

Giving is God's Way

Stewardship materials from the Diocese of Southwark

**Part 4:
Giving
thanks**

How to use this guide

Giving is God's Way is designed to work in five distinct stages, each covering a different aspect of your campaign. For best results, you are encouraged to tackle each section in the order suggested. Each stage comes with a step-by-step guide to completing all the necessary tasks in that section, plus a checklist summary at the end.

**Part 1:
Getting
started**

This section shows you how to lay the groundwork for a successful campaign, including choosing your planning team, assessing the current state of your stewardship and gathering together the financial information you will need for your brochure and promotional materials.

**Part 2:
Teaching &
preaching**

The second part of *Giving is God's Way* asks people to consider their own response to God's generosity. This section links to a range of possible Bible studies to help with this question, and also provides sample sermons to preach at the beginning and end of your campaign.

**Part 3:
Asking for
money**

This section gives advice on creating your own brochure to support your *Giving is God's Way* campaign, how to write 'ask' letters and what to include in the packs you distribute to encourage giving, including response and Gift Aid forms.

**Part 4:
Giving
thanks**

An important part of your stewardship campaign is saying thank you to those who have responded. This section shares ideas for thank you letters, a thanksgiving service and how to follow up with people who may not have engaged with your campaign yet.

**Part 5:
After the
campaign**

Once the campaign is over, it is time to reflect. This section shares ideas on how to debrief everyone involved in delivering *Giving is God's Way*, how to assess your strategy and success and how to continue to encourage generosity in the future.



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A key component of *Giving is God's Way* is communicating with all church members after the stewardship pack has gone out, whether to thank them for their contributions or to tactfully follow up with people who have not yet responded.

Step 1: Holding a thanksgiving or celebration service

A thanksgiving service is an opportunity to celebrate God's generosity and the generosity of the people in your church. Held approximately four weeks after the distribution of your brochures to coincide with your response deadline, the service should be a joyful opportunity to give thanks, celebrate and offer people's financial promises and promises of time and skills for God's blessing. Churches have found it helpful to:

- bring a record of the response forms forward for blessing at the altar
- process out with the responses at the end of the service to symbolise that these financial responses and offers of time and skills are to be used to further the mission and ministry of the church in the community
- create celebration videos or interview people to share personal stories of the impact of a specific ministry on their life and how people's generosity makes a difference
- use thanksgiving liturgy
- hold a congregational lunch (possibly a bring and share meal).

“He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God” – 2 Corinthians 9: 10-12

Step 2: deal with responses

In order to process your congregation's responses efficiently and affirm people's commitments, plan how you are going to deal with responses. You want to reinforce people's trust in the campaign and how people feel they are treated can instil the idea that their money is in good hands and that their time and skills are valued.

Say 'thank you'

A prompt thank you to everyone who responds by the deadline is the minimum to do; an



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example 'thank you' letter is one of the [supporting documents for Part 4](#). Ideally, 'thank you' letters should be sent within two weeks of your 'reply by' date.

Please be careful about confidentiality. Decide whether you are going to send a 'thank you' letter to individuals signed by your vicar, which will not include specific financial information, or one from the Treasurer that will. We suggest that the former is more appropriate for a campaign and the latter should be adopted for the annual thank you letters.

If anyone has volunteered to take up one of the roles you are asking to be filled then follow that up as soon as you can, ideally beginning initial discussions within two weeks of your response date. It is a good idea to decide as part of the planning process who will be responsible for these conversations.

Aim to respond to any requests for additional information within a similar time frame.

Step 3: Follow up with people who haven't responded

Church members may not respond to *Giving is God's Way* for all sorts of reasons, including misplacing their stewardship pack.

There are two main ways to follow up with people who haven't responded by your deadline. The planning team will need to decide which method to use and also ensure that your use of data is GDPR compliant (see below).

- **Personal contact:** an approach from another member of the congregation (or 'encourager') is the most effective way of encouraging responses after the deadline. This method of follow-up underlines the importance of *Giving is God's Way* to your church and, if done in the right way, rarely causes offence.
- **Sending a reminder letter:** sending a polite letter is the least time-consuming way to follow up with members of your congregation who haven't responded to *Giving is God's Way* by the deadline. This works best if sent within two weeks of your response date.

Please note that the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) changed the way in which we handle personal information and data stored on individuals. This will make a difference as to how you circulate stewardship review material. For more details about GDPR and our Diocesan advice please see our website: <https://southwark.anglican.org/support/for-our-churches/data-protection/>



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Writing a letter is not the most effective method of following up, although it avoids the need for making personal contact which some people find difficult. Guidance on writing reminder letters and a sample letter are available on the Giving in Grace website at www.givinginGrace.org/Reminder-Letters.

A word of warning – it is never a good idea to send a second reminder letter.

Encouraging responses by personal contact

A key factor in the success or otherwise of any stewardship initiative is ensuring that you get a response from as many of your church members as possible. Some form of personal contact is usually the most effective way of ensuring you get a response. Of course, any follow-up must be pastorally appropriate: remember that you are following up for a response and not chasing for money!

In the past, most parishes referred to the people who followed up for responses as 'visitors' and at one time home visiting was a key component of a stewardship programme. Memories of past visiting may or may not be helpful and many parishes now use terms such as 'encouragers' or 'personal contacts'.

Home visiting remains an option you may wish to consider. Although the prospect of this sometimes causes anxiety in those asked to visit, we should remember Jesus' words to his first disciples,

***"Good follow-up
is a blend of
efficient administration
and personal engagement.
Why? Because good stewardship
is not just about releasing the
gift but nurturing the giver. We
value all responses by thanking
people promptly and responding
to requests personally"***
– Giving in Grace,
Diocese of Liverpool



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“Come and see” (John 1:39) – surely an invitation to a conversation. Home visiting enables personal conversations around financial needs and aspirations as well as encouraging a response. Stewardship is an invitation to respond to God's grace; the more personal that invitation, the more effective it will be.

Choose your ‘encouragers’ carefully. They need to be:

- enthusiastic people who love their church and its ministry and who can encourage others to feel the same
- tactful people who can relate well to others
- good communicators who can talk simply and clearly about the vision and ministry of your church so that others are encouraged to respond.

Some churches use all the members of the PCC in this role as a way of demonstrating PCC commitment both to the initiative and to stewardship in general. Whomever you choose, they should be representative of the church and, ideally, not currently heavily involved in church finance.

The role of ‘encouragers’

Your ‘encouragers’ will have to make contact with all the members of your congregation who have not collected the supporting literature (which will be in named envelopes). They will also have to contact all those who have not responded by the deadline. They may need to answer questions on the information given out – or find out who can answer the question – but their main task is to encourage everyone to respond regardless of whether or not people are able to increase their giving. Of course, any approach to members

***“The Bible is not coy about the business of asking. Jesus tells his disciples, ‘ask and it will be given to you... for everyone who asks receives’ (Matthew 7: 7-8). In Luke’s Gospel, a widow persists in asking until her need for justice is rewarded (Luke 18. 1-8)”
– Giving in Grace website***



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of your congregation who haven't responded needs to be pastorally appropriate. Often, forms have simply been mislaid or not reached the top of the 'to do' pile and so a simple reminder is all that is needed; however, some people may not feel able to respond for various reasons and so should only be prompted once. No 'encourager' should be asked to follow up more than six people.

Training your 'encouragers'

It is important to make sure that your 'encouragers' fully understand their role and to give them the opportunity to ask questions so they are confident in approaching individuals. It is a good idea to hold a briefing session before they go out, covering the areas below. You may also like to download copies of 'Guidance for encouragers', which is one of the [supporting documents for Part 4: Giving thanks](#), to give out after the session.

- i. Exploring the right sort of ways of approaching people; role-playing answering difficult questions can be a good way to do this.
- ii. Drawing out the main points from the stewardship pack so the 'encouragers' are comfortable with the information they need to pass on. This is likely to include:
 - helping people to identify with and value their church
 - explaining how people's generosity will enable the church's vision to be achieved
 - explaining the financial need but that proportionate giving is what we are challenged to consider
 - explaining that all church members are being asked to review their giving in terms of their time and their financial contributions
 - the different ways of giving, for example standing orders or envelopes, and the benefits to donors and the church.
- iii. Ensure that your 'encouragers' fully understand how the response forms should be completed and where they should be sent. Remind them that they should be asking people to return their own forms, and that they should not collect money themselves under any circumstances.
- iv. Impress the importance of confidentiality about both the visit and the content of any conversations upon your 'encouragers'.
- v. Make sure the 'encouragers' understand that their role is to explain that everyone is being asked to make a response even if giving is unchanged or less than before, because the church needs to know what its future resources are likely to be.



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- vi. Emphasise that all 'encouragers' should make their own response before they begin to follow up others.

Step 4: review

If you have completed all the steps to your satisfaction, you are ready to move on to [Part 5: After the campaign](#). Use the checklist below to review where you are.

		Notes
Step 1	Notes on your thanksgiving service	
Step 2	Have you sent your thank you letters?	
Step 3	Following up: are you sending letters or appointing 'encouragers'; if it's the latter, who will your encouragers be and who are they following up on?	

