



THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

DIOCESE OF ST ALBANS

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Geoff Fletcher writes:

Before I became Diocesan Stewardship Development Officer I had a conversation with a colleague from another Diocese in which he said that the role in Stewardship Adviser was the 'best one in the Diocesan Office'. Having enjoyed visits to over 100 PCCs and other church committees, I agree with that colleague – rather than the dozens of people who have commiserated with me over how difficult it is to engage with congregations in the area of giving! I am excited at the opportunities in mission and service through our church communities – and therefore I'm excited when we see congregations responding in gratitude to God's generosity, and in resourcing His work in our parishes and beyond.

My encouragement to PCCs and other groups thinking of a stewardship initiative is to consider 5 key elements:

1. Vision
 - ensuring that stewardship is linked to a positive view of church focus and mission.
2. Information
 - providing information to build confidence of donors that time and money given to parish work is a thoroughly worthwhile focus for giving.
3. Spirituality
 - recognising that our faith is a fundamental starting point for a life of giving.
4. Teaching
 - recognising that with faith as a starting point, there is then a lifetime of teaching and learning to be built upon in ongoing discipleship.
5. Acknowledgement / Administration
 - ensuring we do say a regular and positive 'thank you' to all our planned givers.
 - ensuring we build best practice for our administrative and accounting processes (including maximising recovering of Gift Aid tax recoverable).

There are some excellent materials available to parishes thinking about stewardship, and resourcing God's work, and many of these can be accessed from this website:

Giving in Grace (www.givinginrace.org) is a large website and Bishop Christopher St Albans has commented:

- 'Giving in Grace' is a programme of teaching to encourage the knowledge and practice of Christian giving as an act of worship and thanksgiving. Having seen the extensive resources available for preaching and group work as well as more practical aspects on communication to church members, I believe it will be a wonderful asset for churches wanting to lift the whole emphasis of stewardship as an aspect of our spiritual journey in Christian discipleship.
- The encouragement of giving to God's work as worship, as thanksgiving, and not merely to provide the next pound towards the electricity bill, is so relevant for us all, and the practical application to recognise members of our congregations being at different stages of Christian life and practice seems absolutely appropriate.

Diocesan Board for Christian Development

Holywell Lodge 41 Holywell Hill St Albans Herts AL1 1HE www.stalbans.anglican.org

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- We are indebted to all those in the Diocese of Liverpool who have worked to produce this wealth of material. Its focus is entirely relevant to our own initiative 'Vision for Action', with its aim for stewardship to 'strengthen the commitment to stewardship amongst clergy and laity in order to further the mission of the church'; and I commend its use throughout our Diocese.

Parish Resources (www.parishresources.org.uk) has preaching / teaching and other material to support clergy / treasurers / stewardship and Gift Aid reps. In particular, Funding Guides for churches actively involved in fund-raising and the Rural Churches Stewardship Toolkit may be of special relevance.

I have access to other materials and am very keen to talk with groups thinking of setting up a stewardship initiative.

Meantime please explore the stewardship material via this website and do get in touch over Stewardship programmes, Gift Aid, Fund-raising, etc. etc. etc. – I'll be very happy to try to help with appropriate material for each parish situation.

I look forward to working with you.

Best wishes

Geoff Fletcher

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