

7) Preach

Take two or three weeks' break from the lectionary Gospel of the day and construct a teaching series so that you can explore what the Bible has to say about giving and generosity. You might want also to provide some study notes if you have homegroups or study groups. Of course the Bible doesn't mention PGS or Gift Aid, but what scriptural principles *can* you draw out?

8) Prime

It can really help the flow of resources if the church leadership prime the pump and set an example of generosity themselves. If clergy, ministry team members and PCC members are able with integrity to make it known that they are fully behind the principles of generosity, and are themselves committed to the review process, they will be setting a good example for everyone else. In the 'Teach' leaflet in this series the example of King David in 1 Chronicles 29 is discussed. This certainly avoids accusations of clergy saying 'Do what I say, not what I do' in their preaching. You can also take the chance for the PCC to review the corporate giving of your church to mission partners, both locally and overseas, which can have the added benefits of ensuring that giving is not solely inward-looking and inspiring even greater generosity.

9) Provide

We want people to respond to what we're teaching, so we need to make it easy for them to do so, and to give them what they need. Provide a pack containing a series of forms for joining the PGS, reviewing giving, signing up for Gift Aid, and maybe a pledge form for the year ahead: my aim during 20XX is to give £YYY to the work of St Mary's. This will give your Treasurer some idea of what you have to work with in the year ahead. Make it very clear how and when you hope forms will be returned, and you may want to mark their return liturgically, for example by presenting the forms with your offering during Sunday worship.

10) P.S...

After the event, make sure you follow up properly. Don't forget to announce the results. Churches which set targets well and prayerfully generally hit them, but if you don't, tell people that. It's always better to be honest than to sweep 'failures' under the carpet, because that's how we learn and grow. Hopefully, though, as a result of your faithful prayer and planning you will have much to celebrate. Find some creative ways to celebrate, and use your success to build faith for even more stretching targets next year.

Remember as well to thank people for their part in the Review, and their willingness to invest in the future mission and ministry of the church.

Further detail of what a Giving Review looks like, how to run one & useful resources can be found on the following C of E websites: <http://www.givingingrace.org/> and <http://www.parishresources.org.uk/givingforlife/annualreview/>

Generous Living

How to run a Parish Giving Review



In one of the stewardship purple passages Paul writes to the Christian community in Corinth about their financial giving:

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 9:7

Elsewhere (1 Cor 16) Paul suggests that this should be a weekly decision, perhaps due to the vagaries of income, of which their giving was to be a proportion. Our times are different, and most of those who receive an income tend generally to be able to predict with some certainty how that level of income is likely to continue.

However, the downside of this is that with inflation people's giving decreases in real terms if it is not regularly reviewed. Evidence suggests that even standing orders are only reviewed on average once every four years; for envelope giving it is much less frequently. This leaflet sets out a detailed plan for holding a regular Giving Review. This is particularly important if you are launching the Parish Giving Scheme, but should also be built in annually to your programme. You might also include an annual Gift Day, hopefully not to balance the books, but to give away or to use for some exciting project to resource the growth of your church.

One leader of an independent church said that a tradition is something we've done twice. Despite the long and glorious history of the Church of England, the truth is that it doesn't take very long to build up a tradition. The first time is the most difficult, but certainly by the third time round people will usually happily accept that 'this is what we do here'.

Here are 10 steps to running a Giving Review:

1) Plan

A good time to review giving is towards the end of the financial year, ready for the new start in January. Many churches use October, linking in with the thanksgiving theme of Harvest Festivals. There is also the advantage that we are still in Ordinary Time, so it is perfectly permissible to move away from the Lectionary readings and create a mini preaching series of your own. But whatever time of year you choose, you will need to plan well in advance.

Plan too your aims for the Review. A good pair of aims might be to get regular givers to move over to the Parish Giving Scheme, and to use the opportunity to invite them to make a fresh decision about their level of giving. If you are combining the Review with a Gift Day, you will want to think about how that extra money is to be used.



2) Publicise

Begin well in advance to get people on board and praying towards it. It works well to cast the Review as an adventure we're embarking on together, but one through which we need God to act, so we need to pray fervently because we're about to see God's action in the life of our church.

3) Pray

Corporate prayer is not always deeply embedded in the culture of Anglican churches, apart from led intercessions in services. Of course people's individual and private prayers count, but many churches have discovered that there seems to be extra power in praying together. So how might we stimulate prayer in a way which makes it accessible for people? Here are some suggestions:

Produce a brief Office. The *Common Worship* 'Prayer during the Day', which is found at <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/texts/daily2/day.aspx> gives a simple outline which you might tailor to your own purposes and encourage people to use during a special season of prayer running up to your Review. You should include some specific prayer pointers in line with your teaching about the Review.

Use the Daily Office. If people from your church are in the habit of saying Morning and/or Evening Prayer in church, they can be encouraged to focus on your Review in the intercessions. You may even find that people get into the habit and join you more regularly.

Hold an extended period of prayer. This might be a half-night (8 pm to Midnight), a whole night of prayer, or even a 24 hour (or longer) initiative. This will seem daunting at first, but the idea is to use a whole variety of ways of praying, and to keep things moving. One way to do this is to create some prayer stations around your church and invite people to circulate as they wish and pray in different ways at the different stations. Or different people might be invited each to lead a 30 minute slot. There really does seem to be something extra special about putting ourselves out in prayer, and moving beyond our comfortable regular prayer patterns for a season.

Pause for prayer in other meetings. Most PCC meetings begin with a brief prayer, maybe the Collect for the Week, and end with the Grace. You could use a period of praying within your meetings, for example after talking about finance.

Prayer is vital for two reasons: it tells God we are serious and need his action, but it also tells people that we are serious and that this is an important and spiritually-based event in the life of the church.

4) Plot

On the basis that a picture is worth a thousand spreadsheet cells, produce some graphs or other graphics through which the financial 'state of the nation' can be easily communicated to people.

5) Paint

Don't fire the arrow, go and paint the target around wherever it happens to have landed, and then pat yourselves on the back. Set some goals and use them to stimulate prayer and stretch faith. For example: we would like 10 people to move to the PGS, we would like our income to increase by £200 per month, and we would like to raise £5,000 to send to our Mission Partners in Sudan.

6) Print

Any materials you're going to need should be well-prepared and available in good time. You will also need to get official PGS literature from the Diocesan Office. Remember that people give more readily to *vision* than to *need*, so make sure you cast vision for the year ahead: this is what we're planning to do, and this is how you can be a part of making it happen, through your time, talents and money. Consider a similar pack tailored for and directed at children and young people too.