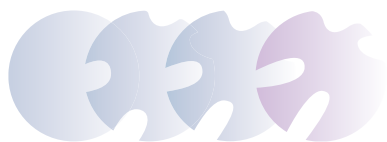


Practical guidance for the preaching series

Preaching plays an important part in growing a culture of generosity. This paper offers practical guidelines on the extensive preaching resources within Giving in Grace.



Preaching is at the heart of a Giving in Grace programme and it is important to be clear about its purpose. The sermon invites a response but is never a thinly disguised appeal for cash. The sermon speaks of what God has done for us in Jesus. The letters we write ask people to consider the why, what and how of their giving. Seeking the financial resources for the ministry and mission of the local church is part of the wider task of growing faithful, obedient and joyful givers.

The five preaching tracks

Giving in Grace offers a range of preaching options, or preaching tracks so that local churches can blend their stewardship preaching with the rich variety of worship patterns and traditions in church life. The first step is for clergy and others responsible for the preaching series to explore the resources and decide which track best suits local needs and ethos.

- **Matthew:** select three (just possibly four) standalone passages from a choice of five parables found in Matthew's Gospel. This preaching series is supported by background notes, sermon reflections by Dr Jane Williams and themed liturgical provision.
- **Mark:** this preaching track contains sermon material on four passages (you may well choose three passages as a preaching series) in Mark's Gospel. Each passage reflects Mark's signature focus on the discipleship cost of following Jesus. It is inspired by *Generous God, Generous People*, a series of daily readings and a related bible study from the diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich. Sermon reflections are provided by Rev Professor Loveday Alexander.
- **Luke:** four well-known money-themed parables in Luke's Gospel. This resource differs from the Matthew track in that the four passages create a themed four-week preaching series, *Seasons of Giving*. However, as with Matthew, it is possible to select from the passages and preach standalone sermons. The preaching track is supported by liturgical resources, background notes by Peter Howell-Jones, Dean of Blackburn and a small-group study. There is also a suite of creative all-age resources to accompany this series.
- **2 Corinthians:** this preaching series explores Paul's detailed teaching on giving in chapters 8 and 9. It lends itself to a more expository style of preaching. It is a four-week series but can be adapted to three weeks if required. The series is supported by sermon notes, sermon reflections by Bishop John Packer and a three-week small-group study.
- **Exodus:** taking a very different approach, *Preach Exodus* is a fully resourced all-age preaching series exploring five passages in the Exodus story. It can, of course, be edited to be a shorter preaching series. It is supported by an adult bible study and additional young people's materials in the form of scripts modelled on a Godly Play approach and picture-based Action Scenes.



How many sermons?

The length of the preaching series depends very much on local considerations. Already fluctuating patterns of church attendance were significantly altered by the Covid pandemic. For a sustained focus on stewardship arguably three sermons is a minimum. However, local considerations may suggest more or less preaching.

Fix the preaching dates

The first sermon in the series marks the congregational launch of Giving in Grace. Plan the date far enough in advance to allow adequate time for those charged with preaching to prepare.

- Try to preach on consecutive weeks, partly for consistency and focus, partly to avoid the feeling that the series lasted for many weeks.
- Avoid the main Christian festivals for obvious reasons. Ordinary Time in the liturgical calendar gives flexibility in choosing readings and sermon series. Harvest-tide, a patronal festival or a church anniversary can work well to anchor a series. The first weeks of Lent can also provide a very helpful focus and the Lectionary year is accommodated by the three Gospel focused tracks.
- The materials can be adapted to all age worship, most especially the Luke and Exodus tracks. But try to work around infant baptisms or services to which you expect many visitors. Don't appear to be taking advantage of more people to talk money.
- Wherever possible, include all Sunday services in the preaching and the programme; it is a matter for the whole church family.

Thanksgiving Sunday

Two weeks after the end of the preaching series, plan for a Thanksgiving Service. This is the occasion for offering to God in our worship the returned response forms, which represent congregational pledges and serve to mark the close of the Giving in Grace programme for the congregation. Provision is made for a Thanksgiving to be the focus of Sunday worship. However, your Thanksgiving may be a more simple liturgical action within worship accompanied by a short litany. There is more detailed guidance at the [Thanksgiving Service](#) tab.

Harvest festival

Autumn is a popular time for running a stewardship programme so planning groups will need to take Harvest Festival into account. With its themes of abundance, celebration, offering and dependence on God, harvest-tide is rich with stewardship possibilities. Guidance and resources are found at the [Harvest](#) tab.

A financial presentation

Many churches choose to include a financial presentation in the preaching series. Sometimes a brief financial presentation is included in a service alongside the sermon. In other churches, a financial presentation may be more substantial or more creative. This can be accommodated by blending in



some biblical material and so replacing the sermon or by making the sermon a little shorter and adjusting other aspects of the service. Take a view on whether a financial presentation is appropriate and how to integrate it into a sermon series. See the resources at the [Financial Presentations](#) tab.

Who does the preaching?

Money talk must be done and done well by those who are identified with the leadership of the church. Many Anglican dioceses have a stewardship officer, lay or ordained, who will be willing to preach, and guest speakers can be invited. But this is not an excuse for local church leaders not to preach.

Clergy must not be seen, fairly or unfairly, to distance themselves from talking money. They must preach but it is not always an easy ask. Lay leaders must give permission and encouragement to their clergy to address this subject. Likewise, Readers and lay leaders who regularly preach should also play their part. As noted in thinking about the [planning group](#), research suggests that congregations prefer that money matters are shared between laity and clergy. This research was not about lay people preaching but, where lay leaders preach routinely, there is value in their preaching on stewardship also.

Personal testimony

Lay people can also make a significant contribution through the offering of personal testimony. See the guidance at the [Lay Testimony](#) tab.