



# How to ...

## Encourage Generous Giving

### **Why encourage generous giving?**

Generous giving is an integral part of the discipleship of Christian believers. Giving within the Church and beyond it not only resources God's mission in the world but also has an impact on our lifestyle. When we are generous with our money, our time and our resources, we are fully able to bless God and bless others around us - and this is a central part of living out our faith. This guide aims to support your parish in developing a strong culture of generosity.

### **Aren't people already giving generously to churches?**

Many people already give very generously of their time and money. However, we can often be reluctant to address issues around money and giving in our churches. As a result, many churchgoers are simply never asked to consider their giving as part of their discipleship, and aren't encouraged to review their generosity regularly. In the Diocese of Bristol, we want to be open and honest about this area of spiritual growth and unlock the generosity of the people of God for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

### **How do we encourage generous giving in our church?**

There are four recommended steps to building a strong culture of generosity in your church:

#### **1. Articulate a clear vision**

*What are people giving towards?*

*What difference will their gift make to the church's mission and ministry?*

*How will they see the impact of their generosity?*

It's important for the incumbent and PCC to have a clear idea of what your church stands for, what it offers, and what it is aiming for in order to bring the wider congregation and church community behind a shared vision. If you're unable to articulate why someone should generously support your church, then they're unlikely to do so.

One way of developing this vision is through a PCC exercise such as a [Mission Action Plan](#), which will help you to come to a shared agreement. From this, you can start to communicate with your congregation/s what you'd like them to give towards, and the impact that their generosity can have.

#### **2. Build on this vision with sound theology**

*How is generosity at the heart of the Gospel?*

*How do our finances link to our discipleship?*

*Why is it important to give as an outpouring of our gratitude for God's generosity?*

Christians give for a number of reasons, but a large factor is that we're driven by our faith. Our generosity and our relationship with God are intricately intertwined, and it is important for churches to help congregations to better understand the links between their discipleship and their daily lives – including personal finances.

This can be done through building a theology of generous discipleship throughout your church life; that might look like a teaching series on different aspects of generosity, a home group / Lent course series, written communications to parishioners, or special events. (See 'Further information' at the end of this guide for suggested materials). A good way of bringing these strands together is through a dedicated church-wide stewardship campaign.

### 3. Plan a stewardship programme

Giving levels – meaning both the proportion of people who give regularly, and the amount given – tend to be consistently higher in churches that hold stewardship programmes at least once every three years. It also helps if you review stewardship at least annually, perhaps through a Stewardship Sunday, or around Harvest time or January.

There are a number of different programmes to support your church in running a stewardship programme, depending on your tradition and context. Some of these include:

- **Giving in Grace:** containing a wealth of materials, this online library includes sermon outlines, bible studies, communication templates, and more - [www.givinginGrace.org](http://www.givinginGrace.org)
- **A Simple Giving Programme:** designed particularly for smaller, rural churches, this programme seeks to engage with both the congregation and wider community - [www.parishresources.org.uk/sqp](http://www.parishresources.org.uk/sqp)
- **Give 10:** resourcing churches that specifically want to teach tithing, this guide contains all you need to introduce this biblical model of giving - [www.parishresources.org.uk/giving/give-10](http://www.parishresources.org.uk/giving/give-10)

Whether you use some of these materials or plan your own programme, there are some core common elements to all successful stewardship initiatives:

- Ask!** A main reason people give is because they were asked to; people give to people. Personal letters, individual conversations and addressing the whole congregation are all good ways to explain your vision and theology (see above) and ask for a prayerful response.
- Make it easy to respond.** Along with the ask, provide people with a clear response device such as a pledge form, a direct debit form, or a postcard with your church bank details. Include a deadline for people to respond by.
- Preach and teach on generosity.** To build a theology of generosity, it's important to integrate this into church teaching. The programmes above all give pointers on this.
- Thank people and celebrate their generosity.** You can never say 'thank you' too much. It doesn't need to be repetitive, it can take many forms and can help you to communicate what you're doing as a church and show the wide impact of people's gifts. As well as writing to all givers every year to thank them for their generous giving, for instance, you could regularly communicate through notices and newsletters all church activities that are made possible through people's generosity. Why not invite the youth leader / pastoral visitor / volunteer to share what they do, and share a big 'thank you'?
- Repeat annually.** Make this part of the church calendar, and embed generosity as part of your church culture.

### 4. Introduce the Parish Giving Scheme

The Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) is a nationwide tool allowing individuals to make regular, planned gifts to their church by Direct Debit. Its benefits include:

- the automatic monthly claim and payment of Gift Aid,
- reduced church administration, and
- an 'inflation proofed' giving option to address static giving.

While the PGS alone doesn't encourage a culture of generosity, it can make it very easy for people to give regularly, and review and control their giving. When introduced alongside a stewardship programme, churches see an average increase in giving of around 20% as people move to the PGS. It also makes it the 'new normal' for churchgoers to review their gifts annually, and gives church leaders a good reason to address this with the wider church.

*How we give influences how much we give, and moving towards a Direct Debit system and away from collections and envelopes encourages people to give as they would to any other charity. It also has tailored materials for wedding couples, baptism families, and the wider community to encourage them to give generously to support the church.*

For more information, see [www.parishgivingscheme.org](http://www.parishgivingscheme.org) or the Diocesan website [here](#) – which includes a registration form for your parish to join the PGS.

## Other things to consider

**Aligning our will with God's will:** Leaving a gift in a will is a really meaningful and lasting way for people to support their church. These resources support your PCC in creating a legacies policy and communicating this to your congregation and community:

[www.parishresources.org.uk/legacies](http://www.parishresources.org.uk/legacies)

**Let's get digital:** In the age of the internet, using your website, introducing text giving, and considering contactless card readers are all good ideas for enabling more people to give. Find out more at [www.parishresources.org.uk/digital-giving](http://www.parishresources.org.uk/digital-giving)

**Journey of Generosity:** Aimed at mature Christians who have been supporting the church for a number of years, this day-long retreat explores generosity through the lens of discipleship and is a powerful way of reappraising our responses to God's generosity. Find out more at:

[www.bristol.anglican.org/journey-of-generosity](http://www.bristol.anglican.org/journey-of-generosity)

**Don't look a Gift Aid horse in the mouth:** Church of England parishes collectively receive nearly £90 million in Gift Aid tax rebates each year, which is sufficient to fund 1,600 stipendiary clergy! To check whether your church is claiming its full quota of Gift Aid and Gift Aid Small Donations, review the guidance at [www.parishresources.org.uk/giftaid](http://www.parishresources.org.uk/giftaid)

**Any high earners in your church?** If anyone in your congregation is a higher rate tax payer (earns over £43,000 a year) then encourage them to make more of their gift to the church through considering Payroll Giving. A gift of £10 to the church could be worth £16.67, as payroll giving is taken before tax – and at this 40% tax rate, the benefit to the church is worth more than Gift Aid which only claims back an additional 20% of tax.

**You're spending how much on photocopying?** Reducing church expenditure is another way to improve your stewardship practice, whilst also ensuring that givers to your church are getting the best "value for money". Join the Parish Buying Service to get good deals on your parish expenses, and find out more top tips: [www.parishresources.org.uk/buying-smarter](http://www.parishresources.org.uk/buying-smarter)

**Making friends:** Friends Groups can be a good way of encouraging your wider community to support the church. To avoid common pitfalls and make the most of Friends Groups, see this guidance: [www.parishresources.org.uk/friends-schemes](http://www.parishresources.org.uk/friends-schemes)

## Further Information

- More guidance and support on good stewardship and encouraging generosity can be found on the Diocesan stewardship page: [www.bristol.anglican.org/stewardship](http://www.bristol.anglican.org/stewardship)
- If you'd like to discuss any of the above, please contact the Diocesan Giving and Resources Adviser on 0117 906 0100
- Small group resources exploring stewardship and money include:
  - [Dethroning Mammon](#): a series of Lent reflections from Justin Welby
  - [Living Generously](#): seven reflections on Mary anointing Jesus' feet
  - [Giving in Grace – small groups](#): study series' on Exodus, 2 Corinthians, Luke and Mark
  - [Money Palette](#): a guide to many more stewardship materials for your church

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