

FREEWILL OFFERING 2018:

our challenge is to grow



DIOCESE OF
YORK

Money is always an instrument for Mission

A key part of ministry is recognising what really matters and being willing to pay the price to achieve it.

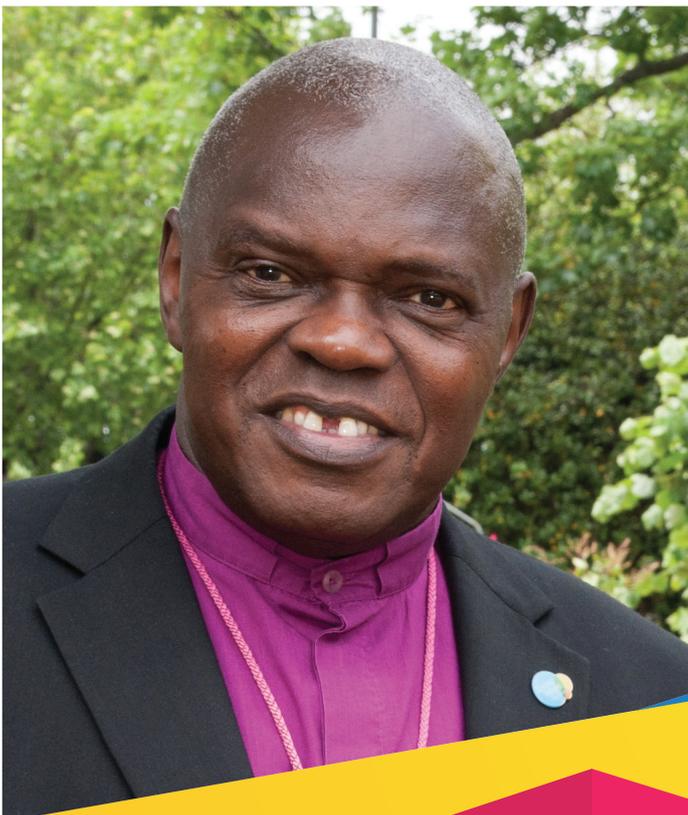
This is why, as a diocese, we chose to adopt the Freewill Offering programme in 2013. We wanted to give every church the freedom to set its own giving agenda, prayerfully and sacrificially; with freedom comes great responsibility.

We are wholeheartedly committed to the Freewill Offering. Despite the challenges it has borne wonderful fruit. Since we moved to Freewill Offering, 60% of our parishes have increased their annual offer, often in trying circumstances. God is at work through this process and we are so encouraged and thankful!

So as you come to discern prayerfully your Freewill Offering for 2018, please do so with God's mission firmly in mind, because that's what you're giving to. May God bless you richly.

You are in my prayers as you consider your offer.

+Sentamu Eboracensis



How much to give to our Common Fund each year?

Some thoughts to guide you:

The typical cost of ministry where you are (see below) –

- You might be able to pay more to support the mission in places with fewer resources or greater needs than yours.
- If you aren't contributing what it costs to provide ministry in your place, have you thought why the rest of the diocesan family should make up the difference?

We've committed to transform our Diocese; to be Generous Churches Making and Nurturing Disciples. Will your offer support every parish as we—

- Reach the people we currently don't
- Move to growth
- Establish sustainable finances

Are you called to give what seems possible – or to be courageous about setting a challenge?

The cost of ministry where you are

- If the minister isn't paid by the Diocese and lives in their own house? *The cost of shared support works out at an average of £25,000 per benefice. It includes training for new ministers, one-stop guidance from diocesan teams, work with schools and young people, Safeguarding support and much more.*
- If the minister lives in a house provided for the ministry? *Typically the cost of providing a house is £10,000 per year.*
- If the minister is paid by the Diocese? *A full-time stipend with pension, National Insurance etc costs the Diocese about £35,000 per year.*

So typically our Common Fund needs to provide £70,000 per year to resource a benefice with a full-time stipendiary minister in a diocesan house.

Over half our parishes increased their offer from 2016 to 2017 so...

Why do we need more money?

- The average increase was 5%
- Sixty parishes made an average decrease of 24%
- A quarter of parishes did not change their offer
- Over half our parishes don't meet the cost of their own ministry.
- The shortfall against our shared budget is slowing down our plans to transform our Diocese.

Your Freewill Offer decision in your parish affects every parish.

In 2016 Beverley Minster received a substantial legacy, and in addition to its contribution to our diocesan Common Fund from the congregation's giving, the PCC decided it was right to share some of its good fortune with the wider diocese.

"Our vision includes a commitment to grow in partnership; 'We who are many are one body in Christ' (Romans 12:5).

"This chimes with the Diocesan statement that 'the freedom to choose comes with the responsibility to contribute to the costs of supporting ministry throughout the diocese'.

"A lively and prayerful debate during a PCC meeting seeks to bring these two complimentary ideas together, recognising our need to be as generous as possible in supporting the wider ministry."

In 2012 the Benefice of Deeply Rural offered £65,000, equivalent to the cost of its own ministry, and increased it by RPI in 2013 and 2014.

In 2015 one of their church electrical systems was condemned shortly after the Vicar retired.

The PCC minutes record that a massive effort brought in substantial grant aid and with a loan from the Diocese it was possible to rewire the church, but the 2016 Freewill Offer was reduced by £10,000 from 2015 and it was felt that "the Diocese needs to understand what the Benefice was up against".

Unfortunately this more than wiped out the RPI-based increases made by the other benefices in the Deanery and so seriously reduced the overall income from that Deanery into our Common Fund.

The Archdeacon has asked Deeply Rural PCC to pray and discuss its future Freewill Offers on the basis of rebuilding its commitment to support the wider church, and to look for help if needed within the Deanery.

The vision for The Timothy Centre began at a mission weekend in St Suburb's parish three years ago, named from 1 Timothy 5:8, "And whoever does not provide for relatives, and especially for family members, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

The Centre is based in a former bakery bought with a substantial legacy left to the church and reserved for outreach projects.

It is run by church and community volunteers to offer a safe and social space for families, activities for parents and children, a fairtrade café and a Christian presence including regular morning and midday prayers.

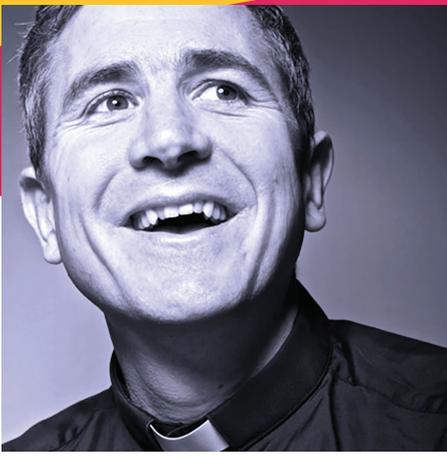
The Centre is supported by the local authority and attracts significant grant funding, as well as support in kind from local businesses with repairs and furnishings for the building.

In February 2016 St Suburb's PCC voted to implement phase II of its 2014 vision, employing a qualified detached youth worker. Reserved funds were to hand for the additional office and meeting space needed, but the cost of the appointment was more than expected so they asked for funding from church members specifically for the new post, and chose to divert £10,000 from the current year's Freewill Offer.

In September St Suburb's new incumbent was alarmed to learn that this meant the PCC's contribution to the diocesan Common Fund would be significantly less than the cost even of her own stipend.

The PCC has now agreed to her proposal that St Suburb's should run a Giving in Grace campaign before next year's Freewill Offer is decided, with a view to making a more realistic contribution as well as putting their own project onto a sustainable footing.

Giving in Grace 



Welling up... Hull Pioneer Minister Matt Woodcock's view:

Be honest, when you see the words 'Freewill Offer for 2018', what's your immediate reaction? Do your eyes roll? Does your heart sink? Do you laugh, panic, or sigh perhaps? Or do you feel a sense of opportunity, excitement or potential welling up inside?

Scripture tells us that giving should never induce negative emotions. Familiar words in 2 Corinthians 9:7 tell us that 'Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver'.

So why do so many churches feel the opposite? Why are we so reluctant to give? Why do we often give not cheerfully but miserably?

Giving into our Common Fund often arouses feelings of negativity, suspicion and even hostility. Little wonder then that despite there

being plenty to celebrate and give thanks to God for, the bald facts reveal some worrying financial trends. Parish giving has actually decreased since 2012.

More than 80% of our churches have not been ready, willing or able to give enough to cover the costs of their own basic mission and ministry. Not only have we been unable to invest in areas of growth; we haven't even kept up with inflation at its record low levels. As a diocese we rely increasingly on reserves to meet the cost of ministry, while we know that within a few years we'll receive

about £1 million less annually from the Church Commissioners.

So are we doomed? NO! We know we have a God who provides today what we need to do his will – today.

We know there are a myriad of practical reasons for the state of our giving. Every church has its own individual challenges and hurdles to overcome.

However, I also want to suggest that the challenge of 2 Corinthians 9 eludes us because we so often separate – and differentiate – between our giving, our finances, and our divine mission.

'When somebody says it's not about the money, it's about the money.'

H.L. Mencken, American satirist

Jesus wasn't afraid of talking about money. He was clear that what people do with money shows a lot about their spiritual health. Acts 4:35 says that members of the early church 'gave to any who had need'.

The embers of the early church fanned into flames because of Spirit-filled sacrificial giving – of their time, finances, of their whole selves. Surely nothing has changed?

Let's be loud and clear that the Freewill Offer is absolutely about the money – but it's absolutely about the mission too. The money and the mission are inextricably linked. Surely if this is not the case then we're wasting our time?

The hard reality is that mission costs money. Putting 180 paid clergy out into the mission field and supporting the ministry of over 600 churches from the Tees to the Humber costs us £14million every year.

Money makes a theological statement about who is in charge – it's God's sheepdog snapping at our heels to change direction'

+Sentamu

Here's why Thirkleby PCC near Thirsk has increased its Freewill Offer:

"We try not to focus on our own needs. We promote the idea of ministry being about 'family', in terms of offering more to support other parishes who, despite their best efforts, can't.

"We understand that we should not sit on money for a rainy day. We have evidence (and so confidence) of God meeting our needs when we've pushed the boat out and taken risks.

"After our recent bell tower project, we were aware of many organisations, companies and individuals who had been very generous. So this encourages us to be generous too.

"We have tried to model and encourage 'generosity of spirit' in all that we do, as both PCC and church community.

"Our Treasurer attends Diocesan training and events, so is always up to date with how best to use our funds. We are prepared to draw on Reserves each year

if necessary (the majority are Unrestricted).

"The PCC engages wholeheartedly with diocesan training and resources. This keeps us informed and helps us see the bigger picture, and generally feeling part of the family.

"The rented property we own, the former School House, is a valuable source of income and we feel fortunate to have it.

"Rural parishes can be quite insular, so it was always a case of trying to widen the perspective and pushing the boundaries to think beyond, to think big! Because God is big!

STATUS QUO – OR GROWTH?

One of the key challenges of the Leading Your Church Into Growth (LYCIG) course – which many of us have done and found encouraging – is to make that often painful choice to move from the status quo to growth.

To go from asking 'How do we keep going?' to the key question 'How do we keep growing?' It's no surprise that a church which prioritises mission is often amongst the most sacrificial givers – and blessed with the most stable finances!

We are determined, focused and passionate that we don't become a 'maintenance diocese'. A 'hold the line' diocese. A diocese that cuts back rather than pushes forward. We simply don't believe that this is God's plan for us. Our budget commitment must reflect a missional mentality. We are committed to 180 parochial posts,

growing the number of curates, school support and building on resourcing and supporting church mission through LYCIG, lay ministries and the Pilgrimage and Deanery Missions. We are developing a "toolkit" to support parishes in increasing their income and controlling their costs.

Giving – and Getting Back

We would love to be able to do more. We want to be even bolder and more ambitious. We want to provide for more ministry and grow the reach and extent of our mission. At the moment, fewer than 20%

of benefices meet what it costs to provide the ministry they receive. Over the next five years we need to increase that to 80%; can your benefice be one of those 80%?

I believe that this is more than realistic. Be encouraged and inspired afresh by Christ's words in Luke 6:38 "Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

Matt Woodcock

Support from the Diocese of York's Common Fund enables St Margaret's Welcome Centre to serve the people of Longhill in East Hull and grow community, both through its own ministries and partnerships with others who work from it.

St Margaret's Church was built in the 1950's as a simple multi-purpose hall to serve the new Longhill estate. Supported by the Church of England, a charity called Longhill Link Up extended community activity and won a large grant to add a three storey centre to the hall, but after thriving for many years it had become financially unviable by 2015.

Longhill's significant social challenges led to a decision that the Diocese of York would step in to maintain a presence on the estate. Pioneer Minister Trisha Wick was appointed in September 2015 to work from the Centre, reopened with the support of Hull City Council and now renamed 'St Margaret's Welcome Centre'.

Activities now include a café, a 'Pint Club' for men (tea not beer!), a diet club, a money/debt advice service, and a Lunch Club. Small community groups including Craft, Genealogy, a Women's Group and a Toddler

Group use the Centre, and the local library relocated there last year.

Church activities for people of any denomination or none include a Christianity Group every Wednesday, a Holy Communion Service every Thursday, a monthly prayer meeting and a monthly Messy Church (for families). Services take place at Easter, Harvest, Christmas etc and baptisms, weddings and funerals are arranged. Confidential counselling is offered.

Increasing reach into estates like Longhill will be a key activity in our strategic plans.



Please complete the response form, make a copy for your records, and send the original to Freewill Offering, Diocese of York, Amy Johnson Way, Clifton Moor, York, YO30 4XT or email to FreeWillOffer@yorkdiocese.org by 31st July.

