Our Lenten journey is an answer to the call to return to God. During this season we are called to fast, to renew our prayer-lives and to greater acts of generosity. At this point in our Lenten journey I thought I would write to you concerning generosity. Acts of generosity underpin our faith and it is your generosity which enables our Church and our Faith to not only continue but to flourish in this place as we seek to bring others to know the joy that we know through our worship and our relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Official Church in Wales teaching (although we rarely talk about it), based on the firm foundation of biblical teaching, is that of tithing. The biblical principle is that 10% of our income is set aside, given to God to support ministry and to care for those in need spiritually and physically. The Church interprets this by asking it’s members to give 5% to the the church and 5% to other charities, although it is often asked meekly because we are embarrassed to talk about money and are grateful for any gift that is given. Tithing is a practice that I seek to follow myself but it is not always easy, especially in times such as these with a cost of living crisis and so many competing pressures on our finances.

A church with a rainbow in the sky

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

My thought in writing to you is to try and explain how valuable your generosity is and how the gift you give to the church is used. The church is entirely dependant on the gifts it receives. The money given is used partly to ensure the up-keep of our magnificent buildings, keeping them open as houses of God to any who seek the comfort and solace within them. Our churches more than places to gather for worship, they are also the largest group of historical cultural buildings in this area. We are custodians of their past, guardians of the stories of our communities and want to preserve them for future generations not as musuem pieces but as living, growing and evolving communities. In our buildings we see the mark of every generation across the sea of centuries and in them we leave our generations mark for the generations that will come after us.

However only a portion of the cost of being a Church is the maintenance, heating, lighting and insurance of our buildings. The greatest expense is the cost of ministry. This is paid through the often misunderstood Share. The Share is paid to the Diocese and from it are paid the costs of deploying vicars as well as central dicoesan staff. It costs just over £4 million a year to run the Diocese of St Asaph, an eye watering sum! Dyffryn Clwyd’s contribution to this for 2022 is just over £150,000. Our share of the costs of ministry are largely calculated by the ministry we receive and our attendance worked out over a 3 year average. The mission area covers some of this from our central funds, the remainder works out at around £830 per person annually, or the cost of a cup of coffee from Costa a day.

Some will be able to afford this, others may give more, some will give less, each according to their ability. So what do we get for this money given to the Diocese? Firstly we get priests. It costs around £50,000 a year to deploy a priest. Of course that is not how much we are given to allow us to fulfil our calling to God! That also covers the associated costs such as National Insurance contributions, pension contributions, housing and other employment costs that need to be paid. In Dyffryn Clwyd we receive 3 full time priests A group of people posing for a photo

Description automatically generatedand 1 non-stipendary priest (which costs 0.1% of a full time priest). Further to this Dyffryn Clwyd is considered a good place for the training of future ministry and so we are presently blessed with 1 full time curate and 2 part-time ordinands. We also receive an annual grant that pays half of the costs of our administrator. So we actually receive from the Diocese more than we give.

A group of children in a church

Description automatically generated with medium confidenceA group of children sitting on the floor

Description automatically generated with medium confidenceAdded to the ministry we receive we also benefit from the Diocesan staff. People like Tracey White who is running our Lent LyCiG course. It is also thanks to Tracey that we have been trialling such things as the contactless donation system that has been in St Peter’s Ruthin for the last few years. Then there’s Michael Plane, the churches inspector who carries out our Quinquennial inspections. His advice has been invaluable in the re-ordering of Llanfair DC and Llangynhafal and in the plans for Llanbedr, Ruthin, Clocaenog, Llanynys & Efenechtyd. There’s Martin Schlangen who advises on grants and again has been instrumental in helping us find grant funding for projects here in Dyffryn Clwyd. Our schools officers who assist with the running of Church Schools across the Diocese who give education to over 6,000 primary aged children, 3 of these Church schools are within Dyffryn Clwyd.

Generosity begets generosity. Your donations and gifts, given in faith Sunday by Sunday enables the generosity of the Diocese and enables us here to serve in our communties with that same generosity. Your donations helps us do far more than just keep the doors open and maintain our Sunday Worship. It allows:

* Daily and varied worship
* Visiting the sick and the housebound
* Visits to care homes
* Care and religious teaching to our children inside and outside of schools
* Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals
* Youth work including Teen Screen, Teens Go Wild, Beveredges & Confirmation Classes
* Care for our churchyards, not just as places of burial but as havens for wildlife
* A group of people sitting outside

  Description automatically generated with medium confidenceOutreach such as Drop in Fridays, Caffee Côf, Quiet Days, Pilgrimages, Meditation Days and more
* Music Education through Song School
* School Chaplaincy in Bryn Hyfryd
* Fresh expressions like Wild Church, Clwb Cynhafal, The Bridge
* And so much more...

Above all your generosity allows both our churches and our clergy to be visible and tangible signs of God’s grace and love to everyone and anyone across Dyffryn Clwyd, open and available whatever anybodies needs and a constant bedrock of prayer in all our communties.

A person wearing glasses

Description automatically generated with low confidenceAt present our income does not match our outgoings and we are using our reserves to do all these things. Why not take this time in Lent to pray about your giving and see if you can pledge to give a little extra each month so that we can continue to serve our communities, investing in a vibrant gorwing church for the generations to come. The most efficient way of doing this is through the Gift Direct scheme, which if you’re a tax payer can add 25% to your gift. To sign up to Gift Direct or other ways in which you can give talk to your treasurer or ask the clergy.

Thank you for all that you do and all that you give.

May God’s grace be with you on your Lenten Journey.

Yours in Christ

Tad Huw, Rev. Richard, Rev. Stuart, Rev. John, Rev. Natasha