

Giving for Life

Developing regular giving

Regular givers are the financial lifeblood of a parish. It is a healthy rule of thumb that your income from regular givers (Standing Orders, Gift Aiders, envelope users) should more or less pay your Parish Share. (Do you know if yours does? If not, try the Taking Stock workbook, downloadable from the Christian Giving and Funding section of the website.) Then your fundraising, fees, other income and donations can pay for the other bills and mission activities.

We can learn much from secular charities. Regular givers need to be:-

- **Recruited** (whether as first-time givers or 'upgraders' from irregular or one-off gifts)
- **Educated** (about the practical and spiritual dimensions to their giving)
- **Kept informed** (about what the church is doing with their money)
- **Thanked** (regularly. We are often not very good at this.)

Church members may be at different stages of their faith journey, and their giving journey. You hope that their wallets will be converted, as well as their hearts. You also, perhaps, hope to convert existing givers to more consistent ways of giving:-

- From cash to envelopes . . .
- From envelopes to Standing Orders . . .
- From irregular to regular . . .
- From a £2 coin to a £5 note . . .

Helping people to think about their giving is a sensitive task. Not everyone is receptive to this particular Gospel challenge first time.

Each parish will want to use what is best for their situation. A combination of the following elements has been proved time and time again to make a difference. Do not think that one element only will do the trick!

A letter to everyone

- It must have a response form
- It should be individually addressed
- Different people should get different targeted versions of the letter (existing givers, electoral roll members, infrequent givers, new members, etc)
- The content must strike the right note – **not** be full of panic and woe!

A Sunday sermon about wealth, giving, generosity and sacrifice

- should be preached at all services on the day to make sure everyone hears it
- **must** be followed up – best to tie it in with a letter
- take-home sermon notes may help people to think through what has been said
- is best done as part of a short sermon series about gratitude, generous giving and wealth.

A visit to collect the response and, if necessary, discuss the letter

- you will need discreet and trusted visitors
- a 'pass-it-on' pack can help get round to everybody without needing lots of visitors.

Housegroups or other Bible study group

- can really get to the heart of the matter
- it may be difficult for people to speak personally about their income, response, etc in a group.

A special event – a 'focus on giving' evening or an old-fashioned 'stewardship supper'

- brings people together with a common mind, encourages the 'laggards'
- takes organisational skill and catering effort.

The booklet Planning your parish's Planned Giving Review programme (downloadable from the Christian Giving and Funding section of the website) gives details of tried-and-tested ways or combining these elements into a giving programme for your church. The website www.givingin grace.org is a mine of useful resources.

Some points to bear in mind:

- Other gifts (of time or skills) may be offered to the church through this process. Are you ready to accept them?
- Letters and visiting may reveal pastoral needs in the parish. How will they be 'handled with care'?
- Gift Aid must be at the heart of the project. It is a simple and very effective way of increasing your parish income at no cost to the giver.

For more information about Christian Giving and Funding, contact Sue Whitehead, PA to the Giving and Funding Adviser:

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<https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/parish-support/christian-giving-and-funding/>