

we're 12 miles from Middlesbrough which has one of the highest levels of urban deprivation in the UK. Along with several other churches, we now focus much of our mission work there. We help to support a food bank and we are about to start working with another church at the immigration holding centre in Teesside. Large

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numbers of asylum seekers come into the area and they need to be fed, housed and cared for while they wait for their futures to be determined. As a church, our heart is to help with that as much as we can. We also support mission projects further afield, especially those which have a record of good financial management"

Giving in Grace has helped Christ Church to focus on increasing their giving, become more generous as a congregation, think deeply about their future in mission and ministry and shone a light on their strengths. As Ken points out, the response to the initial approach to the congregation was very encouraging. "We contacted 238 people about the programme and had a 63% response rate. As a result, we met 85% of our financial target the first year we joined Giving in Grace. For a medium sized church like us, I'd say that was pretty good."

It's early days for Christ Church, but how about the future? Ken is clear. "Great Ayton was a commuter village for industrial Teesside and most of those residents are now at retirement age. We've adapted our services in order to attract new young families. It's hard work, but it is paying off. New people are coming in. We've started running café church and services for toddlers and their carers. Along with that, we are often asked about our participation in Giving in Grace. It's perceived as being a positive and successful programme. We hope that as we continue along the road with Giving in Grace, it will bless many others along the way."



✠ CASE STUDY ✠

Christ Church Great Ayton

"Giving in Grace has helped us to see where we are now and where we would like to go in the future."



Location: rural village, 12 miles from Middlesbrough, mixture of old and new families

Congregation: Electoral Roll: 288

Typical Sunday attendance: 130

Started Giving in Grace: February 2014

Christ Church, Great Ayton decided to investigate Giving in Grace in the final quarter of 2013. Church Treasurer Ken Taylor takes up the story:

"Based on a number of factors, we felt that we needed a stewardship programme. We looked at several, but our vicar had come across Giving in Grace already and after some discussion the PCC decided to go with it last winter."

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The main driving force behind Christ Church's decision flowed from a desire to be more generous. "We had looked very carefully at our giving and we felt that we should be more generous than we had been. There were varying opinions

in our congregation about this, but the PCC decided to set a very generous target for our giving to the Diocese which we believed to be the right thing to do. We couldn't sustain that level of giving from our regular collections, so we had to do something. Giving in Grace was it."

This decision was underpinned by a decision made by the Diocese of York the year before, as Ken explains. "The Diocese moved away from the Parish Share notion which was based on the size of the congregation, its income and numbers of paid clergy. Not much thought went

into it by the PCC and it was treated almost like a tax. York switched to what they called the Freewill Offering. We received information about our relative wealth

compared to other parishes and our previous giving record, but we had genuine freewill to give what we felt was right. It's been very successful. There was a small shortfall the first year, but we nearly reached the Diocesan budget. People are getting used to it and we hope that it will encourage even more generosity as we move forward."

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Christ Church found the discipline of writing a Case Statement very constructive. It helped them to focus on their strong points and also their weaknesses. It is being used to determine what the church will do for the next few years and to set targets for giving, ministry and mission.

"Once we had written the Case Statement, we presented it to the congregation and then used the programme of activities the template advised," Ken explains. "We sent out letters, explanatory leaflets and offered guidance on increasing giving which all led up our Freewill Offering

Day at harvest time last year." The results of all this hard work paid off, as Ken notes. "Once we'd collected in all the pledges, we found we had achieved 85% of our target. Bearing in mind this was the first time we had even had a target, we were very pleased."

Giving in Grace is continuing to have an encouraging effect on Christ Church. Since February this year, giving has increased significantly. The increase in the Freewill Offering is now covered and there is more income to help them with their mission work, locally and further afield.

"We are on the edge of the North Yorkshire Moors, in a fairly affluent and middle class area. However,

