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With card having overtaken cash as the preferred form of payment in society generally in 2017, we know that having the ability to accept digital donations is going to be key for many churches in the years to come. In 2021 alone, churches across the country received digital donations and payments of almost £5m. That's why the Church of England's National Giving Team is embarking on a three-year project to help thousands more churches get started with digital giving.

In 2021, we ran four pilots with dioceses across the country to test out different types of devices and ways of training churches. Taking on board everything we learned from that experience, this year we're beginning to rollout a streamlined approach to helping churches get going with digital giving with the aim of working with each diocese in the country by the end of 2024.

## **What is digital giving?**

Digital giving refers to donations made using a bank card or smart device, such as a mobile phone, either via a contactless donation unit or through an online giving page accessed through a web browser or QR code.

## **What are the benefits of digital giving for churches?**

### Higher donations

Enabling people to give to churches using digital mechanisms makes it easier for people to give when they wish to do so—and in many cases could be what allows that person to make a donation in the first place given they may not be carrying cash. The average contactless donation is typically three times that of a cash donation, indicating that not only is the ability to make a contactless donation important but that people also tend to give more generously when this option is available. In our experience, the average contactless donation is about £9. Giving online tends to result in much higher donations still, with the average gift being around £40.

Simply having these mechanisms in place does not automatically mean your church will start receiving donations, but having a range of mechanisms that are clearly signposted ensures it is as easy as possible for those who wish to support churches to do so. The average amounts will vary depending on where your church is, how many people come to your church, and what sort of device you have, but give an indication of the typical donation levels for these mechanisms for giving.

### Safe and secure

Digital giving mechanisms are also a safe and secure way to receive donations. Funds can often be settled into your church's bank account the next day and no personal data is stored on contactless donation devices, meaning both the person giving and you as the church receiving the gift can have a high level of trust in the donation process.

## **How is the rollout going to work?**

We are working in a phased way diocese-by-diocese. Each diocese is entitled to a certain amount of devices, and the National Giving Team will work with them to allocate devices to a range of churches. This will also include offering some online and in-person training, so that churches feel equipped with how to get the most out of digital giving.

The dioceses we are currently working with, or are about to start working with, include:

- [Norwich](#) *applications closed.*
- [London](#) *applications closed.*
- [Winchester](#) *applications now open.*
- [Chester](#) *applications now open.*
- [York](#) *applications now open.*

Each diocese will promote the application window to their churches; those dioceses currently accepting applications are indicated above and you can click on the link to find out more information.

Details of the order of future dioceses to be included in the rollout will be published here in due course. If you want to find out more about what's happening in your area, [contact your local giving advisor](#) or the [National Giving Team's support desk for digital giving queries](#).

## **FAQs**

# General information about the rollout of digital giving

## Who is running this project?

The digital giving rollout is being coordinated by Grace Emmett, National Digital Giving Manager, supported by the rest of the National Giving Team.

## Who are the National Giving Team?

The National Giving Team is a department within the National Church Institutions, the body that works on behalf of the Church of England to support the Church in its mission and ministry. The National Giving Team exists to equip dioceses and parishes with the tools and knowledge to create the best environment for giving and generosity in their churches. You can find out more about the National Giving Team and what they do [here](#).

## How many churches will benefit from the rollout of digital giving?

We anticipate supplying around 2,000 contactless donation devices and setting up around 1,000 online giving accounts. Some devices are likely to be shared between multiple churches. By the end of 2024, we expect the rollout to take the number of parishes using either online or contactless giving (or both) to be around 6,000—roughly half the number of parishes across the country.

## Our church wants to get started with digital giving sooner than our diocese is scheduled to take part in the rollout. Is it worth us getting started now?

Yes, absolutely! It is free to set up online giving through Parish Buying, so we recommend churches get started with this as soon as they're able to. Remember that online giving can include the use of QR codes, which can be printed and displayed in your church building, on pew cards, on order of services and so on. So it's very easy to offer visitors to your church a digital way to give. You can find all the information you'll need to set up an online giving page [here](#). Not all churches in a diocese will be able to access a contactless donation device through the rollout because resources are limited. Therefore if your church is in a position to purchase a device we would recommend you do so, as there is no guarantee you will receive a subsidised one later. Additionally, on average churches will make back the upfront cost of their device within a few months. Therefore there are likely to be lots of benefits to getting started with contactless giving sooner rather than later. You can see all the different options available for contactless giving on [this page](#) of Parish Buying, and should contact your [local diocesan giving advisor](#) if you would like more advice on what device might be most suitable for your church.

## What is Parish Buying?

Parish Buying is a buying service set up by the Church, for churches. It uses the bulk buying power that the Church has to negotiate competitive rates on a variety of different products and services that many churches require. It is free to register for an account, and more than one person from your church can register. It is through Parish Buying that the rates for the devices in the rollout project have been secured.

# Information for churches whose dioceses have launched a digital giving project

**My church is thinking about applying to take part in our diocese's digital giving project:**

## How does the application process work?

You will need to fill in a form that will probably take around 15 minutes to complete. This asks for details about your church to assess how digital giving might be of most benefit to you. You'll find more information about the application process in your diocese's project pack. Click on the link for your diocese under 'How is the rollout going to work?' and you will find a link to a PDF guide with all the information about what's happening in your diocese.

#### **When will I hear if my church has been successful in applying for a device?**

The timeline for your diocese's project is outlined in the project pack. Click on the link for your diocese under 'How is the rollout going to work?' and you will find a link to a PDF guide with all the information about what's happening in your diocese.

#### **If successful, when will I receive my device?**

You will be able to collect your device at in-person training session in several months' time; please see the timeline for your diocese's project, which is outlined in the project pack. Click on the link for your diocese under 'How is the rollout going to work?' and you will find a link to a PDF guide with all the information about what's happening in your diocese.

#### **My church already has a card reader, can we still take part?**

Of course, you are welcome to apply. Card readers are a great first step into contactless giving, but we see the devices being given out as part of this project as a step beyond the use of just a card reader.

#### **My church already has a contactless donation device similar to those being offered as part of this project, can we still take part?**

You are welcome to apply but as part of your application will be asked to justify why you think you should receive a subsidised device and the difference having an additional device will make to your church.

#### **Can I apply as a multi-church parish or benefice?**

Yes, and we have seen this shared model work well for some groups of churches when it comes to contactless donation devices. We would encourage you to discuss how this might best work with your diocesan giving advisor, and the application form will ask you for the details of the other churches involved if you are applying on behalf of a group.

#### **If successful with our application, who owns the contactless donation unit?**

You do. Once you've received the device it is your responsibility to look after it and use it.

#### **If successful, will our church need to give our device back for any reason?**

Only if you are not using your device, or only using it very infrequently. If you find that you are not able to make the most of your device then your diocesan giving advisor may pass it on to another church within the diocese. However, we will always work with you first to ensure that you have been able to access any additional support you need to make the most out of contactless giving. You will always be given plenty of notice about what's expected of your church.

#### **Do I need an internet connection?**

No, as some of the contactless donation devices being offered can accept donations offline. If you do not have WiFi in your church building it may

be that your device can operate by accessing a mobile phone signal instead to connect to the internet; there are questions on the application form that ask about connectivity so that we can allocate the most suitable device to your church. Even devices that can accept donations offline still need to be connected to the internet regularly, however, to upload the donation. For most churches in this situation this looks like someone taking the device home at the end of the day and connecting to their home WiFi.

### **How secure are contactless donation devices?**

We are not aware of a contactless donation device having been stolen from a church to date. All the devices offered in this project are securable in some way and will be provided with the means to secure it for unattended use.

### **Does our church need a faculty for a contactless donation device?**

Contactless donation devices fall under List A of the Faculty Rules so no faculty or consultation is needed to secure a device so long as the device isn't being attached to any historic fabric.

### **Is there a cost to take part?**

Devices offered through the rollout are either free or heavily subsidised. You will find a breakdown of the potential costs associated with each device in the project pack for your diocese. Click on the link for your diocese under 'How is the rollout going to work?' and you will find a link to a PDF guide with all the information about what's happening in your diocese.

### **Why do some devices have a monthly charge and others don't?**

For some of the units there is an associated monthly charge that will need to be paid for by your church. The details of these can be found in the project pack for your diocese and the specific charges of the unit allocated to you will be outlined before you are required to commit to the unit. This reflects an increased level of support available for these devices that 'work out the box' i.e., the providers of both devices configure all the settings and so on for you so there is minimal set up to when you receive your device. Any changes to these settings are also managed remotely by the provider. So partly this service fee pays for ease of use with both types of devices. For the CollecTin More and Payaz GivingStation, where more initial set up is required, this will all be covered in your one-to-one training session when you collect your device and ongoing support will be available from your diocesan giving advisor and the National Giving Team. The GWD Midi also supports offline donations. It is important to remember that a cost for connecting to the internet is always paid for somewhere with the use of contactless donation devices: either in the form of WiFi, or a mobile data SIM, or in paying for offline functionality.

### **How can our church explore different options for connectivity?**

Please see the guidance available on [this page](#) of the Church of England website, and the different options available through [Parish Buying](#).

### **If our church has to pay a monthly service fee, how long is the contract?**

There is no minimum contract, but the device will not be operational without paying the service fee. If you choose to stop paying the fee, we would ask you to return your device so we can give it to another church.

### **Do I need PCC sign off to take part?**

This will depend on your PCC rules and whether you are being asked to make a contribution towards the cost of the device, either in the form of an upfront payment or via any ongoing monthly fees. The arrangements for each device type are detailed in the project pack for your diocese. In most cases, the maximum any church would be required to pay over the course of a year is around £200. Many PCCs have adjusted to signing off low-level financial decisions like this over email, and may just require sign-off from the treasurer and e.g., the churchwarden.

### **What is a merchant account?**

Once you have been allocated a device you will be required to create a 'merchant account' with a particular provider. This is the financial process that enables donations to be taken on your behalf and then moved into your church's bank account. Once you are allocated a unit, the details and forms that you are required to fill in will be sent to you.

### **What support will I be able to access?**

During this project you will be required to attend two sets of training:

- Digital giving webinar: this will give you some foundational knowledge about digital giving, introduce you to members of the project team, and give you an opportunity to ask any questions you may have.
- Collection training: depending on the device you are allocated, this will either be one-to-one training or training run in small groups. This is the session where you will receive your device. This will mean you can get hands-on, in-person support with your unit and you can ask any questions you have.

Additionally, your diocesan giving advisor will always be around to help, and the National Giving Team can add further expertise. The unit manufacturers also have support teams should there be a technical or hardware issue that needs resolving.

### **Who is the project team in my diocese?**

The project team are a small group consisting of members of the diocesan central staff team and members of the National Giving Team. The contact details for the primary point of contact are listed on the final page of your diocese's project pack.

### **How will my church's data be used?**

The National Giving Team will have access to the data disclosed in your application form, which will be shared with your diocese. You can find our privacy notice relating to how this data will be used [here](#). Both the National Giving Team and your diocese will also have access to aggregate donation values and volumes of your device and, if applicable, your online giving account, which will be used by both teams to assess the progress of a digital giving project and inform best practice. Parish Buying's privacy notice is available to view [here](#).

### **Who can I ask for more information about any aspect of this project?**

You can get in touch with diocesan giving advisor, whose details are on the last page of your diocese's project pack.

## **My church has been successful in applying for a contactless donation device:**

### **What do I need to do now?**

You will have received an email outlining the next steps.

### **What is a merchant account?**

Once you have been allocated a device you will be required to create a 'merchant account' with a particular provider. This is the financial process that enables donations to be taken on your behalf and then moved into your church's bank account. The details and forms that you are required to fill in will be sent to you.

### **Do I need to tell my church insurance provider about contactless donation device?**

This is up to you; most churches tend not to insure items with a value of less than £1000, but your church may have a different approach. The only devices worth more than £1000 are the GWD Skinnys, of which only a few will be given out in this project. If your church is receiving a GWD Skinny we will give you a cost estimate for your insurance provider if you would like one.

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