



Vision, mission and money

It goes without saying that a vision of a Diocese as a community of communities, affirming both the importance of the local and the catholicity of the world-wide Church should not just be theoretical. It affects something as basic and fundamental as our money, the way we get it and the way we spend it. It is the philosophy for instance behind the practice of Parish Share. At one level it can be seen as a financial necessity or a monetary procedure, but there is a deep theological principle at stake in promoting such a practice. What we have, we have in common, and this is never truer than when we are speaking about the mission of the Church. In many respects Parish Share is actually a mission fund, to which, through personal giving, we can all contribute - those with more contribute to the mission of the church along with those who have less. This is important because it is so easy to get distracted by the observation that the provision of stipendiary clergy is declining and as a result to bemoan the situation that "we are paying more for less." But Parish Share is not a contribution to buy a bit of a stipend; it is a pooling of resources to enable the mission of the Church to flourish and to respond to changing circumstances. It is Biblically-based on Acts 4: 32 onwards, where we hear that everything was held in common, with benefactors laying at the feet of the Apostles, the proceeds of their property sales. So Parish Share does what it says on the tin, where we all attempt to give sacrificially for the good of the whole and our giving is always in response to God's overwhelming generosity.

This remains the rationale of our Parish Share system –

- Parish Share is not a contribution to buy a bit of a stipend; it is a pooling of resources to enable the mission of the Church to flourish and to respond to changing circumstances.

First Principles

The essential understanding that our giving is always in response to God's overwhelming love, is a constant Biblical theme.



A quote from the first letter of St John makes this point clearly:-

"Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God."
"God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another."

All our giving, whether as individuals, PCCs or as a Diocese, stems from this one fact – that God first loved us.

First Church

The best pictures of this overflowing generosity in the early Church are to be found in St Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9, and in The Acts of the Apostles. There, we read:

"Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need." (Acts 4: 32–35)



Conclusions

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First Principles gives us our aim:

"Since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another."

First Church gives us our objectives:

"Everything they owned was held in common"

"and it was distributed to each as any had need."

None of this has changed between then and today, in both good times and bad.

Thank you! - to all our churches for their on-going generosity and support and thanks be to God for his many blessings poured out upon his work in this diocese and its parishes.

A copy of this article can be found on the Parish Stewardship & Resources pages at www.llandaff.org

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