be used:

- To underline the responsibility of the committed to resource the Church's mission
- To teach the principles of Christian Giving within the context of mission.
- To encourage a proper, biblical approach to personal giving.
- To enable an informed decision about giving.
- To challenge and give regular opportunity for annual renewal of Giving commitment.
- MMA based teaching undertaken locally within an organised and timetabled programme and as part of a Diocesan-wide Project.
- The setting up of a locally acceptable mechanism for committed giving, namely a challenge to actual pledging of Giving within the context of worship.
- The promotion of tax efficient giving in line with the latest Gift Aid Regulations.
- The inclusion of reports from the Adviser in MMA Council meetings on a regular basis.

Some of these strategies can be delivered as notices or part of the preaching slot in Sunday worship, and some can be delivered through shared leaflets distributed in the churches of the MMA. In all this there is a real sense in which stewardship in the whole area of our Christian giving equals discipleship.

SOME PRACTICALITIES

1. A Giving Adviser

The MMA Council will need to make a decision in principle to seek and appoint a **CHRISTIAN GIVING ADVISER** who will gather around him or her a small supportive group to think, discern, plan and communicate to the congregations which make up the church in the MMA. Furthermore a decision has to be made to have a coherent and united approach within the whole MMA.

The **ADVISER** will be someone who has learnt **the importance of Biblically informed giving and is committed** to it. Hopefully such a person will be keen to communicate that in practical ways within the MMA. The Adviser may not necessarily be the Treasurer. That possibility is not precluded but is advised against. S/he may find it useful for his/her voice to be heard within the MMA Finance group, if such exists, in order to inform, brief and be briefed. The role has a basic educational function, essential if cultures are to be changed and new ways of resourcing based on realistic giving are to be imagined.

2. Talking Money

The teaching and study material with its various introductory materials in **TALKING MONEY** is commended as an introduction to the material and the MMA is encouraged to timetable such a course into its programme at an early opportunity. Study Materials for individuals have now been added to the resources together with a booklet entitled **Congregations resourcing MMAs**

3. Help Available

Advice is available from the Mission and Ministry Development Adviser and the North and South Christian Giving advisers, whose details are in the Diocesan Directory. Training is also available periodically via the National Stewardship Committee and the National Stewardship Officer, Dr John Preston. The oversight of the Diocesan Christian Giving Advisers is a part of the Council for Developing Discipleship and Ministry with its Training and Development Team. It is separate from the Board of Finance though the Development Officer has regular access to that Board.

Hopefully MMA Advisers will want to get together from time to time for mutual support, story sharing and training. Such meetings will be facilitated by the Area Giving Advisers.

SO, LET'S GET GOING WITH THE FIRST STEP. APPOINT A LOCAL MMA ADVISER!!!