

The Common Fund provides a mechanism for helping every parish in our Diocese to flourish so that every parish can bear witness to Christ's presence in their community. There are parishes, often in some of the areas of greatest need, which may never be able to 'pay their way' in real terms. That is, the contributions these parishes are asked to make to the Common Fund is less than the cost of the support they receive in the form of stipendiary clergy. Yet these parishes are engaged, often against the odds, in bearing witness to Christ's presence in their communities. The Common Fund ensures that these parishes receive the support they need to flourish. And many parishes are glad to make their contributions— giving more than they receive – so that every parish in our Diocese can bear witness to Christ's presence.

But is the generosity of parishes only to be expressed through their contributions to the Common Fund? How might generosity be expressed through the offering between parishes of time and talents? If my parish is blessed with an abundance of ministers or teachers or leaders or evangelists, how might my parish express generosity to a parish lacking such people so that it can flourish and bear witness to Christ's presence in its community?

Our Common Fund Prayer

God our Father, make us to think more of what we can give to life and less of what we can get out of it. May we be mindful that we hold our gifts, our talents, our possessions, our life itself, in trust for you and the service of all people. Save us from thinking only of our own needs and desires; and help us to remember that it is more blessed to give than receive, according to the teaching of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Information & resources

We have a wide range of resources to help parishes review planned giving. For more information, please contact the Archdeacons or the Parish Support Office.

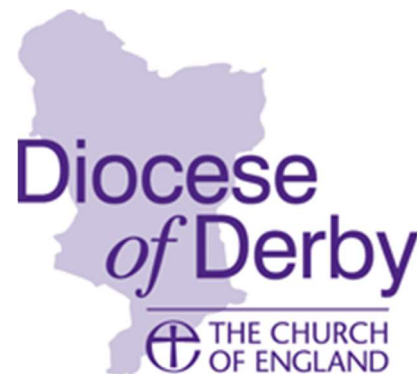
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Christ's presence in every community

Growing • Outward Facing • Learning • Healthy



Living generously



The Common Fund Generosity & Neighbours: a theological reflection

Generosity and Neighbours

If there is among you anyone in need, a member of your community in any of your towns within the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted towards your needy neighbour. You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need, whatever it may be. Give liberally and be ungrudging when you do so, for on this account the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, 'Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbour in your land.'

Deuteronomy 15.7, 8, 10, 11

The people of Israel are commanded to be **generous to their 'poor and needy' neighbours**. Their generosity is to be characterised by **open-handedness**, by **willingness**, and by **liberality**. Being hard-hearted, being tight-fisted, or being grudging are not the characteristics of a generous person.



Putting it personally, I am commanded to love **my neighbour**: just as I seek to flourish, so I should want to see my neighbour flourish; **my neighbour's need is my concern**. The needs of people about whom I might know very little but who, with me, are part of the Body of Christ, are my concerns. Generosity is demanded of me as a Christian.

At the offertory I often hear the words, 'All things come from you, and of your own do we give you'. But how generous am I expected to be, and to whom should I be generous? What might it mean to give everything back to God?

I give my time, my talents, and my tithe (i.e., my money) to my parish. Yet am I really being **generous**? Is giving my time, my talents, and my tithe for something from which I will benefit really generosity at all?



Is my giving not enlightened self-interest to keep my parish's 'show' 'on the road'? Would I be as ready to give my time, my talents, and my tithe to support another parish's 'show'? Where is the sense of mutual flourishing, of wanting the best for other people – individuals, churches, communities – and not just for myself?

To what extent have my attitudes and my behaviours become those of a **consumer**? To what extent have my horizons become limited to the boundaries of my parish? And in an era of austerity with its emphasis on prudence and caution, have I almost stopped believing in God, or at least the God who loves all humankind generously and extravagantly?

