

# How it worked in one parish . . .

For more information on giving and Gift Aid in your parish, visit <https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/parish-support/christian-giving-and-funding/>

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St Mary's, Stoke sub Hamdon, is a village church in South Somerset. Lesley Strutt, who was the PCC Treasurer at the time, describes a two stage process encouraging regular worshippers to give more effectively to the mission of their parish.



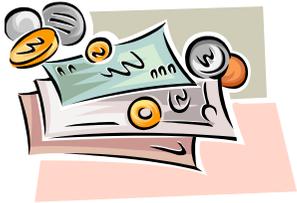
**E**ncouraging effective giving is a gradual process, not a 'big hit', and it is worth spending the time on it. People who are used to putting cash in the plate do not want to be confronted with too many changes at once (this is the Church of England, after all), so I found it better to do things in two stages.

**Stage One** was to get as much giving as possible planned, ie monthly Standing Order, or monthly or weekly envelopes.

**Stage Two** was to get Gift Aid Declarations from as many of the planned givers as possible. As Gift Aid tax reclaims can be backdated as far as the normal time limit within which tax can be reclaimed (now 4 years from the date of the Declaration), I took more time over Stage Two.

## Stage One: Planned giving and Standing Orders

The initial aim is to get more planned givers – of any type. Converting them to Standing Orders involves spending time and effort, which comes later.



You will need to get your publicity right. Start with an article in the newsletter, or a separate handout over several Sundays (after consultation with the Vicar and Churchwardens).

Explain the different methods of giving that are available, list the advantages of each method, and give everyone a contact point (which does not have to be the Treasurer) for more information and the forms you have prepared.

A few weeks later, a reminder in the Church notices is helpful. Then look at who has not yet responded, and start the personal approach. Ring members and ask if they understood/have any questions/have had a chance to think

### Plus points for envelopes

- Regular income helps the church plan ahead.
- Easier for you to keep track of your giving.
- If you miss a week at Church, your giving need not miss out.
- It is discreet on the plate as others cannot see how much is in your envelope.
- You are assured of confidentiality as only the Treasurer or Gift Aid Secretary will know how much you give.



Then once a year, you only need to do a sweep of the members and pick up any new worshippers or people whose circumstances may have changed, or who you think might agree now they are in a minority!

Our **Gift Aid Guide** is a resource for parishes, covering all the official Gift Aid rules, together with some tried-and-tested practical ideas for increasing the use of Gift Aid in your parish.

The Gift Aid Guide includes worked examples from a fictitious parish, with:-

- Record-keeping sheets
- HMRC online claim schedule
- Step-by-step guidance on how to register with HMRC, get set up and make a claim
- Letters to givers.

The Guide contains hints and tips for Gift Aid administrators and Treasurers. A 'Frequently asked questions' sheet covers all the queries you may get from your parishioners. Model Gift Aid Declarations and pledge forms are included. There is also a list of computer programs specially made for Gift Aid administration, and contact details for suppliers of envelopes.

In addition, the Guide explains how to set up and run the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme (GASDS), which enables churches to claim a Gift Aid style payment on small cash and contactless donations up to £30 where it is not possible or easy to obtain a Gift Aid Declaration.

## Stage Two: Gift Aid

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You should now have a better number of planned givers, and you should have encouraged many of them to give by Standing Order. Now comes Stage Two – Gift Aid.

Gift Aid tax reclaims can be backdated 4 years from the date of the Declaration. Start with a Gift Aid form in the newsletter, or incorporated into a handout which explains the system simply. Encourage those who are not taxpayers to let you know so they do not get chased. Follow with a verbal reminder from the front during a Sunday service, then go for phone calls.

Only ring those who are obviously taxpayers, but at PCC meetings, home groups etc, have a stock of forms handy and ask people to complete them on the spot!

Reassure people that they have no paperwork to do other than sign the Declaration, and that they do not actually commit themselves to giving anything by signing the form.



It works if you are positive but not pushy, and if you make it humorous. Keep chasing for Gift Aid forms personally.

Remember, it does not have to be the Treasurer who does the handouts/articles/verbal notices/contacting by phone. It could be other people who feel more comfortable with those tasks. As there are no amounts discussed, there is nothing confidential.

about it/have made a decision. Try to overcome any objections but do not push too hard, and be ready to accept that some people will never want to do anything other than put loose cash on the plate. Offer a home visit to explain and complete the form (very few will take this up, but the offer is welcomed).

Once you have a decent proportion of giving planned, you may want to consider approaching the more generous users of envelopes and suggest that a Standing Order would be more convenient for all concerned. The donor, the Churchwardens (or whoever does the first count) and the Treasurer (or whoever does the processing and banking) will all benefit. This needs no prior publicity.

### Tips for Treasurers/Planned Giving Promoters on how to tackle Stage One:-

- ✓ Believe in Standing Orders or no one else will be convinced.
- ✓ Enjoy your job and let others know it is an honour, not a chore.
- ✓ Be positive and appreciative.
- ✓ Get your facts right – do not talk about Direct Debits when it is Standing Orders we are dealing with.

### For Standing Orders, the additional benefits are:-



- Not having to find the right cash each week.
- It streamlines your giving with other household expenses that go out of your bank automatically.
- It saves the Treasurer from counting, handling, storing, insuring, carrying, and banking £xxx per year.

**Consider this:** what is the point of you drawing cash from your bank on Friday, putting it on the plate on Sunday, and the Treasurer taking it back (possibly to the same bank in a rural area) on Monday?



Urge members to choose the right method for them, whatever suits their circumstances best.

- If a household has monthly income, and several bills are paid by monthly Standing Order, suggest that giving by Standing Order would be more convenient.
- If they hesitate, offer monthly envelopes (less counting for the Churchwardens but still has the discipline of regular giving).
- For those who operate their finances on a weekly basis, suggest weekly envelopes.

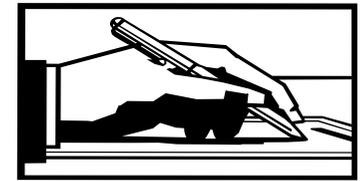


Do not try to make out that cash or envelopes are somehow second best, but help members to consider all the options and find the best one for them. If

someone who is obviously a taxpayer insists on using loose cash, you can bring in the tax rebate point (currently 25p for every £1 given) and use it to try to persuade them to plan and Gift Aid their giving. Otherwise there is no need to talk about tax at this stage. Encourage others who have been converted to spread the word.

- Nearly two-thirds of our collection now comes in by Standing Order, from nearly half our planned givers.
- One third comes in by weekly or monthly envelope, from just over half of the planned givers.
- Just a small proportion comes in cash from less regular members and visitors.

## Objections to Standing Orders



The main objection is usually 'What will others think if I don't put anything in?' The problem

of passing on the plate without being seen to contribute is one that we have not quite overcome.

At services where there are likely to be many visitors it is important to say that most regular members give by Standing Order when the offering is announced, and it is helpful to do this every few weeks anyway.

Once they know several members are doing it, people are usually happy to sign up to a Standing Order. After a while everyone will get used to some people waving the plate by.

Some members cannot cope with the idea of not offering something to God each week. Several people overcome this by putting a nominal amount in the envelope, and doing their main giving by monthly Standing Order! The beauty of Gift Aid is that all their giving is tax-efficient, including extra gifts.

## Regular giving cards

A number of parishes keep a supply of small pre-printed cards at the back of church, like the one on the right. The worshipper takes one as they come into church, and puts it in the bag or on the plate when the offering is taken.

### St Mary's Church

My regular gift to the mission of St Mary's is made by Standing Order direct from my bank.

*All things come from you, O Lord, and of your own do we give you.*