

Nottingham North & South Deanery Finance Group

Parish Share

Theological Principles

This is a brief introductory outline statement of Theological Principles as discussed and agreed by the Nottingham North & South Deanery Finance Group.

It is offered to Parishes as a theological backdrop to the work being done on the allocation of Parish Share by the Finance Group and equally as a theological backdrop behind the challenge of achieving delivery of the share asked of parishes.

The Revd Colin Bourne is willing to offer an extended paper, giving more detail, to any Parish who would like it and to engage in correspondence or discussion about it.

1. **Mutuality/commonality.** Fundamental to the understanding of the share system is the principle of mutuality/commonality, whereby each parish/benefice sees and understands itself to be part of the wider church via Cluster and Deanery links to the Diocese, and beyond the Diocese to the wider church. The 'strong' should rejoice in being able to offer help to the 'weak', recognising that each is able to learn from and benefit from the experience and context of others in widely differing situations – celebrating, through the Parish system, the universal spiritual coverage of the entire population provided by the Church of England in co-operation with our ecumenical partners. There are numerous examples in the New Testament of this principle.
2. **God's Generosity – and ours.** (See, for example, Psalm 65, Ephesians 1:3 – 14 and Matthew 6:19 – 21). All we have to offer comes from our extravagantly generous creator God, who provides physically and spiritually for His creation. In Christ we have been blessed in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing. Our response – an open acknowledgment of our gratitude – and of our total dependence on God for all we have and all we are and will be – mirrored by our own lifestyles of generosity and love (giving time, talents and money).
3. **Jesus and Money.** A read through the Gospels shows that Jesus talked and taught much about money, directly and without embarrassment. We should do so too. For example, the parable of the talents/bags of gold reveals God's stupendous generosity with unworthy servants who are called simply to be good stewards of all they have freely received. 2 Corinthians 9:6 – 15 reveals the blessings of abundant, cheerful giving – out of what God has freely provided. Each must freely decide what to give, without compulsion or reluctance.
4. **Keeping Things in Proportion.** (See, for example, Deuteronomy 16:9 – 17, 2 Corinthians 8:1 – 13, Mark 12:41 – 44). The bible consistently teaches that our giving should be in proportion to our income and resources. This holds true whether we are relatively rich or relatively poor. Paul talks of "this grace of giving". It is a spiritual matter. We are to give to God what's right, not what's left! All Church of England members are asked to give at least 5% of their disposable income (take home pay) to their local church. Many choose to do more than this. If all Electoral Roll members reached even this benchmark, our total Parish Share would be met – with plenty to spare for increased mission and ministry!