
GIVING FOR LIFE: CONTINUING THE JOURNEY

This short leaflet summarises the good practice that has been widely adopted by PCCs, provides links to further resources and explains how a structured PCC discussion can help you review your current practice and identify some development priorities.

Since General Synod enthusiastically commended the original 'Giving for Life' report in 2009, parishes have requested for over 400,000 booklets and leaflets to help them review their strategy and to promote this to their congregations. A survey of over 1100 parishes across all dioceses, contexts and sizes of congregation, earlier this year, shows that most parishes have now adopted many of its recommended Key Tasks. General Synod has now received a report reviewing the progress made, which asks each parish to revisit its strategy in this area.

This second phase of Giving for Life expands the good practice. It continues to set giving first and foremost within the context of discipleship and mission. This is not primarily about asking people to give more to their church. Rather it is about responding to St Paul's invitation to, 'excel in this grace of giving'.

The original report summed it up well: Generous giving provides resources to enable the mission and ministry of the Church and fosters distinctive Christian lifestyles that enable others to be touched by the overflowing generosity of God.

*Remember this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly,
and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.
Each of you should give what you have decided in your
heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion,
for God loves a cheerful giver.
2 Cor 9 v6,7*



ENABLING THE PCC TO ENGAGE WITH THIS REVIEW

We suggest that the following five steps will allow for a helpful review using no more than 20 to 30 minutes of a PCC or DCC meeting. This will be time well invested as it will enable PCC members to be secure in the knowledge that they are following or working towards good practice and free up additional time on future meetings to consider matters other than money. Feedback from the original report suggested that parishes had felt that generating funds had become burdensome and they were going round in circles, a bit like being on a hamster wheel. Giving for Life enables parishes to review their strategy, adopt a small number of critical actions and then move on to consider wider issues of the church's mission and ministry.

1. The first step is to ensure that both the incumbent (as chair of the PCC) and whoever leads on stewardship matters has a copy of this leaflet and reads it through ahead of the meeting.
2. You'll need enough copies of the accompanying PCC sheet for each PCC member to have one. It's a good idea to send this out in advance of the meeting, and ask people to complete the survey questions. Doing so will help them prepare to contribute to a discussion, but will also highlight the extent to which members are aware of the PCCs existing strategy and policy.
3. In the meeting a short introduction should be given, summarizing the background presented on the next page – that generosity is about more than balancing books; it is about mission, ministry and discipleship. This review should help ensure that the church is adopting good practice, and provide reassurance to PCC members that they have a robust approach to resourcing their mission and ministry.
4. Before discussing detailed action plans, the PCC should quickly collate a common view of the 'tick box sheets'. Members will hold different views, and it is helpful to understand the range of opinion.
5. You may wish to identify a number of action points arising from the discussion, but it is wise to ensure that you have agreed on the three points that will make the biggest difference and have clear plans to make progress against these. The points are broadly in order of potential impact, so if there are more than three identified for action, the ones with the lower numbers will usually have the greatest impact.

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION:

List your three priorities here, what action the PCC has committed to, and who will take this forward.

Action Point	What are you going to do?	Who is going to do it?

GOD'S GENEROSITY AND OUR RESPONSE:

Our thinking must start with God's generosity to us. God gives to us abundantly and graciously in creation and redemption, and in sustaining life, day by day. Scripture shows that God's giving is characterised by extravagance, both for nations and for individuals. Jesus' birth, death and resurrection and his breathing his Holy Spirit on us reveal to us the astonishing depths of God's generosity toward humankind. The life of Jesus and his parables show what this generosity looks like translated into human behaviour. In the life and stories of Jesus there are pointers to how we can live our lives in a different way - a way that is characterized by wholeness and blessing which is God's intention for us.

As a result the challenge for us as disciples of Jesus is to be prepared to do whatever is needed to align ourselves with ways of living and giving that release rather than obstruct the flow of God's generosity. God brings in His Kingdom through us, creating a social order that not only provides for the needs of all, but also redefines abundant living from the accumulation of consumerism to the fulfilment found in Christ-centred lives.



GOOD PRACTICE:

This section amplifies the good practice points made on the sheets for PCC members. It is illustrated with the results of a survey of over 1100 parishes which shows the progress that has been made over the past five years, and encourages parishes which have not yet adopted the 'new normal' to consider doing so.

1 *Preach and teach regularly about giving in the context of discipleship*

It is not the preacher's job to raise the funds for the church, but rather to nurture generous disciples, who are willing to give of our time, money, hospitality wherever and whenever we are called to do so – living generously in the world. As we seek to encourage discipleship, it is important to focus on the giver, rather than the gift.

There is no shortage of biblical material. Over 2300 verses relate to money, wealth and possessions and one third of Jesus' parables relate to these topics. Yet all too often money-related preaching is focused on giving to the church, whereas the generosity and grace of God should be the starting point of our preaching. An overflowing generosity is at the heart of God's character. God can do no other because God is love and the essence of loving is giving. Our preaching needs to point to the connection between the lives of our audiences and the grace of God. Preaching stewardship should be a joy and a pleasure – there are no shortage of opportunities from the lectionary. It should not be simply the fundraising sermon for the year! See www.parishresources.org.uk/giving/preaching for resources to help you.

2 *Communicate with givers from several different perspectives*

When talking about money, many churches focus on their costs or budget shortfall, but givers need to hear wider faith perspectives, and what their giving enables in terms of both current ministry and future vision. This not only stimulates increased generosity, but also helps them decide how to allocate their giving between church and the other causes and charities the Lord has put on their hearts. Opportunities to link giving to mission and ministry are the APCM, the communication of the budget, a church's website etc. See www.parishresources.org.uk/givingforlife for ideas to help you do this.

3 *Send an annual, personal 'thank you' to regular givers and clearly communicate that giving to the church enables the mission and ministry that flows from it*

Our survey tells us that half of parishes send an annual thank you letters to their planned givers, and two thirds have sent one within the past three years. Sending a personal thank you values your donors, acknowledges their giving, and offers a perfect opportunity to tell them about the positive impact that their giving as a group is having on your church's mission and ministry. See www.parishresources.org.uk/givingforlife for templates and ideas.

4 *Hold some form of annual review of giving*

Most parishes now conduct an annual giving review according to our survey. Four out of five have asked their congregations to review their giving within the last three years. Personal and church finances work on an annual basis, and so it is good to help people review their giving once a year. There are many different ways this can be done – it certainly is not the intention for parishes to run a major giving programme every year. See www.parishresources.org.uk/givingforlife for templates and ideas.

5 *Agree a legacy policy and communicate this to the congregation*

Parishes received a record level of £52 million from gifts in wills in 2014. Many parishes are seeing an increase in the number of gifts received because they have agreed a PCC Legacy Policy and communicated it to the congregation. A Legacy Policy allows the PCC to prepare and discuss how they would wish to see a gift used. It can also help to reassure that gifts will be used to make a real difference to the future mission and ministry. Our survey shows many PCCs could benefit from adopting. Find out more www.parishresources.org.uk/legacies

6 *Claim Gift Aid regularly, including the Small Donations Scheme*

Each year parishes claim over £80 million through Gift Aid and the Small Donations Scheme BUT we're missing out on up to £10 million more. Our survey showed that 15% of parishes have not yet claimed on the Small Donations Scheme, and there is a small number who have not claimed Gift Aid for the past two years. There is no easier way of boosting income! We've produced some checklists to ensure you're following good practice with both Gift Aid and the Small Donations Scheme. See www.parishresources.org.uk/giftaid

7 *Use the Parish Buying Service*

Over 10,000 people have registered on behalf of churches, charities and schools with the Parish Buying service. This provides national contracts for many goods and services parishes use – energy, photocopiers, paper and office products, software, telecoms, fire safety and so on. Unless you've got a good reason to buy elsewhere we'd encourage you to see this as the default option. This helps us take advantage of the scale of the church's overall buying power. You'll also find Buying Guides to help you make good decisions about insuring your church, manage capital projects and view buying decisions as part of your stewardship. All this and more at www.parishbuying.org.uk

This Giving for Life Guide has been produced by the National Stewardship Committee. With the National Stewardship and Resources team we're trying to make it easier for you to nurture giving in all its forms and to help you manage your spending. Find out more at www.parishresources.org.uk www.churchlegacy.org.uk and www.parishbuying.org.uk