

# How the Generous Giving Project helps the church to grow.

## Background.

1. 18 months ago the Diocese of Durham launched the Generous Giving Project to change the culture and attitudes towards giving. This is a **long-term** strategy that in part addresses our financial situation by bringing about sustainable, long-term financial security, as well as building greater capacity at local church level in other tangible ways, as parishioners give more generously of their time and skills.
2. This innovative strategy is now a recommended approach of the National Church, and its National Stewardship Advisor, John Preston<sup>1</sup>, and the strategies and tools employed by the Generous Giving Project are now being readily used by other diocese across the C of E<sup>2</sup>. In short, the greater our resources in money, time and skills, which can be released by a generous giving approach, the greater our capacity to grow as a church, and be sustainable in the future.

## Short-term vs Long-term (campaigns vs culture change)

3. It is widely held that concentrating on short-term fundraising campaigns tends to get responses from the same few people who already regularly give generously (thus draining an ever diminishing pool of resources, failing to reach those not yet convinced, and putting pressure on committed members). This is not good for growth.
4. Furthermore, it is also widely held that a fundraising campaign, due to its short-term quick-fix nature, does not enable the local church to integrate generous giving as part of the church's DNA, and "raising funds" can often neglect the faith-based, Bible-centred response for us as Christians to give generously of ourselves as a recognition of God's generosity and the church's wider mission. This, too, is not good for growth.
5. A traditional "3 Sunday sermon series" is time and resource heavy, reducing the capacity of the Diocesan Adviser to engage with a large number of churches. However, if churches wish to do a sermon series *as part of their wider approach and implementation of GGP ideas*, this

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<sup>1</sup>"It's a different angle, and that's one of the real gifts that you're bringing to the role - the chance to think and communicate from a different perspective." John Preston, **National Stewardship Advisor**

<sup>2</sup>"It was great to receive your blog via **John Preston** and then to explore a bit further the Generosity project. When I arrived in my role here in London in 2015 it appeared we were the only Diocese undertaking to increase/improve our fundraising – beyond the stewardship officer type role. It is great to hear now that there is more going on [in Durham]." Sarah Webster, **Diocese of London**

"Before you started [writing these blogs] I had never thought of trying to explain the offertory/collection" Terry Gray, Parish Finance Officer, **Diocese of Chelmsford**

"I'm loving your other blogs; I frequently forward them around the Diocesan office and one of the Archdeacons is particularly keen to share them around the diocese." Rebeca Evans, Parish Support Advisor, **Truro Diocese**

"Your articles are brilliant! And [Jack and the Beans talk] is great – I will use it." Gordon Randall, Stewardship Adviser, **Diocese of Winchester**

can be fully resourced. The key is that we do not rely on sermons alone. Culture change requires communication via several mediums at once, over a protracted time.

6. The Generous Giving Project has its focus firmly on the long-term, and has developed a creative, easy to implement, and popular<sup>3</sup> suite of practical resources to support the local church in changing attitudes towards finances and other aspects of generous giving, by instigating subtle changes to worship services, by supporting lay and ordained leaders to teach and preach generosity, by providing interesting and inspiring written materials available to every parishioner in the diocese, and by helping churches to raise the profile of their existing generosity.

### Focus on Growth

7. In "[Marks of a Generous Church](#)" the Generous Giving Project highlights 8 characteristics, or "marks" of a generous church. Now the main tool parishes are using to become "generous churches", it is centred on our faith response to a generous God and our desire to realise Jesus' mission on earth. This is about growing disciples. The article is supported by this [practical resource](#) which, within a framework of generous giving, specifically encourages mission, participation, collaboration, prayer, and inclusivity. It's also supported by this [resource](#), aimed at non-Christians, new-Christians and young-Christians, visitors and outsiders. The Generous Giving Project has specifically developed resources to address not just the existing culture within our worshipping community (discipleship) but also ways of connecting with and encouraging people of the fringes (mission).
8. This approach has been adopted so we will not only see growth in terms of money, time and skills, which will help us to sustain our current mission objectives, but also growth by connecting with, and explaining church culture and practices to would-be Christians, or those on the edges. It is a very inclusive approach, using language that makes sense to new or not-yet-Christians.

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<sup>3</sup> "All [PCC members] were very impressed with your commitment and enthusiasm to the Generous Giving Project. We will be adopting many of your ideas and using the GGP website and your blog to improve our approach to GGP." Barrie Kirton, St Cuthbert's Church, Etherley, **Diocese of Durham**