



the case statement gift array

Introduction

Paul told the Corinthians to give as they have decided in their hearts (1 Cor 16:2). Writing again in 2 Cor 8:7 Paul told them to give from what they had, not what they did not have and that the gift is acceptable if the eagerness to respond to the grace of God was in their hearts. A gift array simply helps people how to make that decision by providing a range of giving options. The choice meets both the financial needs of the ministry and the need for a response by each member appropriate to their situation. A gift array is familiar to us from everyday charity mailings which request £5, £10, £15 etc. An example of a gift array is given in this paper.

Why not proportional giving?

For some people a gift array is not necessary. They will consciously choose to give a percentage of their income, often a tithe. Such proportionate giving should be the goal for every Christian because it fundamentally re-connects income, lifestyle and giving. A gift array in no way contradicts the importance of proportionate giving. Its lasting value is as a helpful and effective way to assist church members not giving proportionately to make a considered financial response. A gift array presents to people a clear and unambiguous challenge to choose a response that reflects their economic, domestic and spiritual situation. In this way a gift array puts the core principle of differentiation into practice.

The advantages of a Gift Array

The advantages of a gift array are best illustrated by reviewing the other options available to a parish. Imagine a local church with a congregation of 30 that

needs to increase its direct giving by £60 per week to make ends meet. How are they to meet that target?

- The obvious approach is to ask each person is asked to give £2. The superficial simplicity of this is misleading. In practice not everyone will respond, so a shortfall is inevitable. Secondly, it treats people equally but neither income nor inclination in the congregation is equal. For some that £2 increase is a real commitment, for others it is hardly noticed. Consider how the common statement that it costs, say, £8 to open the doors plays with new people in the church. Is this the subscription cost for this club? Thirdly, it leaves no room for the leadership of the church to take the lead. Finally, a basic principle of giving is that people will only give what you ask them to give. Those who could and perhaps should give more will only give what they are asked to give.
- A second approach looks for a more proportionate increase in giving. Imagine that the £60 extra needed represents 20% of total direct income. Effectively what is required is for each person to increase their giving by 20p for every £1 already given. The person who currently gives £10 per week now gives £12; the person who currently gives £1 per week now gives £1.20. This approach is very effective and introduces an important principle of proportionality. The problem is that no serious challenge is presented to affluent but low level givers who potentially could give significantly more. Again people give what you ask them to give.

The advantage of a gift array is that it frees individuals from a single target by presenting a range of responses. It enables the giver to make a response that matches their domestic situation and their sense of what



personal discipleship requires of them. Certainly a gift array allows people to make a response that is within their comfort zone but they can just as easily do that if they are asked to 'give what they can'. A gift array introduces a measure of challenge by posing the possibility of a higher rate of giving, giving that will stretch people out of their comfort zone and into giving that requires something of them.

Making the gift array work

Creating a realistic and achievable gift array is a process of trial and error till you get it right. It is not an exact science. Simply estimate the number of people from the total congregation who will realistically respond with an increase in giving. Then allocate so many to each of the giving bands until you reach the target. The pattern should be roughly 'bell shaped' with the upper giving bands and the lower giving bands with a few givers and the middle bands with the majority. See the illustrated example.

Remember, the gift array in the draft Case Statement is precisely that - a draft. A key part of the consultation process around the Case Statement is

to get a feel as to whether folk will give at a higher level than anticipated - or that the giving range is unrealistic and needs to be scaled down.

Clergy and planning group members need to lead by example. They should seriously consider upper level commitments or at least giving that stretches them personally. Don't include tax recovered by Gift Aid on increases in giving. What does arrive is a bonus and can compensate for any pledges that fail to materialise.

Choosing from the array

Either in preaching or in response to requests for advice it may be helpful to explain how to make a choice. When considering a response church members should begin at the top of the list (i.e. a £5 increase in our example) and work downwards until they reach a giving level that feels comfortable for them. *They should then seriously consider stepping back up one level* so that the response has an element of sacrificial giving to it. To be real giving should cost something, a little outside of the comfort zone and require a trust in God's provision.

The gift array is initially prepared for the case statement and then included in the brochure which will go to the entire church membership on the database.

This many people	giving this much extra each week	produces this much extra	and makes mission possible
1	£5	£5	Worship
1	£4	£4	Service
7	£3	£21	Mission
11	£2	£22	Teaching
8	£1	£8	Evangelism
28		£60	Prayer

