

What's the 'adventure level' of your giving?

Last summer I had a go at white-water rafting, something that is a bit scary but incredibly exhilarating. You have to entrust yourself into the hands of your skipper, and trust that they really know what they are doing.

For me the point at which I really had to trust was when we had just come down some tumultuous rapids, and then coming to a calmer stretch of water the skipper called out ... 'Everyone jump in the water.'

The first time he called, I pretended not to hear. But eventually I plucked up courage and jumped in. I am so glad I did – it turned out to be tremendous fun!

Rafting rivers are graded from one to five in terms of level of adventure, where one is a nice gentle stream and five is more like a raging torrent. The river I was on was usually a three, but because of recent high rainfall it was a four.

Like white-water rafting, being a disciple of Jesus is an adventure.

Giving part of our income to God is part of the adventure of faith, so it's worth each of us thinking for a moment – what's the adventure level of my giving?

Is it a nice, safe, gentle one, rippling along in shallow water? Or is it a two, pushing out into slightly choppier water, trusting the Skipper? Or maybe I've been giving at level two for years and frankly it feels dull and safe, and I am just realising that God is prodding me to be ready to jump out of the boat and try giving at level three or four? Or am I really going for it, with a high-adrenalin five?

In the Gospels Jesus calls his disciples not to settle for the safe and comfortable, but to be bold and adventurous in their giving.

He commends the poor widow, who puts into the offertory all that she has to live on. He challenges the rich young ruler to sell all his possessions and give the money to the poor before he comes to follow him.

Jesus' radical teaching about generosity is explored in our new DVD course, ideal for Lent groups, called *Generosity, Gift and Grace* which has been distributed to parishes in the past few weeks.

The videos that have been distributed on DVD are also available via our Diocesan YouTube channel.

As we focus as a diocese on the theme of discipleship in the coming years it is a good time for us each as disciples of Jesus to pray about our giving and to step up a level.

God has collectively given us an exciting vision as a Diocese – Vision 2026 Healthy Churches Transforming Communities – to see the churches of the diocese grow through making disciples, being witnesses and growing leaders.

As part of this vision we are committed to growth and to maintain, rather than cut back, the number of stipendiary clergy in parishes, and to train more lay leaders.

We won't be able to do this without a step change in both giving and vocations. Yet through our generous response we can help more people discover the love and forgiveness that only Jesus can give.

What might a step change in adventurous giving look like?

Surely it should be to work towards giving away a tenth of our income – what the Bible calls a tithe – to church and to missions, not as a maximum to be aspired to, but as a joyful minimum?

In the Gospels following Jesus is a risky adventure, but we are in the safest of hands.

Are you up for the adventure?

Archdeacon Mark

- Do you have any response to this piece that you want to share? Email communicate@blackburn.anglican.org