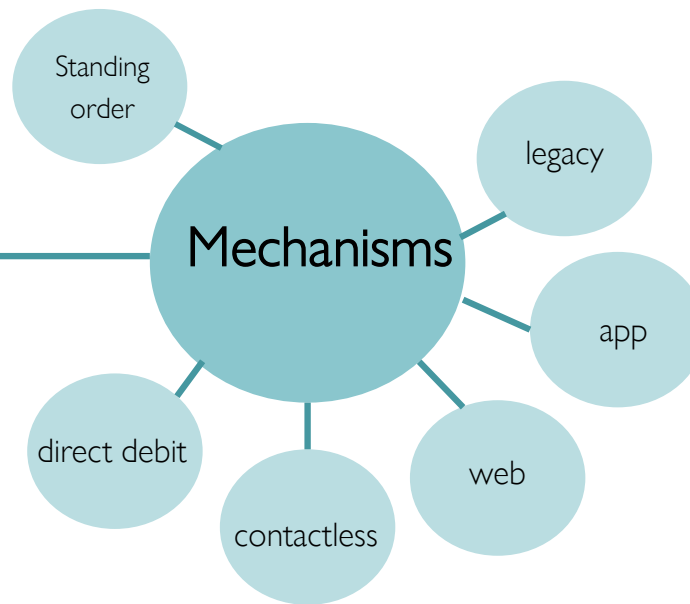


Giving Practice



Define

This is about the ways people give. The easier it is to give, the less 'friction' there is in giving, the more likely people are to give. The way people use money is changing, and that means the way people give is changing too, and we need to acknowledge that in the mechanisms we offer. Good practice with mechanisms is all about providing the ways to give in an accessible, visible, simple, straight forward way. It's also about ensuring that whatever way people give, they are thanked for their gift.

Discern

We want to encourage 'holy habits' within our church, so that giving becomes second nature. Most people want to be generous, and often are, but like all spiritual gifts, we become better at using it with *practice*. There is a place for reflection, deep thinking, and contemplative generosity. There's also a place for spontaneous and instinctive generosity, and enabling us all to be generous in different ways is a key part of building the generous community God calls us to be.

Discuss

Can you think of a time, in church or in another context, when you wanted to give but couldn't?

Can you think of a time when you gave, more because of the mechanism for giving (like a sponsored activity) than the cause itself?

How do you normally give outside of church? Is it different?

What is your preferred way of giving?

Discover

What are we doing well?

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Where do we need to improve?

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Dream

What things could we do?

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Rank them in terms of importance

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Giving Practice

Impact

mission

vision

community engagement

Define

To encourage people to give, we need to explain what will change if they do, and that's impact. We often talk about costs, but that often makes people think their giving is insignificant in comparison. Impact should be shown clearly in our mission and vision plans, and the more we engage with our community the greater impact we will have. Good practice is showing consistently throughout the year what impact the church has made in leaflets, talks, social media stories etc.

Discern

Reporting on impact can sound like showing off – look at all the marvellous things we have done! However, in truth it is the opposite – it is showing what God is doing through us, the enormous privilege of being used by him to transform lives and communities. Showing impact can embolden us, and give us confidence, because we see where God is already working and want to join in. Impact reporting is not about what we've done, but what God has done through us.

Discuss

What stories have people told you of what your church has done for them?

What does the church do that has made the greatest impact on you?

Impact is about outcomes not outputs. Running a 'messy church' is an output, whereas enabling 12 children to learn about God is an outcome. Think about what the church does, and try and explain it by describing its outcomes not its outputs.

Discover

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Giving Practice

Need

urgency

cause
and
effect

responsibility

Define

People sometimes assume the church is wealthy and doesn't need their support, but voluntary income pays for 75% of the costs of the church's ministry and mission, so people need to give for the church to do what it does. People need to understand cause and effect – if people do not give, what will stop? They need to realise the urgency for people to give, and be convinced of their responsibility to give too (as opposed to others). Being persuaded of the *need* to give is crucial to people *choosing* to give.

Discern

Articulating need can feel deeply uncomfortable, as it shows us to be powerless. As a church, we need what others have, and they may choose not to give. But we believe in a God who was rich but who for our sakes became poor, who lived with and ministered to those in need, and we are called to be dependent on the God who loves us. We need to always be learning the language of need, for God's grace above all things, and acknowledge our need for God's generosity to be shown to us through each other.

Discuss

What would not happen if people gave 10% less? What could happen if people gave 10% more?

In the 1970s, the church commissioners paid for 70% of ministry costs, now it is 10%. How well known is this amongst our congregation? How do we explain it to them?

In most churches, only some feel the need to give. How can we make all feel that responsibility?

Discover

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Giving Practice

Trust

local church

diocese

national church

Define

When people give, they have to trust the people they are giving to. Trust that the money will be carefully spent, that it will be spent on what they said it would, that the money will be kept safe, and that their gift will be kept confidential. They must also have trust that the work it is spent on will be consistent with and live out the faith that motivates the gift. Trust is woven into all aspects of giving, and we need to show ourselves to be worthy of that trust, and make sure we keep it.

Discern

Jennie Pollock writes that three things are necessary for our trust in God to grow – knowledge of God and what he has done, our ongoing relationship with God and our communication with God. The same applies for trust between the giver and our church. Givers need to know what we do and what we have done, we need an active relationship with them, and we need to communicate regularly to sustain and develop that relationship. All these things grow trust.

Discuss

Which organisations do you trust? Why?

Has there been a time when you trusted someone and they let you down? How did that feel?

Think of a person that you think is trustworthy. Describe them, and say why you think they inspire trust.

How does trust work in your church? Who or what do people trust?

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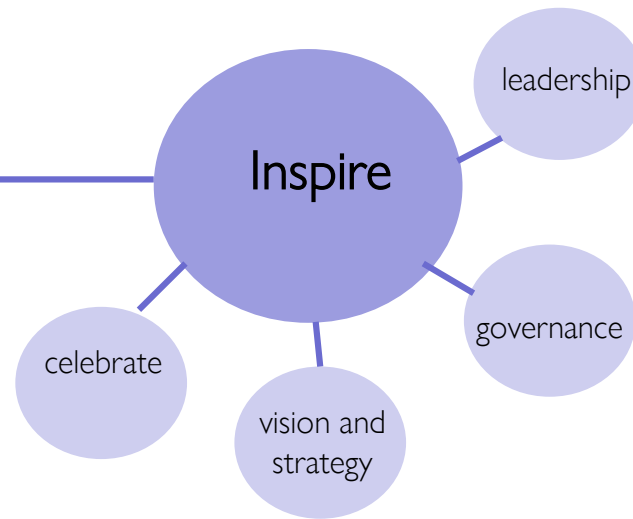
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Generous Culture



Define

Generous churches need generous leaders, who embody and live out generosity as part of their faith. PCCs need to be generous, showing generosity in the decisions they make and the way they act. All church members, whatever their age, need to be inspired to live more generous lives. We need to celebrate generosity within our church through inspirational stories of the transforming grace of generosity lived out.. We need generous and hopeful visions, plans and strategies to inspire us.

Discern

In Mark 12 Jesus praises the poor widow, who gives 'all she has' in the temple, or more accurately this is translated as 'her very life', for she has given away the last remaining coins that she would need to keep her alive. Inspirational leadership can be found in unusual places, and the poor widow is a far greater leader than the other givers in this story. We all have a role to play in inspiring others, in encouraging each other to keep making tentative steps forward in living more generous lives.

Discuss

"People only give as much as the person asking for a gift has given themselves". Is this true?

After Mary anointed Jesus' feet (John 12), he said that "wherever this good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her". Think of the different ways this was generous.

Think of someone who you think is generous. How do they live generously?

Discover

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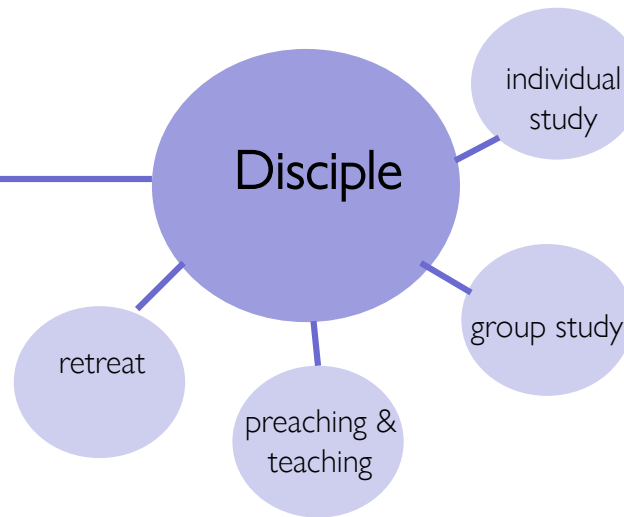
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Generous Culture



Define

We all learn in different ways, and so we need different ways to learn about living generously. Giving is a subject we often find difficult, and it is easy to become defensive, and to feel criticised, condemned or judged. However we disciple people on generosity - individual or group study or preaching and teaching - it needs to be encouraging, positive and supportive. Retreats can be transformative as they give the time to understand afresh God's generosity to us and how we can live generously in response.

Discern

What is it to be a disciple? In Mark 12 Jesus says it is to love God and love our neighbour. This requires a complete generosity of spirit, and graciously God sees we cannot attain it by ourselves. As St Anselm put it, "I owe you more than my whole self, but I have no more, and by myself I cannot render the whole of it to you." Generosity is itself a spiritual gift, and we should start by praying for the gift of generosity, and that we be constantly refreshed with the re-realisation of God's generosity to us.

Discuss

Describe the way you think you learn the best. How could you learn more about generosity this way?

Why do so many people prefer not to talk about money? How can we talk about it in a way that people find comfortable?

How do you think you have grown most in your faith? What events, courses or sermons have been the most helpful?

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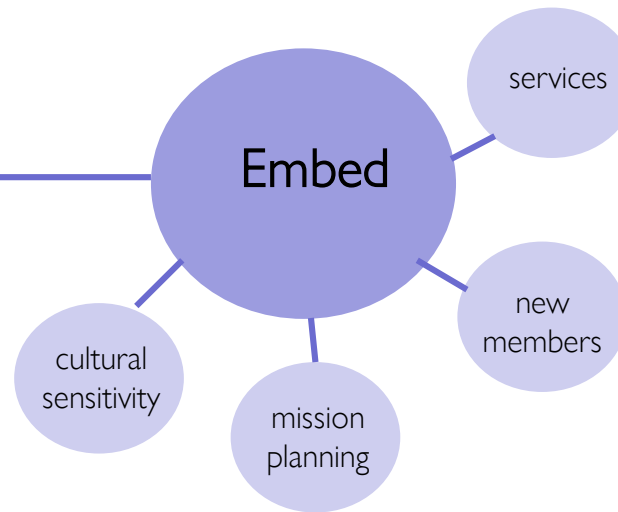
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Generous Culture



Define

Generosity and giving shouldn't only be talked about once a year (and many churches don't even do that) but should be embedded in the church's ministry and mission. Everyone can give something, and giving needs to be seen as intrinsic to being part of the church community. It needs to be embedded in our planning, mentioned in every service, form part of our welcoming of new members, and the way this is all done needs to reflect the particular context of the church.

Discern

There are more bible verses on money, wealth and possessions (2,350) than anything apart from love, with four times more than on faith or prayer. Nearly half of the parables are about money and possessions. Whilst we as a church often hate talking about money, Jesus never stopped. The way we use the money God has given us is so important in bringing the love of God to our communities. Embedding generosity in all we do makes us more and more like the generous God we believe in.

Discuss

Think of adjectives you think other people would use to describe your church. Would generous be one of them?

How are new members of the church welcomed in to the church. Do we mention giving as part of that?

Are there particular aspects to our parish (age, wealth, health, religion etc) that we need to be aware of when thinking about encouraging giving and generosity?

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Generous Culture

Activate

21st
century
harvest

1% more

boomerang
offertory

Define

People often want to build a more generous life, but they don't know how to build it. We can provide the scaffolding for this learning, giving practical ways to grow generosity. For example, pay all church costs for the year in 11 months, then give away everything given in harvest month. Encourage people to plan generosity, by committing to give 1% more of their net income each year. Boomerang offertory - hand back to the congregation the offertory received and ask them to give it away.

Discern

"I by my works will show you my faith" (James 2:18). Generosity is a spiritual gift that needs practice. We need to be able to live it out, not just to ponder it. It is a way of being, not just a way of thinking. By giving people the opportunity to grow a more generous life, we give the opportunity to deepen the faith that sustains it. Generous churches are inevitably growing churches., they can't help it. Their generosity spills out, as they share the overflowing life and love of God.

Discuss

Have you ever set yourself a goal and a plan to achieve it? It could be fitness, diet, a new skill, a qualification. Talk about how you planned it and how it felt when you achieved it.

People often find it easier to do something new if they do it with other people. Is the same true of being more generous?

How do you encourage people to do something without making them feel guilty if they don't?

Discover

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