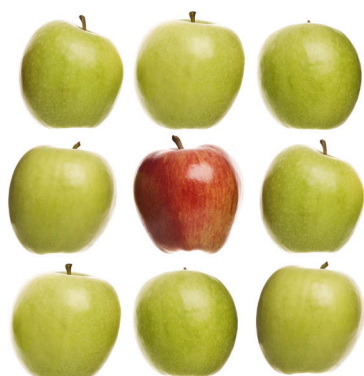


Discussing differentiation

Differentiation is a new concept for many churches and some discussion will be helpful. This paper presents a simple discussion exercise and a verbal sketch that, separately or together, will help to explore the thinking behind differentiation and apply the principles to the local church.



Differentiation helps us to allow the relationship that people have with the church to shape the way in which we talk about generous giving to resource the ministry of the church and as an aspect of discipleship. For more on this principle of differentiation, the papers can be found under *Key Principles* at the *Differentiate* tab.

A differentiation exercise

Consider the following fictitious descriptions of four church members and then discuss the questions that follow:

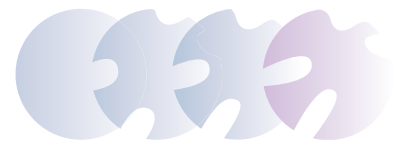
Mary is a young single mum on benefits. She kept coming to church after the baptism of her daughter because the church was more interesting than she had thought it might be and the people were so friendly. She wants the best for her baby and down the line she thinks that the church school would be a good choice.

Mark is a long-standing church member who, after a long career, is now enjoying retirement on a reasonable company pension. He attends the 8am Eucharist faithfully and serves as a volunteer at the local CAB. He puts £2 in an envelope every week and has done so for the last seven years.

Janice is a committed member of her church council. She tithes her net income, believing such proportionate giving to be the biblical standard. She uses the Parish Giving Scheme to give half her tithe to her church and also gifts half to overseas mission, having served with Christian Aid in Uganda.

Andrew and Jayne are a young couple who married in the church last year and appreciated the church's care. They are on the electoral roll but never think of attending on Sunday. They are glad others do and that the church is there.

1. In which differentiated grouping would you put each of these four church members?
2. What are *their* different perspectives on giving to the life of the local church?
3. How would you present the financial challenge as part of Giving in Grace to each of these people?
4. Does this idea of differentiation ring true in your local church?
5. Are we happy to use the categories of Leader, Planned, Plate and Friends in our differentiation? Or do we want to use different terms or take a different approach?
6. How would we reasonably define the Leader grouping in our own church? Do we have other leaders apart from our church council?
7. How strong and how many are our links with our friends in the community, folk who rarely attend but value their church?



A sketch about differentiation

As an alternative to the above exercise or as a companion to it, you may like to use this sketch for voices to start thinking about differentiation.

LEADER Hello, I'm John.

PLANNED Hello, I'm James.

PLATE Hello, I'm Jan.

LEADER I stand here to represent what you might call a Leader...committed, busy. I might even be on the church council.

PLANNED I stand here to represent our regular Planned givers. Not perhaps quite as involved as him, but you'll see me on Sunday, oh and much more than that too.

PLATE Yes, you'll probably see me on Sunday, but I'm standing here to represent our Plate givers. I may be newer in our church or come more occasionally. I may come with my kids to church parade or I may just like them going to Sunday school. And I do like that nice vicar!

LEADER We have different perspectives on the Christian faith, the church and stuff.

PLATE Though we all know we have to play our part in helping the vicar run the church.

PLANNED Well, yes but it's more than that I think. All of us, we are the church and we all have a part to play.

LEADER Although it can be necessary to let some vicars think they run it.

PLATE I believe in giving something to support the church and things it does – and that nice vicar, of course.

LEADER I believe in giving as part of my discipleship, as good stewardship of what God's given me, and as an act of worship.

PLANNED Wow. Wish I'd said that! I give because I know what this church means to me and others, and so does my faith.

LEADER I suppose this Giving in Grace thing will major on tithing, will it? It's good to stretch us; we need that here.

PLANNED Tithing? That rather scares me. I've been putting the same amount in my envelope for a while. In fact, I can't remember the last time I changed it.

PLATE Well, tithing doesn't scare me. I don't know what tithing is.

PLANNED Could we have what we need the money for set out a bit more clearly than usual?

PLATE Yes, it isn't always clear what we need. Where does the money go to anyway?

LEADER It's the vicar that. Making things clear was never his strong point. Have you never heard him preach?

PLATE He does his best. He's a nice man, a very, very nice man!

PLANNED Could we hear a bit from the Bible? A bit more about money I mean – why we should give. There's a lot I don't understand.

LEADER Inspire me. Challenge me. Take me deeper. There's a lot I don't understand.

PLATE Help me know why I should give and where to start. There's a lot I don't understand.



LEADER But please don't tell me it's to keep the doors open every Sunday. I love this church but I'm looking for much more than that – it's about discipleship for me.

PLANNED I've attended this church for nearly 60 years. It makes a difference in our community so I want to keep those doors open.

PLATE I want to keep the doors open too. It's those open doors that helped me and Molly find God...and that nice vicar.

LEADER Give me a message about reflecting prayerful, proportionate giving, and an appropriate and sacrificial response to God's love and it'll work for me.

PLANNED Give me a message about realistic giving. Perhaps get me thinking about proportions of income and explain the Bible's patterns and reasoning more and it'll work for me.

PLATE Give me a message about why to give and help me to give something regularly and it'll work for me.