



Diocese of Bristol



Church Handbook

2022

“I would encourage other parishes to join”

Gill, Treasurer of Holy Trinity, Westbury-on-Trym

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1. Introduction – what is the PGS and why should you use it?

The Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) is a nationwide service allowing people to make regular, planned donations to their local church by Direct Debit. The cost of membership of the PGS is entirely borne by the Diocese, and is **free of charge for parishes**. 100% of donations come directly back to your parish from the PGS each month, along with any Gift Aid for those donations. Using it will make generosity simpler for your congregation, make life easier for treasurers and givers, and reduce the need to handle lots of cash.

This Handbook will guide you through setting up the PGS and enabling your church family to use it. Ensuring success involves thinking deeply about a culture of generosity in your church, and telling people about it - so this handbook covers both the practicalities of signing up and ideas to encourage engagement in giving more widely.

We hope you find it helpful. The contact details for the Stewardship Team are at the end of the document, so please don't hesitate to get in touch if there is anything we can help with.

Why do you need the PGS?

Nationwide three quarters of the church's ministry is funded by giving, mostly by local people giving to their local church. A church that has a strong giving culture is much more resilient to the shocks that the world might throw at it. This has certainly proved to be the case during the Covid pandemic.

The [Anglican Giving Survey in 2020](#) found that people who give through a scheme like the PGS give an average gift of £41.76 compared to an average cash gift of only £3.80! So it can absolutely transform church fundraising.

The survey also found that a third of regular church attendees do not give to their church, and 40% had never been asked; so there's a lot more we can do to encourage generosity. Also, almost two thirds of those who had heard a sermon on giving in the last year said it didn't change their thinking. This proves an annual sermon on its own isn't enough to encourage a culture of generous discipleship, you need mechanisms that work too, and we think the Parish Giving Scheme is one of the best.

Now we will run through how to prepare for the Parish Giving Scheme, how you sign your church up, how you get people using it and places to go for help.

How does it work?

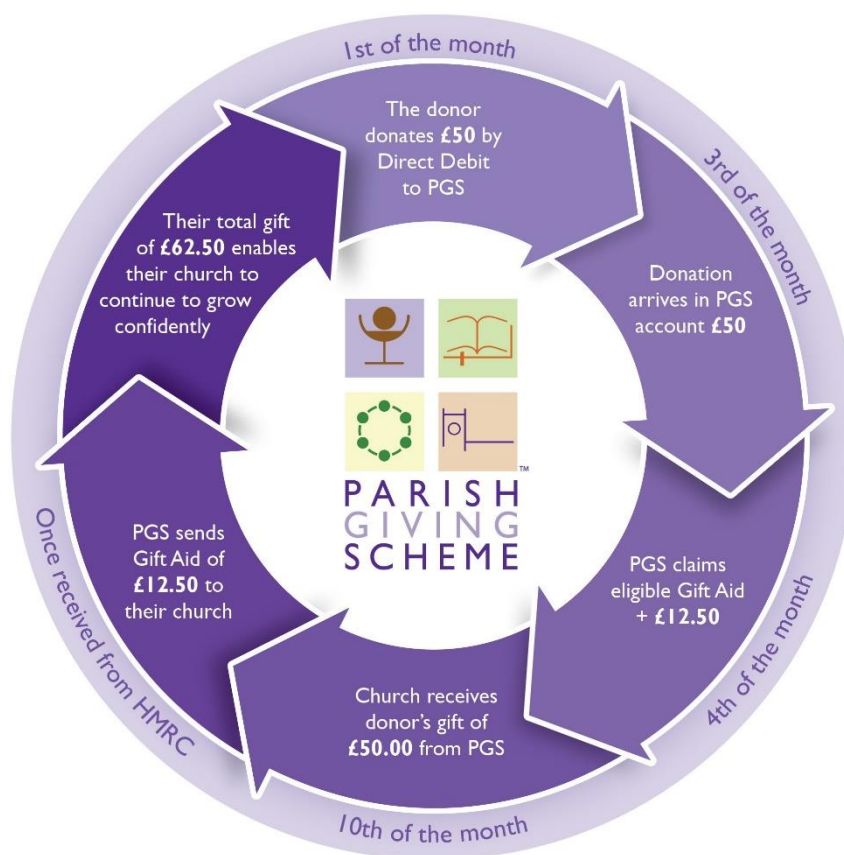


Figure 1: The PGS operates on a 10-day cycle, collecting gifts from givers on the first of each month, and then sending it back to your church by the tenth of the month. The Gift Aid is sent separately once it is received from HMRC, which is normally a couple of days later.

As shown in Figure 1 above, people give by Direct Debit to the PGS on the first of the month, and one remittance of the total amount of giving arrives in your church's bank account by the 10th of the month. Then the PGS claims gift aid on all eligible donations on your behalf, and sends one payment of all the Gift Aid to your account shortly after.

As more and more givers switch to the PGS, it will save many hours of administrative time. Donations are much easier for the Treasurer (or Giving Officer) to reconcile than standing orders or cash, reducing the need for trips to the bank. It will improve cash flow, since Gift Aid is forwarded each month. Furthermore, with the option for givers to add an annual inflationary uplift to their gift (which the majority of people tend to adopt), church receipts should increase year on year.

2. Getting started

Preparing to launch

Plan and run a stewardship campaign alongside your PGS launch

The PGS is a helpful mechanism to allow people to give easily. However, it doesn't explain the *need* to give to your church. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that you run a [stewardship programme](#) alongside the launch of the PGS to discuss personal generosity and discipleship. As one user put it, the PGS is, "a comfortable way into an uncomfortable conversation!"

Pray

We need to seek God's guidance before we make any significant decision affecting our church. The [Generosity Week](#) resources from the National Church are a great place to start.

Pass a PCC resolution

Joining the PGS means that money from participating givers will flow to the PCC through the PGS, rather than directly from the giver to the church. 100% of the donation returns to the church, and no money is held or deducted by the PGS at any point. So it is important that the trustees of the local church pass and minute a resolution. It can be as simple as: "We the PCC of ... request the Parish Giving Scheme to commence operation on our behalf."

Register your church

Complete a registration form

When you're ready to register, you simply need to complete a registration form.

You can either download and complete an [online version](#) and email it to us (see contact details below); or you can print and post the form; or phone us to ask for the form and we'll post it to you.

The **first page** of the form provides the PGS with information about your church/parish bank account and the church officers responsible for parish finances.

The **second page** provides the Giving and Resources Adviser with information about your current patterns of giving, from which we can measure the effectiveness of the PGS across the Diocese.

We need you to complete both pages. If completing the form by hand, please use **BLOCK CAPITALS** to ensure all details are legible (especially bank details).

Once all the parish details are complete, the form needs to be **signed** by the relevant church officers and **dated**. If the parish is in vacancy, two church wardens may sign in place of incumbent.

When you send in the registration form, please attach a copy of a paying in slip for the bank account detailed on the registration form. This is for verification purposes only, and can be as simple as a photo of your bank statement of paying in slip sent as an email attachment.

There are two versions of the registration form: one for a [single church parish](#) and one for a [multi-church parish](#). Please use the latter if you'd like to register two or more churches at the same time.

What happens once you've registered

On receipt of your Church Registration Form:

1. We will acknowledge receipt, check the paperwork and then pass the information on to the Parish Giving Scheme.
2. The PGS team will process the application. Your Statement Receiver will receive a letter from the PGS confirming the registration and outlining important parish details. Please check this thoroughly before givers start to register with scheme.
3. We will then be in touch again by email with some tips for getting started, and take your order for any accompanying materials that you'd like to distribute to givers. These materials include:
 - [PGS gift forms](#) – these are the forms givers need to sign up to give to your church via the scheme. **Please DO NOT photocopy the giver forms. As only original versions of these forms will be accepted by the PGS.**
 - **Church ID stickers** - These will be printed and coded for your parish, so you can be sure that donations are allocated to your church. **Before** you issue a form to a prospective giver stick a label onto the form where it asks for church details

Example sticker:

Church/Parish Name:	Dibley
PGS Parish Code:	29-9999999999
Village/Town/City:	Havant
in the Diocese of	PORTSMOUTH



I wish my donation to be used solely for the benefit of:
 Church / Parish name
 PGS Parish code
 In the village / town / city of
 In the **Diocese** of

← **Stick the sticker here**

- **Leaflets**
 - [Parish Giving Scheme explained: a better way to give to church](#) - A brief introduction to the scheme
 - [How is the Church funded?](#) - A document outlining the costs of running a parish church
 - [Why do we give to church?](#) - A brief guide to Christian generosity, and a table laying out suggested amounts to give based on your personal income.
- **‘Covering letter’ examples** - examples of letters that you might send to ‘planned givers’ (i.e. individuals who already give to your church regularly, for example by Standing Order).
 - [Your congregations\(s\)](#)
 - [Your wider community](#)
 - [Recent wedding couples](#)
 - [Recent baptism families](#)

You will want to create a version specific to your church, and tailor the letters depending on who you are writing to.

3. Moving givers onto the PGS

Leading from the front

It’s a good idea to ask PCC members to sign up to the PGS first, perhaps in the meeting as you pass the resolution to join as a church.

This is so that they can be advocates to the rest of the congregation and show how simple it is to join, be around to answer any questions, and also show that the leadership aren’t asking the church to do anything that they haven’t already done. You could perhaps show the [PGS short film](#) at a PCC meeting, and circulate the Introductory Leaflet and Gift Form.

How Givers sign up

There are 4 ways people can sign up to give through the PGS:

1. Using the online registration process at www.parishgiving.org.uk.

People can search for your church, and then set up a regular gift using your church’s online page. Information on how to set up your church’s online giving page is [here](#).

2. Using the telephone service: by calling 0333 002 1271 to set up a regular gift

3. Filling in an [editable giving form](#), and sending off to the PGS by email
4. Or finally, filling in a hard-copy gift form and posting to the PGS.

Regardless of which method you suggest your givers use, the Gift Form, accompanying materials and an appropriate covering letter, should be sent or handed to givers individually. Just leaving piles of the giver forms and booklets at the back of the church is unlikely to lead to a good take up of the PGS.

Givers should be encouraged to send their forms directly to PGS rather than Treasurers gathering them in and sending them to PGS in bulk.

If givers want to guarantee that their gift starts in the month they have requested, gift forms must be received by the PGS at least one full month before the date the first gift is due.

The PGS have minimal communications with the giver, so the responsibility for the relationship with the giver remains with the church.

Initial Communication

On receiving the gift form from the giver, the PGS will send back a 'thank you' confirmation letter with details of the amount and frequency, plus any additional information, e.g. gift aid status, agreement to uplift by inflation, and anonymity. If someone has given their email address, then this may be the only postal letter they receive; subsequent information (and uplift reminders) will be sent by email.

Standing Orders

The PGS recommend that people wait for their confirmation letter before cancelling their standing order if they have one. The main difference (to the giver) between Standing Orders and Direct Debits is that standing orders can only be cancelled and changed by the giver directly with their bank, whereas Direct Debits are usually changed by the beneficiary organisation (e.g. the firm or charity). Please make sure givers realise they need to cancel their own standing orders.

If a standing order and Direct Debit payment have BOTH been taken, the easiest thing is for the giver to contact PGS and request a skipped payment. This is generally easier than refunding, although a giver can of course speak to the church treasurer and sort things in the usual way.

Inflationary Increase

If the giver has requested an annual inflationary increase, then they will be informed six weeks prior, which will be every 12 months after the initial donation. The inflationary increase is based on the last official announced RPI for January each year which is announced annually in February. They will be only informed by email unless they have asked to be informed by post.

Anonymous gifts

One advantage of the scheme is that givers can choose to remain anonymous to the church. While they will have to provide their information to the PGS to create the Direct Debit, they can choose not to share their name on the statements that the church treasurer can access.

This tends to be rare, but when it does happen Treasurers are still able to thank the giver for their gift. They simply need to send a thank you letter along with a blank stamped envelope to the PGS office, and they will then add the address and send it to the anonymous giver.

One-Off Gifts, Skipping or Cancellation

People can give one-off gifts by contacting PGS directly and the Direct Debit can be amended for that month.

People can also increase (or decrease) their next monthly gift by contacting the PGS. This needs to be before the 20th of the month or it will take effect the following month. If people want to telephone, then it needs to be the named person (unless permission has been granted to another which has been recorded on the database). If they email, it needs to be from the registered email address.

There is a [PGS annual increase form](#) available on the website which can be adapted by parishes as you see fit.

People can cancel their gift by speaking to PGS direct. The PGS statement receiver will see the people who have ceased payments in their monthly statement.

Missed gifts

If a gift has been returned unpaid then a letter is sent to the giver to let them know. If they miss two consecutive gifts, then a letter is sent to the giver advising them that the Direct Debit has been cancelled.

Top tips!

- One Parish that has adopted the scheme suggests that the PCC / Treasurer sends each new person that signs up a Thank You card – they will then not only feel blessed and thanked, but also be more likely to speak as a champion and advocate of the PGS.
- Often gift forms are rejected because they haven't been signed or the bank details are incomplete. If you are collecting gift forms together to send in, please check first, or remind people to check themselves.
- If you're distributing physical gift forms, issuing a Stamped Addressed Envelope (SAE) with each pack, addressed to Parish Giving Scheme, 76 Kingsholm Road Gloucester GL1 3BD, not only reduces confusion as to where to send the completed form, but also increases the response rate. People hate to discard SAEs!

4. Information for Treasurers

Parish or Benefice Treasurers are normally the person named on the registration form as the 'Statement Receiver' and this section details everything the 'Statement Receiver' needs to know.

PGS Statements

When you register as statement receiver you will receive a welcome email or letter. You will then receive an email from admin@parishgivingscheme.org.uk on or around the 10th of the month advising you that an account has been created for you on www.parishgiving.org.uk. This email will contain your username and password.

If you have not received or cannot locate this email, please call the team on **0333 002 1260** or email info@parishgivingscheme.org.uk.

How to access your parish statement online

Once you have received an email from admin@parishgivingscheme.org.uk informing you of your username and password, please go to the PGS website at www.parishgiving.org.uk, and select 'Sign in' from the navigation on the top right of the screen.

On your first visit, select 'Activate Account' and enter your email address and you will be guided through the process of selecting a password.

On subsequent visits, select 'Account log in' and use your email address and password to access your secure personal account area.

Click on 'Download parish statements' and select the month you'd like to access, and an Excel file will be displayed at the bottom of your screen, ready for you to view, download and/or print.

The aim is to significantly reduce the number of posted statements. However, if you would prefer to receive your monthly PGS statements by post or require a copy paper statement for any month / year, please contact the team on **0333 002 1260** or email info@parishgivingscheme.org.uk

It's important to note:

- The statement for the current month is published on 10th of each month.
- You can only view the last twelve months' statements at one time.
- Online statements will not detail manual back-dated/refunded Gift Aid adjustments.
- If applicable, PGS will notify the statement receiver by email with any manual adjustments made to giver's gifts and/or Gift Aid.

Your statement is listed in Contact ID order and will contain data for the current month, the calendar year and the tax year. No gift amounts will show in the months that the donations are not collected but will be shown in the calendar and tax year columns for continuity.

How to add this to your accounts

Once you've downloaded the information, you can copy the relevant data into your church accounts. The Gift Aid payments can go into your accounts as 'Gift Aid reclaimed'.

For those givers on the PGS, you will now get a single payment into your bank account once a month with their total donations followed by another single payment later in the month with the Gift Aid. That means you have just two lines to reconcile with your accounts.

If your church has a donations coordinator package, such as Data Developments, your downloaded spreadsheet is compatible with these packages and you can simply upload this information directly into the donations coordinator programme.

Anonymous gifts are also detailed on the statement, with names omitted.

How long does it take for the gifts to come through?

Gifts are collected from givers on the 1st of each month, and remitted to PCC bank accounts by the 10th of each month. However, the first gift may take longer to come through. (For example, a form posted on 15th of Feb may receive a confirmation letter dated 25th Feb, indicating a first collection date of 1st April). This is a good reason for givers to wait until the confirmation letter before deciding when to cancel their standing order.

Can the giver forms be photocopied?

No. Only original forms will be accepted at the PGS office. To receive more forms, and any other leaflets, contact the Giving and Resources Adviser.

Does this mean we no longer need to claim Gift Aid on any donations?

No. The Gift Aid is only automatically claimed for donations made via the PGS. Other giving by standing order, envelope or plate will continue to require a claim under the Gift aid or Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme (GASDS). To claim the maximum amount of £8000 GASDS allowed in a tax year, a church will have had to successfully claim Gift Aid on £800 of non-PGS donations. This could be plate donations plus any other funds raised through other events and fundraising activities. This shouldn't be an issue for most churches, as it is unlikely that all givers will be converted and there will still remain the one-off gifts from special services. See <https://www.gov.uk/claim-gift-aid/small-donations-scheme> for more information.

5. Setting up a PGS online giving page

Your church will automatically have an online giving page hosted on the PGS site. This is pre-populated with information from your A Church Near You page, but you're able to edit this page and add photographs. The page also includes a QR code that can be downloaded and used on your church materials, to point people to this online giving page.

A full guide to editing your online giving page can be accessed [here](#).



Once you've updated your online giving page, the next steps are to communicate this to your givers. All the materials you need to do this are available [here](#).

One of our parish statement receivers sent this helpful summary, and their suggested steps are:

1. Sign in to your usual PGS account area.
2. Click on "Update Parish Page" and do two things:
 - Check that the PGS has correctly transferred your details from the "A Church Near You" system. Amend if necessary.
 - At the bottom of the page you will find "Download the QR code for this parish". Click on that, download and save the QR code. Then go back to the "My PGS" page.
3. Click on "Check Parish Details". On the Parish Details click on "Please click here to view the full range of support materials" (in the top line of the text).
4. That takes you to a page headed "PGS Digital Service". Click on "Your Guide and Resources" (top of left hand column). That takes you to a list of documents. Extract "PGS Step by Step Guide for Givers" and save it for issue to potential givers.

You now have the QR code and the "Guide for Givers". These are the key items to issue to potential givers. For example, if you have a printed pew sheet that would be a great place to put the QR code, or you could place it on a screen during the service as a call to action.

Annual review

While the PGS does give people the opportunity to opt into the inflationary increase, you will also want people to regularly review their gift, so an annual thanksgiving day is very important.

Remember you can download [editable increase forms](#) from our website, so that people can fill in their details and hand them in to you to be sent on to PGS. Make sure you add in your parish name and unique parish code.

Saying Thank You!

Thanking people for their giving is really important, and once a year is a good time to do this, as well as a time to check if their Gift Aid status is still correct. Some churches write to people individually, others hold a small thank you event like a coffee morning or cheese and wine evening. Others combine the 'thank you' with their annual giving review day. Whatever you decide, it is important to make your givers feel appreciated and to let them know how their gifts are being used.

5. Diocesan Stewardship Team details

The Stewardship Team at the Diocese are always here to help!

Ring us at Hillside House on 0117 906 0100 or drop us an email

Clare Fussell on

clare.fussell@bristoldiocese.org



Naomi Buckler on

naomi.buckler@bristoldiocese.org



6. Other stewardship resources

The launch of PGS is a fantastic opportunity to raise the profile of stewardship in your parish, encourage your parishioners in their Christian giving and to reflect on this giving as part of discipleship. This is a good opportunity to declare your vision and demonstrate how generosity enables the funding of Christ's mission and ministry.

Experience reveals a much stronger take up of the PGS when it is offered as a vehicle for giving as part of a Stewardship Programme. This stronger take up is both in terms of giver numbers and giving levels.

There are various Stewardship Programmes that your church can choose from. You can introduce the PGS as a preferred method of payment through each programme. The stewardship pages on our diocesan website are helpful, and you can find those at www.bristol.anglican.org/stewardship, and below are some other useful resources:

- [Giving in Grace](#) offers a wealth of materials to equip you in running a major stewardship programme or annual review.
- [Generosity Week](#) is a suite of worship resources developed by the national church providing everything you'd need to run a full week of daily worship around generosity, but you can pick and choose the parts of it are the most use to you.
- [Rural Giving Programme](#) is designed particularly for smaller, rural churches looking to involve the wider community.

- [Generosity Fika](#) is a half day workshop reflecting on biblical generosity
- [Generosity Learning hub](#) is a suite of videos and sermon resources for clergy on generosity.
- [The Giving Review](#) is a template for how to run a giving review in your church

7. Copyright notice

The PGS logo, which is used in this handbook and on the various PGS materials, is Trademarked TM and is the property of the Parish Giving Scheme Ltd. They are happy to give you permission to use the logo if the following conditions are adhered to:

- The logo is only used in articles or posters relating directly to the PGS
- No changes are made to the logo, other than resizing (but please preserve the aspect ratio)
- If you wish to use the logo please seek permission from Parish Giving Scheme Ltd by emailing info@parishgivingscheme.org.uk stating that you agree to the above conditions.