Root & Branch Review of Fairer Shares

A Study Guide for PCCs on the key principles of an offering-based system

January 2014
Introduction

The ‘Strategy for Ministry’ report, approved by Diocesan Synod in November 2012 is a major piece of work outlining the way forward for Southwark Diocese over the next five years. One of the recommendations from this report (3.8.1. on page 20) was that there should be a ‘root and branch review of the Fairer Shares system’.

In response to this the Diocesan Board of Finance appointed a group chaired by the Revd Canon Simon Butler to undertake a through review of the Fairer Shares system. A report from the group was presented to and approved by Diocesan Synod in November 2013. The report recommended that whilst ‘Fairer Shares’ served the Diocese well for many years, it was time to move to a new scheme.

The heart of the report (Section 2) sets out the key principles on which a new system is to be based and the next task of the Group is to work on designing a scheme which is ‘explicitly theological, mission-focussed and financially coherent’. The appropriate parts of Section 2 are reproduced on pages 6-8 of this Study Guide.

Further sections of the report develop the principles further - reinforcing the priority of good practice in stewardship (section 3); an exploration of what is known as an ‘offerings based system’ as the way forward in Southwark (section 4); initial consideration of what such a system would look like (section 5); an examination of some of the advantages and disadvantages, challenges and risks (section 6) and some preliminary practical considerations (section 7).

It will be helpful in the first instance to focus on Section 2 and these core principles in a PCC discussion. It should also be said that there is not yet a new name for the system. ‘Root and Branch’ is the name of the report that has examined the way forward!

After Easter this year, parishes will be invited to Archdeaconry conversations about the key principles and the development of a new way forward. Details of these will be made available as soon as possible.

Bishop Christopher has suggested that parishes and especially PCCs would find it helpful to make opportunities to discuss the principles that shape the report in the coming months.
The full Report can be found on the Diocesan website (http://tinyurl.com/pykxe3l) and some may wish to read it in full. This short introduction and accompanying study material introduces the key principles. Bishop Christopher hopes that PCCs might consider the material either by taking about an hour at a forthcoming meeting or by having three shorter sessions at successive meetings.

After it has discussed the principles the PCC may wish:
- to share their thinking and reflections more widely in the parish
- to bring their conclusions to one of the archdeaconry meetings
- to e-mail them to the Working Group via richard.coe@southwark.anglican.org

None of these options are required - but all are welcome!

Three key principles

The Root & Branch Report outlines three key principles upon which the funding of the mission and ministry of the Diocese should be structured and two further principles within which both the parishes of the Diocese and its Boards, Councils and Officers should operate.

1. Proportionality (2.2.1 - 2.2.6; pages 7 - 10)

The concept of proportionality is at the centre of biblical insights into stewardship and giving (Deuteronomy 16:16b & 17, 2 Corinthians 8: 10-15).

To consider:
- How might the lessons of these two passages be applied within your church and between the churches of the Diocese?
- What are some of the attitudes and qualities that must mark proportional giving?
- What are the challenges and opportunities of proportional giving in your church?

This principle also recognises the important commitment to mission and ministry across the whole Diocese. It leads to a greater awareness of how that is exercised and the importance of relationships between all churches, given that all are engaged in a common purpose and aim.
2. **Informed Generosity (2.31. - 2.3.6: pages 10 - 13)**


To consider:
- How does the church receive and reflect the generosity of God in its regular life?
- The Root and Branch Review group has found helpful some words from the writer Henri Nouwen:
  
  “As our prayer deepens into constant awareness of God’s goodness, the spirit of gratitude grows within us. Gratitude flows from the recognition that who we are and we have are gifts to be received and shared. Gratitude releases us from the bonds of obligation and prepares us to offer ourselves freely and fully for the work of the Kingdom.”

What is your response to these words and the response of the PCC?

Generosity is not to be equated with wealth. The incident of the widow’s offering shows that generosity is measured by what we have left not by how much we give. It may mean that across the Diocese there will be occasions in the future to celebrate the generosity displayed by poorer parishes and to challenge the lack of generosity which may be evident in richer ones.

3. **Aspiration and encouragement towards self-financing (2.4.1 - 2.4.8; pages 13 - 15)**

To believe in self-sufficiency is a sin - a denial of our reliance on God and on one another. However within the Biblical tradition there is an expectation that churches should, as far as they are able, support the ministry of their own clergy (1 Corinthians 9: 11-14).

Nonetheless we need to take the ‘proportionality’ principle seriously. This means that it is right that where ministry and mission cannot be fully paid for by the local church it should be supported. Whilst recognising that in some places self-financing will always be a long-term goal, it is helpful to encourage it to remain a genuine aspiration. (In 2013, two-thirds of parishes in the Diocese were not yet able to fund their own costs of ministry.)
To consider:
- What lessons can be learned from Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 9: 11-14
- If you are a parish that is currently supported by the giving of others in the Diocese (at present those paying around £60,000 per year or less in Fairer Shares payments)
  - What responsibility do you have towards those other parishes?
  - What might you like them to know about what that giving means to you?
- If you are a parish that currently supports other parishes through Fairer Shares (at present pays over around £60,000 per year through Fairer Shares)
  - What responsibility do you have towards those other parishes?
  - What would deepen your relationship with such parishes?

Two further considerations

The group recommends that the funding of ministry and mission in Southwark should also be based on:

**Transparency**
That is, there should be a commitment from the Diocese to enable individual church members and PCCs to understand how the Diocese assesses contributions and distributes the money it collects. This means providing the fullest information possible about funding and expenditure - a principle which should be reciprocated by parishes.

**Mutual Accountability**
An important part of the new proposals will be mature, open, communicative relationships based on trust, respect and deepening love one for another in order that there can be good conversations about parish and Diocesan finance.

Finally

We hope that this material will help parishes begin to explore a possible exciting new way of funding ministry and mission in the Diocese of Southwark. Please do consider one or more of the suggested ways of sharing your PCC’s responses
The Principles behind a New System for Funding Mission & Ministry

From Diocese of Southwark: Root & Branch Report Section 2

Principle 1: Proportionality

We discern, agree and recommend that the funding of mission and ministry within Southwark should be based on the principle of proportionality. (Report 2.2.1)

Scripture & Theology: For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has - not according to what one does not have. I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. 2 Corinthians 8:11-14 NRSV. Those who are blessed with more have a responsibility to support those with less.

Principle: A principle of proportionality depends - both within Scripture and in Church history- upon relationship between congregations. Our proposals seek to clarify and increase the relationship between the churches of the Diocese through proportional sharing of responsibility for funding mission and ministry. We believe that the Deanery could well offer a place for deeper relationship to flourish between local congregations that could easily foster a greater commitment to proportional giving towards mission and ministry elsewhere in the Diocese.

Fairness?: Because there is no agreement in the diocese about what ‘fairness’ means in the context of funding mission and ministry, the Root & Branch Group are anxious to move away from the concept of ‘fairness’ as a first consideration of what is the best approach for the future. The biblical principle of proportionality suggests that the more biblical and mission-enabling concept of generosity is a basis upon which to operate a system of funding mission and ministry in Southwark.

Principle 2: Informed Generosity

We discern, agree and recommend that the funding of mission and ministry within Southwark should be based on the principle of informed generosity. (Report 2.3.1)

Scripture & Theology: Freely you have received, freely give. Matthew 10:8 NRSV. God’s generosity is the essence of the theological concept of grace. The Scottish theologian Richard of St Victor reminds us that for love to be perfect, it must be shared. Part of our response to God’s grace is that of generosity. Thus in the Corinthian correspondence St Paul can highlight the Macedonians’ extreme generosity (2 Corinthians 8:1-5), and use that to challenge the
Corinthians themselves to excel in generosity (8:6-8), because of the grace of the Lord. Responding to God’s grace results in the sort of symbiotic relationship which Paul goes on to describe in chapter 9: 6 The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And 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. 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 NRSV

What we give can only be a token of recognition of what God has done for us. A measure of our wealth and of faithfulness to the Kingdom of God is not what we possess, but what we give away.

**Principle:** *Generosity is a fundamental theological perspective.* It informs our relationship with God, our fellow-Christians and our living in the world. Furthermore, generous living is always informed by our ongoing experience of God’s continued faithfulness and generosity in prayer and worship. Every Eucharist is a moment of informed generosity: we offer our lives to the God who speaks to us in the Word and feeds us in the Sacrament. Funding mission and ministry on the basis of such generosity is a reflection of generous Christian living.

*Generosity is also voluntary.* Rather than a system where we feel ‘obliged’ to do something, we are free to respond generously. All of us have experienced outpourings of generosity within our congregations when hearts are touched by God to respond to genuine need and when giving is seen primarily as directed towards such a need rather than towards a budget. This is the essence of informed generosity and we see no reason why a similar approach should not operate in respect of funding the ministry and mission of the Diocese.

*Generosity is something into which we can grow.* Effective Christian education, the active example of clergy and lay leaders and support from the wider Diocese, is the way to see generosity grow in and between congregations. We would like to see a system in place which offers parishes a chance to grow in their attitude towards generosity and ability to be generous.

*Generosity is mission-shaped:* it is infectious, it encourages congregations in faith and it provides a basis upon which new disciples can connect their newfound Christian commitment to their responsibility to God’s people. Our mission as the People of God is an expression of God’s generosity.

*Generosity is inclusive.* Generosity should not be equated with wealth. In the incident of the widow’s offering in Luke 21:1-4 Jesus teaches that generosity is not to be measured by how much we give but by how much we have left. This principle will enable us to celebrate where generosity is displayed by poorer parishes and challenge lack of generosity which may be evident in some richer parishes.
Principle 3: Aspiring to Become Self-Financing

We discern, agree and recommend that the funding of mission and ministry within Southwark should be based on the principle that all parishes should aspire to, and be encouraged towards, becoming self-financing. (Report 2.4.1)

Scripture & Theology: To believe in self-sufficiency is sin. It is a denial of our reliance upon God and upon one another. Our principle of self-financing is not an expectation that we should be self-sufficient. But, within the Biblical tradition there is an expectation that local churches should, as far as they are able, support the ministry of their clergy. St Paul’s defence of his ministry in 1 Corinthians 9 is based on the principle that those who sow spiritual seed should be able to reap a material harvest (v.11). He reinforces this with an appeal to Jesus’ command (cf Matthew 10:10): In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.
1 Corinthians 9:14 NIV. Then in Galatians 6, Paul emphasises the responsibility of the local church to provide proper support for those who teach: Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.
Galatians 6:6 NIV

Principle: The principle of the local church paying for its clergy seems well-established and, in many parts of the Anglican Communion, is the norm. However, putting this principle alongside the proportionality principle, it seems right that ministry and mission should be supported where it cannot fully be paid for. We are not proposing that this should cease. Those with more resources should support those with fewer.

But parishes where mission and ministry is supported by other congregations through redistribution of resources are not somehow freed from the aspiration to become self-financing. In some places such an aspiration will always be a long-term goal, but we want to encourage it to remain a genuine aspiration. When others give us a gift, it is natural that we should honour the generosity by using the gift received wisely. In a similar way, congregations where local ministry is supported by the generosity of other parishes will hopefully want to honour such generosity by not taking it for granted and husbanding the gift with care.

We are not imagining that all parishes will be able to become self-financing in the near future: some may never reach that goal. However, we do believe that the way we structure the funding of mission and ministry within Southwark should expect, enable and encourage as many parishes as possible to reach that goal, thus releasing other parishes to divert their generous and sacrificial commitment to funding ministry to other areas of mission.