

Living Generously: Adaptable Resource

What is this resource?

This is a resource to help you explore the topic of *Living Generously*, and the different ways in which we can be generous with our lives in response to the incredible generosity of Jesus in giving his life for us on the cross.

'Christian Generosity is rooted in the generosity of God made abundantly available to us in Jesus Christ, whose way is the truth that leads to fullness of life. For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. (2 Corinthians 8.9).' – Bishop Christopher

The resource has been created based upon the booklet *'Living Generously: Seven reflections on Mary anointing Jesus' feet'* by Jonathan Farnhill, which is available as a PDF on the Equip Hub to download and read, or limited paper copies are available from the Diocese.

In the booklet, seven different types of generosity are identified in the act of Mary anointing Jesus' feet with perfume, and there are short written reflections on each type. In this resource, we have taken each of the seven types of generosity identified and provided a one page reflection on each including a definition, some examples of what this kind of generosity might look like in our day to day lives, an image and a few questions.

How to use this resource

This resource can be adapted and used in a number of different ways to suit different contexts and audiences. We have provided a few suggestions below, but please don't feel limited by these options – you know your context best, so if you have got other ideas, go ahead and get creative!

1. Small group / lent group discussion starters

For groups who like quite an informal style, this will provide some great discussion starters and opportunities to reflect and respond. There are 7 topics and 5 weeks in Lent, so either choose 5 or group a few together some weeks to cover them all. If you're looking for something more formal, have a look at the *Living Generously: Study Course* resource on the Equip Hub.

2. Prayer stations / reflections

We have used these resources as a series of prayer stations in the Cathedral last autumn. Visitors and church members alike engaged with the resource and it prompted conversations and prayer across age groups. This could be a one off event or they could be left out for the duration of your focus on this theme. Appendix 1 includes some photos of how we set this up and what additional equipment we used.

3. With children and young people

The simplicity of this resource means it can easily be used to start conversations with children. You can pick and choose which examples and question you use depending on the children you are with.

It could be used in a home, church or school context. Children might especially enjoy thinking about what action they could take that week to be more generous and feeding back to say how it went.

4. Service topics

You could use these as a prompt for preparing interactive, intergenerational services on this theme, along with the prayers and liturgy provided in a separate resource.

5. Individual reflection

Alongside the reflections in the booklet, the stories and questions from this resource can be a helpful tool for further individual reflection, especially for those who are unable to attend church gatherings. You could create a resource bag to deliver with the booklet and these reflections.

6. In the community

When we piloted this resource in the Cathedral last autumn we found that visitors to the cathedral readily engaged with this topic as a display station. The subject, stories and questions are accessible and relatable whether or not you have a faith, and it started some interesting conversations with people from all walks of life. You might like to use this as an activity trail around your church yard or community, or contact local schools to run it as an assembly or shared event.

Generous with time

Being generous with our time means choosing to spend time in ways which bless and serve others. Time is precious. By giving people our time, we are saying to them that they matter and they have value.



Examples:

"A neighbour knocked on the door because their car had broken down and they couldn't collect their shopping. I jumped into my car and collected it for them even though I had a busy day planned."

"I noticed that my colleague was upset at work. I talked to them briefly but it was a busy shift, so I offered to meet up with them on my break so they had space to talk and share."

"I volunteer one morning a week at the community café, setting up tables, serving drinks and having a chat – it's a great chance for people to gather and get to know one another. People really appreciate the company and the cake! I think people can be lonely without things like this"

"I'm on the management board at work. Recently some of my team have raised some issues with their work conditions which needed addressing. Bringing these issues to the board has meant the meetings have run on longer into the evening as we've tried to find a solution, but it's really important that my team know they are heard and valued as employees."

"I'm a single dad and don't get to go out much. A mate from my church offered to babysit for me once a fortnight so I could get out the house for a bit and have a break. It's made such a difference."

Questions:

What about you?

- When has someone been generous to you like this?
- Do you find it easy or hard?

Or

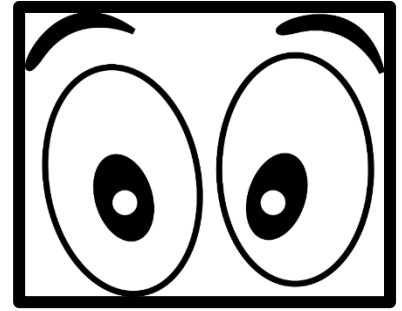
- When have you been generous to someone else like this?
- Did you find it easy or hard?

Thinking about your daily routine, do you feel time rich or time poor?

What might being generous with your time look like this week?

Generous with attention

Being generous with our attention means choosing to ignore distractions like our phones, TV or other thoughts and being intentional about paying attention to what is happening around you. This helps us notice what God is doing around us.



Examples:

“Whenever I meet my friend she puts her phone on silent and hides it so she isn’t distracted and can concentrate on me.”

“When I get into a discussion with someone, I try really hard to focus on what they are saying, rather than just planning my response in my head. Listening to what they’re saying, even if I don’t agree with them, shows respect and helps us to disagree well.”

“My children love to tell me about their day. I’m usually half listening whilst also making dinner, hanging up the washing, clearing up a spill and trying to remember when they last had a bath. Yesterday my daughter got frustrated because she could tell I wasn’t listening to her. I realized I needed to stop for 5 minutes and give her my full attention. The other stuff could wait.”

“I used to go every week to a social group. I’ve found it harder to go the last month or so. I didn’t say anything as I didn’t want to bother anyone. Anyway this morning I got a phone call from someone in the group just wondering how I am. Said they’d noticed I wasn’t there for a few weeks and wanted to check I was okay. It made my day.”

Questions:

What about you?

- When has someone been generous to you like this?
- Do you find it easy or hard?

Or

- When have you been generous to someone else like this?
- Did you find it easy or hard?

When do you find it hardest to pay attention?

What are you often distracted by?

What might being generous with your attention look like this week?

Generous with wealth

Being generous with our wealth is choosing to honour God with how we spend our money. Rather than holding on to as much as we can, seeking ways to live with less and give away more.



Examples:

"I wanted to help people who had less than me. So, I decided to make a packed lunch instead of buying lunch every day and give away the money I saved."

"When money was tight one month, an unexpected bill came in and meant I didn't have enough money left for food. I was a bit embarrassed, but I told my small group thinking they would pray and they did so much more! They made sure I had food all week, inviting me round for dinner and sending me home with leftovers. One of them even gave me a gift card for the local supermarket. I felt so loved."

"I try to give away some of my income each month. I set aside some money and ask God what or who it might be for. Sometimes I don't hear anything, so I give it to a charity I support. Other times I get a sense I'm supposed to give it to a specific person or for a specific thing. It's not much, but it's a privilege to be able to share some of what I have."

Questions:

What about you?

- When has someone been generous to you like this?
- Do you find it easy or hard?

Or

- When have you been generous to someone else like this?
- Did you find it easy or hard?

Why do you think we tend to hold onto our money so much?

How might you be creative with how you spend money, in order to free some up to give away?

What might being generous with your wealth look like this week?

Generous with talents

Being generous with our talents is finding ways to use the things we are good at to bless others and worship God.



Examples:

"Someone in our church runs a marketing company, and he offered his expertise and skills to help our church design new signage and branding."

"I love cooking, so I often cook extra portions and drop them off to people who might appreciate a meal when their life is extra busy or hard. It doesn't take me much longer when I'm cooking anyway, but it saves them lots of time."

"I used to work in finance but recently retired. I've started volunteering for Citizens Advice Bureau to use some of my knowledge and experience to help others."

'There's a lady at church who always seems to have the right words to say at the right time. She's helped so many people through difficult times with her sensitive and loving conversation'

Questions:

What about you?

- When has someone been generous to you like this?
- Do you find it easy or hard?

Or

- When have you been generous to someone else like this?
- Did you find it easy or hard?

What are you good at? What abilities and talents do you have?

What might being generous with your talents look like this week?

Generous with possessions

Being generous with our possessions means not hoarding the stuff we own, but being open handed and sharing what we have with those in need.



Examples:

“My uncle has a beautiful old car, and he loves lending it to people or driving it for them on their wedding day.”

“I’ve collected lots of jigsaws over the years, so I lend them out to friends and family to enjoy and swap around. No point them sitting there collecting dust!”

“I love to garden and have lots of different plants. Every time I grow plants from seed I set some aside to give to my neighbours to enjoy.”

“My friend and I helped each other clear out our wardrobes of the clothes and shoes that we don’t wear anymore or no longer fit us – we were surprised how much we didn’t use! We took two full bags to the charity shop.”

Questions:

What about you?

- When has someone been generous to you like this?
- Do you find it easy or hard?

Or

- When have you been generous to someone else like this?
- Did you find it easy or hard?

What possessions to you have which you might be able to share?

Are there any possessions you have which you no longer use and might give away?

What might being generous with your possessions look like this week?

Generous with reputation

Being generous with our reputation is about caring less about what others think of us, or feeling embarrassed, and more about loving God and loving our neighbour.



Examples:

"I was stood in a circle of friends chatting and noticed someone was standing alone. No one really likes them, but I went to say hello and invited them to join us."

"A big decision was being made at work which would bring in more profits, but I wasn't comfortable that it was an honest and fair choice for our customers. I spoke up to try to change it, even though that made me unpopular."

"My friend was really struggling with confidence. Everyone knows me as confident as I'm always up the front so she felt like I couldn't relate at all because I had it all together. Although it felt vulnerable and scary, I decided to admit to her that I get really anxious too, and shared some of my ways I've learned to cope with it. I've not told anyone that before as I thought she might think I was a fraud, but I think it helped."

Questions:

What about you?

- When has someone been generous to you like this?
- Do you find it easy or hard?

Or

- When have you been generous to someone else like this?
- Did you find it easy or hard?

Do you think it is right to be concerned about our reputations?

What might being generous with your reputation look like this week?

Generous with comfort

Being generous with our comfort is about sacrificing our own comfort to help someone else or care for and love them.



Examples:

"I fell off my bike on the ice. My leg hurt too much to get up so my friend sat on the cold ground with me until help arrived."

"I fell out with my friend. I lost my temper and was really rude to her. I wanted to make up but I hate confrontation, it just makes me feel uncomfortable. I thought we would just go our separate ways, but I decided the friendship was worth it so I braved the awkward, uncomfortable apology and we made up!"

"My friend wanted to start a new exercise class, but didn't want to go alone. I really wanted to just curl up at home with a film, not spend the evening jumping around in the gym, but I knew how much it meant to her so I went with her."

Questions:

What about you?

- When has someone been generous to you like this?
- Do you find it easy or hard?

Or

- When have you been generous to someone else like this?
- Did you find it easy or hard?

What kind of comfort is hardest to give up?

What might being generous with your comfort look like this week?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS:

Which type of generosity comes most naturally to you?

Which type of generosity is hardest for you?

Do you find it easier to be generous, or to receive someone else's generosity? Why do you think this might be?

Do you find it easier to be generous with some people than with others? Why might this be?

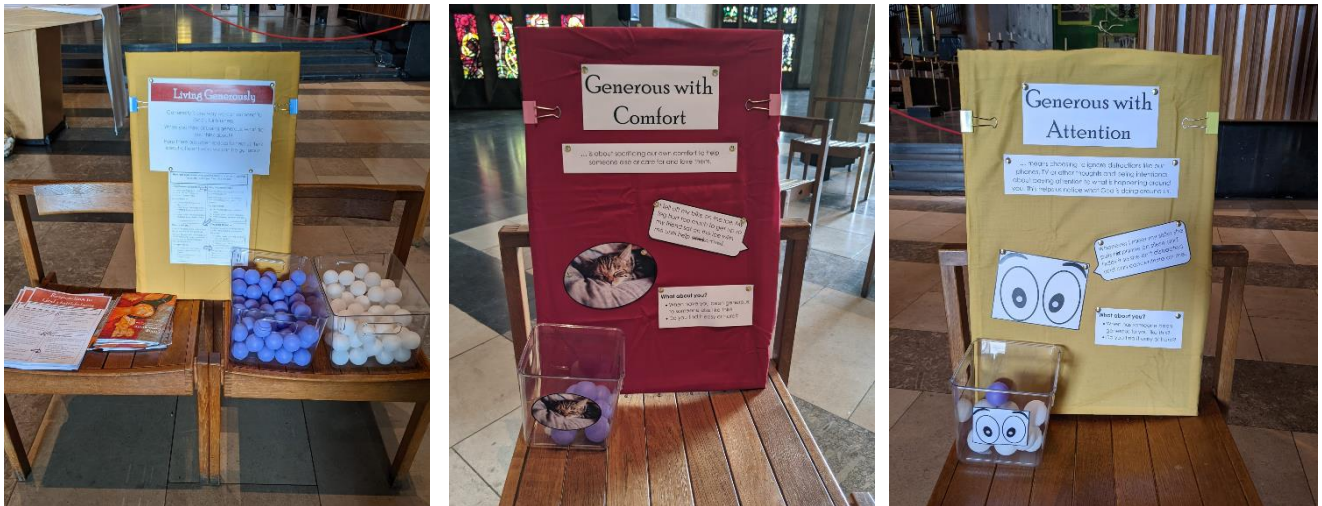
What steps could you take to live more generously? Spend some time thinking and praying about how you might respond. E.g.

- Think of more ways you can be generous in the way you find most natural
- Think of one generous thing you could do in a way you find challenging
- Think of one generous thing you could do for a person you find it hard to be generous to

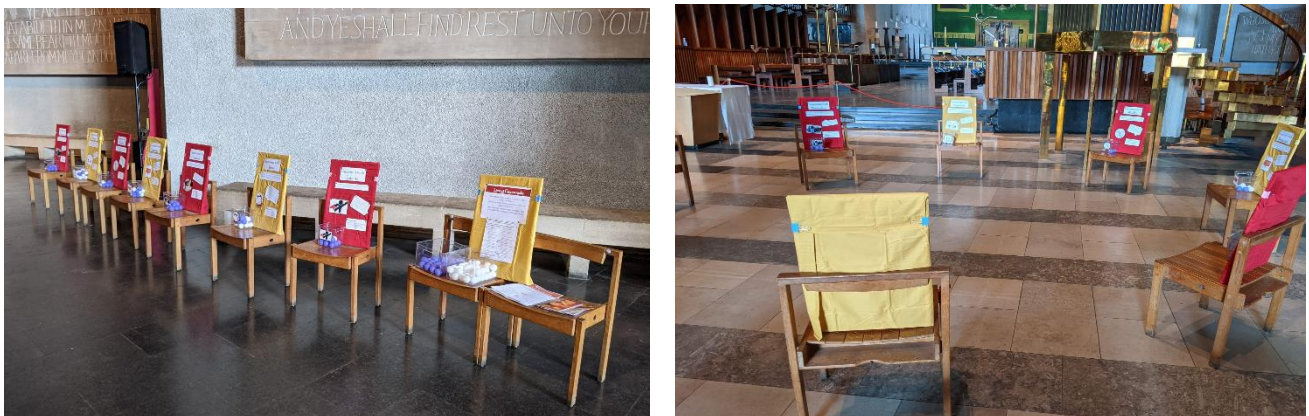
Appendix 1: Using this resource to create prayer stations

In autumn 2021 we piloted using this parts of this resource to create an interactive, intergenerational prayer station which was set up in the cathedral. This is how we did it.

Content: For each type of generosity we created a board with a definition, an example, the image and a question. We also created a board introducing the theme and suggesting how they could use the prayer station, along with a sheet they could take with instructions and further reflection activities. A copy of this sheet is below. We also provided copies of the *Living Generously* booklet for further optional reflection. Larger images are on the following pages.



Layout: We tried it in two layouts; a line and a circle. Both were equally effective, so simply use the space you have.



Additional equipment

- We used cork notice boards inside a pillowcase to create the display boards. These were lightweight and relatively cheap to put together, and can be reused for different displays in the future.
- We used clear tubs for the ping pong balls. You could also use jars, tupperware or bowls. It's helpful if they are see through so you can see the impact of the mix of colours.
- We ordered the Ping-Pong balls online and intend to use them for future activities too.
- If you're interested in borrowing the resource we created, this is possible too and will save you the work! Please contact us to arrange this: servingchrist@coventry.anglican.org

Living Generously

Generosity is one way we can respond to God's faithfulness.

When you think of being generous, what do you think about?

Here there are seven spaces to help us think about different ways we can be generous.

Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair.

John 12:3

Living Generously booklet

The booklet you have been given helps us to see how we can be generous in different ways.

You might want to:

- Find a space to read some or all of it now.
- Move around the prayer space and read the ones that stand out.
- Move around the prayer space and read the booklet at home.

Using the prayer space

When you think of being generous, what do you think about?

Here there are seven spaces to help us think about different ways we can be generous.

You might want to:

- Go around each one and silently reflect.
- Go around and discuss it with others.
- Share stories and examples from your lives.

What about you?

After you've explored the stations. How do you feel? Do you feel generous?

Turn over this sheet and use the activity to think about what kind of generosity you find easy (or most natural) and what you find difficult.

You might want to:

- Circle the ones you find easy.
- Underline the ones you find harder.
- Draw or write examples that come to mind.

Ping pong response

Take a white and a purple ball from the centre. There is a tub at each type of generosity.

- Put the purple ball in the one that you find easiest.
- Put the white ball in the one that you find most difficult.
- Ask God to help you find new ways to be generous.

Look around the tubs, each has a different mix of coloured balls. This is a demonstration of how we show generosity differently.

Generous with Comfort

... is about sacrificing our own comfort to help someone else or care for and love them.



I fell off my bike on the ice. My leg hurt too much to get up so my friend sat on the ice with me until help ~~came~~ arrived.

What about you?

- When have you been generous to someone else like this?
- Do you find it easy or hard?

Generous with Attention

... means choosing to ignore distractions like our phones, TV or other thoughts and being intentional about paying attention to what is happening around you. This helps us notice what God is doing around us.



Whenever I meet my sister she puts her phone on silent and hides it so she isn't distracted and can concentrate on me.

What about you?

- When has someone been generous to you like this?
- Do you find it easy or hard?

Generous with Possessions

... means not hoarding possessions, but being open handed and sharing what we have with those in need.



My uncle has a beautiful old car, and he loves lending it to people or driving it for them on their wedding day.

What about you?

- When have you been generous to someone else like this?
- Do you find it easy or hard?

Generous with Time

... means choosing to spend time in ways which bless and serve others. Time is precious. By giving people our time, we are saying to them that they matter and they have value.



A neighbour knocked on the door because their car had broken down and they couldn't collect their shopping. I jumped into my car and collected it for them even though I had a busy day planned.

What about you?

- When has someone been generous to you like this?
- Do you find it easy or hard?

Generous with Wealth

... is choosing to honour God with how we spend our money. Rather than holding on to as much as we can, seeking ways to live with less and give away more.

I wanted to help people who had less than me. So, I decided to make my lunch instead of buying it everyday and give away the money I saved.



What about you?

- When have you been generous to someone else like this?
- Do you find it easy or hard?

Generous with Reputation

... is about caring less about what others think of us, or feeling embarrassed, and more about loving God and loving our neighbour.



I was stood in a circle of friends chatting and noticed someone was stood alone. No one really like them but I went to say hello and invited them to join us.

What about you?

- When has someone been generous to you like this?
- Do you find it easy or hard?

Responding to God's faithfulness

Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair.

John 12:3

Living Generously booklet

The booklet you have been given helps us to see how we can be generous in different ways.

You might want to:

- Find a space to read some or all of it now.
- Move around the prayer space and read the ones that stand out.
- Move around the prayer space and read the booklet at home.

Using the prayer space

When you think of being generous, what do you think about?

Here there are seven spaces to help us think about different ways we can be generous.

You might want to:

- Go around each one and silently reflect.
- Go around and discuss it with others.
- Share stories and examples from your lives.

What about you?

After you've explored the stations. How do you feel? Do you feel generous?

Turn over this sheet and use the activity to think about what kind of generosity you find easy (or most natural) and what you find difficult.

You might want to:

- Circle the ones you find easy.
- Underline the ones you find harder.
- Draw or write examples that come to mind.

Ping pong response

Take a white and a purple ball from the centre. There is a tub at each type of generosity.

- Put the purple ball in the one that you find easiest.
- Put the white ball in the one that you find most difficult.
- Ask God to help you find new ways to be generous.

Look around the tubs, each has a different mix of coloured balls. This is a demonstration of how we show generosity differently.

