

Money is too tight for our mission

Q: WE spend so much on parish share and repairing buildings that we have nothing left for mission.

A: It can be frustrating when the sums only just add up, and your parish is forever just 'getting by' each year. It means that big ideas about making a difference to your community or reaching out to new people can just dissipate as you deal with urgent fundraising.

That's one of the reasons why we suggest seeking to embed effective stewardship practices into our parish life. This means there is regular preaching and teaching on issues of stewardship so that we grow as disciples of Christ.

This would include running a stewardship programme every three or four years, and continuing to develop a generous faith through annual renewal services in the intervening years. It is also important that we thank all individuals who regularly support our churches.

A well-planned stewardship programme is a way of thinking

frequently asked questions

Our Archdeaconry consultations gave you a chance to ask staff from our four central diocesan sections questions about their work. Those questions were noted down and are the basis of this new Pompey Chimes feature – in which we try to answer questions you're asking.

about the bigger picture. We look at the purpose of your church – is it just about preventing historic buildings from falling down, or is it more about promoting genuine faith in your area?

We look at the resources in your congregation already – people's time, talents and expertise, which they are often incredibly generous with. And we look at what might be the best ways to inspire people to give toward your ultimate goals of transforming and improving lives in your community.

What we often discover is that such inspiration unlocks all sorts of potential resources within your parish. That includes better use of your buildings, better

engagement with your local community, different ideas about fund-raising, and more sacrificial giving from congregation members who want to support that work.

We have some great examples from around the diocese where parishes, which have assumed they can't stretch their resources any further, suddenly discover that a stewardship programme pays dividends.

We are also discovering that the Parish Giving Scheme, which we are rolling out to all our parishes and involves worshippers donating by direct debit, encourages people to review their levels of giving and to increase what they give if their

own income rises.

It's worth remembering as well that the parish share payments you pay go towards paying the stipend, housing costs and pensions of your clergy – and that most of our parishes actually receive more in ministry than they pay in parish share. So your parish share is already being used to fund mission and ministry around the diocese.

Q: Should there be better promotion of 10 per cent tithing rather than giving of 5 per cent of our income?

A: The Biblical principle of tithing is an important one that helps us to understand how our giving relates to our faith. The idea of giving the 'first fruits' to God first involves looking at our regular income and deciding to give away a certain percentage for God's work before we do anything else.

Many of our parishes apply this principle to their parish income – they may give away 10 per cent to Christian charities and mission organisations each year before spending any of it.

The actual percentage that individuals choose to give is, in

some ways, less important than the principle – that God blesses us with money and resources, and we hold lightly to them. But it is certainly true that 10 per cent is mentioned in the Bible, whereas the average amount given to our churches is less than three per cent of people's incomes.

What is also true is that Christians who give money to the Church are also much more likely to give to one-off good causes, to local community organisations or regularly to charity. The General Synod therefore recommended that giving five per cent of our income to the Church was a reasonable suggestion, and five per cent to other kingdom-building causes.

Working towards giving five per cent of our income to the work of the Church in this area, would, of course, enable our parishes to do so much more!

If you have further questions about Christian stewardship, please contact stewardship adviser Victoria James on 023-9289 9665 or victoria.james@portsmouth.anglican.org or see www.portsmouth.anglican.org/stewardship.



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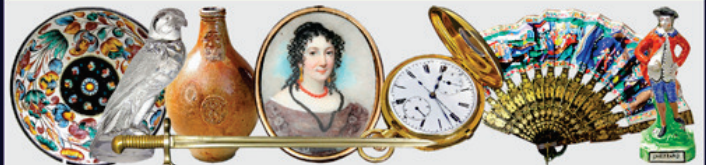
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