

Annual Review

This information response form includes, of course, a name and contact details. Note that there is no expectation that everyone will return this form. The information response form serves the needs of the giver who wishes to know more. It is not intended to enable the church to track responses.

A review commitment card

The annual review invites a thoughtful, prayerful review of giving. A *review commitment card* enables church members to express their response in a tangible way. Note that the commitment card is an anonymous response and does not ask for any pledge of increased giving. Commitment cards are primarily for the giver to express their prayerful response. While the church leadership may reasonably expect that commitment cards will be returned, individual responses cannot be tracked and there is no intent to follow up non responses.

Commitment cards come in two formats. The first is a credit card size and may be kept in a purse or wallet. Alternatively, the commitment card may be returned to the church as a sign of shared commitment, for which local arrangements must be made. It is strongly recommended that returned commitment cards are offered to God in the context of worship. This can be as simple as placing cards on the offertory plate and amending the offertory prayer accordingly. Alternatively, commitment cards can be offered with a separate prayer on or soon after a review Sunday and accompanied by a short liturgy within the service.ⁱⁱⁱ

Commitment cards are also available as a bookmark to be kept in a bible or suitable place as a tangible reminder of their commitment to giving. Some churches will use the small cards and mark their return in an act of worship. Other churches will use the bookmark while others may use both, requesting the return of the card and retention of the bookmark. And some will turn the cards into fridge magnets or completely redesign the cards as postcards. In other words, do what works locally.

A pledge response form

In some cases church leaders planning a review will wish to invite church members to declare the financial amount of their pledged increased giving – for example an increase of £3 per week. This may be appropriate when the church is facing a significant financial deficit or ministry opportunity and the purpose of the annual review is to address this situation.

Pledge response forms can be anonymous. The pledge

becomes a vehicle by which church members can declare their commitment before God *and* to the leadership of the church and by which the church can have an estimate of the financial response. Note that you will never get a 100% return from what is a voluntary and anonymous process. It will indicate the direction of travel but will not reflect accurately the situation across the whole congregation. If you wish to use an anonymous pledge form, please edit the pledge response template accordingly.

Some churches will request the return of *named* pledge response forms more usually

associated with a significant stewardship programme. This may be appropriate where there is no recent history of stewardship, a significant financial challenge, or there is good reason for a clear expectation that all will return pledge response forms.^{iv}

The golden rule is this: if you expect people to return the response form then you must be *willing* to chase up non responses. It is counterproductive in the long run to request named responses and financial pledges and then not follow up those who do not respond. It is very easy to create a culture in which everyone knows that responses are sought but no one bothers if you do not respond! Be sparing, therefore, in the use of anonymous or named pledge response forms. In an ideal world they should be retained for use at a stewardship programme rather than at the annual review.

Conclusion

Response forms have a place at the annual review but consider first the purpose of the review and the wider context of the stewardship ministry of the church in deciding whether to use them and which response forms to use if you do.

Notes and Resources

- i. Guidance can be found at the [Leaflets and Letters tab](#) under About the Annual Review.
- ii. See the [Charitable Giving Accounts tab](#) in the Stewardship Programme strand of the website
- iii. For more on this, including a simple liturgy, click to the [Thanksgiving Sunday tab](#) in the Stewardship Programme strand of the website
- iv. For more guidance on pledge response forms click to the [Response Forms tab](#) the Stewardship Programme strand of the website

