

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ

Last year the Mothers' Union invited Graham Pountain, a trustee of the Bethany Orphanage to give them a talk about the work of the orphanage. The orphanage is run by a small team of Christians working together to help the most vulnerable people in a rural area of Tanzania. East Africa. They are involved in providing financial support and volunteers to visit both long and short term to share in the work they do.

Those who heard Graham's talk were really moved by what he had to share with us. So, off the back of that, we invited the choir to come and perform in church whilst they were in the UK on a visit. They were absolutely amazing, and it was a very emotional evening listening to them sing and hearing their stories. You can't help but be moved to tears when a child tells you that the most exciting thing about Christmas Day is getting a can of fizzy drink as an extra special Christmas treat.

Many people bought Christmas cards and other goods that were on sale to raise funds for the orphanage. And many also took collecting tins. The PCC have decided that this year they will adopt the Bethany Orphanage as a charity that we will support. At the last PCC meeting it was decided that we would adopt the orphanage as our supported charity for the next twelve months and follow the biblical teaching of tithing and give ten per cent of our fund-raising efforts this year to the orphanage.

The PCC are being very brave in making this decision, particularly in our current financial situation. For the first time in many years we haven't been able to pay our parish share in full. We have some outstanding work on the church building that hasn't been done as we just don't have the money to pay for it.

So why give money away? Simply because we cannot expect to receive blessings from others if we are not prepared to give out blessings ourselves as a church. In Matthew 23:23, Jesus talks to the Pharisees, condemning them for tithing to the penny but neglecting the more important issues of justice, mercy and faith. He then goes on to tell them that they should in fact tithe, but that they shouldn't neglect the more important things.

At the 'Resourcing the Mission of God' Conference in the diocese last March we heard from Bishop Philip. He asked as a diocese whether we were trusting in God and planning for growth or giving up and planning for decline?

I would rather have a conversation with my bishop about why the parish share has some outstanding than stand before my God knowing that I had only looked inwards to our own needs as a church.

We need to pray as individuals and as a church, asking God to provide for us and for the orphanage. As Christians we are called to serve the vulnerable and ensure justice is done.

So I thank the PCC, and especially our treasurer and assistant treasurer, for their bravery, their commitment, their faith and trust in God and their prayers and I ask you to join us in praying hard as we move forwards together.

Yours, in Christ
Tracy

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tracy', with a stylized flourish extending to the left.