

FAITH & GENEROSITY REFLECTION

Our Offering

Our Offering is a short, flexible resource for financial and volunteer giving that can be used over one, two, or three Sundays.

Our Offering intentionally adds nothing new to the life of the church; rather, it begins with what we already do – the weekly offering of ourselves and our gifts to God in the Offertory.

Our Offering shows us that setting aside a season as a church to pray, reflect and review our giving is not an uncomfortable obligation, but a natural expression of who we are as Christians.

At its heart is a simple invitation: to give thanks for all that God has given us, to reflect prayerfully on our giving, and to make our giving part of the offering of our whole lives to God. This offering includes not only our money but also our time, skills and presence as we serve God and our neighbours.

Generosity as Our Response to God's Grace

Generosity lies at the heart of the Christian life. It is woven into our identity in Christ, shaping our instincts, habits, and the way we see the world. As we grow as followers of Christ, we learn to live more 'in tune' with God, reflecting his generous heart.

Yet when we are asked to explain what this means in practice many of us feel unsure what our response should be. What should we say?

From the very beginning, we know that God's generosity is written into creation. He freely shares the world, the universe, and every good gift with us, inviting us to receive them with gratitude and to use them in his service. So we know that our generous response is not optional; it is part of the very structure of Christian life.

Above all, God's greatest gift is his love. We are able to love only because 'he first loved us' (1 John 4:19). Without love, even the richest life is empty. We show our faith and gratitude by sharing that love: not out of mere obligation, but because love and thankfulness belong together; they are part of our spiritual DNA.

We know this, yet something can hold us back from living as generously as we would wish. St Paul's words to the Romans still speak powerfully today:

'For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit'. (Romans 8:5)

When our minds are set only on worldly things, what Paul calls 'the flesh' we find it hard to trust God with our money, time, and skills. Our hesitations may come from worldly attractions and from fear: fear of losing what makes us feel secure, or fear that our gift will be wasted. In

response, setting aside a season as a church to pray, reflect and review our giving is not about fundraising, but an invitation to name these fears honestly before God, to reflect on where our minds are truly 'set', and to ask the Holy Spirit to reshape our desires.

Seeing Generosity from God's Perspective

The more we contemplate God's unwavering generosity, the more we realise how often we squander his gifts – and yet he does not hold back. He continues to pour out his Holy Spirit, inviting us to grow in faith and love.

Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams describes this wonderfully: 'Once we know that God is 'for us', we open up to the gift that God wants to give us – which is a share in his own love and freedom and mercy. We breathe with his breath – that's part of what it means to say that we receive God's 'Spirit', which makes us live like Jesus 'in tune' with God. If we have really taken the message in, we shall live lives of selfless generosity, always asking how the gifts given us – material or imaginative or spiritual or whatever – can be shared in a way that brings other people more fully alive. And we shall be able to trust the generosity of others and be free to receive what they have to give us. Generosity, gratitude, confidence that when we fail, we are still loved – all of this focused on Jesus' life and death and resurrection. That's where we start in the lifelong job of being a Christian.'

Generosity is not separate from discipleship; it is a sign of Christ's life at work in us. As we learn to trust God's promise, we discover the truth of Scripture: 'Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously' (2 Corinthians 9:6).

As Christians, we know that God has shown his love by coming close to us in Jesus Christ, at great cost. Our response is a life of grateful, generous faith. The more we dwell in this love, the more generosity becomes who we are, not something we do.

Who We Are in Giving

Our Offering recognises that we are entrusted with sharing the love of God. Jesus calls us to share this love – loving, learning, serving, and growing together as children of God. No wonder discipleship and generosity are widely described as two sides of the same coin, because both are about sharing his love. *Our Offering* simply reflects this truth.

When, together, as a church family, we ask how our money, time, and abilities can more faithfully reflect the love we have received, we remember that there are no 'private compartments' on the journey to eternal life (Abbot Jamison, *Finding Sanctuary*); we travel together, sharing our gifts as children of God.

So when we bring our offering to God in thanksgiving, we are saying that we want to be faithful and generous followers, ready to share his love. Whatever our doubts and worries, we choose to trust him, believing that as we give, we will grow in faith, hope, and love.

For a church shaped by Christ's generosity, pausing to reflect on giving is not an unusual demand but the most natural thing in the world.

For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
St Francis of Assisi