

Giving for Growth



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The National Stewardship Programme

Planning Guide for Congregations

The Church of Scotland

Stewardship and Finance Scottish Charity Number – SC011353

PLANNING GUIDE

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Introduction

Christian giving is a response to God's gifts of life and love. In particular it is a response to the good news of God's love and saving grace in Jesus Christ.

Christian giving is an opportunity to enable the sharing of the gospel through the worship, fellowship, mission and service of the Church.

GIVING FOR GROWTH is a stewardship programme to teach and promote the Christian giving of money.

GIVING FOR GROWTH focuses on the life of the Church and the ways in which our giving of money enable the sharing of the gospel through the life of the Church.

GIVING FOR GROWTH seeks to provide financial resources for the sharing of the gospel – not just to maintain things as they are, but to develop the life of the Church, that the Church may numerically and spiritually.

The objective of this programme is to increase the regular, committed giving of money by members and adherents of the Church.

Three things are very important:

The first is **prayer** –

- recognising that **GIVING FOR GROWTH** is undertaken with God;
- involving everyone in the congregation in prayer for the programme;
- remembering those leading the planning and delivery of the programme.

The second is **commitment** –

- from the minister, elders, and other office-bearers;
- to the programme **GIVING FOR GROWTH**;
- as an important part of our overall commitment to Christ and his Church.

The third is **enthusiasm** –

- for sharing the gospel through the life and work of the Church;
- for talking about the difference the Church makes to the life of the world;
- for generous giving to make this difference.

GIVING FOR GROWTH should not be a painful exercise you have to endure : it should be an opportunity for the congregation to **celebrate Christian giving**.

Planning

Careful preparation is essential if **GIVING FOR GROWTH** is to be effective in your congregation. The first step is the appointment of a Planning Group by the Kirk Session. The Planning Group should include people with the necessary abilities for the various tasks : they do not have to be office-bearers.

Planning Group Convener

Co-ordinate the work of the Planning Group and liaise with the Stewardship Consultant. Encourage and liaise with the other members of the group to ensure that the various tasks are completed at the appropriate time. Prepare an agenda for each Planning Group meeting and chair the meetings of the group when the Stewardship Consultant is not present.

Administration Convener

Record and distribute minutes of Planning Group meetings. Prepare list of homes to be visited and, in consultation with the Visitor Convener, lists of districts for visitors. Arrange printing/copying of letters, lists etc as required. Arrange availability of accommodation and any equipment required for various meetings. Order any material required from the Stewardship and Finance Department.

Visitor Convener

With the help of others in the group prepare a list of potential visitors and team leaders. Recruit team leaders and through them arrange recruitment of sufficient visitors. In consultation with the Administration Convener, prepare lists and allocate visitors districts. Prepare a timetable and letter of thanks to visitors. Via team leaders, encourage and support visitors throughout the programme.

Publicity Convener

Arrange design, content and production of all materials required for the programme. Make appropriate use of opportunities for publicity before and during the period of the programme to obtain maximum impact within the congregation and, if appropriate, throughout the local community (depending on type of event(s) chosen).

Event Convener

Co-ordinate all matters relating to the special event(s), e.g. congregational gatherings (with or without catering), presentations using audio/visual displays, an exhibition of the work of the Church. Recruit others to help with this.

Follow-Up Convener

Prepare a system for recording and acknowledging responses. In consultation with Visitor Convener, make arrangements for the return of responses by visitors. Plan a method of following up responses and recording the outcome. Produce an analysis of results.

Minister

The minister should be part of the Planning Group but should not be its Convener and should not be delegated specific tasks as detailed above. The minister's role is to teach Christian giving, to give general advice and guidance, and to provide encouragement and support to the other members of the group.

Timetable

The Planning Group should arrange a timetable for the programme, ensuring that the Preparatory Worship and the Gatherings are taking place at the best possible times. It is important that a timetable for the whole programme is worked out at the beginning. Every effort should then be made to stick to this timetable.

The timetable should be based on the following outline:

Initial Planning Meeting	5 months before the Gatherings (with meetings at least monthly thereafter)
Recruitment of Visitors	Should be completed 2 months before the Gatherings
Preparatory Services	3 or 4 Sundays before the Gatherings (or intermittently over a longer period)
Preparation of Visitors	3-4 weeks before the Gatherings
Commissioning of Visitors	Sunday before Invitation Contact
Invitation Visits	2 weeks before the Gatherings (completed 1 week before)
THE GATHERINGS	
Delivery of Brochure to those who did not attend	Week following the Gatherings
Response Visits	2 weeks after the Gatherings
Follow Up	Should begin as soon as responses are received and be completed within 4 weeks
Thanksgiving Service	4 weeks after the Gatherings
Feedback Meeting with Stewardship Consultant	About 2 months after the Gatherings

Teaching Christian Giving

Christian giving has a biblical and theological foundation. As members and adherents understand this more clearly and more fully, they will think of their Christian giving as an integral part of their Christian faith and commitment.

The Minister's main role as a member of the Planning Group is to take responsibility for teaching Christian giving as a core ingredient in **GIVING FOR GROWTH**.

Study groups in the congregation may be encouraged to use the Bible Study material produced by the Stewardship and Finance Department –

'The Bible teaches ... GIVE - Explore some Biblical models for Giving ...'

The Biblical models considered in this booklet are First Fruits, Tithes and Freewill Offerings, Sharing, Sacrifice, and Created in the image of a giving God.

It is very helpful if the Minister leads worship on a 'giving' theme on three or four Sundays prior to the Gatherings.

Possible themes are:

- 1 Made in the image of a giving God (Genesis 1: 1-31)
- 2 Giving in response to God's giving (Deuteronomy 26: 1-11)
- 3 Selfishness and Sacrifice (Luke 12: 13-21 and 21: 1-4)
- 4 Giving in the first days of the Church (2 Corinthians 8: 1-15)

It is helpful to pick up biblical themes of sharing (Acts 4: 32-27 and 2 Corinthians 8: 1-15) and relate these to the sharing of financial resources in the Church of Scotland to maintain a Christian presence throughout Scotland, to make particular provision for the Church in more deprived or more remote areas, and to share in the mission of the Church in some of the poorest parts of the world.

New Testament passages about the Christian giving of money in Acts and Paul's Letters are concerned with consolidating new congregations and growing the Christian community. Today the message about the Christian giving of money should not be focusing on maintaining a declining Church : it should be concerned with providing financial resources to enable the Church to grow in faith, commitment and numbers.

There are many passages which focus on the gospel making a difference to people's lives (e.g. Mark 10: 46-52; Luke 19: 1-10; John 10: 1-10). These might be explored to make the point that Christian giving enables the sharing of the gospel, which in turn enriches individual lives and the lives of communities.

The purpose of leading worship on 'giving' themes is to encourage members and adherents to think about what the Bible is saying about giving. Sermons on these themes should be expository and explanatory, rather than occasions to call for better giving. The Gatherings, at the heart of **GIVING FOR GROWTH**, provide the opportunity to challenge members and adherents to give more generously.

Personal Contact

How do you intend to invite members and adherents to the Gatherings at the heart of your **GIVING FOR GROWTH** programme?

How do you intend to obtain responses from members and adherents to the message of your **GIVING FOR GROWTH** programme?

Personal contact with members and adherents is the best way. This will mean recruiting a considerable number of visitors.

Many people are apprehensive about being a visitor in a stewardship programme. It is very important that potential visitors are told that they will not be expected to convey the message of **GIVING FOR GROWTH**. The visitors' role is to invite members and adherents to the Gatherings and to collect responses from members and adherents after the Gatherings.

The Stewardship Consultant will lead a preparation session for visitors – to outline the purpose of **GIVING FOR GROWTH**, explain their role, provide answers to questions they may be asked, and, most of all, to help visitors approach their task with confidence. There should also be a **Commissioning of Visitors** in the context of Sunday Worship.

There may be good pastoral reasons why it would be insensitive to visit certain members and adherents – consult the Minister about this.

In a few places congregations have successfully contacted their members and adherents by telephone. The Stewardship Consultant will advise the Planning Group about this way of contacting members and adherents.

Contact by letter should only be considered as a last resort. If you have to make contact in this way, it is vital that the letter attracts the reader if it is to be in any way effective. The Stewardship Consultant will advise the Planning Group on the wording of such a letter.

Material

GIVING FOR GROWTH will require various pieces of material to communicate the Christian giving message.

You will probably need to produce:

- Prayer Card for use by members and adherents;
- Articles for the Church Newsletter, to give brief advance notice to members and adherents and to report the results of the programme to the congregation;
- Invitation to the Gatherings (with RSVP to advise numbers or transport requirements);
- Brochure to portray the sharing of the gospel through the worship, fellowship, mission and service of the congregation and the Church of Scotland as a whole;
- Response Card, to provide members and adherents with an opportunity to commit themselves to committed, generous giving of money;
- Gift Aid Declaration and a bank Standing Order form to accompany the response card;
- ID for Visitors (if required).

A CD of templates for the above is provided.

Also provided is a template for a PowerPoint presentation to be used at the Gatherings.

Some general stewardship material, such as ***Giving for the Gospel, Christian Giving is Sacrificial Giving, Reflections – Stewardship Words and Phrases, Gift Aid is Good News*** and ***A Gift to the Church in your Will*** is produced by the Stewardship and Finance Department and may be useful in conveying the message of the programme.

The most important things about material for any stewardship programme are:

- It must be visually attractive.
- Its content must be presented in an imaginative way.
- The stewardship message must be clear.

The material you produce will be competing for attention with professionally produced material from companies and other charities.

The Gatherings

A series of Gatherings provides members and adherents with an opportunity, not only to hear the message of the **GIVING FOR GROWTH** programme, but also to ask questions and make comments.

Please note that members and adherents are invited to attend one Gathering.

The number of Gatherings will depend on the size of the congregation. The maximum attendance may be achieved when at least one is scheduled for a morning or afternoon. When issuing the invitations it may be helpful to include a reply slip which will give an indication of the number attending on each occasion.

SAMPLE PROGRAMME	
7.00pm	People begin to arrive, are welcomed by members of the Planning Group, and have the opportunity to view displays of the life of the Church, which is supported by Christian giving. Brochures and Response Cards are issued as people arrive.
7.30pm	Welcome, followed by a brief act of worship focusing on Christian giving as a response to God's gifts of life and love.
7.40pm	The objective of GIVING FOR GROWTH .
7.45pm	A PowerPoint presentation on 'Sharing the Gospel' through giving to support the worship, fellowship, mission and service of the Church.
8.15pm	Questions and Comments
8.30pm	The Response Cards are explained and the arrangements for returning these are outlined. <i>(At this point guidance will be given about Offering Envelopes, Standing Orders and Gift Aid.)</i>
8.40pm	Questions and Comments.
8.45pm	A challenge to respond by giving generously and a closing prayer.

The message at any Christian giving event should be positive. This is achieved by emphasising:

- Christian giving is a joyful response to God's generous giving to us.
- Christian giving is an opportunity to enable the sharing of the gospel through the worship, fellowship, mission and service of the Church.

Giving for Growth

God's generous giving to us can be highlighted in the opening worship at the Gatherings. There should be some reference to God's giving at the beginning of the brochure.

Our Christian giving as a joyful response to the gifts of God is a very important part of the message at the Gatherings.

The other important part of the message is persuading and convincing members and adherents that their Christian giving is supporting a worthy cause – the sharing of the gospel through the worship, fellowship, mission and service of the Church.

Talk about Christian giving often gets bogged down in discussion about local expenses relating to the buildings and the Ministries and Mission Contribution which has to be sent to the Church Offices in Edinburgh. It is important that the work done through local expenditure and the work done through the Ministries and Mission allocation are highlighted.

All the ingredients of the Gatherings should be designed to present this work in a positive and attractive way.

In presenting the message, do not be negative –

- DON'T talk about deficits and books that will not balance
- DON'T apologise about asking for more money for God's work.

Remember the important role which all members and adherents, including the housebound, can play – praying for the sharing of the gospel through the work of the Church and giving to support this work.

Responses and Follow Up

If **GIVING FOR GROWTH** is to be an effective means of resourcing the life of your congregation, it is important that all members and adherents have the opportunity to respond to the Christian giving message.

A Response Card should provide the opportunity for members and adherents to declare their intention to give regularly and generously.

There is no point in receiving responses from members and adherents if these are not followed up promptly. Requests for offering envelopes or further information about a gift to the Church in your Will must be followed up as soon as possible.

In the history of the Church many special efforts, including stewardship programmes, have been less effective than they should have been through lack of follow up.

Thanksgiving

When responses are received, it is time –

- to give thanks to God for his guidance, strength, support and encouragement throughout the programme;
- to give thanks to God for the work of the Holy Spirit working in the hearts of members and adherents to prompt increased giving of money.

It is an important symbolic act to offer the responses of members and adherents to God in the context of Sunday worship.

A Thanksgiving Service is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate Christian giving and commemorate a sense of renewal in the life of the congregation.

Conclusion

When a congregation completes **GIVING FOR GROWTH**, the Stewardship Consultant will participate in a Feedback Meeting with the Planning Group when the following questions will be addressed:

- In what ways has the programme enhanced the life of the congregation?
- In what ways has the programme advanced the worship, fellowship, mission and service of the Church?
- To what extent have the offerings of members and adherents increased?
- To what extent have the offerings of members and adherents become more committed?
- To what extent has the method of giving changed?
- How many members have decided to give through Gift Aid?
- In what ways did the programme not meet your expectations?

An honest appraisal of the programme and its results should be submitted to the Kirk Session and the Consultant by the Planning Group – with recommendations for continuing teaching and promotion of Christian giving.

It is important that the teaching and promotion of Christian giving is not an occasional event in the life of the congregation, but becomes an integral part of that life. Christian giving (of money, time and talent) should be part of the culture of every congregation.

To help develop this culture, the Stewardship and Finance Department has produced a booklet ***Creating and developing a STEWARDSHIP SEASON in your congregation.***

It is also very important that the results of the programme are communicated to the congregation. (*This has often been done through a final newsletter, using the same format as the newsletters issued prior to the programme.*)

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