

Notes of the Tower Hamlets Common Fund Meeting – 10 May 2016

7.30pm at Christ Church Isle of Dogs

Attended by 11 clergy and 32 laity

Welcome

Andy Rider opened the meeting and welcomed those present. A short Powerpoint presentation was shown providing an overview of the Diocese of London. The Diocese consists of some 400 parishes with a population of 6 million people. 450 vicars are engaged and their training, wages, housing and pension costs are met by the Diocese. The Diocese also engages in other activities, namely schools, chaplaincies, National Church, property management, together with support services for parishes in the form of specialist advisors in finance, HR, legal matters, etc. To support all of this activity some £30 million needs to be generated. Three quarters of this comes from the parishes, the final quarter from income on investments, property and grants.

Tom Pyke took the floor to lead worship. Firstly, however, he welcomed the new Archdeacon of Hackney, [Liz Adekunle](#), and presented her with a small gift – a fragment of the yew tree from the churchyard in Capel in Kent under which Thomas á Becket preached.

Evening prayer was led by Tom. David Longbottom gave the reading.

The How of Common Fund

Theresa Moses spoke to a [Powerpoint presentation](#) outlining how Common Fund works. The benefits received by each parish are equivalent to £77k on average, covering clergy costs, housing and training as well as the support activities already mentioned. Parishes with greater need are supported by those which are better off. Together, the giving from parishes in the form of Common Fund enables the Diocese to maintain a Christian presence in every community. It also enables the Diocese to invest in opportunities for growth, such as increasing the number of young people involved in the church, providing a New Church presence in major development areas and, of course, improving the parsonage housing stock.

Attendees were encouraged to pick up copies of the [Common Fund brochure](#) to take back to their parishes for information.

The Why of Common Fund

Liz Adekunle spoke about the importance of recognising 'connection'. Liz spoke about the five love languages, the ways in which we all give and receive love - words of affirmation, quality time, gifts, loving physical touch and acts of service – and how these are all connected. As Christians we are asked to love God and our neighbour and Liz asked us to think about who our neighbour is. The Good Samaritan crossed social, religious and political boundaries to help his neighbour using the resources he had to hand – his donkey and money. We were reminded that we are one in Christ and connected in mission, and this can be developed via Common Fund.

Interviews

Andy introduced Richard Antcliffe (Diocesan Finance and Operations Director), Michael Blaby (PCC Secretary, Christ Church Isle of Dogs) and Sylvester Small (Warden Emeritus and member of both Christ Church and St Luke's). Each spoke a little about themselves and, in response to questions from Andy, spoke about their experience of how Common Fund works in their own individual contexts.

- Richard was pleased to support the 400 churches that generously contribute to Common Fund. For the last ten years the Diocese has managed to balance the budget and also to embark on strategic development priorities to bring a Christian presence to new areas. The Annual Return indicates trends in levels of income and provides useful information for analysis.
- Michael was pleased that Christ Church was able to contribute a considerable sum to Common Fund but he was always looking at ways to raise more. Plenty of information, including presentations, help people to understand better how valuable their personal contributions are and how the money is spent on the **common** good. Christ Church has two ordained ministers and a curate and has been able to open two new bible study groups as well as expand ministry to families and young people.
- Sylvester was busy with building works at the Community Centre but already knows they need a bigger space. Christ Church and St Luke's work closely together, including sharing worship and the patronal festivals.

Conclusion

Andy invited attendees to form small buzz groups to discuss what had been learnt followed by questions/comments from the floor.

- Jacquie Driver reported that she was currently investigating on behalf of the Diocese the possibility of setting up a finance support team for parishes. Those who had finance experience and who might consider offering support, or indeed those who are in need of assistance, were asked to contact Theresa.
- James Hughesdon felt the evening had provided useful information to take back to the parish in order to explain and break down the mysteries of the Common Fund.
- In response to a question from Hayley Clark, Theresa Moses briefly outlined the benefits of the new [Parish Giving Scheme](#). The administration of claiming Gift Aid can be handled centrally and is free to parishes (as opposed to a 4% charge for stewardship). The service is only available for those giving by direct debit. Theresa also advised that there had been a change to the GASDS ([Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme](#)) and it was now possible to claim up to £8,000 of loose plate collections and anonymous donations.

Ed Dix closed the evening with prayers.

The next Deanery Synod – Thursday 13 July 2016 - Summer Synod at RFSK