

finances. The response, when the recession was starting to hit people hard, was extremely impressive. People understood and gave willingly.”

“For us, Giving in Grace was like a stewardship course ‘plus’ – it had an extra dimension that encouraged us to capture our vision for the church and create a sense of ownership from everyone involved.

The money has allowed the church to employ a part time Children and Families worker.

Part of getting people to buy into that vision was encouraging them to ask themselves ‘how will I contribute to making that happen?’ It helped us make clear the connection between giving and individual discipleship, and the fact that giving is part of your own journey with Christ.”

The money has allowed the church to employ a part time Children and Families worker. To keep the momentum going after the initial campaign, the church also appointed a dedicated Stewardship Officer, and, in partnership with the Diocesan Parish Giving Scheme sends out annual letters giving people the option to let their planned giving increase in line with inflation.

They also use the church magazine, services, teaching and the parish website to regularly revisit the theme of giving. “Giving has simply become part of being church,” said Mick. “It is now just something that we do and goes hand in hand with mission. We never had a problem as such with stewardship in our church, but this improved it greatly. Giving is now part of the fabric of what we do.”



“Giving in Grace encouraged us to celebrate our strengths at a time of recession”

**Location:** Semi-rural, close to London  
**Congregation:** 170  
**Started Giving in Grace:** January 2011

**Christ Church, Chineham, launched Giving in Grace in January 2011 – just as the recession was really starting to bite.**

“As we entered Autumn in 2010 it looked as though we were going to have yearly shortfall of around £20,000 and knew that the recession would further affect our finances and what we could do for the community, so we decided to take action early. We were also very aware that our congregation would be feeling the strain,” said Mick Jones, Churchwarden, and who led Giving in Grace at Christ Church.

“It may seem strange to start asking people to think about giving more to the church in those circumstances, but with hindsight, it was the ideal time to think about the theology and practicality of stewardship.”

People offering their own skills for the greater good of the community was itself an act of giving in grace.

Three churches that had previously used Giving in Grace were contacted before deciding to go ahead. In January 2011 they put a team together, approaching people in the congregation who were known to have specific gifts and talents – leading prayer, financial skills, administration, speaking in church and teaching. “People offering their own skills for the greater good of the community was itself an act of giving in grace,” said Mick.

Giving in Grace was launched by the vicar at a Sunday service, and it was supported by sermons and a teaching programme about money and giving using the Giving in Grace



resources. Teaching also took place at house groups, courses, in church and in small groups.

“We put a heavy emphasis on prayer, and found that the differentiated activities were very powerful. People heard different things and picked up on what was most relevant to them on their own journey. There were lots of what I would call, ‘light bulb’ moments, both for those already on planned giving and those who came to realise the impact that regular giving can have.”

Giving in Grace also provided an opportunity for the church to celebrate what it was good at. “We are a very family-orientated church – we serve three primary schools - and we have a very strong music and worship group. We held an evening ‘Big Gig’ music event, and also started ‘Give a Gift’ where everyone nominated someone else to whom they would give a present, such as handmade art or a craft item. For example, someone who enjoyed walking was given a relevant gift and a bible verse about journeying.”

Junior Church also played an active part, “The children followed the same sermon series but took part in differentiated activities. They made and decorated their own coasters with phrases like ‘God loves a cheerful giver’, or pictures of bread and fish. They then joined the rest of the service and gave what they had made to someone in the congregation. They were encouraged to participate in an actual act of giving and in so doing think about giving in the wider sense.”



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At the end of the initial programme Christ Church saw a tangible increase in giving. “We wanted to bring in an extra £1200-£1400 per month but we exceeded that target, and we are now on track with our