



## GIVING AND MILLENNIALS

### *Helping the Under 35's to Give*

#### Why are the Under 35's different?

As each generation grows to adulthood, the formation process is shaped by the prevailing culture and the impact of major events. Those born between 1980 and 2000, are known as Millennials or Gen Y, and there are just over 16 million (born 1980 to 2000) in the UK, a quarter of the population.

This is the first generation to grow up with widespread computer, mobile and Internet technology, have been impacted by the introduction of student loans, and many were entering work as the 2008 economic crisis unfolded. They live, think, work and give differently to the preceding Baby Boomer and Gen X generations, and so employers, charities and companies wishing to sell to them need to act differently.

Churches will need to change how they operate if they want to make it easy for this group to give. It's not just giving, though - we will need profound change across the whole ambit of church life if we are to offer ways of worshipping and styles of ministry that they can relate to.

#### What makes this group different?

Researching Millennials is best done in their natural space – online. However, since most available research is US based, care needs to be taken in understanding where the UK generation are similar and where they are different. In overview...

1. The under 35's are tech-savvy, and almost always online. This dominates how they receive news and information, how they communicate with friends, how they work, shop and how they give. It shapes their attitudes and values, and as a result leads to different behaviour.
2. Authenticity is important to them, although this can mean a range of things. It may mean consistency between an online personality and the portrayed personality in the workplace, or that the marketing of brands relates to true performance, or that the stated values of an organisation are actually delivered.
3. They are individuals, whose connectedness is via online social groupings, rather than through more traditional institutional labels. At the UK general election in May 2015, only 48.5% of Millennials voted, the lowest turnout of any age group. This is 10% less than the 58% of Gen X who voted at the 1997 election and 17.5% less than the 66% of Baby Boomers who voted in 1979. (elections chosen to give approximately the same ages).
4. In terms of work, their preference is for work-life alignment rather than work-life balance. Finding work that matches life passions with career interests is their ideal, and their preference is to work flexibly. Despite the suspicions of older management, this doesn't mean that they will be working less hard or for fewer hours, but may work in other locations and at other times.

5. Some of the traditional life stages happen later. On average millennial women get married 7.1 years later than those marrying in 1981. Millennials are having children later. The average age of women at childbirth has increased 3.8 years since 1974.
6. Many are struggling financially and are unable to afford to buy their own house. ONS statistics show that 25.4% of those aged 20-34 still lived at home in 2015, 6% higher than the 19.7% of Gen X who lived at home in 1999 when they were 20-34.

### How do they give?

1. **Millennials support causes not organisations.** This is massively important. The charity isn't important – it's what they do and the impact they have that matters. Charities that understand this have found effective ways of explaining the difference they make, and their effectiveness in doing this.
2. **Under 35's can be far more passionate about a cause than older donors** – if they can engage in the way they want. Charities that understand this allow them to volunteer or donate on their own terms, providing flexible ways of accomplishing their mission. There is a balance to be struck though, between engagement of donors on their terms, and the charity remaining effective in achieving its purpose.
3. **They value authenticity.** This complements the previous point. Whilst Millennials will want to engage in ways that naturally suit them, these ways should not be contrived. Charities that understand this provide accountability and stay in touch with donors – not just to seek more from them, but to explain what impact their gift has had, and to update them on their work.
4. **Social Media is important** in helping this generation to support the causes that matter to them. Charities that understand this make it easy for supporters to engage with them online. This is more than simply 'liking' or 'following' their preferred charity's page, or read through a charity's website. Their engagement will be more diverse, faster and cannot be controlled in the way that a Gen X marketer might like. However, the nature of Social Media is that they may just reach a far wider audience than the charity would have done otherwise.
5. **Millennials donate in the way that they shop – instantly, wherever they are.** Because they are constantly on-line, their decision to buy or give can be executed instantly. If they hear a song they like, they'll download it there and then. If there is a cause they want to give to, they'd like to do it online. Charities that understand this make it easy for them to give online – providing mobile friendly websites so they can be accessed from smartphones.
6. **Millennials find event based fundraising attractive** – where someone can "do" something for charity and their (on-line) friends can support the cause they are promoting. Sponsored events have seen a resurgence, and for a wide variety of things – from traditional walks and runs, to Movember, Macmillan Coffee Mornings and so on. Charities that understand this provide easy ways for supporters to engage with these kind of events. However, the ALS Ice-Bucket Challenge from 2014 provides a powerful illustration of how widely these events can engage, but how short lived they can be. This poses some significant challenges to charity fundraising strategy.

## How can the Church help them give?

If we're honest, the current position that many parishes find themselves in is almost as far removed as possible from an ideal way of supporting this generation and encouraging them to give. The practice in many churches:

- Focuses on the organisation rather than the cause (Giving to the church)
- Doesn't make it easy to give online
- Expects commitment rather than explains why regular giving is essential
- Lacks transparency, risking a lack of authenticity. (Many parishes don't explain well where the money goes, why they are holding reserves or the impact that they are having, asking donors to take them 'on trust'.)

### So what can be done?

1. Linking Mission and Ministry Outcomes to giving has been one of the key tasks that Giving for Life asks parishes to address since its launch in 2009. However, it is probably the one with which we have made least progress.
2. Enable those who wish to give, to do so when and however suits them. Consider at least online giving, and possibly app, mobile or text giving – and communicate that they are there.
3. Teach a wider view of generosity, responding to God's generosity to us and set in the context of discipleship – living generously as disciples in the world, rather than solely focusing on giving to the Church. This gives an authenticity to the message preached.
4. Don't just teach the giving of money, but genuine giving of time and using gifts as part of ministry – this values the giver and enables them to get involved with the mission and ministry of the church, even if they may feel less a part of the institution.
5. Teach regular giving, but explain carefully why this is needed and how it links to the mission and ministry of the church. The millennial generation will give regularly e.g. to sponsor children through Compassion or World Vision, but they need to see the impact as to why this is needed, and to be reminded of this periodically.
6. Don't look down on event based fundraising, but set it alongside regular giving. This may or may not be to Church funds, but can be a great way of encouraging the under 35's to take a role in nurturing generosity. Events can also be a great way of campaigning and influencing thinking.
7. Allow our mindsets to be changed by Millennials within our church. If we have pre-set ideas as to how people will give and volunteer as part of our community, we can appear unattractive as a church. Part of the creativity of the Holy Spirit is to allow people to be used in God's service afresh in each generation. The issue, though, in many churches is wider as Millennials will want to worship differently too.

### Checking authenticity

As explained earlier, authenticity is vital for Millennials. Here is a quick checklist to assess the degree to which your church is demonstrating an integrity (in the sense of all things coming together with a consistent message) in its conversations about giving and generosity.

1. **Is generosity a core value of the Church?** People of any age will find it hard to respond to messages encouraging generosity from a church which appears to be as stingy as anything!

Reviewing this might get you to consider your hospitality, your outward mission giving, the engagement in the wider community, the degree we welcome those who turn up who are “not like us, and might not like church the way we do it” and softer things such as not turning around with a frown when a toddler kicks off just as the administration of communion starts.

2. **Are your messages consistent?** Most churches will have some reserves – have you explained to your church members what they are there for? It can be counter intuitive being asked to increase giving if the church is sitting on tens of thousands of pounds.
3. **Are you transparent with money?** How easy is it for someone to look at your report and accounts. Most people haven't got the slightest interest in doing so, but if they are hidden away, it could create suspicion. How well do you budget, and what does this say about the church's priorities?
4. **Is there teaching on money and financial discipleship?** Teaching and preaching about money communicates the distinctive Christian perspectives in relation to generosity that can challenge paradigms that would otherwise be set by secular charities. But even if a church has all the money it needs to fulfil its vision, it still needs to talk about giving and generosity – because generosity is right at the heart of God's character – he is relentlessly, persistently generous. Doing so creates generous disciples – people willing to open their homes, share their possessions, volunteer with community and other organisations, support charities financially, dedicate time to praying for them and so on.
5. **Do you receive an offering or take a collection?** Practice with the offering varies, but in many places this has not been thought about for some years, and can send mixed messages. We have a great resource available to help parishes review this at:  
[www.parishresources.org.uk/offering](http://www.parishresources.org.uk/offering)

### Further help available...

1. Giving for Life resources to ensure that there is a healthy base of stewardship / money practice in your church: [www.parishresources.org.uk/givingforlife/](http://www.parishresources.org.uk/givingforlife/)
2. See the Parish Resources guide on Text, Mobile and Web Giving. Find this and other giving resources at: [www.parishresources.org.uk/giving/](http://www.parishresources.org.uk/giving/)
3. Further links to information on Millennials:  
A good article from Forbes on Millennials values, and what leadership styles engage best: [www.forbes.com/sites/karlmoore/2014/08/14/authenticity-the-way-to-the-millennials-heart/](http://www.forbes.com/sites/karlmoore/2014/08/14/authenticity-the-way-to-the-millennials-heart/)  
A uk page overviewing trends and attitudes of UK millennials: [www.theguardian.com/world/series/millennials-the-trials-of-generation-y](http://www.theguardian.com/world/series/millennials-the-trials-of-generation-y)  
A UK report on how London based Millennials give: [www.cityphilanthropy.org.uk/sites/default/files/user-uploads/final\\_m2g\\_report.pdf](http://www.cityphilanthropy.org.uk/sites/default/files/user-uploads/final_m2g_report.pdf)