

## Differentiation: thinking about plate givers

Differentiation is all about the different experiences, motivations, practices in our congregations. We don't do one size fits all. This optional paper offers some further reflections on the motivations and characteristics of the Plate grouping in a differentiated list of church members.



This paper complements the thinking about differentiation in *One Body, Many Parts*, found at the [Differentiate tab](#). Advice on differentiation in a mailing list is found at the [Building the Database tab](#).

### Defining plate givers

Plate givers are defined as those who attend church worship, in person or online, but do not give using any form of regular planned giving, usually the Parish Giving Scheme, standing orders or weekly envelopes. This link to attendance at worship is important. It differentiates the Plate grouping from our church Friends who are supportive and may give but only very occasionally attend worship: major festivals, School services etc.

Of course, worship attendance is not easy to define, more so since the Covid pandemic. It can range from weekly attendance to more infrequent monthly or a little less attendance. In the end this is judgement that can only be taken locally. As above, it's important to read carefully the guidance at the [Building the Database](#) in light of GDPR requirements.

In fact, even the term 'Plate' givers is contested. The pandemic has shifted the liturgical and practical aspects of the church offertory. Passing an offertory plate in worship is now much less common although giving thanks over the offering plate in worship is returning more strongly.

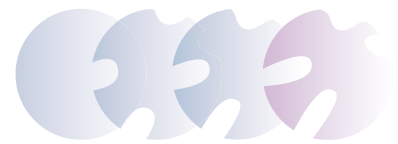
Moreover, the pandemic accelerated [contactless giving](#) units in church and the availability and encouragement of [online giving](#). This is to be much encouraged, not least for a younger generation of new church members for whom the cultural capture of cash in church holds little resonance.

Nonetheless, for now we retain the term 'Plate' as readily identifiable by a majority and still practised by some 45% of church members ([Anglican Giving Survey](#)) many of whom, of course, give cash occasionally as well as their regular planned giving. We retain it also as the physical plate will likely focus the offering of gifts in worship for years to come.

Invitations to Plate givers who attend less regularly must acknowledge the many reasons why they come to church and give as they do. Speak but don't force the language of generous discipleship on those taking the first steps on their giving journey. We note also that some may not give anything and that we can't gauge individual giving on an open plate.

### Re imagining the offertory

In passing, therefore, we note that liturgical words and practices must be rich and thoughtful, embracing more than cash given on the offertory plate. [Re imagining the Offertory](#), a 2015 resource predating the pandemic and much of the growth in contactless giving, offers food for thought.



### It's all about relationships

We may assume more letters mean more gifts. But don't think in terms of ever bigger mailing lists to maximise income or offset lower giving levels. Our core purpose is to invite regular planned giving and a deeper church connection.

Further, pastoral and missional sensitivity is important, as is consideration of our data protection (GDPR) responsibilities. We cannot harvest names and contact them. Again, see [Building the Database](#).

### Key characteristics of plate givers

- The church is 'theirs'; much appreciated and much valued, often with a focus on the building as sacred space.
- As with planned givers, there is a rich range of giving motivations perhaps more weighted for many around buildings and church and community activities than personal discipleship
- There is often a good engagement with key festivals in the church's year but commitment goes well beyond such celebrations.
- There can be a looser connection between giving and personal discipleship and shared worship
- Some can feel on the margins of church life and/or find aspects of that life harder to understand

### Plate: key stewardship characteristics

- Plate giving is sometimes very regular but more likely to be sporadic, almost by definition as it is dependent upon being in church for worship.
- It's impossible to measure per person giving but overall giving levels are low
- That said, there can be some very generous gifts and plate givers are often responsive to special appeals for specific purposes.
- Plate giving is often passive, framed more by a residual belief or practice around something to church rather than a response to a giving request.
- A large number of Plate givers in church may reflect past hesitation to promote planned giving.
- There can be sometimes ignorance of or misinformation about church finances.

### Plate: refresh

The key message to plate givers is single, simple and direct. It is to *refresh* their giving by joining the Parish Giving Scheme (or a standing order where the church is not able to use the Parish Giving Scheme). This may seem a big ask. Indeed several years ago it was prudent to invite envelope giving as an easy 'first step' with a later move to standing orders.

But times and the world in which we live and give have changed. A default to the Parish Giving Scheme as, 'the way we do things around here' is strongly advised. The more personal and relaxed the invitation - in welcome, nurture or confirmation courses, in church communications built on good pastoral relationships - the easier this ask becomes. And if it is not possible for any reason then other ways to give regularly can be explored.



### Plate: no review?

Plate givers will receive and read the church brochure with financial information and a gift array so they will be aware of an invitation to review giving levels. But there is no specific request to increase giving levels.

Our key goal is to encourage regular giving which is not impacted by changing patterns of church attendance and grows the givers connection with the church. Regular giving of itself increases giving. Starting is a milestone on our discipleship journey and our identification with the local church, helping seal personal commitment.

This does not just happen. Now unavailable research by [Stewardship](#) (*The Giving Trigger*) found just 9% of respondents started giving regularly within six months of joining their church and nearly half took five years to start giving regularly. The invitation to Plate givers is an opportunity to engage people, perhaps for the first time, in thinking about or conversation around the financial needs of the church. It is also opportunity to establish an early and formative connection of giving with worship, church membership and generous discipleship.

### 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.