

## Giving brings blessing

We cannot make spiritual revival happen. But when we give God all he desires he pours out his blessings on us. As the prophet Malachi says:

*'Test me and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room for it'*

Christian giving is our natural response to God's generosity. As we say in the Communion service:

*'Yours, Lord, is the greatness...for everything in heaven and earth is yours. All things come from you, and of your own do we give you'*

Strictly speaking, we are not giving, we are releasing for God's service what is already his.

## Our Giving to God's Church

**What is it for?** - to fund its mission

- to pay for sufficient parish clergy to support mission and ministry across the diocese.
- provide training in every deanery for lay ministers to share pastoral and mission work with the clergy
- employ specialists to work with young people and assist parishes with projects in the community.

Greater parish giving is needed now because:

- The pensions "time bomb" greatly reduced the subsidy paid by the Church Commissioners to support clergy stipends.

- All "Parish Share" giving now goes to clergy stipends. We can only have what we pay for.

To raise the average weekly giving of each person by a third would meet our vision.

## What are we giving at present?

Whilst recognising the generosity of many Church members, a large number still give £1 a week or less. In terms of the percentage of personal income given, we in Carlisle Diocese have the lowest rate in the Church of England (1.7%). Suppose those who give £1 gave instead £5 per week; and those who can afford it gave more, our vision would be realised.

Research shows, worryingly, that in each church there are a few very generous people, and a lot of others who rely on them.

## How should we give?

- **generously** - As St. Paul says *'The point is this: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully'*

The more generous we are, the more we shall be set free from being possessed by our own possessions.

- **cheerfully** - as St. Paul continues *'Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver'* (2Cor 9)  
Giving is a privilege - not a tax. But it is a very

personal thing and it is up to each of us to decide what is right.

- **sacrificially**

God looks not so much at the sum we give but at how much it costs us and what remains to us.

A useful comparison can be made with what we spend in a year on choices like holidays, meals out or leisure pursuits. How we spend our money shows what we value most.

Gift Aid is easy and adds nearly one third to most gifts. Many Christians tithe their real income, giving a tenth (10%) to God: some to their church and some to other causes.

Of course, all of us have many commitments but many Christians say that giving God priority brings order to other responsibilities.

## What difference will it make?

A substantial increase in giving will lead to vigorous growth:

- joyful and more confident spiritual lives
- local churches being invigorated with sufficient resources to pay all expenses.
- new projects, eg. with young people
- a sense of the presence of God with his Church

Revival has to touch our wallets. What we give and how we give it speaks volumes about our walk with God.

### Healthy Churches Exercise

Two marks of a healthy church were found to be weak in most of our churches.

- they needed to be more energised by faith.
- they were weak on seeking to know what God wants.

There is no better way for faith to grow than to increase our giving. And where better to start seeking what God wants than in prayer about our personal giving?

### The Vision

**To discover in our churches the joy and blessings of generous giving to God's mission.**

- Pay for the clergy we need
- Be able to develop new work eg. with young people or community projects
- Support Church schools
- Train lay ministers

### What next?

- **Resources** : Geoff Hine, Finance Resources Officer, can be contacted for any information through Church House, 01228 522573. He can help with researching and applying for grants for particular projects.
- **Ideas for Church education**  
Once a year give a clear explanation to the whole congregation about Church Finances - parish and diocesan. The absence of clear information leads to mistaken attitudes being assumed.
- Encourage ownership of Stewardship Renewal (or your equivalent). It can be helpful to build a well-briefed team in the parish. Stewardship needs to feature in courses in Christian discipleship.
- **My commitment - 'I want to be part of the revival in giving'**  
Exciting opportunities lie ahead of us as a diocese. To play your part please contact your church treasurer or the Finance Resources Officer - see above
- **Celebration and Thanksgiving**  
As St. Paul did, celebrate the generosity of your church and its members. Thank the congregation for all their work
- **Time and Talents**  
Don't be distracted from the challenge to people's purses by these – but don't forget them either! They too are essential for the life of the Church.

### Revival in our Giving

Generous  
Cheerful  
Sacrificial  
Committed  
Planned  
Responsible  
Forward-looking  
Gift-Aided