



Church of Ireland – Generous Giving Programme

“Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.” (1 Chr 29:14 NIV)

What is the Generous Giving Programme?

It is a simple 7-step plan to help parishes encourage generosity and enable fresh mission and ministry. It changes the focus from paying bills to growing God’s Kingdom.

Why do we need it?

It can be difficult for churches to stay motivated by their vision to serve and engage with the needs of their local community whilst struggling to meet their everyday running costs.

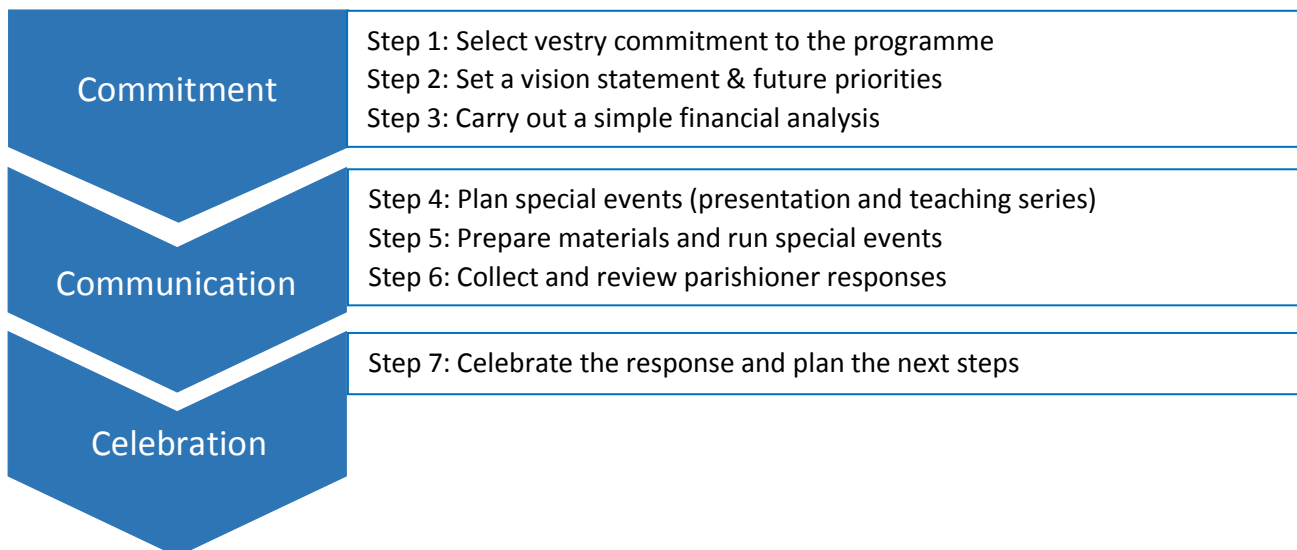
How will it help?

Central to the programme is a presentation event and biblical teaching series which will help parishes to:

- Understand what God is calling them to do
- Connect giving with faith
- Get a realistic picture of their finance and giving
- Link their giving directly to mission and ministry
- Prayerfully reflect on personal level of giving
- Use practical tools to encourage generous giving

‘Generous giving’ includes the giving of time, talents and gifts, through volunteering and service, as well as giving money. This programme focuses mainly on financial giving, but in doing so it aims to change people’s mind-sets, and in turn, create the right climate for growth in all areas of giving.

Generous Giving Programme Overview:



The programme breaks down into three phases and seven steps. Each step is essential to the success of the whole programme and is supported by advice and simple, helpful templates. The programme is flexible but typically takes around 4 months to complete; a suggested timetable and other support resources can be found at ireland.anglican.org/parish-resources/people-community.

‘Bring your full tithe to the temple treasury so there will be ample provisions in my temple. Test me in this, and see if I don’t open up heaven itself to you and pour out blessings beyond your wildest dreams.’
(Malachi 3:10 MSG)

Commitment

Step 1: Select vestry commitment to the programme

(a) Confirm support for the programme

The programme starts with commitment from the select vestry. Its support is essential to the success of the programme. The select vestry should meet to discuss their understanding of the process, its importance to their parish, and to confirm its prayerful and practical support.

(b) Appoint a Giving Co-ordinator

Central to the programme's success is the appointment of the Giving Co-ordinator. It's important to use the gifts, passions and experience of lay people who can champion generous giving. The Co-ordinator should be passionate about generosity and someone who really 'gets' giving and its importance to parish life. It's best if it is *not* the church treasurer, and may not even be a member of the select vestry, but rather someone who is involved in and respected by the church community.

The ideal Giving Co-ordinator would:

- Be encouraging and positive
- Lead the Generous Giving team
- Organise individuals and activities
- Co-ordinate the programme timetable
- Liaise with the rector and select vestry
- Work closely, and confidentially, with the treasurer
- Communicate positively with the parish

A template job description for the Giving Co-ordinator is available at [\[ireland.anglican.org/parish-resources/people-community\]](http://ireland.anglican.org/parish-resources/people-community).

(c) Set up a Generous Giving team

The Generous Giving team will support the Co-ordinator and be responsible for implementing the programme on behalf of the select vestry. At a minimum, the team might include:

- Giving Co-ordinator
- Rector
- Treasurer
- Churchwarden

The number of additional members in the support team may vary depending on the size of the parish. It would be helpful to include someone with experience giving presentations or in event publicity. Additional volunteers may support certain activities and, ultimately, the whole parish should feel part of the programme. The job of the team is to ensure the programme stays on track and is sufficiently well organised and implemented.

(d) Get people praying

The foundation of this programme is prayer. The church should pray specifically for God to give wisdom, direction and clarity to every step of the process, believing that He will provide for and bless His work.

A prayer strategy might involve:

- linking with the prayer groups in church
- planning specific prayer events
- prayer cards
- incorporating prayers for the Generous Giving Programme into the weekly Sunday services.

Further prayer strategy ideas and resources can be found at [\[ireland.anglican.org/parish-resources/people-community\]](http://ireland.anglican.org/parish-resources/people-community).

Step 2: Set a vision statement and future priorities

A clear and specific vision for your church's mission and ministry is at the heart of encouraging generosity, and creates a firm foundation for inspiring the parish and allocating resources for the future. If your parish already has a vision statement and mission priorities, it is important to communicate them clearly. Ensure parishioners have been involved in determining the vision, consulted and informed, so they feel ownership of it and understand that they are an integral part of the future plans.

Decide on two or three specific priorities for the future. Focus on the actions necessary to achieve your vision and not just on finances. The focus on practical and positive actions will help your parish rise to the challenge – vision first, money second. It's important to communicate to parishioners the difference that their offering makes in enabling the mission and ministry of the parish, and that it doesn't just pay bills!

The vision statement and mission priorities will be included in all your publicity for the Generous Giving Programme, in the presentation and special events, and will be the focus of your prayer strategy.

If your church does not have a vision statement:

The select vestry and leadership team of the parish should take some steps to discern God's heart and direction for the parish. Some ideas to help include:

- SWOT analysis (identify strengths and weaknesses of, and opportunities and threats to your parish)
- Dream some dreams! Where do you see the church in 5 years?
- How can you better reach out to your local community?
- Set 3 specific mission priorities
- Bring in an external facilitator to help you look honestly at the priorities of the parish
- Consider a 'vision away day' for the select vestry and the leadership
- Circulate questionnaire to parishioners for feedback and comments

Resources to help plan a vision statement can be found at [[insert link: ireland.anglican.org/parish-resources/people-community](https://ireland.anglican.org/parish-resources/people-community)].

It is vitally important that the church family is involved in and committed to the priorities of God's vision for the parish. The vision statement will give clarity to the financial requirement and will be included in the programme's publicity, presentation and prayer strategy.

Step 3: Carry out a simple financial analysis

The Generous Giving Programme is focused on encouraging generosity, so that parishes can not only meet their everyday running costs but plan for the future and provide financial resources for growth, mission and ministry.

To do this, it is important that the Generous Giving team has a clear and realistic financial picture, including:

- an understanding of the basics of parish income and expenditure
- an understanding of what it takes to meet the running costs of the parish
- an idea of the necessary increases that would be needed to meet the vision statement priorities
- a profile of the giving patterns of the givers in your parish.

(a) Create a budget

It may be useful for your parish to set out a proposed budget for the next 3 years which includes the financial elements of your vision statement and priorities. The team could work alongside the parish treasurer to get a realistic picture and set some achievable financial targets that will meet the running costs of the parish, fund continuing activities and new planned initiatives.

The RCB provides useful budgeting templates and advice for treasurers on [ireland.anglican.org/parish-resources/parish-finance].

(b) Focus on sustained planned giving

Fundraising activities and events which encourage one-off donations are important not only for generating income but also for creating a sense of church community. Keep incorporating these events into the life of your parish.

However, for long-term sustainability and growth it is essential that emphasis is put on encouraging planned giving. Planned giving is giving that is regular, realistic and proportionate.

(c) A Parish Giving Profile

Create a parish giving profile to get a true picture of the strengths and weaknesses of giving patterns in your parish. A template profile can be found at [\[ireland.anglican.org/parish-resources/people-community\]](http://ireland.anglican.org/parish-resources/people-community).

The template profile asks you to set out how many people give regularly, how much they give each month, how they give (freewill offering envelope, standing order), how many people have signed the relevant forms to allow the parish to claim back tax, how much money comes in as one-off donations and loose plate collections (cash).

Connect the donations made with membership statistics; consider the number of people who attend but who do not give regularly. It will be important to communicate the reality of the giving patterns in your information leaflet and presentation (see Step 5 below).

Set some financial targets to help meet the vision priorities, for example, *“if each parishioner gave an extra £2 / €2 a week it would raise an extra per year to start a community outreach”*.

(d) Help parishioners plan their giving

Many parishes have traditionally facilitated giving through the use of freewill offering envelopes. Although familiar to us, this method is based on historic behaviour (when most people received a weekly wage in an envelope!) and is no longer the most effective method of giving, for the giver or the parish. Nowadays, most outgoings are paid directly via our bank accounts by direct debit or standing order. Therefore, it is appropriate to consider our financial relationship with the Church in equally up-to-date terms and in line with our other personal finances.

Simply communicating to parishioners that there are alternatives to a weekly envelope can be hugely effective. Share the information needed for parishioners to set up standing orders or direct debits. A guaranteed weekly or monthly payment means the parish won't lose out on the weeks a member may be unable to attend the Sunday service. Reducing the amount of cash which is handled in turn reduces the pressure on those who undertake the tasks of counting, recording and lodging the money on a weekly basis.

If your parish members enjoy the traditional gesture of making a physical offering, think about an alternative 'token' of some sort that parishioners could put into the collection plate; many churches have tokens such as cards for people who pay by standing order. It may be as simple as acknowledging that a person can contribute in ways other than giving an envelope on a Sunday – this could help alleviate the discomfort some may feel by letting the offering plate go by without contributing.

(e) Maximise Tax Efficient Giving

Tax refund schemes for charitable bodies allow parishes to claim tax relief on donations. These extra funds can make an enormous difference to the parish. However, if parishioners who are tax payers donate but are not signed up to the relevant scheme (Gift Aid Declaration in Northern Ireland or Enduring or Annual Certificates in the Republic of Ireland) their parishes are missing out on valuable income.

It is a good idea to include a bank mandate and Gift Aid Declaration forms (for Northern Ireland) or Enduring or Annual Certificates (for the Republic of Ireland) with the Generous Giving Programme response forms when they are circulated (Step 5 below).

Under Gift Aid in Northern Ireland, the parish can claim 25p in every pound donated by tax paying members of the parish. In addition, the parish can claim 25% tax relief on small cash donations of £20 or less (on up to £8000 per year) through the Small Donations Scheme. In the Republic of Ireland, parishes can claim a blended rate of tax relief which equates to nearly 45c per Euro donated by tax paying members (who donate €250 per year) – share this information! Further advice on the process for reclaiming tax in either Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland is available from the RCB or the relevant tax authority.

Communication

Step 4: Plan the special events (presentation and teaching series)

Central to the programme is the presentation event and biblical teaching series. The presentation will be on the parish vision and plans for the future, including a picture of the church finances and what is needed for these plans to become reality. This could be part of a Sunday service, or run separately. An information leaflet and confidential response form should be prepared and given to each parishioner at the presentations event (see Step 5 below).

The biblical teaching series will focus on the theme of generosity, and is usually delivered on two Sundays following or around the presentation event. People give generously when they understand that giving is rooted in discipleship and worship, when they know what their money is being used for and that it is making a difference. After all events, there should be opportunities for the parish to prayerfully respond.

(a) Set dates for your events:

Consider when to hold the presentation event and supporting teaching series. We would suggest setting aside 3 Sundays, and then holding a celebration Sunday another 4 weeks after the events. Suggested Event Plan:

Sunday 1 – presentation	Generous Giving Programme Presentation
	Distribution of the leaflets and response forms
	Encourage people to prayerfully consider their response
Sunday 2 – teaching	1 st teaching sermon on generosity
	Continue to encourage people to respond
	Offer opportunity to return response forms
Sunday 3 – teaching	2 nd teaching sermon on generosity
	Continue to encourage people to respond
	Offer opportunity to return response forms.
Celebration Sunday	Celebration and thanksgiving event (four weeks after Sunday 3)

Some parishes may have different groups of people who worship at different times during the week. The team will need to decide whether the presentation and follow up services are run for each group at their particular service or whether everyone is invited to one presentation event. How this will work may depend upon the parish dynamics, and whether people are willing and able to attend services at a different time. Arrangements are best decided by the Generous Giving team.

Some may decide to run the event and presentation on a special night or weekend with food and other activities, rather than at a Sunday service, and have the teaching on the Sundays at either side. It is important to cater this event to your parish and surrounding community, so that it attracts as many people as possible.

When setting your dates it may be best to stay away from already busy times in your church calendar like Christmas and Easter, and from holiday times when attendance may be less than usual. Although the parish may already hold special events or services around Harvest, it is a very relevant time to celebrate God's provision and focus on encouraging generosity.

(b) Plan the Format for the presentation Sunday

This is a chance to demonstrate generosity in practice, as well as to communicate the positive impact your parish already has on the local community, and its vision for the future. Try to attract as many people as possible and create a sense of occasion. Consider serving some food either before the special service (breakfast, croissants, bacon butties, donuts etc.) or after the service (lunch, picnic, BBQ). Food always encourages more people to attend, and is a simple way of demonstrating generosity, as well encouraging a sense of community and relationships.

The service could include:

- Information leaflets and response packs given out to everyone as they arrive
- Introduction from the rector
- Presentation by the Giving Co-ordinator
- Summary and biblical reflection from the rector
- Prayers for the programme and encouragement to pray and reflect on a personal response
- Announcement of teaching series (for example, on the next two Sundays)
- Information on the response packs and how to complete and return them
- Announcement of the date of the Celebration Sunday of thanksgiving.

(c) Prepare a list of contacts

It is important to encourage all those who are interested in and support the life and mission of the parish to attend these events and services. A member of the team should take responsibility for putting together a list of people who will receive a personal invitation by post or email, including:

- People on the general vestry register
- People who already give to the parish but may not be registered members
- Those who attend regularly but aren't yet considered to be planned givers
- Families of newly baptised children, and recently married couples
- Church magazine recipients
- Sunday school families
- Families of members of Church organisations

(d) Design and send out invitations and publicise events.

The team will need to give some thought as to how the invitations will be produced and circulated.

Invitation cards could be given out by the churchwardens at the Sunday services at least three to four weeks before the presentation Sunday, or personal invitations should be posted or emailed in good time before the presentation Sunday.

It is important to personally invite the people in your parish who are already regular givers. It is essential that the church communicate that this is priority for the parish, to announce it at every opportunity, and to pray for the presentation and teaching series. The invitation cards should make it clear that the presentation is simply providing an opportunity to hear about the parish's vision and plans, and that there will be opportunities to reflect and respond during the following teaching series. Continue to pray for these events at every opportunity.

A simple invitation is enough; there is a template at [\[ireland.anglican.org/parish-resources/people-community\]](http://ireland.anglican.org/parish-resources/people-community).

Step 5: Prepare materials and run the special events

(a) Create an information leaflet

An information leaflet should be given to all parishioners at the presentation event. Templates to help the Generous Giving team prepare the information leaflet and response pack (below) can be found at [\[ireland.anglican.org/parish-resources/people-community\]](http://ireland.anglican.org/parish-resources/people-community).

This leaflet is an opportunity to communicate the good news stories in your parish and the impact your parish has on people's lives. The leaflet should include the following information:

- Your vision statement
- What you are already doing (e.g. ministering to 60 children each week, serving 50 meals a month, supporting 20 lonely people each week, engaging with 50 young people through youth club etc.)
- What you plan to do in the next 3 years; make your mission priorities clear.
- How you plan to make that happen and what financial resources are needed to achieve this; you may consider including an overview of your parish finances, and the giving profile of your parish.
- How the whole parish can play their part; focus on becoming a generous church, increasing giving, thinking about how you give, maximising gift aid, and using gifts and talents to serve in these ministries.
- Encouragement to people to prayerfully consider their giving and to respond.

Keep the leaflets informative, colourful, simple and to the point, including photographs and good news stories.

(b) Prepare the response pack

The response pack should be circulated along with the information leaflet and should encourage parishioners to personally reflect on their levels of giving and generosity, and to prayerfully respond. It should include a Standing order form and a Gift Aid Declaration (Northern Ireland) or Enduring Certificate or Annual Certificate (Republic of Ireland), as relevant, and a confidential envelope in which the completed form is to be returned to the Giving Co-ordinator, team or treasurer.

It is important that you include a deadline for your responses. Also encourage people to play their part in the vision and mission of the church. Every person's gift is valuable, no matter how much or how little. There should be an opportunity to respond at both the teaching Sundays, and some follow-up may be required.

Think about how parishioners will return their response forms, for example:

- A post box in the entrance of the church
- In a confidential envelope directly to Giving Co-ordinator
- On the offering plates during the service
- Bring their responses personally to the front, to a cross or a basket
- To the church office

(c) Prepare the presentation

The presentation will explain more fully the details of the information leaflet provided. Aim for a lively, interesting, visually attractive presentation, underpinned with thankfulness for what God has already done, and giving an outline of the future plans. It should celebrate the goodness and generosity of God, and the privilege of being part of His family. The presentation should include:

- A brief history of the parish church, its role in, and impact on, the local community;
- An outline of the vision, the priorities, new initiatives planned and their potential impact;
- How the new plans will be carried out and the financial resources needed to achieve these;
- An overview of the current financial situation of your parish and the Parish Giving Profile;
- A challenge to every person to be involved in the future mission and ministry of the parish; and
- An explanation of the blessing and growth that will come from being a generous church.

A presentation is most effective at getting a clear message across, and could be effectively delivered by the Giving Co-ordinator, or another member of the team.

(d) Prepare a teaching series (2 Sundays)

This programme is based on a firm foundation of teaching and prayer. Biblical teaching on generosity helps us to listen to where God is calling us, and seek his blessing on everything that we do. It prepares our hearts and minds to respond to what God is challenging us to do. It connects our giving with our faith, and as we give, we grow in our relationship with God and in our relationship with others. Our churches grow as we see hearts changed and resources (both financial and people) released for mission and ministry.

Alongside the presentation, the two Sundays of biblical teaching on the theme of generosity will encourage parishioners to focus not just on the cost of running a church, but rather on living generously in all aspects of their lives. God speaks through His word and challenges hearts to respond.

It is acknowledged that there can be challenges and sensitivities involved in teaching on generosity and giving. This programme aims to make resources available to support biblical teaching; some can be found at [\[ireland.anglican.org/parish-resources/people-community\]](http://ireland.anglican.org/parish-resources/people-community) and the further sharing of teaching materials is encouraged. An alternative option might be to invite a guest speaker for the teaching series.

At the two teaching Sundays, the congregation should be given an opportunity to respond.

Step 6: Collect and review parishioner responses

(a) Collect and follow-up

As responses are received they should be carefully and confidentially recorded; those from whom responses are received should be checked off against the list of invitations sent so it's clear what proportion of people have responded. Once the deadline for responses is near, it is important to follow up with those yet to respond to try to get the best possible outcome for the programme.

The degree of follow-up required will depend on the level of response received and what the team feels is appropriate in their parish community. It will be up to the team, perhaps in conjunction with the select vestry, to decide what level of follow up is needed and how this should be approached. Ideas for follow up include running an open session to meet and discuss questions with the Generous Giving team after a service, an announcement from the pulpit, a reminder in the notices or parish website, or emails or telephone calls to remind people of the deadline.

Follow-up reminders should happen in good time, be sensitive and well-organised. Remember that responses need to be collated in time for results to be shared at the Celebration Sunday service.

When undertaking any follow up activities to try to improve the response rate, it must be clear that the reason is to provide everyone with a chance to have their responses included, and *not* to put pressure on people to discuss their levels of giving.

(b) Review of responses

The responses should be collated and reviewed by the team as soon as possible after the deadline. Further responses received as a result of follow-up reminders will also need to be considered.

It is also important to be aware of, and to record, any changes in giving patterns or behaviour of the congregation. The giving team and treasurer may need to consider the impact any changes will have on the financial requirement of the parish mission priorities.

Create a summary of the overall response to be presented to the whole parish on the Celebration Sunday.

- Has there been an increase in planned giving?
- Has there been an increase in the numbers of planned givers?
- Has the percentage of standing orders increased?
- Has there been an increase in the number of people signed up for Gift Aid or Enduring/Annual Certificates?
- What is the projected increase in income and what will be the impact on your future plans and ministry?
- Have the targets been reached?
- Have there been any other outcomes? (E.g. increase in service, volunteering, or prayer)

Celebration

Step 7: Celebrate the response and plan the next steps

(a) Celebration Service

A special service of celebration and thanksgiving should be held no later than 4 weeks after the completion of the presentation event and teaching series. This service is a chance to feedback the results of the programme including the analysis of the responses and the impact that these will have on the mission and ministry of the church. More importantly this service gives an opportunity to thank God for His generosity, His provision and His blessing, and to thank and value all the parishioners who reflected and responded.

(b) Thank you letters

This step is so simple yet so important. Unfortunately, it's something that some parishes are not very good at doing! As soon as the responses are collated and the celebration service has taken place, thank you letters should be sent to every person who has responded.

This provides an opportunity to thank members for their support, and to explain to them how their giving will enable the church to fulfil its mission and ministry. It is important to link the giving with the mission priorities,

and the impact it will have. It also helps people to know that, no matter how big or small, their gifts are valued by the church. Expressing gratitude encourages people to keep giving generously. These letters should be personalised to each giver and should be sent out from the treasurer, the rector or the Generous Giving Team.

In this personal thank you letter, please **don't include** a request for more money, as it undermines the gratitude and risks the 'thank you' message getting lost!

It is good practice to send out thank you letters to your planned givers every year, and keeps generous giving on the radar. Template letters can be found at [ireland.anglican.org/parish-resources/people-community].

(c) 6 month vision update and anniversary service

Aim to give parishioners a progress report after 6 months. Include an update on the vision statement and priorities from the original Generous Giving programme. Use this opportunity to collectively thank the respondents again, and outline the impact their giving has already made and will make to the future of the parish.

A year after the events and teaching series, consider having an anniversary service to thank God for the previous year's blessings, recap on what has been achieved and continue to look to the future.

(d) Revisit Generous Giving every year

It is good practice for the select vestry to commit to having a conversation about giving every year, and to commit to taking appropriate action. Such a commitment could be to:

- Include annual biblical teaching on the theme of generosity so it becomes a central part of worship and discipleship
- Send thank you letters to planned givers every year
- Review the parish giving profile each year
- Recap relevant elements of the Generous Giving Programme as needed.

A template annual review form for use by select vestries and Generous Giving teams can be found at [ireland.anglican.org/parish-resources/people-community].