



THE BISHOP OF HEREFORD
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To All Clergy and PCC Secretaries, Hereford Diocese

STEWARDSHIP

It is very encouraging that, following our Diocesan Synod's decision on 14th October last year that each Deanery should appoint a Stewardship Co-Ordinator, most now have (but not yet all!). Furthermore, I am heartened by the work that they are doing and by the fact that more and more of our parishes and benefices are seriously addressing stewardship issues, with the support and teaching of their clergy.

All of this is vital. As we know, stewardship is first and foremost a spiritual issue: it is for us to give back to God, and place at his disposal, what He has so lavishly and generously given us. This is not just a comment, as we know, about our time and energy but also about our money and material possessions. Stewardship is part of our discipleship.

I want to place on record as well my gratitude to Rosemary Lording and the Stewardship Working Group. Part of the point of writing to you at this stage about this crucial issue is that our Diocesan Stewardship Working Group has produced a Stewardship Tool Kit which today goes live on our Diocesan Website. Hard copies will be available from the Diocesan Office on request. There are key sections explaining what stewardship is, what Gift Aid is, how the Diocesan budget and parish share work and what are some of the Biblical models of giving.

The national statistics for the Church of England show that our Diocese is in the unenviable position of having the smallest amount of direct giving per week per electoral roll member (£3.71) and the lowest figure but one of any diocese for the weekly average per subscriber to planned giving viz £5.90. That figure is up over 5% on the previous year which is a move in the right direction! We have a long way to go to reach the average for our national church which is £10.06.

However, although the stewardship and giving are serious issues for us, we are delighted to have such a high level of parish share paid and also the fact that, as with the figures from 2004-2008, so in 2009 the average weekly attendance and the usual Sunday attendance within the Diocese has gone up again. This is heartening and a tribute to the dedication, leadership, encouragement, and faithfulness of you all and so many others in our ongoing worship, ministry and mission.

- Do please look at the Stewardship Tool Kit about stewardship or obtain a hard copy from the Diocesan Office.
- Do use it.
- Do take opportunities to teach about stewardship.
- Do encourage your parishes to focus on and renew stewardship giving and best practice.
- Do encourage them as well with the vision of how much more we can do for God if the resources are more fully available.

With very best wishes, thanks and prayers for all that you are doing.

Yours sincerely