

What is parish share and why do we pay it?

a biblical and theological perspective



 **THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND**
Diocese of Southwell & Nottingham

Jeremiah 16, 17

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the earth: and they shall be for the sword, and by famines shall be meat for the hungry, and for the beasts of the field.

12 Shall iron break the north, and the south, and shall the Lord, Enter not into the house, neither go to mourning, neither go to weep for them: for I have sent peace from this people, and not lovingkindness and truth.

13 Thy substance and thy treasures will I give to the spoiler without price, and for all thy sins, even in all thy days.

14 And I will make thee to pass through the enemies into a land which thou knowest not: for a fire is kindled in mine anger, which shall burn upon you, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in your long suffering: know ye not away in which I have suffered rebuke?

15 O LORD, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in your long suffering: know ye not away in which I have suffered rebuke?

16 Thy words were found, and I did not despise them: and rejoicing of mine heart, I called by thy name, O LORD God of Israel.

17 I sat not in the assembly of mockers, nor rejoiced in the cause of thy hand; for thou hast filled me with indignation.

18 Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fall?

19 Therefore thus saith the LORD God, thou shalt stand before me, and thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them.

20 And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brassen wall, and they shall fight against thee: but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee, and to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

21 And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the terrible ones, and I will rescue thee from the hand of the wicked, and I will rescue thee from the hand of the terrible ones.

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Jeremiah 14-16

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THE BIBLE AND PARISH SHARE

The way in which we are able to offer mission and ministry across the length and breadth of our diocese is not funded by a tax, hidden investments, or donations from what's left over but rather by something called Parish Share.

Resourcing the work of churches in this way follows some key principles we find in Scripture: God's nature as Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is to invite us to be in a relationship with Him, *and with one another*. This calling into relationship with one another as exemplified at Pentecost (Acts 2) involves men and women, young and old, across local and national divides. This relationship we call 'church' and we ignore its sheer size if we equate it to a particular place or building. It is God not place that characterises the church; as Paul points out in his opening letters to the Corinthians 'To the church of God that is *in* Corinth' (1v2). Elsewhere church is located in cities and across regions (e.g. to the churches of Galatia - Gal 1:2). Putting the place first is like looking through the wrong end of a telescope – we are called to a bigger vision of belonging together.

Not only are we drawn into a relationship, but we are also invited to share in God's reconciling mission to the world. Parish Share is one way we act, as disciples of Christ, to fulfil our calling and even reflect God's own relational and missional nature.

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE ARE FOR

As Christians, we understand our lives first and foremost in the light of our relationship with God. Our identity, who we are, is deeply rooted in whose we are. As children of a loving and generous Father, you are invited into a

closer and deeper relationship with Him, and are brought together to join with others in Christ as his body, the church:

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. (Romans 12:4-5, NIV)

We're not all the same, and not all of our church communities are the same, but, like different parts of the body we each play our own part in ensuring the flourishing of the whole body so that the Living Hope of Jesus can be shared in the city, towns, villages of Nottinghamshire and beyond. Living Hope brings transformation and new life, healing and wholeness; and the local church is uniquely placed to share in every community.

Indeed, the vision of sharing Living Hope will be brought about by pursuing our mission and calling of Growing Disciples of Christ, with Compassion, Confidence and Courage. This mission is an urgent one:

For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

(Romans 10:13-15, NIV)

As a tool which supports the mission of the church, Parish Share is grounded in our calling to share together in a life shaped in response to God's abundant generosity, and the hope we have in Him.

LIVING TOGETHER

Parish Share presents an opportunity for each church community, according to their ability, to participate in the financial costs of mission and ministry throughout the Body of Christ across our diocese. In this way, ministry may be sustained in poorer communities where otherwise this would not be possible. There is a mutuality to our belonging to one another, as St Paul writes:

“Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need.”

(2 Corinthians 8:13-14, NIV)

ABUNDANT GENEROSITY

Inevitably, calculations and formulae must be chosen to ensure that Parish Share is fairly requested from each church community to meet the needs of the whole.

In Bishop Paul’s talk on Discipleship, Gospel and Generosity (see final page for QR Code), he explains that people’s giving often starts with personal motivation: we give to do what’s necessary to keep the doors open and the activities going that ‘keeps the show on the road’. The same can be said of our churches where we limit ourselves to only give to that which serves us.

However, at its heart, Parish Share is a part of our response to the extraordinary generosity of God. His abundant generosity is recalled through the pages of the bible: creation out of nothing, the widow caring for Elijah whose oil never ran out, twelve baskets left over after the 5000 had been

fed on five loaves and two fishes and ultimately the giving of his only Son. His abundant generosity is in stark contrast to the human narrative so often portrayed of a world dominated by scarcity and bereft of resources.

We know that as the creator of everything, God is the true owner of everything, and we are simply stewards of all that we have. We are called to be prayerful and sacrificial in our giving, both as individuals and as church communities responding to Parish Share.

“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 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. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever.”

(2 Corinthians 9:6-9, NIV)

To give generously is to be caught up in the overflow of God’s grace for, when we give, we reflect the nature of God himself.

LIVING HOPE

Fundamental to every aspect of Christian discipleship, including financial stewardship and Parish Share, is that our hope is always in the Lord. We look to him to strengthen and guide us, and to provide for our needs. The model for discipleship presented in the Gospels is based upon dependence upon God’s provision (Matthew 6:30) rather than upon the building up of levels of reserves by those who can afford, aiming to provide total security for themselves for the future, as in the parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:13-21).

There's a stark warning for those who contrive to hold back (Acts 5:1-11)!

The Parish Share principles of mutuality and providing for the needs of all, as opposed to the 'survival of the fittest', are somewhat at odds with many attitudes we might encounter in our 21st Century world. And yet as Christians, we are bound together as members of the Body of Christ, called to live as generous and compassionate disciples of Christ having our confidence in Him and the courage to offer living hope to a desperate and disheartened world. By ensuring that the church may offer ministry beyond those communities which could readily afford it, Parish Share is a means of justice, of true Christ-centred generosity and modelling authentic communities of disciples that will draw others in and into relationship with their heavenly Father.

Richard Kellett

Associate Archdeacon

WATCH THE VIDEO



Discipleship, Gospel and Giving Video

Bishop Paul Williams

Diocese of Southwell & Nottingham

(Available on Youtube)



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