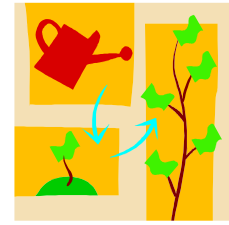


grow your giving



Top Ten

The ten most common excuses for not giving more . . .

1 We are all pensioners...

Answer: what sort of pensioner? Those who are on the minimum State pension (£114 per week including the guaranteed uplift/Pension Credit) are in a very different position to those who have retired on company or Service pensions.

Jesus praised the widow who gave her mite at the Temple, and we honour those on low fixed incomes who give much out of what they have. But we should also look to those whose retirement is 'comfortable' to recognise that they are sometimes better off now than they ever were when they had mortgages and children to support.

2 We need more young families in church: they could give more than me...

Answer: of course every church needs more members to strengthen its life. (And we need to remember that every Christian is called to be a missionary in their own neighbourhood!)

However, the mission and maintenance of the parish church is primarily the responsibility of those who worship there now. There is a grave danger that if we look over our shoulder and expect others to take this responsibility for us, the life of the church will ebb away while we wait! Then there may be no living church for young families to join at all.

3 We don't have a very big congregation...

Answer: see above.

In many cases there are people who are not regular worshippers who will cheerfully give to help keep the church building in reasonable repair. But they should not be asked to shoulder the responsibility of supporting the basic mission

and worship of the parish – that is the congregation's job. One of the benefits of a parish with more than one village is that, combined, they can do much more than when separate. This is true whether you think of worship or of finance.

4 We only get one-fifth of a priest here...

Answer: each village is not being asked to pay for a whole clergy post, nor for all the costs of the parish. But each village does need to pay its part of the whole. (See also 5 below.)

5 The Parish Share we pay to the diocese is more than the Vicar's stipend...

Answer: that is not quite right. It is true we pay just under (for example) £24,000 Parish Share, while the stipend is £20,000. But there are other costs involved in having a priest – the cost of housing, the pension contributions, National Insurance, etc. These are all paid for on a shared basis by the diocese.

The current estimate is that it costs about £37,000 to keep a priest in a parish. So we are getting a bargain! In fact, we are being subsidised by other parishes.

6 The diocese wastes money - its administration costs are too high...

Answer: the diocesan 2007 budget shows that only 5% of its expenditure goes on administration. 75% goes directly to parish ministry – paying for clergy and houses. Another 12% goes on activities that directly support Christian ministry in the parishes – everything from training ordinands to supporting church schools and providing specialist help to parishes (eg the Parish Resources Adviser, doing Child Protection procedures, Youth work, etc).

7 The Church Commissioners lost all that money . . .

Answer: the Commissioners did indeed take a major paper loss about 15 years ago when property deals went wrong. But, like many householders in 'negative equity' then, they have more than recovered their loss now. They are now much more tightly regulated – they have put their house in order, and currently out-perform many other pension funds.

But the days when the Commissioners acted like a fairy godmother, distributing money to the dioceses to pay for clergy, have now long gone. The Commissioners now target their money on the really needy dioceses (chiefly in inner-city areas) and on paying pensions to retired priests. We are effectively a self-sufficient diocese now.

It is not healthy for the church to rely on investment income – dead men's money. For a living church, we have to become a giving church, like our fellow-Christians in the Methodist and Baptist churches, for example.

8 I don't have a pension scheme; why should I fund the clergy one..?

Answer: nowadays we are all aware of the need to provide for our old age. Many people worked and saved hard in their working lives, or have a house they can sell as they 'trade down' in retirement. But clergy are a very different case to most people: they are not paid well, or on a 'career ladder', and they don't have their own property to sell. The church relies so much on their generosity and sacrifice when they are in active ministry; it's therefore very important that they are looked after properly when they retire and have to buy a home of their own.

9 We already give to other causes...

Answer: good for you! But the Christian challenge is to become generous and cheerful givers. It may be that you can afford to give to your favourite charities in addition to your giving to the church. Or it might be right for you to sit down and prioritise your giving. After all, many thousands of people will support the lifeboats, Guide Dogs, hospice or Air Ambulance. Only committed church people will support the work of God through the local parish.

So you may want to decide how much of your income you are going to give away first, and then list the causes you will give to. Perhaps the church will be a higher priority than other things, however worthwhile they feel.

10 The Vicar doesn't visit anymore...

Answer: perhaps he or she is too busy trying to run an underfunded parish! If the finances were more secure, the Vicar could pay more attention to the pastoral ministry and less to keeping the Treasurer happy!

If you have a real pastoral reason for a home visit, then you should let the Vicar know and book a time to come and see you. But don't let your individual circumstance deflect you from the real need for you to support the work of the church financially.

Produced by the Parish Resources office of the diocese of Bath & Wells,
The Old Deanery, Wells, Somerset BA5 2UG
01749 670777

sue.whitehead@bathwells.anglican.org

For an instant Bible Study on money and giving, go to www.bathandwells.org.uk
and click on 'parish resources'



Diocese of Bath & Wells

Changing Lives, Changing Churches for Changing Communities