

Generous giving of our Expertise

One of the joys of being a part of God's family is that he has blessed us all with different skills and abilities, personalities and gifts. St Paul describes this as being part of the body in 1 Corinthians, chapter 12 – "Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. (v12,27)"

Those gifts and abilities can be contributed to our life together as a church, but they can also be given in all sorts of areas outside of the church.



Reflect: What gifts, expertise and abilities has the Holy Spirit given you? How are you contributing these? How might you give these?

If we are to live generously, we will be called into many aspects of giving – time, money, hospitality, and more. So four questions to reflect on our generosity:

- L Labour** – in what ways am I giving my time and my labour, whether paid or unpaid?
- I Interactions** – am I generous in the small things in life, my daily interactions with other people?
- F Finance** – when I set my giving in the context of my income, is the percentage I'm giving away a realistic amount?
- E Expertise** – In what ways do I share the skills, gifts and experience I've been given to benefit others and the Church?

Spend some time reflecting on these, and pray that the Spirit would help you focus on the next step for you in living generously.

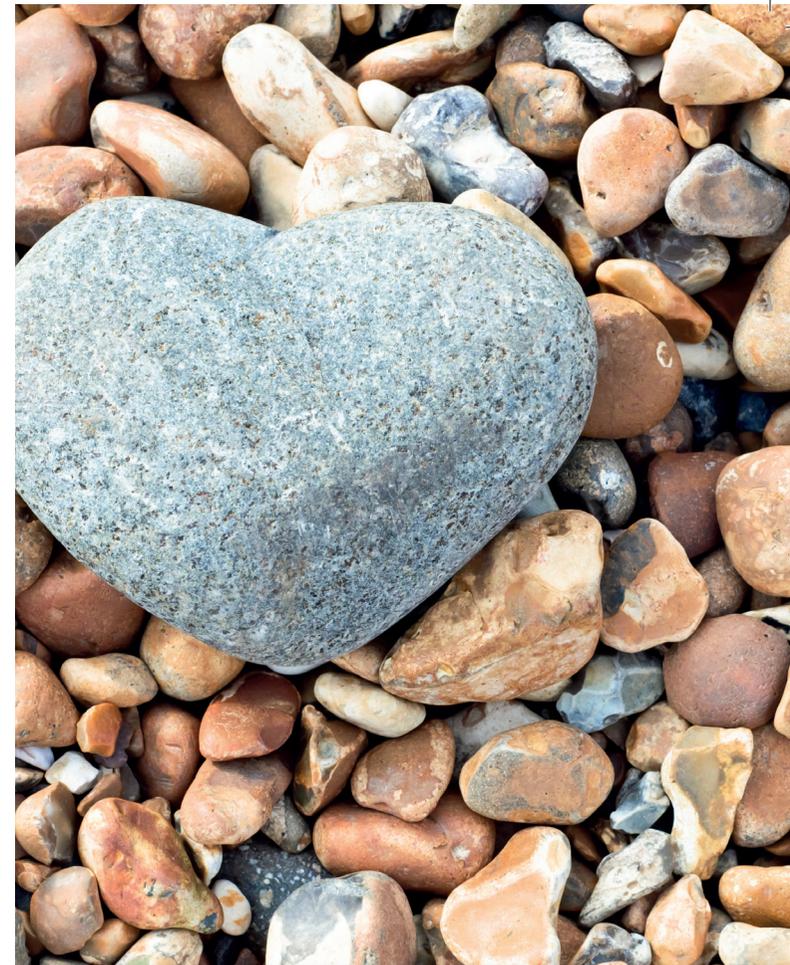
"Dearest Lord, teach me to be generous; teach me to serve you as you deserve; to give and not to count the cost."

St Ignatius of Loyola (1491 - 1556)



National
Stewardship Team

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 THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

GIVING
FOR LIFE

LIVING A GENEROUS
LIFE

Generous giving of our Labour

The challenge to give generously is much wider than money. Christians seek to focus their whole lives on serving God, and we may be called to serve by giving our labour (our time, skills and experience), whether that is full-time or part-time work, or in a voluntary role.

It may well be that we're called to serve in contexts other than the church – as teachers, medical professionals, carers or in many other professions. Outside of paid work, Church members provide a significant proportion of volunteering in the UK – that enables so many of our charities and community groups to function. As we give of our labour, whether in the church or outside of it, many also find that they too are blessed.



Reflect: In the area of giving of time and labour, where are you currently serving God? Might he be calling you to serve differently?

Generous in our Interactions

Sometimes it's easier to be generous in the large things, when we might take time to consider and pray through our response.

As we live out our lives moment by moment, we can be on auto-pilot, with our instincts and values governing our interactions with the people and situations we encounter. Do they lead to us being generous drivers or courteous pedestrians? When we shop, do we consider being generous to those who have made or sell the goods we buy – buying fairtrade for example, or not always seeking the lowest possible price. Do we take the opportunity to brighten peoples lives with a smile or a kind word?



Reflect: For a day or two, note where your instincts have led you – to generosity or to be somewhat self-centred. You might pray that the Holy Spirit would help you to be generous in the daily interactions of life.

Generosity with our Finances

Whether we're living comfortably, or struggling to get by, we're called to give financially too. How much we are able to give will clearly vary, but it is often those on the lowest incomes who are the most sacrificial of givers. As Christians, the more we are blessed with, the more we are called to give away.

In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul encourages them to 'excel in the grace of giving' in talking about the collection for the needy church in Jerusalem (2 Cor 8:1-15). This means that our financial giving needs to be a heart response as well as a head decision. As with all aspects of our giving, we are challenged to give freely and joyfully in response to the love, grace and mercy we have received from the Lord.



Reflect: Take stock of your own financial giving. You might like to note your regular giving, and the one-off gifts that you've made recently. Pause to pray about the level of your generosity in relation to your income.