



Giving in Grace The Liverpool Story

And they're off!

Aintree Racecourse, home to the Grand was the venue for the launch of Giving in Grace in March 2005. The Diocese of Liverpool undertook a Diocesan Review in 2001 which identified money as a key constraint on mission as problematic. Among the many, wide ranging proposals in the Review was a major diocesan giving initiative and from this Giving in Grace was born.

The Aintree conference was hosted by the two bishops of the Diocese of Liverpool and proved remarkably successful. Eventually just under 600 delegates filled the conference at Aintree racecourse to (over!) capacity. Because Giving in Grace was conceived from the outset as a lay led programme it was important that this was reflected in the conference itself. Worship at the conference was led by worship groups from two parishes and the deanery advisors (see below) played an important part in running the afternoon deanery workshops.

Web based resources

A significant and formative influence was the early decision to make the resources available on a web site which made possible continuing development and shared learning. Concerns about access for those who were not online or had an expensive dial up modem were substantially addressed by provision of a CD ROM for each parish.

A local church focus

The decision to develop a website was inspired at least in part by the recognition that Giving in Grace was to be focused clearly upon resourcing ministry and mission in the local church. In that sense it was

not a diocesan initiative as such but the provision of resources for parish use. The case statement which functions as the foundational document of each parish programme focuses exclusively on the ministry of the local church not the financial circumstances of the Diocese. Of course, the improved financial health of a parish contributes enormously to the parish share system but the focus was in the local church.

Local church leadership

Another fundamental principle behind Giving in Grace, again reflected in the decision to have a web based medium, was that a local church should be able to run a programme without extensive external support. It was always expected, and experience has proved the point, that the unambiguous support and commitment of the parish clergy would be crucial to a successful Giving in Grace programme. Nevertheless the focus was on the people of God working to resource ministry and mission in their own church. Across the Diocese it has been a joy to hear of committed teams of lay people reaping the blessings from their hard work and commitment to the life and ministry of their local church.

Lay advisors

Prior to this initiative the Diocese of Liverpool had no system of parish stewardship or giving officers. A crucial development was the creation of a network of advisors in preparation for the launch. Lay and ordained advisors were chosen for their experience of stewardship programmes rather than financial ability although it was most helpful that some with a strong financial background offered their support. The advisors took a strong lead at the Conference, facilitating deanery seminars at the afternoon workshops. They also provided constructive and critical input in the development of presentations that would be used at the

Aintree Launch. Their hard work, enthusiasm and support proved to be essential to the success of both the launch and the subsequent response from the parishes. The advisors played an important role as local links in deaneries. Some visited PCC's to explain about Giving in Grace, some assisted planning groups while others were invited to preach at the Sunday services.

Deanery road-shows

After the conference a series of deanery road shows were organised across the Diocese to encourage local churches who were planning or preparing to run programmes in either the autumn of 2005 or early 2006. The road shows were conceived of as interactive meetings rather than presentations - an opportunity for planning groups to ask questions and share their stories. Attendance was good and the road shows reaffirmed the momentum of the initiative after the successful launch. These road shows were supported by the Resources Department from Church House and especially by the deanery advisors who attended the relevant road show for their deanery.

The two bishops

Within any Giving in Grace programme firm leadership is crucial. The support and personal commitment of our Bishops, James and David was crucial. Both Bishops took a keen interest in the plans, lending the initiative their enthusiastic and wholehearted support for the initiative. Both Bishops were present at the conference and each spoke personally and powerfully of their own commitment to Christian stewardship. Their commitment was shared by the Diocesan Secretary and the Archdeacons who have been unfailingly supportive in commending Giving in Grace to parishes. In the early autumn of 2005 Bishop David and Bishop James hosted a series of ten Deanery based Giving

in Grace services to celebrate, affirm and encourage parishes engaging with the initiative.

The story so far

The initial results from parishes running Giving in Grace programmes were very encouraging. By June 2006 around 50 parishes in the Diocese of Liverpool had run a local programme. The first 24 parishes reporting on their programmes shared a pledged increase in giving of some £300,000, around £250pw increase. The average one year actual increase in total giving for churches undertaking a Giving in Grace programme was 16%. Details of individual churches can be found in the case studies.

By September 2007 approximately half of parishes in the Diocese of Liverpool (around 110 parishes) had completed a programme with several turning attention to an annual review. The 2006 financial returns yielded the following results:

% increase in giving	GiG Churches	non GiG churches
Total direct giving	15.5	6.4
Tax efficient	24.7	17.1
Other Planned Giving	31.6	4.1
Loose plate	10.3	10.4

It has been encouraging to see positive results also reported in parishes outside of the Diocese of Liverpool, including a rural parish in Cumbria and a suburb of San Diego in California!

