

Harvest Stewardship eNews Introduction.



The other day I heard a story that made me chuckle: there once was a strongman at a circus sideshow who demonstrated his power before large audiences every night. Toward the end of one performance, he squeezed the juice from a lemon between his hands. He said to the onlookers, "I will offer £200 to anyone here who can squeeze another drop from this lemon". An older lady hobbled up the stage. She picked up the lemon, clamped it between her two frail, bony hands and squeezed. Out came another teaspoon of lemon juice. The strongman was amazed. He paid the woman £200 but privately asked her, "What is the secret of your strength?" "Practice," the woman answered. "I've been the church treasurer for forty-two years!"

This comes with a huge thank you to all our church treasurers, and stewardship advisers, and all who have been squeezing the very last drops out of the precious resources they have been given to resource God's mission in our County. You are truly creative, dedicated (and strong!) people and we are very grateful for all you do.

But wouldn't it be great if we didn't have to do so quite so much squeezing, and that instead we experienced an overflow of resources, both financial and in others ways, that meant that we could do *everything* God was calling us to do with generous and abundant provision? For that aspiration to be more than wishful thinking, it depends on all of us to play our part.

Generosity is one of the most underrated values in our world. When someone is really generous we are amazed and comment on it. But in fact all Christians are called upon to be generous. We are supposed to be a generous people. Why? Because we are made in the image of God who is a generous God. That's what we remember at Harvest; that God has given us far more than we could need.

Just look at the generous outrageous profligacy of creation. He didn't make just one type of flower, he made millions. Just think about the variety of fish in the sea, and birds in the air. God provides not just enough, not just a meagre last drop, but oceans of beauty and variety in our natural world. And when we see that, it causes us to want to be generous in return: 2 Corinthians 9:10 says "*For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you*".

Harvest is a good time to consider the generosity of what we have been given by God, and to give him thanks. It's also a time for us to think and understand how better to use our resources to join in with God in what he is calling us to create together.

In this season of generosity, as we think about how best to use our money and other resources in the life of the church I'd like to encourage us to be a generous people, reflecting the image of our generous God. My prayer is that we would never have to be like the strong old woman, squeezing the last drops out of meagre resources, but that the outrageous generosity of God would overflow in and through his people, in finances, and in so many other ways.