

Honouring the Engine: The Vital Role of Volunteers in Mission
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When I'm not working as an Area Giving and Finance Adviser, I spend a lot of time volunteering at my church, as a Youth Leader, a foodbank volunteer, the PCC secretary, and one of the mentors at an English as a foreign language group. I am not alone in this. I attend St. Matthew's church in Yiewsley, where I am just one of a multitude of volunteers.

There is a fundamental truth that must be recognised if we want to encourage people to be generous with their time and talents. That is that volunteers are the engine that keep a church running.

Churchwardens who maintain our buildings and support our leaders.

Sidespeople who welcome people with a smile into the service, offering guidance and answering questions to those both established and new.

Musicians who enhance our services and worship to become an outpouring of song and praise.

Those that lead us in prayer, giving us a time to reflect and dwell in God's presence.

Sunday School and Youth leaders, who teach and inspire our next generation.

People who serve refreshments after a service, to help us come together as a community.

Treasurers who balance parish accounts late into the evening to make sure we can plan our mission and ministry.

I could go on and on, there are countless ways people volunteer within the church, but this piece does have a word limit.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul describes the Church as one body with many members, each indispensable. Volunteers are not an optional extra, they are the living expression of this passage.

In a world where we are all time-pressed, and seem to be busier than ever, their willingness to give creates space for others to encounter Christ.

Often, their faithfulness and dedication is hidden, and may go unnoticed. When we arrive at church on Sunday to beautifully arranged flowers, tidy and well cared-for grounds, to slides or service books prepared, how often do we pause to think who made these things possible?

Each generous act quietly says to the community, *"You matter. This place matters. God's grace is for you."*

Such giving is not without cost. Time, energy and sometimes emotional resilience are poured out. That is why gratitude is so important. As leaders and fellow disciples, we are called not only to benefit from this generosity but to honour it - to notice, to encourage, to pray for those who give so much. Ephesians 4:12 reminds us that the whole body is built up as each part plays its role. When volunteers are supported and affirmed, the entire Church is strengthened.

Honouring volunteers requires more than an occasional thank you, it calls for a culture of attentiveness and care. It looks like praying regularly for those who serve, thanking them publicly and privately, and noticing when the load they carry has grown too heavy. It means encouraging rest as well as commitment, ensuring responsibility is shared rather than assumed, and creating space for honest conversations about capacity and wellbeing. When we don't ask "what are you doing?" but instead ask "how are you?", we reflect the pastoral heart of Christ and affirm that volunteers are valued not simply for the tasks they perform, but for the people they are.

So let us honour this engine of mission - not merely with polite thanks, but with heartfelt recognition. Let us celebrate the generosity that sustains our common life. And let us pray that God will continue to raise up cheerful, faithful givers in every parish, that through their quiet acts of service many may glimpse the generous heart of Christ.

For in giving ourselves away, we discover anew the abundant generosity of God.