



**Diocese of Argyll
and The Isles**

Living our Vision:

*God's abundance—
our gratitude*

**Year 2
Participants' Guide**

<p>Landfill Tax http://www.suezcommunitiestrust.org.uk/scotland http://www.wren.org.uk/</p>	<p>No personal experience in the diocese, but worth exploring to check if a project might be eligible.</p>
<p>Scotland's Churches Trust (formerly Scottish Churches Architectural Heritage Trust) http://www.scotlandschurchestrust.org.uk/</p>	<p>A smallish grant, £3-5k usual. Assessed against the church's assets and income.</p>
<p>National Churches Trust https://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/our-grants</p>	<p>Recently extended scope to Scotland. SCT also forward good applications to them. Fund minor repairs, major (£100k) projects and also development projects.</p>
<p>Idlewild Trust http://www.idlewildtrust.org.uk/</p>	<p>Support active churches for repairs. Grants up to £5,000 may be awarded.</p>
<p>Glaziers' Trust http://glazierscompany.org.uk/conservation-grants/</p>	<p>For window conservation.</p>
<p>Garfield Weston http://www.garfieldweston.org/</p>	<p>Very big charity, support lots of churches with very different sized grants for conservation or improvements for e.g. inclusion development. Grant Received £2,500.</p>
<p>The William and Jane Morris Fund https://www.sal.org.uk/grants/morris-fund-conservation-grants/</p>	<p>Small, specialised in windows/furnishings but constrained to lifetime of William Morris. Quite a complex application process for small (e.g. £1k) grants.</p>

Resources

Matthew 6: 1 - 8

2 Corinthians 9: 1 -11

1 Timothy 6: 3 - 10

Holy Habits: Andrew Roberts' book discusses 10 'habits' mentioned in Acts including 'giving'.

February 2018: Some sources of grant funding for church building repairs or development.

Dean A Swift, Diocese of Argyll and The Isles.

<p>Heritage Lottery Fund https://www.hlf.org.uk/looking-funding/what-we-fund/buildings-and-monuments/places-worship https://www.historicenvironment.scot/grants-and-funding/our-grants/grants-for-places-of-worship-scheme/</p>	<p>Very big funder – like high grade listed buildings, always worth an application. You will be competing against non-church heritage projects. The architect has to work and guide on the application for it to work. Lots of strings attached! Historic Environment Scotland funding for churches is managed through the HLF schemes too. This is the big game for conservation and development!</p>
<p>Scottish Episcopal Church Dunderdale Buildings</p>	<p>Applications and further information via the diocesan office.</p>
<p>Dalrymple Donaldson http://glasarchsoc.org.uk/index.php/grants-and-awards/dalrymple-donaldson-fund</p>	<p>Smallish foundation - £1-£5k grants for repairs, expected to be part of a larger funded (e.g. HLF/HES) project.</p>
<p>Allchurches http://www.allchurches.co.uk/</p>	<p>Ecclesiastical Insurance charity – very good and responsive, can apply every two years.</p>

Year 2: Participants' Guide

Introduction

Time does seem to go ever faster so some of you may be wondering where Year 1 went to! At the 2017 Synod there was a request for support with stewardship; these 'Year 2' materials offer a response to this request. If you are still working on the 'From Membership to Discipleship' material, you may combine the two, selecting what is most relevant to you. You are invited to view the Living our Vision materials as a rolling programme, a resource for our ongoing journey together.

Opening Worship

A candle is lit

James 1:17

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

Prayer

O Lord:

In a world where many are lonely:

We thank you for our friendships.

In a world where many are captive:

We thank you for our freedom.

In a world where many are hungry:

We thank you for your provision.

We pray that you will:
 Enlarge our sympathy,
 Deepen our compassion,
 And give us grateful hearts.
 In Christ's name.
Terry Waite

'Stewardship'

What does this prompt in your mind?
 Begging letters, visits from a stewardship committee member, questionnaires about what gifts and skills you can offer, fundraising activities?

Let's begin afresh by looking at stewardship from the point of view of our two key words: Abundance and Gratitude.

Closing Worship

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;

For his steadfast love endures for ever

(Psalm 107:1)

Psalm (104:14-16, 27-30, 35)

¹⁴You cause the grass to grow for the cattle,
 and plants for people to use,

to bring forth food from the earth,

¹⁵and wine to gladden the human heart,

oil to make the face shine,

and bread to strengthen the human heart.

¹⁶The trees of the Lord are watered abundantly,
 the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.

These all look to you

to give them their food in due season;

²⁸when you give to them, they gather it up;

when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.

²⁹When you hide your face, they are dismayed;

when you take away their breath, they die

and return to their dust.

³⁰When you send forth your spirit, they are created;

and you renew the face of the ground.

³⁵Let sinners be consumed from the earth,

and let the wicked be no more.

Bless the Lord, O my soul.

Praise the Lord!

Grace

gratitude changed not only his life but, presumably, the lives of those he compensated. Serious stewardship has the power to transform our lives and our mission.

1 Abundance – the ‘Why’

John 10:10

I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. The Greek word used here *perisson* means superabundance, an overflowing. You may say that Jesus was not talking about material wealth and that is true but if we take the ‘Lilies of the Field’ passage, (Matthew 6) he uses ‘lilies’ precisely because they are beautiful. He’s not advocating austerity but saying that we can trust to have our needs met and more – the Gospel of Providence, the theme for the Diocesan Conference.

In John 4:14 Jesus promises ‘living water welling up to eternal life’ and we need only think of Psalm 23 to hear a celebration of God’s abundance: ‘...you anoint my head with oil and my cup *overflows*’. We are not however, merely the recipients of this generosity. In Ephesians 3:20 we read ‘Now to him who *by the power at work within us* is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine...’. This is not only about what we receive but it is about how we can grow as a community of disciples when the Holy Spirit is ‘at work within us’.

Addressing the Corinthians, Paul says ‘..God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work’. Thinking seriously about stewardship can enable us to ‘live our vision’ however that vision is expressed in our local setting.

Take a few moments to reflect together on these texts.

Do you have an attitude of scarcity, or an attitude of plenty?

Or even of 'enough'. What would count as 'enough'?

What is God's providence for you?

2 Gratitude – the Why?

Luke 7: 36 – end. The story of the woman anointing Jesus' feet.

Have someone read the passage aloud. Share reactions to the story.

How would we describe such a woman if a comparable event happened in our midst?

How does it feel to be 'forgiven much'?

When in your life have you felt the deepest gratitude?

In 1 Thessalonians 5:18 we are told to 'Give thanks in all circumstances'. Pollyanna made a point of finding 'something to be glad about' no matter the circumstances. We can find people like that annoying especially if we're not feeling at all glad. But neither Paul nor Pollyanna is advocating denial of difficulties. Rather they recommend an 'attitude of gratitude' in the midst of trouble. Habakkuk: 3:17-18 'Though the fig tree does not blossom.....yet I will rejoice in the Lord.'

If it is to relieve us of the individual burden of contributing then the basis of stewardship is shaky. If enough of us are giving all we can no *matter at what level*, then the fundraising has a good foundation in the commitment of members to the church and its mission.

Fundraising can be done through local effort and through grant applications. Local initiatives need to have a clear purpose. 'We've always run the coffee mornings' is a statement of fact not a reason. If members spend money baking and more money buying the produce back again, this does not make sense unless such events are a genuine fellowship opportunity or outreach to the community.

Are your fundraising efforts an example of good stewardship?

Do they enable you to put your mission plan into practice? (Does it need to be reviewed?)

Transformation

Let's look at the story of Zacchaeus whose life was radically changed when he met Jesus.

Generous giving can transform us, not only the church tower or the heating, but as individual Christians and as worshipping communities. Zacchaeus was transformed when Jesus accepted him just as he was. Zacchaeus responded with generous hospitality (everyone back to mine!) and compensated those he had overcharged. He experienced abundance and his

dismayed if we paid our entire pay cheque or pension directly into the church's account. But those who have travelled to developing countries and met people with very little, testify to their disproportionate generosity. Two different studies in the UK indicate that, relative to their resources, those on a lower income contribute more to charity. In pointing out the widow, Jesus was contrasting her sacrificial giving with the self-righteous who would see themselves as so much more worthy.

How should we give?

It is perhaps to state the obvious to mention direct debits, envelopes, Gift Aid etc but there are still charges where the Gift Aid envelopes are in the back of a drawer. You don't want the extra 25%? You don't expect any visitors? Oh dear.

A standing order is obviously easier for the treasurer but envelopes are preferred by some as it allows them to vary their contribution according to circumstance. If a person no longer pays enough tax to cover charitable donations and so comes off the Gift Aid scheme, the charge can still claim Gift Aid if they put the money in the plate. This is because the small donations scheme allows the church to claim on such offerings so long as they don't exceed £20.

Fundraising needs to be addressed in the context of individual giving. If our gratitude for God's abundance does not extend to a commitment of our personal resources, we need to ask what we are fundraising for.

3 Models of Giving – the How (and the 'How much')

A steward is a trusted person who manages the property or business matters of the owner. As stewards of God's bounty we are called to manage what isn't ours, including what we normally believe we own. Secular society regards our resources as belonging to us. It's not simply a matter of whether we are generous or mean. It's about the deeply ingrained individualism in our culture: 'I am the master of my fate'. We lament the loss of 'community' but at the same time resent anyone else telling us what to do with our lives or our money. But our faith calls us to a new identity that says that I am not an autonomous agent. The hymn 'Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to thee' speaks of not withholding our silver and gold, but fundamental to that are the lines, 'Take my will and make it Thine, It shall be no longer mine.' The steward's hymn you might say.

Note that this also applies to our individual and collective stewardship of the earth's resources. This study does not focus on that but eco congregation materials are available.

How Much?

Some denominations expect members to tithe; some people opt to tithe – to give a tenth of their income to their church. There is some debate about whether references in the Hebrew scriptures work out at 10%, some calculating that it was closer to 20%. It was a practice also in use in secular society where a

proportion of the produce of the land was owed to the feudal landlord. There is debate also about whether it is recommended in the New Testament. It seems reasonable to assume that as we are still reading about a Jewish community in the New Testament, tithing would be taken for granted. But Jesus tells the pharisees that tithing produce is not enough if they neglect justice, mercy and faith. (Matthew 23:23)

One point seems to be common to most references. It is the 'first fruits' that are to be offered, not what is left over after all the bills are paid.

'Honour the Lord with your substance and with the first fruits of all your produce.' Proverbs 3:9.

It is a personal choice how we choose to allocate our resources of energy, time and money. One of the exercises in '*From Membership to Discipleship*' was to list the organisations to which we belong. Do we sit down and compare what we spend on our activities, with what we give as our offering to God? It may not be a case of being mean or grudging; sometimes we just haven't given the matter serious thought. One of our members acknowledges this.

'Some 11 years ago, I had the opportunity to attend the Annual Meeting of Trinity Episcopal Church in Bessemer, Alabama. In many things I was reminded of home - not just the dedication of the church, but also the demographic and numbers of its congregation, although it is nothing like my own Argyll location. Bessemer is a bleak place in February, a city rated 7th in the USA for violent crime, a place of broken-

down single-storey clapboard houses with shotgun porches, a place struggling to rebuild its economy after the collapse of its famous coal and steel production.

Why all this detail? I suppose to reinforce the kind of problems the congregation faced then, and may well still face.

At that meeting, to which we were made so welcome, I learned quite by the way that the weekly giving of these perfectly ordinary people was at least 50% more than we were accustomed to give. I listened to them talking about the projects they financed, the matter-of-fact way it was accepted that they all pitched in and talked openly about what they could give.

I was shaken - shaken to the extent that the moment we arrived back in Argyll we increased our giving to match what we'd come to realise was realistic if our church was important to us.'

Do we, could we, set aside a proportion for God and then allocate the rest of our budget?

Do our congregational allocations pass the 'first fruits' test?

Are we prepared to pay the cost of discipleship?

In Mark 12:41- 44 we read of the 'Widow's mite'. She gave all she had. Our families and friends might be