

CHURCH LEGACY

A lasting gift to your church



PCC Guide: Encouraging Giving through Legacies

 THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

www.churchlegacy.org.uk

Why a PCC should Encourage Legacy Giving

Legacies are a lifeline for our parishes. Each year around 5,000 people leave a gift in their will to a Church of England parish. In total, parishes receive around £50 million in legacy gifts each year - gifts to finance mission projects, maintain beautiful church buildings and grow faithful communities.

For many people, leaving a gift in their will is a final opportunity to make a lasting gift to God. It is also a way to make a lasting difference to the future of their church and community.



Many church members would like to know how they could leave a gift to the Church, although they might be reticent about asking. This booklet provides a guide to encouraging legacies in your parish and some practical steps to take.



Action

The PCC should put legacy giving on the agenda for a forthcoming meeting.

Why every Christian should have a Will

We are God's stewards, entrusted to use His gifts for the good of our family and our church family. In thanksgiving, we should also take will writing seriously – setting our affairs in order, and stewarding them wisely to the end of our time on earth and beyond.

For nearly 500 years the Church of England has encouraged its members to keep their wills up to date. The Book of Common Prayer instructs clergy to remind those who are sick:



“

Let him be admonished to make his will... for the better discharging of his conscience and the quietness of his Executors. But men should often be put in remembrance to take order for the settling of their temporal estates, whilst they are in health.

”



Every year thousands of people die without leaving a will. Making a will and updating it regularly is the only way to make sure your wishes are carried out after your death, giving you peace of mind that you can continue to support the family, friends and causes you love.



Action

The PCC should affirm or reaffirm its commitment to encouraging people to make and review their wills.

A Natural Part of Christian Stewardship

Christian Stewardship is simply how we manage the resources, wealth and possessions that have been entrusted to us. Gifts in wills are a natural part of this and are a way of giving thanks to God for the gifts of our lifetime.

We are stewards of everything we own, not just our income. Many of us give regularly to the church each week or month; why not from our estates too?

It is good practice for your PCC to appoint a Parish Giving Officer or Stewardship Promoter who will encourage the congregation in their giving. Encouraging people to review their wills regularly as a part of their everyday Christian discipleship should be a part of their role.



Action

The PCC should appoint someone to encourage legacy giving in the parish as part of their wider stewardship role.

A Policy on Legacy Giving

Most people will only leave a gift in their will if they think their church will use it for worthwhile projects, not simply to fund operating costs. A legacy policy allows the PCC to prepare and discuss how they would wish to see a gift used. It can also help to reassure those interested that the PCC has a policy in place.

PCCs should agree a policy on how potential legacy income will be spent, and then communicate it to the congregation. It is also advisable to discourage restricted gifts since the needs of a church will change over time.

An Example Legacy Policy:

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We welcome all gifts in wills, however large or small, and we promise to use your gift to make a difference in our parish. Our PCC legacy policy is to use gifts to help fund significant development projects; whether buildings, equipment, mission or staff. Since needs change over the years, we encourage you to leave a gift in your will for the general purposes of the parish rather than for a restricted purpose.

We will discuss possible uses of your gift with your executors when the time comes, bearing in mind your known areas of interest in the church (e.g. music, buildings, children and youth, overseas mission or aid) and the church's priorities at the time.

You can be confident that your gift will be used to make a real difference to our future mission and ministry.

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There is also a Legacy Policy template available in the PCC Legacy Toolkit.



Action

The PCC should agree a legacy policy and communicate this to the congregation.

How to Encourage Gifts in Wills

Gifts in wills should be encouraged, but in a sensitive, low-key manner- drip feeding messages in different ways throughout the year.

- It is helpful to have literature available routinely, perhaps with periodic reinforcement such as a bookmark, poster or short article in the parish magazine.
- As wills are reviewed periodically, one approach is to add a check box on the Annual Giving Response Form to request information on gifts in wills. This also helps to reinforce the link with Christian giving.
- It is important to talk about the power of gifts in wills to your congregation. A simple service can highlight the difference gifts have made in the past, and how they can make a difference to your church's future.

Resources to Help You

The PCC Toolkit resources include:

- Posters for your church noticeboard
- Bookmarks and Leaflets for church distribution
- Sermon Notes, Bible Readings and Prayers

Additional free copies of Posters, Bookmarks, and Legacy Leaflets are available as well as a template to create your own parish specific legacy leaflet.



Action

The PCC are encouraged to add a check box on the Annual Giving Response Form to request information on gifts in wills.

Further Help

There is further help available at both a national and diocesan level.

Church Legacy Website

www.churchlegacy.org.uk is aimed at individuals and helps guide them through the process of making a will and how to leave a legacy to their local church. It also offers information and downloadable resources for solicitors.

Parish Resources Website

www.parishresources.org.uk/legacies provides further help and resources for parishes including sample magazine articles and advice when receiving a legacy.

Church Legacy and Wills Information Line

This provides help and advice to both parishes and individuals. You can speak to the National Legacy Officer at the Church of England on 08445 870875.

Diocesan Stewardship Advisor

Your Regional Advisor will help you plan your strategy, integrate legacies into the wider stewardship context and provide further help and support.



Action

The PCC are encouraged to make legacy literature and information available to church members.

www.churchlegacy.org.uk

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No matter how large or small, every gift in every will makes a difference.

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