



REFLECTION
BOOKLET
2023



The Generous June Daily Reflection Booklet

Welcome to Generous June 2023!

Generous June is an initiative that seeks to engage churches, communities and individuals with generosity throughout the month of June – we're so excited to go on this journey with you!

Within this booklet you will find 5 individual written reflections. Join with voices across the diocese and beyond, as we delve into Matthew's gospel exploring and reflecting on the biblical truths of giving and generosity.

This booklet is designed to accompany the Generous June Podcast that will be released daily on the Generous June website, and on Apple Podcasts and Spotify. We understand that not everyone has access to a downloadable podcast service, so we have produced this booklet so that a copy of the reflections are available and can be read by you at your leisure, in your own time and at your pace.

Feel free to print this booklet for yourself and use it personally, or if you are a church leader then you might consider printing a few of these booklets and sharing them out to those who don't have access to a computer and still want to be a part of Generous June.

**Matthew 6:21 - For where your treasure is,
there your heart will be also.**

Personal Reflections of Generosity

I used to think that being generous was all about money; giving away everything you have in order to help those who have nothing. Of course, that is one amazing form of generosity, but life has since taught me that generosity can also be expressed in many other ways.

When I began my theological training in Oxford I needed somewhere temporary to live, along with my husband Jake. We were trying to find somewhere that was in the right location, that was affordable, that would suit our needs. This proved more difficult than we first expected, and so my Aunt and Uncle who lived in a similar area offered for us to temporarily move in with them – for a few weeks or at most perhaps a few months.

We moved into their spare room, bringing with us a whole house worth of belongings to a home that was already housing four adults even before we arrived. Our things seemed to tower over us in that one small room, but the yellow walls and the sun streaming through the window seemed to make it all ok. We agreed that we would pay a small amount towards the cost of us living there, but far less than we would have paid in a rental property, creating for us an amazing opportunity to save up and look to move out.

Little did we know that after only a short time of being there the pandemic would hit. It suddenly became impossible to view properties and we were stuck – all six adults living right on top of each other in one house. It wasn't what any of us had signed up for.

We ended up staying for nine months in total; through the worst of the lockdowns and into the following summer. It was completely not what we expected, and there were moments of real strain. But all the way through my Aunt and Uncle remained totally gracious. They gave us a roof over our heads, but they also gave us good advice, laughter and an immense amount of fun. Sure, they allowed us to save up money, but more than that they shared their faith with us, they prayed for us, they came up with silly games to keep us all sane in the worst of the lockdowns. Their generosity stemmed from a financial gift, but it ended up being so much more than that. It was hospitality at its very best, truly sharing their home with us and letting us be a part of their life. It was meals around the table, watching films, yoga in the garden and a million cups of tea. Here, generosity looked more like “how was your day?” than a pile of cash.

Being the recipient of radical generosity doesn't leave you unchanged. It shapes you into somebody different, and for me, that meant a deep-rooted desire to one day be able to open my own home to someone who needed it.

Personal Reflections of Generosity

Fast forward several years to when I was five months into my curacy. We were living in a four-bedroom house with way more space than we needed when a colleague shared with me that she needed somewhere to stay temporarily whilst she was between houses. I knew immediately what I needed to do, so without hesitation, I offered her a room in our home.

This dear friend moved in and shared our home for a few months, and once again there was an abundance of meals shared, cups of tea poured, bad jokes laughed at and many many more “how has your day been” moments. There were quick, flying out of the door prayers and some soul searching conversations over the dinner table. For a period of time, our friend had somewhere to rest and to be looked after, and we were blessed by her presence in return.

Generosity can be so many things, but what’s certain is that it shapes us. Generosity often involves sacrifice, and I have seen firsthand how God works in me as I make sacrifices for the sake of being generous. Generosity in the form of hospitality isn’t always easy or simple, but it can create beautiful moments, deeper relationships, and hopefully, some big belly laughs along the way.

Let’s pray together that God would expand our ideas of what it means to be a generous person today:

Prayer

Lord, we look to you as the great example of creative generosity. Thank you for your outpouring of kindness to each one of us, and for your ultimate demonstration of hospitality. Help us today to expand our vision of what it means to live a generous life. Help us to have eyes to see those in need around us, and help us to hear your voice as you prompt us to move towards a place of greater hospitality.

Amen.

Personal Reflections of Generosity

A long time ago, in a place, well, not very far from here, really, the Knights Templar were being baptised. Same as everyone else, pretty much, except for one crucial difference. As the knights went down into the water, they held their sword-hand aloft so it didn't get wet. The idea was that God probably didn't much like what they did with their swords, so they would baptise every area of their lives except that bit.

Peter, a brilliant lay reader at a previous church of mine, told this story in a sermon one Sunday. The talk was on giving, and in a gloriously comic yet profoundly powerful visual image, he concluded by holding his breath, lifting his wallet high above his head, and sinking down behind the lectern, leaving just the wallet visible. The question was clear – is everything baptised except your money?

I had a horrible feeling that the answer might be 'yes' for me, but felt convicted, nay inspired, to change that. This was partly because Peter's talk came hot on the heels of me being a grateful recipient of an extraordinary piece of generosity from someone else. Here's what happened.

Not long before this time, the last vestiges of my useful sight had disappeared down the darkening drainpipe of retinal disease. One particular ramification of this was that I could no longer play the sports that I loved, or get the outdoor exercise that I craved. A friend, though not one I had known for long, saw this and gave me perhaps the greatest gift I have ever received. He turned up at my house one day bearing a bright, shiny, brand new tandem. Now tandems are not cheap at the best of times, and when the chap at the back (the blind one, you'll be pleased to know...) is 6ft3 and the whole thing has to be made to measure, they cost a bomb.

Perhaps the best thing about this gift is that it didn't just consist of the initial outlay. Matt (the friend in question) was generous with his time as well as his money. Over the next several years we went out on regular rides together, beginning with pootling around South London, then working up to 50 milers down to Brighton, coast to coast across the Pennines and even a three-day cycle to Brussels.

I can't tell you how much joy the tandem has given me. The sense of freedom and elation that I get when belting down a valley road, the sense of achievement as we crest the top of a particularly tough climb, and the amazing conversations we have along the way all more than compensate for the fact that I do all this with my face really rather too close to another man's bottom.

Rev Ben Jones Vicar - St Luke's Hedgeend



Personal Reflections of Generosity

I love it, and there's nothing else like it.

Matt isn't perfect, of course, and would absolutely hate being hailed as a hero, but his whole life, including his wallet, has been baptised. His generosity has brought joy into my life and I'd really like to do that for others. I want to be someone who is generous with both my time and my resources. It's a journey I'm still on, and sometimes something I have to really wrestle with, but, given the choice, I'd rather be a Matt than a Knight Templar.

Prayer

Lord God, thank you for the grace I have received from you, and the amazing generosity I have received from others. Help me to live as someone who's whole life has been baptised, holding nothing back. When it's hard, give me strength, courage and perseverance. May my treasure follow my heart, which is to love you and to love my neighbour. Amen.

Jordan Shepherd

Generous Giving Promoter - DOW



Personal Reflections of Generosity

I am so thankful to God for his faithfulness. I can remember many times where the generosity of others has made a significant impact on my life and the life of my family. At times, these gifts have been financial in nature and have been so impeccable in timing that I can only attribute this to the work of God.

Money for a house deposit. New jobs just in time for key life and situational changes. Money for a new car at a time when the old car was on its last legs. At times I have been able to pass this generosity back onto others. This has brought me much joy.

But the act of generosity that has left the biggest mark on my life is from my dad. It's a story that really doesn't start well. Imagine if you will, a young and arrogant teenager. Slight in stature and overconfident in his own strength. This young man was me, many years ago.

Now imagine this young man sat on his dad's motorbike, a 1980s Honda CBR 1000F in white, blue and red to be specific. This was also dad's most prized possession. Now, Jordan knew that he shouldn't sit on the bike without dad being around as it was much too big and much too heavy for him to hold on his own. Despite being told not to, young Jordan could not resist. At this point in the story Dad was inside the house and young Jordan sat gleefully on this wonderful motorbike outside. Suddenly the weight overcame young Jordan, and the bike began to slip.

Crunch!

The bike hit the ground! I had cracked and damaged a significant amount of the side panelling. Dad, hearing the commotion ran outside to look. I've seen my dad angry several times growing up, but this time was different. I have never seen my dad so angry and upset he couldn't speak. He simply turned around and walked back inside.

After what seemed like an age, he came back outside. He promptly urged me to get into the car. We drove to the nearest Honda dealership. I was marched to the front desk where he proceeded to ask the shop owner for a price to fix the damage done. £300 pounds was the price. It was quickly agreed and with no room for discussion that I would repay him the money needed to fix the motorbike.

Jordan Shepherd

Generous Giving Promoter - DOW



Personal Reflections of Generosity

On a 16-year-olds weekly salary of £30 it was going to take many months to repay him. But save I did. On saving the full amount of money needed, I put it into an envelope. I took the envelope to him and placed it into his hands. He opened the envelope and pondered it for a moment. Then turning to me he said, "I think you've learnt your lesson." He smiled and handed the envelope back to me. He knew that the value of the lesson was going to be more valuable to me than the money itself.

He was right, as dads often are. I did not deserve this money, in fact quite the opposite. The money had been saved to repay my debt. Looking back, I can see that his generous act is a simple reflection of God's generous gift to us. The gift of his son. A gift that we didn't deserve. The generosity shown here was undeserved and wrapped in grace. Grace can be defined as receiving a gift we do not deserve. I'm very thankful for this gift and this lesson from my dad. Receiving the £300 back, that I had to work hard to save for, paled in significance to the gift of grace I received in that moment.

I love this motorbike story because it was an act of taking a bad situation and using it for good. The motorbike remains to this day unfixed, neglected and sat sadly on my Mum's driveway. But every time I see that damaged motorbike it serves as a great reminder of great generosity.

My much wiser and older brother has a saying that seems to ring true, and it is something that has stuck with me for many years. "God will give to you, that which goes through you". It's not a biblical principle as such, but I do love the idea. I hope and prayer for more opportunities in my own life to share great generosity with others and for situations where I can be on the other side of stories like my own.

Prayer

Father God, thank you so much for the greatest gift of all, Jesus Christ.
Don't let us forget that every good and perfect gift comes from you.
Remind us to use what we have, to help and bless those around us.
Help us to value the things that are truly important.
Amen

Jemima Lewis

Curate - St Mary's Kings Worthy



Personal Reflections of Generosity

The act of generosity I want to reflect on today is the collective generosity shown by my church community, the people of St Mary's Kings Worthy, or my "Worthy Saints" as I like to call them, when I was ordained as a priest in the Diocese of Winchester last year. So this is perhaps a bit of a cheat because it's actually several acts of generosity I want to talk about!

My ordination service was on the Saturday 2 July 2022 and lots of my "Worthy Saints" came along to the cathedral to be part of the service, which was lovely to look out at the congregation and see their supportive and encouraging faces. The next day, at the Sunday morning service, I presided over the Eucharist for the first time and then, after the service, the Rector Revd Paul said a few lovely words of congratulations and I was presented with an array of such generous gifts from the congregation. There was a wood carving depicting the road to the cross, that had been specially commissioned by a local artist, and a little bear dressed as a female vicar who I now call 'Priscilla the Priestess Teddy' and who comes everywhere with me, some champagne, and a huge bunch of flowers, not to mention the many, many cards all containing lovely heartfelt messages and prayers. As well as this, one lady called Anna had sewn three handmade stoles for me, all embroidered with beautiful stitching and buttons – there was a green one for Ordinary Time, and a white one for Occasional Offices, and – most brilliantly – there was a rainbow one made up of all the Anglican liturgical colours (purple, green, white and red) which is multi-purpose and absolutely perfect for me because, being from a non-Anglican background, I often struggle to remember what stole I should be wearing! Anna knew this and so she had obviously put a lot of thought and care into planning the beautiful design.

After the service we had a celebration lunch in the church rooms and lots of the congregation had brought delicious plates of food to share – the spread of food and wine was amazing and so abundant – definitely not the 'death by quiche' I've experienced in some churches! There were speeches and 'three cheers' and endless toasts and hugs and tears (almost all of them cried by me although a few others were full of emotion too). Even writing about it now makes me misty-eyed! I was absolutely overcome with gratitude for the incredible generosity shown to me by my church family – a congregation I had only joined in 2020 during the lockdown. It spoke to me very deeply about what the church, God's people, should be – a people that are overflowing with love and generosity, just like the heart of God, and who rejoice in giving themselves away, in their time and resources, their money and their skills. St Mary's isn't the most affluent congregation, it's not like other wealthier parishes nearby in Winchester – there are lots of what you would call 'normal hardworking families' – and yet they always give so generously out of what they have.

Jemima Lewis

Curate - St Mary's Kings Worthy



Personal Reflections of Generosity

The verse we are focusing on for Generous June, Matthew 6:21, 'For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also', speaks exactly of how my 'Worthy Saints' blessed me that day. I know that they gave so bountifully out of an overflow of love – love for me and my family, love for God, love for the church – and this love motivated them to be unstinting in their gifts. This kind of giving then becomes a generative process – the more we are generous with one another, the more we feel encouraged to give of our best, the more treasure there is, and hence grows a culture of true generosity. I felt so humbled and affirmed being on the receiving end of that generosity on that day, but there are countless others that the church has blessed in similar ways. It will stay with me forever and the memory will always motivate me as I continue in my ministry as a priest, endeavouring to pass on the love, goodness, faithfulness and generosity that God has shown me through his dear people.

Prayer

God, from whom all good things come,
who breathed life into us and showers us with blessings,
Move us, we pray, to give as we have received -
abundantly, generously, and joyfully,
that our life together may ever bear witness to your unfailing love.
Guard us from holding tight when we should be letting go,
and fill us with a desire to see the dawning of the bountiful Kingdom of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

Jim Barker

Regional Giving Advisor - South



Personal Reflections of Generosity

I work within the National Giving Team, as the Regional Giving Advisor Dioceses in the South of England. I've not always worked in this role, in fact, I spent part of my early twenties as a youth worker, before having the privilege to work in Fundraising for Oxfam, Friends of the Earth and latterly CMS or Church Mission Society. As well as time spent supporting several other organisations in their fundraising work.

It's been a real privilege to do this, and has provided many opportunities to reflect on my own attitude toward giving and generosity. Over recent years it's become common parlance to use the phrase or word 'investment' or 'invested' to mean more than just money, or resources.

How often have you heard someone on the radio, television... or in real life... say something like, "Yes, but how invested are they in this?", or "I'm really invested in this..., I just long to see it work." In my own life, working across a number of organisations and causes, it became apparent to me that there was a common feature among those who supported, and 'invested' in each particular cause.

This feature was that the more 'invested' they were, the more they 'invested'. A simpler way of saying this might be that 'those who gave, did' and 'those who did, gave'. But more than that, giving generates doing, and doing generates giving.

This was something I first noted at Friends of the Earth, where we were able to measure the campaigning activity of supporters alongside their faithful and generous giving. In our work we could measure a tangible correlation... that said, amongst a large band of supporters 'those who did more gave more, and those who gave more did more.'

This discovery really shifted how I thought about the activity of giving and fundraising from that point forward. And, one of the places it took me to was the reading at the start of this reflection. Where Jesus said 'For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.'

In the times I've read this., heard others read it., or the occasion when I heard the verse used in a sermon. My hearing of the sermon of verse was..., in the past., focussed between seeing this as an admonishment of Jesus toward his listener to be wary of where they 'invested', or a warning to the disciples of Jesus to be aware, noting where people keep their treasure, and acknowledging that as a sign of where their priorities are.

Jim Barker

Regional Giving Advisor - South



Personal Reflections of Generosity

Both of these interpretations are valid, but I think both miss a wider more generous point. This is, that generous giving can change the position of our heart. It can shift the axis toward how we want to align our lives and behaviour. It does this because it changes the place where we invest our treasure, and moves our treasure to that place. It can make us participants in something that is bigger than us. It invites us to consider how God is looking for us to participate with him. And 'invest' with him in the work he is doing.

When done well, and sensitively, the request for a gift toward the mission and ministry of their church invites people into a deepening participation with that church, and critically with God and his participation in that church. In the book he wrote in 2021, 'A Comedian's Prayer Book', the comedian and presenter Frank Skinner makes this confessional observation of his own underlying attitude toward generosity,

Hinting at.., perhaps.., where his own heart is tempted.., he writes, "Jesus you say in Luke's gospel that when we do charitable works, we should do them in secret, not sounding a trumpet about our generosity so that we might reap 'the glory of men'.

God will know and that should be enough. This advice makes complete sense, but it has, nevertheless, almost certainly cost me an MBE." I haven't heard whether Frank was pleased, or disheartened, to receive his MBE in the 2023 New Year's Honours list. But I have seen the impact that generosity can have upon the attitude and alignment of my own heart, the hearts of others I have travelled alongside, and the actions of attitudes of those who have supported causes dear to their hearts.

Prayer

Dear Lord, we thank you for the opportunities we have had, and are continually given, show us what you are doing today, and where you are asking us to participate with you through generosity, prompted by the Spirit.

Amen



Generous June is an initiative that seeks to engage churches, communities and individuals with generosity, by encouraging understanding and promoting activity throughout June.

Thank you for journeying with us through June as we reflect and focus on how we can be more generous. We'd love to know how this series may have changed or developed your thinking towards generosity.

Sharing your stories can help to build up and encourage those around you.

Please feel free to contact the team at
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We'd love to hear from you.

www.generousjune.co.uk