

Many churches are blessed with much loved and much used church and other buildings and a core of very committed people. In truth others struggle with difficult buildings and few people. Our stewardship includes making the most of the physical assets entrusted to us and to value and nurture the people who faithfully serve. Sometimes that means tough questions and hard decisions.



Notes and Resources

- ⁱ The Power of Asset Mapping: How Your Congregation Can Act on Its Gifts by Luther K. Snow (Alban 2004). For simple congregational exercises search for 'asset mapping' at www.stewardshipoflife.org.
- ⁱⁱ These 2014 figures update the 2012 data in the book.

Assets, events and appeals

When God called Moses to leadership he asked him, 'What do you have in your hand?' (Exodus 4:2). This simple question focuses an important stewardship principle and rubs shoulders with an asset mapping approach to community development.ⁱ We identify and value our assets, people and gifts, looking for what is strong not just at what is wrong, without minimising the challenges. Chapter four of *Beyond the Collection Plate* explores some ways churches can do this.

Don't just follow the money

Income from church assets and activities is significant. In 2014 total Church of England income was just shy of £1 billion. Of that £59 million came from fundraising activities (7% of total recurring income) and a further £107 million from trading (13%).ⁱⁱ That said, there are associated costs so net income is 6% and 7% respectively of total recurring income; still not to be sniffed at. But more is at stake than money. Over dependence on earned income or inadvertently creating a fundraising culture can compromise that all important commitment to planned giving for existing and new church members. We risk creating the illusion that by supporting such activities we are all doing our bit. These income streams in most churches should complement not supersede regular giving.

Trading income

Trading income from hall rentals is commonplace whilst, to give just one example, All Saints Hereford earns serious income from the church café whilst still sensitive to its primary purpose as a place of worship. Are you getting the best deal you can on these arrangements? Creativity counts and page 34 gives other examples of how churches have creatively developed their buildings for wider usage and increased income. Good planning at the start avoids problems downstream.

Fundraising

Churches are fundraising experts; from jumble sales to bungee jumps there is little we have not done! It is a welcome and legitimate income stream which also contributes to social capital in church and community. But, as with all good things, care must be exercised. Such activities don't organise themselves. They can be time intensive, rely on the commitment of a few and the effort can outweigh the gains. When the fun is gone from fundraising everyone loses out. Think carefully about a fundraising strategy that works for your church.

Capital appeals

Sometimes churches need to raise big money, for major repairs, community development or re-ordering. This world of capital appeals, grant making trusts, individual pledges and public appeals has its own dynamics. The focus is on *time limited, high value money for a specific purpose*. It can be hard work and feel scary but a well-planned, successful capital appeal can be a game-changer for the culture of a church as people realise their achievements and possibilities. In conclusion, look at what is in your hands. Maximise physical assets, nurture people, think about how you fundraise and draw on the creative thinking and passion of your congregation and community.