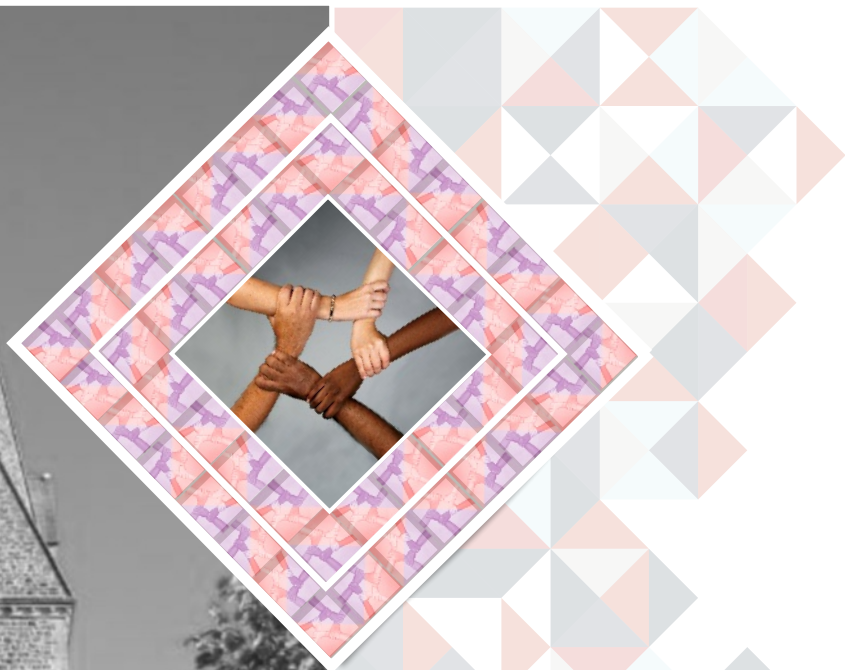




We're all in this

Together

Our renewal of

Giving

Christ Church with St. Mary's

www.christchurchswindon.co.uk

“Crisis—what crisis?”

The three words above helped bring down the Labour government in 1979, even though the man generally thought to have uttered them - Jim Callaghan - did not in fact do so.

But *The Sun* journalist who made up that headline perfectly captured the impression of a government unaware of a very serious state of affairs which had sneaked up on it. The government was felt to be asleep at the wheel.

So – is there a crisis in the Swindon Deanery?

It is not all doom and gloom. When we compare 2008 with 2011, we see that 22 of the 28 parishes in our deanery actually increased their pledge. And they did it in the middle of a recession. That is something to celebrate.

However, during the same period the remaining churches reduced their pledge. So we had a total 2% decrease in pledged giving across Swindon between 2008 and 2011.

We decreased our pledge by 8 %

For many years Swindon had the reputation of being a place where sacrificial and generous giving was practised. Christ Church with St. Mary's was very much part of that.

We need to re-capture that spirit of generosity. Financial decline is not sustainable in the long term.



'Of course, he may just have fallen off the roof

Why does it matter?

The Church exists on two levels.

On one level, it is the people for whom Christ died.

It is the members of his mystical body.

It is the glorious company of the redeemed.

On another level, it is a human organisation, with all the unavoidable financial constraints involved in that.

There are many obvious differences between Christ Church and Comet, St John's and Jessop's or St Mark's and HMV.

We have a *different head* - Jesus Christ.

We have a *different approach* - servant leadership.

We have a *different power* - the Holy Spirit

We have a *different motivation* - agape love.

But when it comes to the practical business of balancing our books the same rules apply to us as they do to everybody else. And that means by the end of the year, we all either end up in the red or the black.

We are weathering a recession. Who can forget it?

But churches have proved time and time again that when our members are committed to giving that is both regular and sacrificial, God can do amazing things.

We want every church to enter into that kind of giving in 2013.



'I give when I feel moved by the Holy Spirit the last time was when England won the World Cup!'

But we're a church!

Sometimes people talk as if the Church were somehow exempt from the financial laws that apply to the rest of the country.

There is almost a sense that, if you put "St." in front of the name of your organisation, you can forget about worldly issues like income and expenditure.

Imagine how that would work in other organisations. You don't get a meal in *McDonalds* unless you pay for it. But what if they called themselves *St. McDonalds*? In that case, we could pay for that Big Mac - or just not bother.

Or if *Swindon Town Football Club* was known as *St. Swindon Town* you could watch them play for free because it wouldn't matter if you didn't buy a ticket.

It is all nonsense of course. But although we would never think like that in any other area of life, somehow it seems quite natural for people to think like that when it comes to the Church.

"Of course it would be good to give to Christ Church with St. Mary's. But it's not essential. We will survive. It's God's church. And anyway, our message is about love, not money!"

It might sound spiritual—but it's really not!

If our treasurer were to send a letter to the gas company, telling them that the PCC hasn't actually got any money for the bill, but they can be sure of the love of the whole congregation — we'd be sitting in the cold next week!



'Ronald McDonald will provide ...'

Where does our income come from?

In Germany, a church tax has traditionally been levied on the general population. Although this practice is changing, the Church in Germany still receives a huge amount from the government for its work, for the salaries of its clergy and for its buildings.

Unfortunately — or possibly fortunately? — the Church of England is not in that position. We receive nothing from the government whatsoever.

- No clergy salaries are paid.
- No pastoral training is provided.
- No church buildings are maintained.

The National Church has investments which go towards clergy salaries, housing and pensions.

Some older dioceses have large historic resources which produce income. Bristol does not have so many of these.

What does all this amount to?

Many people are still under the impression that the government supports the Church. We can understand people outside the Church picking up that false impression.

But we, ourselves, should appreciate the true position.

If the Church is to be supported financially, God's people must rise to the challenge. We cannot ask those outside the church to do it for us.



'Maybe they'll strike oil ...'

Planned giving

There are two kinds of giving — planned and unplanned.

If I see my giving to God as something that takes place after every other expenditure has been met, my order of priorities will look like something like this:

- Rent or mortgage.
- Food.
- Clothing
- Car
- Entertainment
- Holidays
- Christian Giving

Then there is the person whose list runs in this order:

- Christian Giving
- Rent or mortgage.
- Food.
- Clothing
- Car
- Entertainment
- Holidays



'That was a great sermon on Giving, Simon - I'm going to double my pledge!'

'So we can expect another £1 a year from you then Peter?'

Which are you?

Most of us would like to be the latter person but all too often we know in our hearts we are the former.

The Church whose members adopt the first view will always struggle financially. When our members adopt the second view money will never be a hindrance to God's work.

Caring and challenging

Church leaders constantly walk a tight rope.

On the one hand we would do anything rather than put pressure on those in a difficult financial situation.

It is not our intention to create hardship.

There may be someone whose spouse is not a believer. That spouse may not be happy to see family income going to the church.

It is not our intention to cause family disharmony.

However, we must also teach that Jesus is Lord. The Scripture defines true believers as “those who confess that Jesus Christ is Lord with their lips and believe it in their hearts”. If Jesus is Lord, only one order of priorities is possible.

There may, on occasions, be times when we are obliged to turn the order upside down. But they should be rare. And we should restore the original order as soon as we possibly can – putting God’s work at the top and not the bottom of our financial priorities.



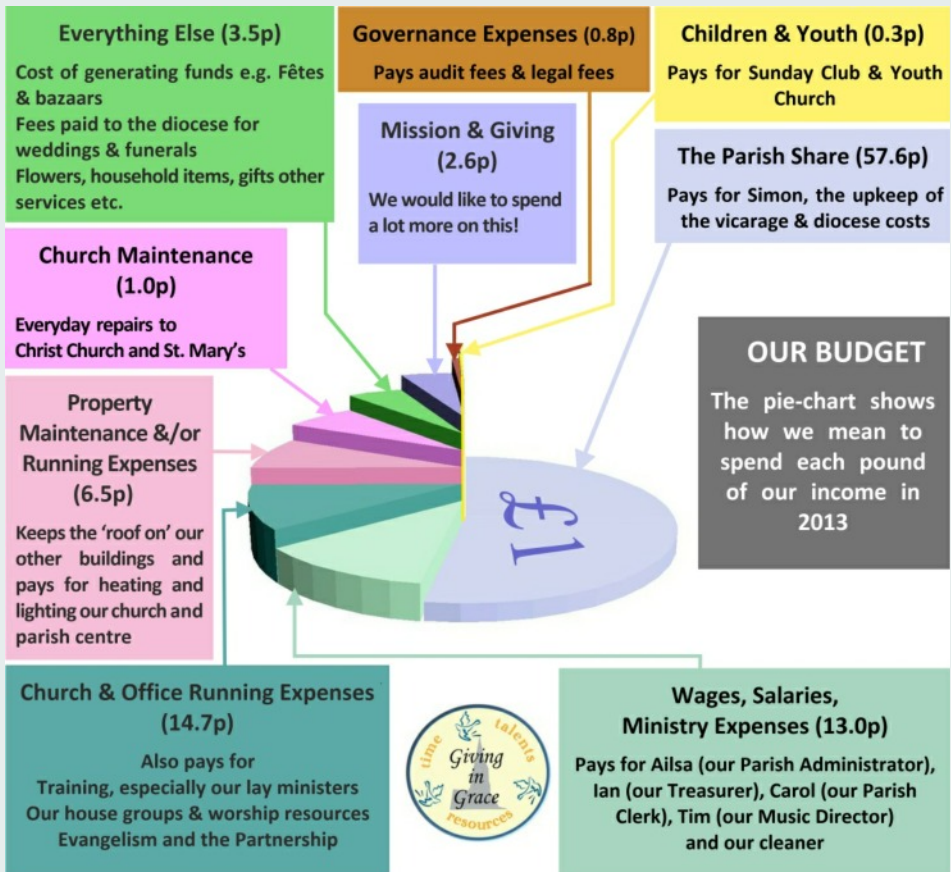
'Lord, give me a generous heart ... but *please* let's keep a sense of proportion!'

We give because God gave to us. And as an expression of our love.

As Paul reminds us in 2 Cor 8:8, generous giving is a sign of the genuineness of that love. We will also find that generous giving to Christ increases our faith and builds up our trust in Him.

Don't grow weary in doing good.

Here are just a few of the things we did with your gifts last year and hope to continue doing at Christ Church with St. Mary's this year.



- Support the work of the Diocese through the Parish Share.
- With our Old Town partner churches, support Messy Church.
- Develop the talents of our ministers and workers by supporting their training and through the stipend fund.
- Reach out to our local community with events such as a Beer Festival and support Street Pastors and Work-place Chaplains.
- Support our three charities and the Partnership Project through generous mission giving.
- Support our young people in experiencing different cultures abroad.
- Support the bereaved and celebrate family events.
- Invite children to take Holy Communion.

Reasons to give to Christ Church with St. Mary's

WHAT WE DO MATTERS

- You believe that worshipping God is what we were made for.
 - You want people to share in the worship of God.
 - You want people to hear and understand the Bible's message.
 - You want to share the Good News with those outside this congregation.
 - You want to spread the message that Jesus Christ is the hope for our world.
 - You want to help us build an authentic Christian community at the heart of Old Town.
 - You want to support the work of Swindon Youth for Christ, Swindon Food Bank, Willows Counselling Service and the Church Pastoral Aid Society.
 - You want to see children and young people growing up in the faith.
 - You want to support the clergy in their work in schools.
 - You want to see children educated, people cared-for and the Church growing in Albania, Paraguay and Uganda.
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Three ways to give to Christ Church with St. Mary's

There are three ways to give to our Church.

Giving by standing order

You make a decision once a year. And because it is paid by the bank, it happens automatically. Most importantly our treasurer knows exactly how much money is coming in every month.

Giving through the envelope scheme

For those who prefer to deal in cash, this is the system for you. You will be following the biblical principle of putting aside some money on the first day of the week. Clergy are often moved by the pile of envelopes given to us by an elderly member of our congregation who has not been able to get to church for some time. They have all been filled, sealed and put aside. Their giving is not hap-hazard, but planned.

Giving cash on the plate

This is the traditional method, which has been used by church members for generations.

All three methods of giving are valid. We tend to refer to the first two under the title of "Planned Giving". In other words, they don't depend on circumstances, like how much cash you happen to have in the house, or in your wallet on Sunday morning.

We want to encourage all our congregations to use **planned** giving more in our 2013 Renewal of Giving . However you choose to give, you have God's promise that you will never be the loser by it.



Henry brings his envelopes to church

Why a pledge card?

Your renewal of giving pack comes with a pledge card. Anything you choose to write on there will be treated with total confidence by your Gift-aid Secretary. Apart from God, and yourself, no one else will ever see what you have written.

What's the point? Why do we need to have a pledge card?

As the proverb reminds us, good intentions do not always lead us where we want to go.

It is possible to be challenged to give, or inspired to give, or even moved to give, and yet never actually get down to the business of giving.

We all do that. It is a very human reaction.

But, if we are to be faithful to God, we want to do better.

A pledge card is a very good way of helping us to make those good resolutions concrete.

A pledge card can help us do that. If each of us goes through the process of filling-in the pledge card properly, then we will

- **Pray about** what we want to give
- **Consider** what we want to give
- **Decide what we want to give**
- **Write down** what we want to give
- **Declare** our decisions **in confidence** to the Gift-aid Secretary

Thank you

He will then be in a position to inform the PCC what our overall giving as a Church for 2014 will be.

Good and faithful servants

As Charity Trustees the PCC must use its funds prudently. Its decisions and actions must be clear and transparent and in the best interests of the Charity.

Every year we have to set a balanced budget, which allows us to meet our financial obligations. To do this we need, ideally, a reliable forecast of our income.

Our biggest single annual obligation is our pledge to the Bristol Diocese (the Parish Share), which is our contribution to the annual Diocesan budget.

The Diocesan budget pays for the clergy; the smaller each church's pledge, the fewer clergy the Diocese can pay for.

What do we need from our PCC members?

- People of faith who believe God is bigger than the bottom line.
- People with a generous spirit *and*
- People of vision, who can lead the local church.

What do those PCC members need from us?

It is hard for our PCC to show a generous spirit when our Parish income is decreasing. In 2013, we had to reduce our pledge to the Diocese by £10,000.

If people of faith each commit to a pledge to Christ Church with St. Mary's, it will be easier for the PCC to fulfil the vision shared by the congregation: of a generous church. Please help the PCC to make our pledge to the Diocese one we are confident can be met.

Where is this initiative coming from?

From the Swindon Deanery.

The Bishop of Bristol is not asking us to do this. He doesn't even know that we are doing it. It comes from the Swindon Deanery and is happening in all our churches.

We want to encourage the spirit of generous giving among every member of every church in our deanery and want to play our part in supporting every church in Swindon and the villages around.

**Please become part of that, so we really
can all be in this together.**

