

Visiting preachers also contributed to the following two Sundays. The Church Lads and Church Girls Brigade helped close the programme by leading a thanksgiving service, making 'thank you' bookmarks,

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each containing a mustard seed, which were given to all members of the congregation.

"Throughout the programme there was a definite sense of a church moving away from maintenance into new mission opportunities and it

is clear that the congregation really caught that vision. The young people of the parish, who are not just associated with the church on a Sunday, also brought a great deal of energy into the process."

The church needed an additional £63 each week to meet the mission targets, representing an approximate required increase of 50%.

"At the start of the planning process there was a great deal of uncertainty about whether there was any capacity within the congregation to increase giving at all. But the final level of response was overwhelming. Out of 40 letters which were sent, 34 families replied, representing an 85% response rate. 9 additional people joined the planned giving scheme. When Gift Aid was taken into account, the additional amount pledged each week was approximately £59. A truly amazing response."

Christ the Servant is also looking at follow up activities to target people who have joined the church since the initial Giving in Grace launch. "Timing is important, and when times are hard it is important to think carefully about what you are asking from the community. Giving in Grace had a massive impact first time around, and we are looking at how we can feed key elements of it in to our planning for the future."



✠ CASE STUDY ✠

Christ the Servant Digmoor

"Our Church has a big community impact outside of Sunday services – and Giving in Grace helped us sustain that"



Location: densely populated area, top 5% of areas of multiple deprivation

Congregation: 40

Started Giving in Grace: 2008

A vision to launch a new community project spurred on Christ the Servant to try Giving in Grace.

"Although Christ the Servant has a fairly small congregation, it has a big impact on the wider community. There are a range of activities in the life of the church including a youth group, beetle drive, ladies and men's groups, a music group for adults with learning disabilities, a thriving Church Lads and Church Girls Brigade and a Parish pantomime," said Rev Janet Heighton.

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It was built in 1970 as a mission church to serve people in the Digmoor area of the developing new town of Skelmersdale. It sits at the heart of a densely populated area, most of which falls in the top 5% of areas of multiple deprivation.

In 2008 they launched a church and community project in partnership with Lancashire College, which offered a variety of courses based in the church building. This new project, and the fact that the church was reaching a critical point financially, led the DCC to look at a renewed vision for mission. After some research, the DCC agreed it was time to engage with the Giving in Grace process and appointed a small team to get this underway.

"The group worked as a team in all areas of the process, rather than people taking on individual responsibilities, which worked well for us. At first the programme seemed daunting and a bit alien but, with the help of the Giving in

Grace team, we soon grasped the concept and were able to develop a more simplified programme suitable for our context."

Working with the results of an earlier DCC Away Day, they were able to develop their case statement and also highlight new areas of mission in need of financial support, rather than just maintenance.

The five week Giving in Grace programme ran in February and March 2009. The launch and close of the campaign were scheduled to take place on Parade Sundays so that there was a real celebratory feel and everyone was involved.

...suitable readings were chosen from the various suggestions on the Giving in Grace website in order to give a good understanding of stewardship...



Differentiated letters were used for the DCC and congregation; the DCC were given their letters at their meeting two weeks before the official launch and were asked to give a lead by submitting their response by the launch date.

The church also co-ordinated biblical teaching with the programme. "No set preaching series was used, but suitable readings were chosen from the various suggestions on the Giving in Grace website in order to give a good understanding of stewardship, that was appropriate for our own context."

The church also used differentiation for various groups "The Church Lads and Church Girls Brigade launched their programme using an adapted version of "The Heckler" resources from the website, and which gave a very visual representation of the needs of the church."

The church Treasurer also gave a presentation to the whole church in week two. "This included a video showing the hard times the church had been through but even more importantly highlighting the new areas of mission and fellowship that had begun to grow in the previous twelve months."

