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# A SIMPLE GIVING PROGRAMME FOR SMALLER OR RURAL CHURCHES

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*This programme is aimed for smaller churches – wherever you are.*

*This programme is a fairly simple one to run, but there are some important decisions to take, and your communication will need to be clear and motivating. It is suggested that you gather a small team to work on this (perhaps only two or three – but this can provide mutual support and encouragement, as well as two minds being better than one.)*

## *An Overview*

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A good giving programme will do more than simply ask people to increase their generosity. It should include some Christian teaching on generosity, as well as explaining the impact of giving on mission and ministry – what happens to the cash that's given, and why more money is needed. There are three stages to the programme:

- A **planning phase** (Steps 1 to 3) to ensure you have a well thought through approach. Time spent in the planning phase will pay dividends over the longer term.
- The **programme phase**, (Steps 4 to 6) which will last about three or four weeks. It may begin with a launch event when you can present the needs, and vision of the church, and celebrate its ministry. It will finish with a Thanksgiving Sunday at which church members and others may make pledges about their future giving.
- A brief **post-programme phase** (Step 7) to thank those who have responded, and to capture learning for next time.

## *Step 1 – Getting Started*

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Get together for an initial planning meeting. You will need to agree some plans, wrap them together in a short 'case statement' (or summary) and get the PCC's agreement before running the giving programme. Examples of Case Statements, together with a template to complete, are available to download. These tasks at this stage include:

- **Identifying your primary need.** Do you need to support regular expenditure, including routine maintenance? If so, a giving programme such as this one is particularly suitable. If you are looking to fund a significant one-off project, when you need to decide whether you are seeking one-off donations, perhaps through a gift day, or if it is a longer-term project, additional regular giving.

- **Analyzing the church's strengths and opportunities.** As well as issues relating to maintaining the building at the heart of the community, look at the extent to which the church is engaged in ministry and mission. You can download a separate "footprint" tool that you may find helpful.
- **Agreeing 2 or 3 reasons to present to encourage support for the church.** It helps if there is some aim beyond just "keeping the show on the road" e.g building improvements such as kitchen / toilet, encouragement of tourists, work with children etc. The appeal of these will vary between those who are regular worshippers and those who are occasional attenders or fringe supporters.
- **Decide whether you will hold a Launch Event.** (See Step Four for examples). This can be a great way of getting the programme under way on a positive footing. Although it is an opportunity to communicate the needs of the church and explain the programme, its initial emphasis is on a celebration of the life and work of the church. Having the chance to explain in person should be much more motivating than simply sending out a paper communication; enable people to ask questions, and avoid misunderstanding.
- **Deciding the timing of your programme.** If you are holding a launch event, you should expect to write out 3 weeks ahead of this event to invite people, and your programme will be between four and five weeks long. If there is no launch event, the letter should go out between two and three weeks ahead of the Thanksgiving Sunday.
- **Gathering the data needed to communicate clearly.** This should include:
  - o completing a budget and understanding the extent of your financial need.
  - o understanding your current giving patterns, and
  - o getting a list of people linked to the church, or living in the local community.

## Step 2 – Getting PCC Agreement

It is essential that a giving programme has the support of the PCC, and the more active the support the better! As part of this, they should agree the reasons that will be presented for supporting the church. Other important elements they should consider is whether or not you will be holding a launch event, and the extent to which you will be writing to invite the fringe or wider community to participate. Both are significant decisions, and to have their support is crucial.

## Step 3 – Write & Send Out Letters

You will need to decide whether you will include a launch event in your programme, which will alter the letter you send. Your initial letter will either seek to:

**Invite people to a launch event** when the needs of the church can be presented along with a supper or lunch. The letter should request people to respond a fortnight before the presentation, giving both time to follow up some who the team think might be interested in coming, and also providing some idea how many to cater for. OR

**If you are *not* holding a launch event**, you will need to send out the pack asking people to consider setting up a standing order, or reviewing it if they already have one. This letter should include a standing order / gift aid form, and preferably an addressed envelope. We suggest that you send out two different

letters, one to those who are already supporting the work of the church through planned giving, and one to everyone else. Suggested templates to work from are provided as separate downloads.

You may also want to include a simple leaflet to explain more about the work of the Church, and to provide some perspective on how different people can contribute different amounts to allow the target to be reached.

## Step 4 – The Launch Event (if you are holding one)

If applicable, you will have sent out letters inviting people to come about three weeks previously. You'll need to decide whether you want people to let you know if they are coming. (This may be important for catering purposes, and it may build commitment, but on the other hand, may deter from coming those who have not been able to confirm their attendance).

*There are lots of examples of successful launch events, including:*

- Parish Supper
- Harvest Supper
- Fish & Chip Supper
- Afternoon tea
- Strawberry cream tea
- Bring & Share lunch
- Guest speakers
- Cheese & Wine
- Quiz Evening (sometimes on the theme of money)
- Pate, Puds & Plonk!
- Barbeque
- Hog Roast
- Church garden parties
- Open Church with displays from church groups
- Combining with Village fetes, shows etc
- Light refreshments following Church services.

*Your presentation should cover the following four points:*

- 1 A brief background to the Church, and its ministry. The “Footfall” tool will help you explore how broad the church’s reach is.
- 2 The costs of maintaining the church - ensuring that parish share is linked with the provision of clergy.
- 3 Some future vision - that it’s not just keeping the show on the road, but there are some exciting new things that the church would like to do.
- 4 Acknowledge existing giving and support, and explain what is needed. Invite prayerful consideration and explain when pledges need to be received.

Make sure those who are present receive a response pack. This is likely to include a follow up letter, brochure and response form (and also a Parish Giving Scheme form if your church is rolling out the scheme - This only applies in dioceses which are operating the Parish Giving Scheme – see [www.parishgivingscheme.org.uk](http://www.parishgivingscheme.org.uk) to see if you’re able to benefit from the scheme). You should note who is at the launch, and send a second letter to those who were unable to attend enclosing the response pack.

## Step 5 – Running the Programme

1. **Send out letters to those who were unable to attend the launch, or if you didn’t hold a launch event, send out letters/packs to all of your contacts.** These can be based on the standard ones included in this toolkit. This can be simply amended to reflect the presentation e.g. by adding “Following the presentation on 15th September, ...” at the beginning of the letter.

2. **Create a simple brochure of information to help people and a response form.** Giving it the title of 'Promise Programme' helps people see what is desired from them, and can act as a linking title for the letter, brochure and response form. Sample resources are available to help you create these.
3. **Encourage prayer and reflection.** You can include a prayer in your brochure; or make additional prayer or other leaflets available in church. Some possible ones are provided.
4. **Provide some Christian teaching during the weeks leading up to Thanksgiving Sunday.** There is a difference between encouraging regular Christian giving, and a secular fundraising campaign. Whilst some on the fringe who may wish to respond will treat it in the same way as a secular appeal, those who are regular church members should be encouraged to see their giving as an ongoing part of their discipleship, giving in response to a generous God, as much to meet the financial needs of the Church. The materials available on the Giving for Life section of the Parish Resources website ([www.parishresources.org.uk/givingforlife](http://www.parishresources.org.uk/givingforlife)) especially the reflections leaflet provide an easy resource to use.

## Step 6 – Thanksgiving Sunday

**Finally you reach the Thanksgiving Sunday, when pledges are offered.** Those received before the day should be counted, and then included with those that are brought to the service. One possibility is for pledges to be offered early in the service, and for the newly offered ones to be added to those that had come in beforehand, so that the results can be communicated back to the congregation towards the end of the service. If this is done, it is important to maintain a focus on thanksgiving, whether or not the target is reached.

**You may want to write again to those that had not responded** - perhaps giving a summary of the results to date, and the amount still required.

## Step 7 – Afterwards

**Encourage further responses.** It's important to encourage those who have not yet responded to do so – many will be willing to do so, but simply have not yet got around to it. At a minimum, it is essential to remind regular church members and those who are already part of the planned giving scheme; if possible, it is good to visit all those on the electoral roll. The purpose of the visit is simply to collect response envelopes, rather than to ask for money.

**The final total should be calculated, and this should be shared with the congregation – whether or not the programme is felt to be successful.** If you have a parish magazine, this is a good way of reaching the wider community, and if there is a village noticeboard, this too, can reach a broader section of people.

**Finally, write out to thank all those who have offered pledges.** A sample letter is provided to download, which you should edit and amend as appropriate. It is important that all those who have offered pledges (whether they have increased their giving or not), should be thanked for their commitment to the Church. A wider thank you should be included in any parish magazine article or noticeboard post.

**You may also want to review your learnings and record them,** so that next time you run a giving review, you will be able to learn from what went well, and what didn't work so well.