

Giving for the Glory of God

How to Run A Special Appeal

*Give to the LORD the glory due his name;
bring an offering and come into his courts. Psalm 96:8*

A Special Appeal provides an opportunity for members of the church family (and sometimes those outside it) to make a one-off contribution to the financial needs of a church. If they are not handled carefully, Special Appeals can hinder rather than aid giving in the parish over the long term, and so it is extremely important that the PCC understand the following paragraphs before deciding to proceed with a Special Appeal.

Appropriate Times to hold a Special Appeal:

- ❖ Special Appeals normally work best when there is a one-off cost that the church is facing for a specific project or need. This might be a building project, or a mission/ministry project.
- ❖ During a recession it can be appropriate to hold a Special Appeal to meet a budget shortfall, but only when all the normal good practice has already been followed. This would include some form of annual review that encourages regular, planned giving.

Two Dangers of a Special Appeal for Regular Funds

- ❖ First, whilst it may solve this year's financial problem, unless some other change happens in the church's income and giving patterns, the problem will still be there next year. Holding a Special Appeal this year for normal funds is likely to mean that a more major programme to boost regular giving will be needed next year.
- ❖ The Church's great financial strength is the regular planned giving of most of its regular worshippers. This enables parishes to maintain their cash flow. A Special Appeal can interrupt the regular income streams, particularly if it becomes an annual event when givers may hold money back to have something to contribute to the Special Appeal.

A note for Rural Churches

Some Rural Churches have run a Special Appeal, or Gift Day, for many years, and this has become a normal part of their church life. This can work well, particularly where this enables a much wider cross-section of the community to contribute to the financial needs of the church, although in this situation, prospective donors should be given the option of setting up a regular Standing Order.

In rural communities in particular, people's income may not be regular and predictable, and a Special Appeal allows people to make a one-off gift to God, although ideally this would 'top up' some form of planned giving.

Purpose of this booklet

If you've read the health warning, and feel it is right to proceed with a Special Appeal, this booklet seeks to set out some ideas and pointers that you might find helpful. Please do not hesitate to alter any material to suit your particular circumstances.

Four P's for the PCC

There are four P's which should ensure a Special Appeal is successful, namely:

- **Planning**
- **Purpose**
- **Prayer**
- **Preparation**

1. Planning

The first step is for the PCC to determine that a Special Appeal is the appropriate course of action, having considered carefully the financial needs of the church, and its strategy for encouraging ongoing, regular giving. Once this is agreed, then the next stages are planning and preparation of the day itself.

A small planning group should be formed to discuss the following questions:

- ❶ Purpose : Why do we want the money? Why should anyone support this?
- ❷ Audience: Who are we aiming at? The regular congregation, all associated with the church, or the wider community?
- ❸ Timescale: When is the Appeal going to be held? How does this fit with other activities in the church or community? Does this allow sufficient time for planning?
- ❹ Communication: How are we going to ask for the gifts? Will we prepare a booklet or give a presentation? What information do we need to communicate? Do we need special envelopes, stationery/pledges /a display or leaflets?
- ❺ Method: How are people going to give? Are we expecting people to come into church with a gift, or return it by post? If they are coming into church, is this part of a normal service, or at some other time?
- ❻ Giving Thanks: Is it planned to hold a Thanksgiving Service to give thanks to God? How are you going to thank donors?
- ❼ Connection with Financial Strategy: How does this Special Appeal link with the other activities of the church? What happens afterwards?

Question 1 is considered below, whilst tips on the other questions are given in Section 4.

2. Purpose

The purpose for holding the Special Appeal must be clearly communicated and understood by potential donors. If they find it compelling they will support it generously. If it doesn't capture their imagination, they will either scale back their contribution or not give at all.

Church of England parishes do a vast amount of amazing work throughout the country, yet much of it is unseen, and the financing of it little understood. A successful Special Appeal will require the parish to be able to communicate

- why the appeal is being held,
- what the money will be used for, and
- what difference this will make.

The last point is vital. It is no longer enough simply to say that the church roof needs mending, our parish would like a youth worker or that we are facing a financial deficit. Appeal communication will need to emphasise the benefit arising from a successful appeal, particularly if it will be read by people who know little about the church.

3. Prayer

This important step gives an opportunity to seek God's guidance, not only committing the work to God, but also asking "Are we doing what God wants us to do, not only within our parish fellowship but also within the wider community as well?"

It is good to involve the wider church family in prayer, as well as members of the planning group. A special prayer time, perhaps on a Saturday morning, before or after a Sunday service or an evening during the week can provide church members the opportunity to carefully consider, and pray about, the finances of the parish and the reason why this extra money is needed. This time does not just have to be for PCC members or members of the finance group but can be open to every church member. This event also can inform personal prayer of church members - and it can be helpful to produce a sheet that can be used afterwards (or used by those who were unable to attend.)

A second element of prayer is to encourage individuals to pray about the gift that they will make. Particularly during a recession decisions on money and giving can be more complicated, and time spent in reflection and prayer can be very helpful.

4. Preparation

Audience : Who are we aiming at?

The audience for the Special Appeal depends on the reason for it. The wider community might be willing to contribute to some projects or building work. However, they are unlikely to contribute to a short-term shortfall in regular income caused by the recession, and this should normally be presented only to the church family.

Timescale : When is the Appeal going to be held?

For a major appeal, it is important to announce it at least six weeks in advance. This avoids creating an impression of panic and gives people time to prepare. It could tie in with another event, such as a Patronal Festival, or Harvest, or identify a particular time when the Appeal is the major focus. July, August and the immediate run up to Christmas are not good times to hold the appeal, although the beginning of Advent can work.

Communication : Presenting your case.

You will need to :

- Draw up a list of who to approach (names & addresses),
- Decide whether to hold a presentation and if so, when. The more significant the appeal, the more important it is to hold a presentation or launch event.
- Draft an initial letter to those on your list. You might write two different letters - one for those who already support the church regularly through planned giving (which acknowledges this and thanks them for it) and one for others. The letters should be personally addressed, although hand delivering them allows the opportunity for personal communication. This initial letter will either seek to :
 - Invite people to a presentation event when the appeal will be presented in detail. This letter will be short, stress the reasons for the appeal and the benefits of achieving success. It shouldn't include the background and response form.
 - or make the 'Ask' if there is no presentation event. This letter should include the short booklet and response mechanism.
- Prepare a short booklet outlining details of the need for support.
- Invite people to prayerfully, thoughtfully and privately to consider their response.
- Provide a mechanism for the response. (see next section)

After a service would be a good time to distribute the letters to those who attend church. For others it may mean a house call. If it has already been mentioned in the parish magazine, it should not come as a complete surprise. It may mean that you have to ask some other members of the church other than just the planning group, to act as contacts and deliver the information.

For more detail on launching the appeal, see Funding Guide 8 : Launching the Appeal from <http://www.parishresources.org.uk/funding.htm>

Method : How are people going to give?

It is recommended to provide a special envelope which enables the gift to be made in a convenient and confidential way. There are two options for this.

- Where the gift will be made in person, either in a service or by visiting the church and placing the gift in a particular place, a Gift Aid envelope can be used. Your church should have these available routinely for taxpayers who are not part of the planned giving scheme. There are several companies who can provide such envelopes if you do not want to make your own. (www.parishresources.org.uk/giftaid/envelopes.htm)
- Alternatively, you could produce a special envelope for the appeal, which could be returned through the post if necessary. (unlike a Gift Aid envelope, the identity of the donor is not disclosed on the outside of the envelope). This will contain the gift, and a separate Gift Aid declaration.

It is recommended to have a Gift Aid declaration included with the appeal, and ask donors to complete it, even though donors may already have completed a Gift Aid declaration for regular giving, as you will need to know the identity of the giver. Suggested wording for Gift Aid declarations is available on the Parish Resources website if needed (www.parishresources.org.uk/giftaid.htm).

Some practical tips :

- Have some spare envelopes available for those who need them.
- Make it clear how to hand the envelope in and give another choice e.g. to place in the Offertory or send to XYZ for those who can't make it on the actual day.
- Ask for cheques and make it clear that cheques or CAF vouchers should be made payable to - StPCC.
- If the church is open at a time apart from a service for people to bring gifts, firstly advertise the times that the church will be open. You may wish to consider having tea and coffee available which gives people a chance to chat and makes it more of a social occasion.

Giving Thanks :

King David praised the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, "Praise be to you, O Lord, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendour, for everything in heaven and earth is yours.... Wealth and honour come from you; you are the ruler of all things.... Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name.... "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. 1Ch 29:10-14

All that we have comes from God. Holding some kind of Thanksgiving Service gives the opportunity to continue to praise and thank God for all that he has given to us; and to offer the gifts that have been made, and pray for their use in the building up of God's kingdom.

Ideas for doing this include :

- using an appropriate psalm in the early part of the service
- inserting suitable prayers amongst the intercessions
- amending the introduction to the Offertory.
- bring up the gifts made as part of the Offertory
- It is important that the actual amount pledged or raised on the Special Appeal is announced at some time during the service.

It is also important to thank donors for their gift, as a part of the corporate stewardship of the church. Where donor details are known, where for example, the gift is given through Gift Aid, this should be done personally, with a second letter which :

- thanks them for their gift of x.
- If given under Gift Aid reminds them of the additional value of giving through Gift Aid; and informs them that if they are a higher rate taxpayer they can claim additional relief.
- communicates the total raised through the Gift Day
- explains what will happen as a result - linking back to Section 2.

What do you do after the event?

Following the Appeal, there are a number of tasks.

Firstly you need to bank the proceeds. Advertising a Special Appeal advertises that there will be some money around. Household insurance policies only cover a limited amount of cash, and it is strongly advised that you do not take the proceeds home. It is far better to obtain a night safe wallet from your local bank. They may make a small charge for the service but often for one-off occasions it is free. When you press the wallet in the night safe at the bank, make sure that it has fallen into the safe, by opening and closing the drawer after you have placed the wallet in it. If you have never used a night safe before, ask the bank to show you what to do when you collect the wallets. When you do collect it, you can also discuss opening arrangements. The bank can do it for you if you wish.

Second, the planning team should hold a review meeting to evaluate how the Special Appeal went, and what the appropriate next steps should be. Focus on what went well, and what should be done differently next time. The key points from this review, together with a summary of the outcome, should be shared back to the PCC as they commissioned the event in the first place.

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