

Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity (Stewardship Sunday) | 20 September 2026 | 10:45 Eucharist

There is a profound mystery at the heart of our scriptures today, one that invites us to look at our lives, our worth, and our time through the lens of divine generosity. When we look at the wilderness of Exodus and the vineyard of Matthew's Gospel, we are invited to step into a space of complete peace and grace. These texts present us with a vision of a God who provides abundantly. They call us, on this Stewardship Sunday here at Derby Cathedral, to ground our lives in thanksgiving and to look forward together with absolute hope. So, may I encourage you to stay behind after the Eucharist for the Stewardship Presentation.

Creation is an ongoing act of pure love. Everything we have - our breath, our relationships, our community, and the holy space we gather in today - is fundamentally a gift. The 20th century theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar wrote about this reality, noting that "[existential] gratitude is the acknowledgment that we do not possess ourselves, but have received ourselves as a gift." When we recognize that we are entirely held by this grace, our perspective naturally shifts toward a deep and abiding joy.

In this light, giving is a privilege. It is our loving response to a God who has already poured so much goodness into our lives. When we offer our time, our prayer, and our financial resources, we are participating in the very flow of divine love, ensuring that the legacy of faith we have received remains vibrant and welcoming for everyone.

This acts as a direct expression of our discipleship. To be a disciple is to follow Christ, and Christ's entire life was an act of self-giving. Therefore, giving is not an occasional activity; it is a vital part of our spiritual formation. It is woven into the very fabric of our Christian vocation. Our vocation is our response to God's unique call on our lives, a commitment to use the resources, talents, and time entrusted to us to manifest the kingdom of heaven here on earth. When we practice intentional stewardship, we are living out that vocation in its purest form, aligning our hearts with the generosity of the Creator.

As we reflect on this shared vocation, it is essential to acknowledge and thank each one of you for all that you already do. What I have observed in the past 5 months, is that so much of the life of this cathedral happens because of your quiet devotion, your hours of volunteering, your welcome, and your steadfast support. Every act of kindness, every role fulfilled, and every financial offering sustains our common life. Thank you for your immense generosity. Yet, the call to stewardship always invites us to go a little deeper. It gently asks us to look at our lives afresh, ensuring that our commitment matches our ability, and that we are truly investing ourselves in the spiritual and physical future of this community.

This is where our stewardship meets our hope. Hope, in the Christian understanding, is a profound theological virtue - an unshakeable confidence in the enduring faithfulness of God. It is

the conviction that the work begun here centuries ago is meant to flourish and grow far into the future.

By anchoring our giving in this hope, we look forward with great confidence. This is particularly poignant for us as we prepare to enter our centenary year. This milestone is not merely a glance backward at history; it is a powerful reminder of a century of continuous prayer, witness, and service in Derbyshire rooted in faith and hope.

The generational generosity of those who came before us in 1927 built upon ancient foundations to secure the cathedral ministry we inherit today. Now, as we prepare for the next century of faith, our giving becomes the vehicle through which we pass this sacred trust to the generations yet to come. It is an act of deep solidarity and love, making sure that decades from now, this cathedral will still stand as a place of sanctuary, dignity, and grace for all who seek it.

When we commit to supporting the cathedral, we are investing not only in the immediate future but in the future that extends for many years to come. We are declaring that our values, our faith, and our care for this city will continue to thrive. We are ensuring that this cathedral remains a beacon of light, purpose, and spiritual stability for the long term. This building is a living temple, and every gift offered ensures that its bells will keep ringing, its prayers will keep rising, and its doors will remain wide open to offer solace and community to all people.

This sacred future is anchored in the central mysteries of our worship. It is found in our music, which lifts our hearts and translates the divine into a language beyond words. It is found pre-eminently in the Eucharist, where Christ offers himself to us completely, feeding us with the bread of life just as God fed the Israelites in the wilderness.

In the Eucharist, we are unified as one body, nourished to be sent out into the world. By securing our financial future, we ensure that this cathedral remains an enduring place of sanctuary - a holy refuge where anyone, at any time, can enter, experience the beauty of holiness through music, and encounter the real presence of Christ.

We are all a vital part of this journey. Every act of kindness, every hour volunteered, and every financial gift, is a tangible expression of that hope. It is a quiet, powerful statement that we look to the future with confidence because we trust the One who holds it.

As we approach the altar today to receive the bread of life, let us pray for a renewal of our hearts.

May we step forward with confidence and peace. May we steward what we have been given with wisdom, give with joyful and open hands, and look to the future with a resilient and enduring hope. For the One who calls us is faithful, and His grace sustains us today, tomorrow, and for all the years to come. Amen.

The Revd Romita Shrisunder, Canon for Community Outreach and Social Justice