

General Synod

Giving for Life Re-Ignited

This report from the National Stewardship Committee summarises the impact of the Giving for Life initiative so far, and outlines the strategy to improve further the take up of good practice from the autumn of this year.

Following a short summary, this report is in four sections:

- A Key points from the 2009 Giving for Life report
- B What's happened to giving levels & PCC Incomes since 2009?
- C What's happened with parish practice?
- D What's our strategy to encourage further adoption of good practice?

There are two Annexes which provide drafts of the parish materials.

Summary

In the seven years since General Synod debated 'Giving for Life' there has been a significant level of implementation of the recommended good practice. A survey of more than 1100 parishes shows that we have created a 'new normal' in stewardship practice. This survey shows that two thirds of parishes have heard messages relating to money or generosity within the last year, around half have sent a thank you letter to planned givers within the last twelve months and most parishes have encouraged givers to review their giving within the last year.

There has been an encouraging increase in the level of giving, with giving to the church per giver up by almost 20% over a five year period between 2009 and 2014. In cash terms this means an increase of £40 million in total donor income, including the Gift Aid received. However, there is no room for complacency. Because of the decline in church attendance (and the impact on the number of planned givers), the overall increase in the giving received by churches is up by a smaller percentage, with total Donor Income up 9.1% over the same period.

Although there is solid evidence of the implementation of good practice, and encouraging growth in levels of giving, there is more that can be done. The Stewardship Committee has developed new materials to help parishes reassess their stewardship strategy during the autumn of 2016, offering a wider set of key tasks, and encouraging parishes to identify up to three priorities for action. These materials are attached to this report as an Annex.

A Key Points from the 2009 Giving for Life Report.

In July 2009, General Synod enthusiastically commended the 'Giving for Life' report, the first time it had held a significant debate on issues of giving and generosity since 2000. General Synod's resolution:

- set giving within the context of discipleship and mission
- encouraged church members to set the target of giving 5% of their income to and through the church, and a further 5% to other organizations that help build God's kingdom
- commended the initiative for prayerful discussion and action by parishes.

In particular parishes were encouraged to consider four key "good practice" tasks - to:

- **Preach and teach regularly about giving in the context of discipleship**, stressing that it is not the preacher's job to raise the funds for the church, but rather to nurture holistically generous disciples, generous in all aspects of giving.
- **Clearly communicate that giving to the church enables the mission and ministry that flows from it** as many givers were not aware of the impact of their giving.
- **Hold some form of annual review of giving.** Personal and church finances work on an annual basis, and so it is good to help people prayerfully review their giving once a year. There are many different ways this can be done.
- **Send an annual, personal 'thank you' to regular givers.** This values givers, and provides another opportunity to demonstrate how their giving supports the work of the church.

B What's happened to giving levels since 2009?

The latest data from Parish Finance Returns is for 2014, which provides us with data on a five year period since the launch of Giving for Life in 2009.

Table 1	Total PCC Incomes £m	Total Donor Income ¹ £m	Total Planned Giving ² £m	No of Planned Givers '000	Giving Per Head Per Week £	Legacy Income £m
2009	888.8	529.4	301.7	616.5	9.41	42.7
2014	989.2	569.0	329.2	564.2	11.22	52.8
% Change	11.3%	7.5%	9.1%	-8.5%	19.2%	23.7%

Data is based on Parish Finance Returns, and for 2014 is provisional.

¹Total Donor Income includes all giving, collections and donations as well as Gift Aid received.

²Total Planned Giving excludes Gift Aid received.

1. Total PCC incomes have risen by 11.3% over the period, reaching nearly £1 billion total annual income for PCCs, and putting them in a stronger financial position than five years ago. The 2014 statistics showed total PCC reserves of just over £1 billion (data was not collected in 2009), albeit this is widely variable across parishes, and 40% of reserves are restricted funds.
2. Donor income and Planned Giving have risen less strongly, but nevertheless by 2014 were 7.5% and 9.1% ahead of 2009 in terms of total cash receipts.
3. Behind these headline figures are two opposing trends. In short, our planned givers are giving ever more generously but there are fewer of them year on year. Giving per head per

week is rising steadily and is above inflation, indicating increased generosity. However, simultaneously the number of planned givers is decreasing, broadly in line with declining attendances.

4. This means that each year the increase in giving per head has first of all to match the decline in the number of givers before providing a net growth in PCC income. In each of the five years giving per head has risen by an average of 3.6%, whilst the number of givers has declined annually by an average of 1.6%.
5. Legacy income has also risen strongly following the launch of our national campaign in 2011, with nearly all the increase coming through in 2013 and 2014.

C What's happened with parish practice?

6. In order to explore take-up of the good practice recommended in Giving for Life, we have run an implementation survey around the church. Over 1100 parishes responded to the survey, and there is much to celebrate contained within these responses. Despite the inevitable skew that people responding to the survey are more likely to be adopting good practice than those that have not responded, it is nevertheless clear that the level of adoption of good practice is substantially higher than it was at the start of the Giving for Life initiative.
7. **Responses suggest that the survey has a reasonable representation across the different sizes of churches.** Unsurprisingly the very smallest churches are under-represented in terms of number of churches, although the distribution of responses is broadly similar to the distribution of the number of worshippers.

What is the approximate total size of your Sunday congregations?	
Answer Options	Response Percent
Fewer than 20	17.1%
20 to 50	31.4%
50 to 100	31.7%
More than 100	19.8%

8. **Two thirds of respondents have heard a sermon on money or generosity in the past year, and 40% within the last six months.** We judge that this is an improvement on the status prior to Giving for Life, but there is clearly some way to go as nearly a quarter have not heard a message on this within the past three years.

When did you last hear a sermon that included a message on Stewardship, Generosity, or Giving Money?	
Answer Options	Response Percent
Within the last 6 months	40.4%
Within the last year	26.1%
Within the last 3 years	13.7%
Not within the last 3 years	11.3%
Don't know	8.5%

9. **Almost half of all churches (49.2%) sent a thank you letter in the past year, and nearly two thirds (65.9%) have done so within the past 3 years.** Re-percentageing to exclude the “don’t knows” indicates implementation within the past year at 56%, and 75% within three years.
10. **Over half of parishes asked their congregation to review their giving within the last year.** However, 10% haven’t run a review within the past five years. Again, we judge to have made some progress since 2009, but there is still some way to go.

When did your PCC last ask the congregation to review their giving?	
Answer Options	Response Percent
Within the last year	56.3%
Within the last 3 years	22.3%
Within the last 5 years	6.3%
Not within the last 5 years	10.7%
Don't know	4.3%

11. **One in five parishes (19.6%) now has a legacy policy,** although only half have communicated it within their churches. This good practice came in after Giving for Life, which may account for lower levels of take up.
12. **97% of parishes have claimed Gift Aid in the past year.** This is unsurprising, but given that responding to the survey will be skewed to more active parishes, it suggests that our estimate of more than 5% of parishes not claiming Gift Aid in the past couple of years may well be right.
13. **Levels of claiming through the Small Donations Scheme are encouraging, and they suggest that the action taken last year to raise awareness of the scheme may have been successful.** A high level of “Don’t knows” suggests claims levels may be higher than shown.

2013/14	70.7% have claimed,
2014/15	82.8% have claimed
2015/16	48.3% have claimed (although the survey was run in Jan/Feb 2016, and many will wait until the year end before claiming)
14. **Responses suggest that the majority of parishes are now registered with Parish Buying, and a third have now purchased something.** Parish Buying was launched at the beginning of 2012, and over 10,000 individuals have registered with the website, so the level of take up at this point is reasonable. However, there is a significant opportunity to reduce spending across the church by taking better advantage of our economies of scale.

Have you used the Parish Buying Service?	
Answer Options	Response Percent
Registered but not bought	19.6%
Registered and bought something	34.9%
Not registered	23.5%
Not heard of Parish Buying / Don't know	21.9%

D Proposed Strategy

Our objective is for parishes to reappraise their stewardship strategy in the light of restated good practice and to increase adoption of that good practice by identifying up to three priorities for action.

- 15 **Plan and Timeline:** PCCs will be asked to review their stewardship strategy at an autumn 2016 meeting (which may spill over into the first part of 2017) and determine up to three priorities for action.

Materials will be circulated by post and/or email from September, and there will be opportunities to hold workshops with parishes to prompt engagement. Dioceses can choose to send physical copies of the materials to their PCC secretaries using their Diocesan letterheads, but via a national direct mail exercise to take advantage of economies of scale.

- 16 **Resources Provided (See Annex):**

- A four page A4 leaflet for those responsible for stewardship within the parish, and for chairing the PCC. This provides an overview to the process, further information on each of the steps and a guide to handling the PCC discussion.
- A 2-sided A4 checklist for each PCC member to review stewardship practice prior to contributing to a discussion. This ensures that all members are able to contribute to the discussion, rather than simply deferring to the treasurer.

Two versions of these resources will be provided – one for the thirteen dioceses which are currently running the Parish Giving Scheme and dioceses launching within the next eight or nine months, and one for dioceses which have not adopted the PGS.

Web guidance hosted on the Parish Resources website (www.pariahresources.org.uk) will be updated to have simple, practical guidance to support implementation of each of the steps.

- 17 **Presentations:**

There will also be a presentation template for a workshop (with a shorter version that can be added into other events e.g. treasurers' workshops). This will support parishes by explaining why the good practice is important, and providing further practical guidance on how to move ahead with each action point. We anticipate that these presentations will be delivered at diocesan level by Stewardship Advisers, and we will facilitate nationally the provision of guest speakers from either the national team or neighbouring dioceses.

- 18 **Continued Monitoring:**

We will continue to monitor the level of implementation of the key tasks, and the development of giving and stewardship across the Church.

This report has been produced by the National Stewardship Committee

June 2016

ANNEX Parish Materials

The following pages show the resources which will be provided for parishes, to support a twenty to thirty minute discussion at a PCC meeting.

The first document is a four page leaflet for incumbents and those who lead on stewardship in the parish (which may be the treasurer, the Parish Giving Officer or Stewardship Promoter, or sometimes the Gift Aid Secretary). The second document is a single sheet which will be given to PCC members ahead of the PCC meeting at which the parish's practice will be reviewed. This encourages members to have thought about the matter beforehand, thereby increasing the quality of the discussion.

As mentioned at section 15, two versions of these resources will be provided – one for the thirteen dioceses which are currently running the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) and dioceses launching within the next eight or nine months, and one for dioceses which have not adopted the PGS. The ones shown on the following pages are the PGS versions, the others simply omit point 5, and close up the numbering.

GIVING FOR LIFE: CONTINUING THE JOURNEY

This short leaflet summarises the good practice that has been widely adopted by PCCs, provides links to further resources and explains how a structured PCC discussion can help you review your current practice and identify some development priorities.

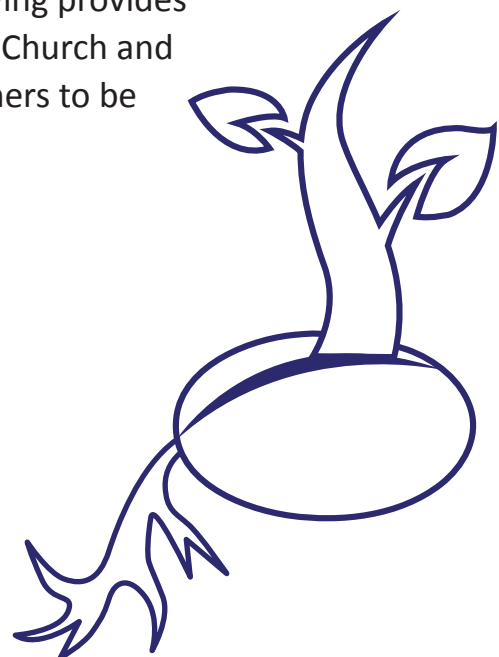
Since General Synod enthusiastically commended the original 'Giving for Life' report in 2009, parishes have requested for over 400,000 booklets and leaflets to help them review their strategy and to promote this to their congregations. A survey of over 1100 parishes across all dioceses, contexts and sizes of congregation, earlier this year, shows that most parishes have now adopted many of its recommended Key Tasks. General Synod has now received a report reviewing the progress made, which asks each parish to revisit its strategy in this area.

This second phase of Giving for Life expands the good practice. It continues to set giving first and foremost within the context of discipleship and mission. This is not primarily about asking people to give more to their church. Rather it is about responding to St Paul's invitation to, 'excel in this grace of giving'.

The original report summed it up well: Generous giving provides resources to enable the mission and ministry of the Church and fosters distinctive Christian lifestyles that enable others to be touched by the overflowing generosity of God.

*Remember this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly,
and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.
Each of you should give what you have decided in your
heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion,
for God loves a cheerful giver.*

2 Cor 9 v6,7



ENABLING THE PCC TO ENGAGE WITH THIS REVIEW

We suggest that the following five steps will allow for a helpful review using no more than 20 to 30 minutes of a PCC or DCC meeting. This will be time well invested as it will enable PCC members to be secure in the knowledge that they are following or working towards good practice and free up additional time on future meetings to consider matters other than money. Feedback from the original report suggested that parishes had felt that generating funds had become burdensome and they were going round in circles, a bit like being on a hamster wheel. Giving for Life enables parishes to review their strategy, adopt a small number of critical actions and then move on to consider wider issues of the church’s mission and ministry.

1. The first step is to ensure that both the incumbent (as chair of the PCC) and whoever leads on stewardship matters has a copy of this leaflet and reads it through ahead of the meeting.
2. You’ll need enough copies of the accompanying PCC sheet for each PCC member to have one. It’s a good idea to send this out in advance of the meeting, and ask people to complete the survey questions. Doing so will help them prepare to contribute to a discussion, but will also highlight the extent to which members are aware of the PCCs existing strategy and policy.
3. In the meeting a short introduction should be given, summarizing the background presented on the next page – that generosity is about more than balancing books; it is about mission, ministry and discipleship. This review should help ensure that the church is adopting good practice, and provide reassurance to PCC members that they have a robust approach to resourcing their mission and ministry.
4. Before discussing detailed action plans, the PCC should quickly collate a common view of the ‘tick box sheets’. Members will hold different views, and it is helpful to understand the range of opinion.
5. You may wish to identify a number of action points arising from the discussion, but it is wise to ensure that you have agreed on the three points that will make the biggest difference and have clear plans to make progress against these. The points are broadly in order of potential impact, so if there are more than three identified for action, the ones with the lower numbers will usually have the greatest impact.

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION:

List your three priorities here, what action the PCC has committed to, and who will take this forward.

Action Point	What are you going to do?	Who is going to do it?

GOD'S GENEROSITY AND OUR RESPONSE:

Our thinking must start with God's generosity to us. God gives to us abundantly and graciously in creation and redemption, and in sustaining life, day by day. Scripture shows that God's giving is characterised by extravagance, both for nations and for individuals. Jesus' birth, death and resurrection and his breathing his Holy Spirit on us reveal to us the astonishing depths of God's generosity toward humankind. The life of Jesus and his parables show what this generosity looks like translated into human behaviour. In the life and stories of Jesus there are pointers to how we can live our lives in a different way - a way that is characterized by wholeness and blessing which is God's intention for us.

As a result the challenge for us as disciples of Jesus is to be prepared to do whatever is needed to align ourselves with ways of living and giving that release rather than obstruct the flow of God's generosity. God brings in His Kingdom through us, creating a social order that not only provides for the needs of all, but also redefines abundant living from the accumulation of consumerism to the fulfilment found in Christ-centred lives.

GOOD PRACTICE:

This section amplifies the good practice points made on the sheets for PCC members. It is illustrated with the results of a survey of over 1100 parishes which shows the progress that has been made over the past five years, and encourages parishes which have not yet adopted the 'new normal' to consider doing so.

1 *Preach and teach regularly about giving in the context of discipleship*

It is not the preacher's job to raise the funds for the church, but rather to nurture generous disciples, who are willing to give of our time, money, hospitality wherever and whenever we are called to do so – living generously in the world. As we encourage discipleship, it is important to focus on the giver, rather than the gift.

All too often money-related preaching is focused on giving to the church, whereas the generosity and grace of God should be the starting point of our preaching. An overflowing generosity is at the heart of God's character. God can do no other because God is love and the essence of loving is giving. Our preaching needs to point to the connection between the lives of our audiences and the grace of God. Preaching stewardship should be a joy and a pleasure – there are no shortage of opportunities from the lectionary. It should not be simply the fundraising sermon for the year! See www.parishresources.org.uk/giving/preaching for resources to help you.

2 *Communicate with givers from several different perspectives*

When talking about money, many churches focus on their costs or budget shortfall, but givers need to hear wider faith perspectives, and what their giving enables in terms of both current ministry and future vision. This not only stimulates increased generosity, but also helps them decide how to allocate their giving between church and the other causes and charities the Lord has put on their hearts. Opportunities to link giving to mission



and ministry are the APCM, the communication of the budget, a church's website etc. See www.parishresources.org.uk/givingforlife for ideas to help you do this.

3 *Send an annual, personal 'thank you' to regular givers and clearly communicate that giving to the church enables the mission and ministry that flows from it*

Our survey tells us that half of parishes send an annual thank you letters to their planned givers, and two thirds have sent one within the past three years. Sending a personal thank you values your donors, acknowledges their giving, and offers a perfect opportunity to tell them about the positive impact that their giving as a group is having on your church's mission and ministry. See www.parishresources.org.uk/givingforlife for templates and ideas.

4 *Hold some form of annual review of giving*

Most parishes now conduct an annual giving review according to our survey. Four out of five have asked their congregations to review their giving within the last three years. Personal and church finances work on an annual basis, and so it is good to help people review their giving once a year. There are many different ways this can be done – it certainly is not the intention for parishes to run a major giving programme every year. See www.parishresources.org.uk/givingforlife for templates and ideas.

5 *Make good use of the Parish Giving Scheme*

The PGS enables donors to give to your church by direct debit. If this scheme becomes the principal funding method for your Church, you will have inflation-proofed your giving, maximized your cash-flow and minimised your administration. This will free up your parish to focus on other important priorities. See www.parishgivingscheme.org.uk

6 *Agree a legacy policy and communicate this to the congregation*

Parishes received a record level of £52 million from gifts in wills in 2014. Many parishes are seeing an increase in the number of gifts received because they have agreed a PCC Legacy Policy and communicated it to the congregation. 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 that gifts will be used to make a real difference to the future mission and ministry. Our survey shows many PCCs could benefit from adopting. Find out more www.parishresources.org.uk/legacies

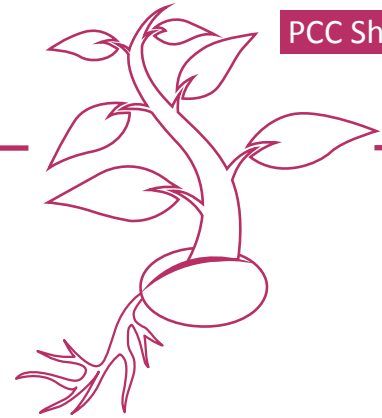
7 *Claim Gift Aid regularly, including the Small Donations Scheme*

Each year parishes claim over £80 million through Gift Aid and the Small Donations Scheme BUT we're missing out on up to £10 million more. Our survey showed that 15% of parishes have not yet claimed on the Small Donations Scheme, and there is a small number who have not claimed Gift Aid for the past two years. There is no easier way of boosting income! We've produced some checklists to ensure you're following good practice with both Gift Aid and the Small Donations Scheme. See www.parishresources.org.uk/giftaid

8 *Use the Parish Buying Service*

Over 10,000 people have registered on behalf of churches, charities and schools with the Parish Buying service. This provides national contracts for many goods and services parishes use – energy, photocopiers, paper and office products, software, telecoms, fire safety and so on. Unless you've got a good reason to buy elsewhere we'd encourage you to see this as the default option. This helps us take advantage of the scale of the church's overall buying power. You'll also find Buying Guides to help you make good decisions about insuring your church, manage capital projects and view buying decisions as part of your stewardship. All this and more at www.parishbuying.org.uk

This Giving for Life Guide has been produced by the National Stewardship Committee. With the National Stewardship and Resources team we're trying to make it easier for you to nurture giving in all its forms and to help you manage your spending. Find out more at www.parishresources.org.uk www.churchlegacy.org.uk and www.parishbuying.org.uk



GIVING FOR LIFE: CONTINUING THE JOURNEY

Your PCC will use this sheet to review your practice on stewardship matters, and to identify and prioritise areas for development. We're asking all PCC members to complete this ahead of the PCC meeting, and bring it with you.

A recent survey of 1100 parishes shows widespread adoption of good practice since the Giving for Life report in 2009. Average giving per planned giver has risen by 20%¹, most churches now send out thank you letters and encourage givers to review their giving once a year, 10,000 people have registered with the Parish Buying service and legacy income has risen to record levels. Perhaps more importantly we're hearing lots of stories of church members feeling better equipped to see how the challenge of generosity fits within their Christian life. Most churches, though, can still find some areas for improvement.

1 *When did you last hear a sermon that included a message on stewardship, generosity or giving money?*

- Within the last 6 months, Within the last year, Within the last 3 years,
 Within the last 5 years, Don't know

Teaching and Preaching on matters of generosity and stewardship are essential if we are to learn to live generously as disciples of Jesus. It's not just about giving, nor just about money – but to help us gain insight into the amazing generosity of God, and seek to respond to it. Almost 70% of the 1100 respondents to our survey have heard a message within the last year, and two thirds of these within the last six months. See www.parishresources.org.uk/giving/preaching for material to support this.

2 *When thinking about how your church communicates with givers which of the following do you talk about? (tick all that apply)*

- Giving as a response to God's generosity The costs and financial needs of the church
 Giving to support a clearly articulated vision for the future Giving in the context of discipleship
 The impact of giving in enabling the church's mission and ministry

It's important to communicate with givers from several different perspectives. All too often churches focus on their cost or budget shortfall, but givers need to hear wider faith perspectives, and what their giving enables in terms of both current ministry and future vision. This helps them decide how to allocate their giving between church and the other causes and charities the Lord has put on their hearts. See www.parishresources.org.uk/givingforlife for ideas to help you do this.

¹2014 compared with 2009

3 *When did your PCC last send a thank you letter to your planned givers?*

- Within the last year, Within the last 3 years, Within the last 5 years,
 Not within the last 5 years, Don't Know

Our survey shows that most churches now send thank you letters to their planned givers. This values your givers, acknowledges their giving, and offers a perfect opportunity to explain the impact that their giving as a group is having on your church's mission and ministry. See www.parishresources.org.uk/givingforlife for templates and ideas.

4 *When did your PCC last ask the congregation to review their giving?*

- Within the last year, Within the last 3 years, Within the last 5 years,
 Not within the last 5 years, Don't Know

Most churches now conduct an annual giving review according to our survey. Four out of five have asked their congregation to review their giving within the last three years. It's much healthier to review giving on an annual basis, rather than every three or four years – it's how money works for most of us, and reminds us that giving is a key element of discipleship. See www.parishresources.org.uk/annualreview

5 *Make good use of the Parish Giving Scheme*

Feedback from donors and parishes using the scheme has been very positive. If this scheme becomes the principal funding method for your Church, you will have inflation-proofed your giving, maximized your cash-flow and minimised your administration. This will free up your church to focus on other important priorities. Find out more at www.parishgivingscheme.org.uk

6 *Has your PCC agreed a legacy policy and communicated this to the congregation?*

- Yes No Don't Know

Many parishes are seeing an increase in legacy gifts received because they have a Legacy Policy in place. Having a Policy helps those people who wish to include a gift in their will know that the church welcomes gifts and will use them wisely. Our research indicates many PCCs could benefit from adopting this. Find out more at www.parishresources.org.uk/legacies

7 *Does your PCC claim Gift Aid, including the Small Donations Scheme, regularly?* Yes No Don't Know

Each year parishes claim over £90 million through Gift Aid and the Small Donations Scheme BUT we're missing out on up to £10 million more. Our survey showed that 15% of PCCs have not yet claimed on the Small Donations Scheme, and a few have not claimed Gift Aid for the past two years. There is no easier way of boosting income! Use our checklists to ensure you're on top of the scheme at www.parishresources.org.uk/giftaid

8 *Is your PCC using the Parish Buying Service?* Yes No Don't Know

The Parish Buying Service enables the Church to take advantage of our overall buying power through a series of national contracts for many goods and services parishes use – energy, photocopiers, paper and office products, software, telecoms, fire safety etc. Unless you've got a good reason to buy elsewhere we'd encourage you to see this as the default option. We also offer Buying Guides to help you make good decisions about insurance, manage capital projects and view buying decisions as part of your stewardship. All this and more at www.parishbuying.org.uk

Priorities for Action:

Please identify up to three of these points that you see as priorities for action: , and
(in general addressing the points with smaller numbers will have the greatest impact)

This Giving for Life Guide has been produced by the National Stewardship Committee.
Find out more at www.parishresources.org.uk www.churchlegacy.org.uk and www.parishbuying.org.uk