

Many parts, one body: about differentiation

Differentiation is all about the different experiences, motivations, practices in our congregations. We don't do one size fits all. We let people's relationship with their church shape our communications. This paper outlines differentiation in Giving in Grace.



Sorry, I didn't catch that

It is said that when the British are abroad we shout louder rather than try to speak the language! Churches can make a similar mistake with giving. We treat everyone the same; saying the same things, sending the same letters and asking the same financial response from everyone. But people are in different places. Some are just starting out, others have long-standing faith. Some can give much, others struggle. Some 'get' church needs and finances, others not so much. Some celebrate generosity as part of a church culture, others only talk money under duress. In 1 Corinthians chapter 12, Paul talks about honouring different parts of the body of Christ. Differentiation takes congregational diversity seriously.

A fresh perspective

Differentiation also represents a shift of emphasis. Around money, we tend to look to the needs of our *church* first and then look to our people to meet those needs. Good stewardship in the local church will try to turn things round, recognising the variety of spiritual aspirations in the congregation. Some are motivated by the biblical challenge to 'excel in the grace of giving'; others warm to the ministry activities of the church or the blessings that their children receive from church organisations. As [Michael Durrall](#) (p7) comments, a one-size-fits-all approach will, 'fail to encompass wide ranging beliefs across the generations about how we grow in faith and character, our role in accomplishing the church's mission and the reasons we give'. Through differentiation we try to respect what moves folk to give, rather than lead with the need and assume response.

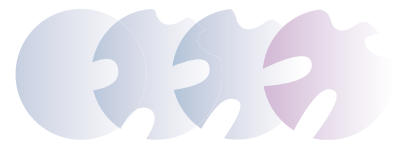
Leader, Planned, Plate and Friends

In practice, churches differentiate all the time. The pastoral sensitivity we show, for example, to new baptism families or adults coming to faith needs to be extended to the area of financial giving. Our church's teaching, worship and pastoral ministry of the church will mean different things to different people. So too will our stewardship messaging.

Differentiation is visualised here as concentric circles. Our formal and informal **Leaders** are likely our most committed givers. Our **Planned Givers** worship and give regularly; our **'Open Plate'** givers may use a contactless giving unit in church, for others cash is still king. Our goal is to grow generous discipleship across our church; we are seeking within that goal our 'next ten big givers'. We may also have community **Friends** who love the church but rarely attend. Note two things.



First, this is not a static financial model but a mission model from church growth thinking. People are encouraged to move towards the centre, growing in maturity and ministry.



Second, *differentiation is never based on how much people give or attend worship*. It is a functional definition. People are Leaders because they have a leadership role. Planned givers use the Parish Giving Scheme or other ways to give regularly. Plate givers make contactless or open plate offerings in church.

Leaders: refresh, renew as you review

Leaders can be in formal (e.g. Reader, church council) and informal (house group or lunch club) roles. They usually give generously of time and talents as well as treasure. Their advocacy and example matter. Their early gifts help an expectation that the financial challenge can be met. A significant portion of church giving likely comes from this Leader group.

The stewardship task for Leaders group is, first, to *refresh* giving by joining the [Parish Giving Scheme](#) and inflation link that giving. Second, to *review* their giving, the amount given. Third, it's an invitation to consider giving *proportionately* of their income. Remember the key challenge to find the next ten generous givers.

Planned givers: refresh as you review

Planned givers are members of the planned giving scheme who are outside of a flexible, local definition of leadership. Planned givers use the Parish Giving Scheme or *other ways to give*: standing orders, envelopes, occasionally a charitable giving [account](#). Generally planned giving has reflected deeper church commitment, fairly regular attendance at worship. But this is a very diverse group and we are still unpicking the impact of Covid on attendance and giving.

The stewardship task for Planned givers is first, to refresh giving with a move to the Parish Giving Scheme. Second, a prayerful, realistic *review* of how much they give to their church, and to increase, as possible, perhaps for the first time in several years.

Plate givers: refresh

Plate givers fall into two broad groups. First, those who worship regularly, often weekly, but for whatever reason don't use the Parish Giving Scheme or any form of planned giving. Second, those who attend worship rather less regularly, more loosely identified with church: kids in organisations, baptism preparation, exploring faith or desiring a, perhaps monthly or less. In the past plate givers gifted by cash or cheque. Today plate giving will include contactless giving in church.

The stewardship task for Plate givers is a simple invitation to regular planned giving through the Parish Giving Scheme (standing orders where this is not possible) and the start of a formative connection between money and ministry. The amount given is a lesser concern than the move to regular giving.

Community friends

For clarity, this is not about the [Friends groups](#) that support some churches. Our community friends are those who rarely attend worship yet love, care for and consider the church to be 'our church'. Friends with a small 'F' can be very strong in rural churches while urban churches with a strong community focus can build notable networks of friends. Regular or significant giving to the general fund of the church is less likely but there can be a good response to appeals for the church building. The stewardship task with the Friends grouping is to build relationships and identification with the church.



Differentiation in practice

Differentiation seeks to take seriously the diversity of our congregations. It's a new idea for many churches so check out the additional papers on the [Differentiation](#) tab. It will impact:

1. *The content of our [letters and response forms](#)*, not asking for the same response from everyone.
2. *The content of our [brochures](#)*: a single brochure carrying multiple messages.
3. *The content of our [preaching](#)*, each sermon containing a challenge to the different groupings.

And differentiation is about people. It requires pastoral sensitivity and GDPR compliance. Be sure to read the practical advice at [Building the Database](#).

Say thank you

We can never say thank you enough, so let's try. For all our faithful givers a key stewardship task which can never be overlooked is to say [thank you](#), often.