



June 2019

To Incumbents, Priests-in-Charge
and PCC Treasurers
in the Diocese of York

Dearlly Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Free Will Offer 2020

For four months in 2 Chronicles Chapter 31, the people of Israel gave in abundance the first fruits of grain, wine, oil, honey, and of all the produce of the field; and they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything, so that the leftovers had to be piled up in heaps!

When King Hezekiah and the officials came and saw the heaps, they blessed the Lord and his people Israel.

The chief priest Azariah said, "Since they began to bring the contributions into the house of the Lord, we have had enough to eat and have plenty to spare; for the Lord has blessed his people, so that we have this great supply left over."

I wonder what sort of wisdom inspired the people to give in such abundance? Was there teaching and preaching about generosity that yielded such abundant giving?

This outbreak of generosity simply happened because Hezekiah announced a great Passover feast so that his people could turn back to the Lord; and the people joined in wholeheartedly and decided to double the length of it. And the result? "There was great joy in Jerusalem".

And when Hezekiah saw the heaps of gifts, he appointed Kore son of Imnah the Levite, keeper of the east gate, to be in charge of the **'freewill-offerings'** to God!

New things happening

We too have a lot to celebrate when we look at what God is doing in our midst; in the last year our vision to become Generous Churches, Making and Nurturing Disciples through our three goals of Reaching, Growing and Sustaining are all starting to bear fruit.



Wherever we look we see new things happening or about to happen in our part of God's Own County; every mission unit in the Diocese has access to new resources to reach out, to grow and become sustainable – and there is more to come.

The Church of England's Strategic Investment Board is investing resources into our goals. Our Diocese is investing our resources in prayer, people and money into actions that can touch every church. And just like Hezekiah we will be amazed by the abundance welling up to the glory of God.

I beseech you to lead your congregation in prayer

Now of course I am writing to you about your parish's Free Will Offer to our Diocesan Common Fund for 2020. This is such a vital year for the outworking of the goals into which we have poured so much prayer and work together. So my prayer is simply that we catch the vision and bring forth great abundance, like the people of Israel in the Second Book of Chronicles.

We are already the beneficiaries of great abundance; we have the £3 million invested in our goals for reaching those in their 20s, 30s and 40s by our national church; and we have the un-numbered blessings of each other and all the commitment we bring to our church family.

- **As incumbent or priest-in-charge** I beseech you to lead your congregation in praying through its God-given calling and how it will express its commitment to our wider diocesan family through its Free Will Offer for 2020.
- **As treasurer** I ask you to offer wise counsel and a generous heart as well as sound book-keeping.

Free Will Offering is about so much more than money; not simply about how much we can afford to give, but about how we understand our joyful commitment to the costly mission of God which we have accepted through our Synod.

Having led your PCC in prayer and consideration of its Free Will Offer for 2020, please return your offer to our Free Will Offer Team by Monday 30th September so that they can begin to shape the 2020 Diocesan Budget (you will need to send one response for each parish in your benefice).

Please take time to read and pray through all the materials and information we've provided. I am praying that together we may be like King Hezekiah: "Every work that he undertook in the service of the house of God, and in accordance with the law and the commandments, to seek his God, he did with all his heart; and he prospered."

With love and prayers,

Henry Ebor

www.dioceseofyork.org.uk/freewilloffer