



Vision for Giving – Giving for Growth Review of Autumn 2008 presentations



1. Introduction

This paper is being prepared for a wide audience within the Diocese to report on the immediate outcome of the Diocesan initiative Vision for Giving - Giving for Growth held in autumn 2008.

2. Outcome

The bald statistics were:

- 12 events were held across the Diocese - all except one were for pairs of deaneries.
- Approx 750 attended Vision for Giving evenings.
- Record of attendance suggests that approximately 120 churches were not represented at one of the evenings - this is not an exact figure as some attendees may have recorded their benefice rather than their church. Of these 120 around 60 were represented by a member from another church within a benefice. A further 50 churches were represented by one person. The total churches listed for purposes of this recording was 359. It had been hoped that a small group would attend from each church, although that was probably an unachievable hope in the case of very small churches.
- 'Obstacles' Sheets were received from 142 churches, 12 being submitted anonymously.
- 319 'Opportunities' Sheets were handed in at the end of each evening.
- 83 Parish Giving Representatives have been nominated.

3. Publicity for the events

Main elements in the preparation and publicity for the programme were:

- Early liaison with Rural Deans to arrange host churches and notification of dates for deaneries.
- Invitations to clergy (incumbent status) / churchwardens for churches in vacancy / PCC secretaries / Bishop's Council, BCD, DBF members / Deanery Lay Chairs.
- Notices in at least 3 monthly bundles / mention at Archdeacon's Visitations / publication of dates & venues at Archdeaconry Budget presentations in July 2008
- An article in SeeRound before all the events started
- Chaser notes approx 1-2 weeks in advance of event where no advice of attendance had been received (NB such chasers were sent only where email contact was available).

4. Content of each event

This consisted of:

- Informal time for refreshments
- Introductory worship + Obstacles Sheets
- Bishop's address
- Resources presentation, including short audio clips from churches having had recent encouragement in a stewardship initiative
- Brief discussion in small groups / Questions and answers / Comments
- Completion of Opportunities sheets
- Closing Worship

5. Analysis from paperwork linked to Vision for Giving

5.1 Obstacle sheets

142 sheets were completed, giving churches opportunity to raise awareness on issues they considered as real concerns needing to be addressed. These sheets were collected and offered to God in the introductory worship.

Review of the Obstacle sheets has now been undertaken and highlighted some – probably not very surprising - general aspects of concern to many of our churches. The overall results have been discussed by Bishop's Officers in Holywell Lodge, and will inform ongoing work for Officers.

Key areas of concern included:

- Burden of church buildings / lack of facilities in some churches
- Ageing and small congregations
- Lack of time amongst congregational members in offering voluntary support in church work.
Reductions in clergy availability
- Need for increased financial resources.

5.2 Opportunity Sheets

319 sheets were received recording ideas which people would be taking back to PCCs / Stewardship or Finance Groups etc. Analysis has highlighted particular areas of focus, including:

- Encouraging preaching and teaching in relation to Stewardship and Christian Giving - that preaching and teaching to include some real challenge to congregations and encouragement to proportionate giving by church members
- Providing better analysis of how expenditure is incurred at parish and diocesan levels
- Considering the use of 'offering cards' in our services as a means for highlighting this element of our worship in regular services
- Linking Stewardship with thinking on Vision and Mission in our parishes
- Encouraging PCCs to consider specific stewardship events and programmes, with Giving in Grace being investigated for possible resource materials.
- Using the Vision for Giving Resource packs for further consideration of specific stewardship initiatives.
- Ensuring due thanks are given regularly to contributors in planned giving schemes and more widely to congregations.

5.3 Parish Giving Representatives (PGR)

Vision for Giving has provided an opportunity to encourage parish / benefice appointments for Parish Giving Representatives, and over 80 such nominations have been received. It is hoped that a stronger support network of such representatives can be built up to allow more effective follow up to Vision for Giving and sharing of best practice between parishes.

6. Summary of Ongoing Action from Vision for Giving

This report has sought to summarise the immediate impact of Vision for Giving - there is clearly a lot of action that could develop from it. The follow up will involve:

- the Stewardship Department being in touch with churches which have identified resourcing issues as a specific concern
- other Diocesan Officers reviewing results from the Obstacle and Opportunities sheets,
- planning for further Vision for Giving events
- building the support network for Parish Giving Representatives.

7. Actions from those to whom this report has been sent

- For those churches which have not yet appointed a Parish / Benefice Giving Representative, I would appreciate advice on appointments so that the network of support can be built up. Where no Rep is appointed, the Treasurer will be recorded as the parish contact point.
- Ensure suitable agenda time within PCC discussion on Vision for Giving matters
- Use Resources on St Albans website relating to Vision for Giving
- Submit comments on any aspect of Vision for Giving which could help in further planning and ongoing work.
- Requests from churches for specific follow up to Vision for Giving and general Stewardship matters are always welcome - please contact Geoff Fletcher on 01727 818141 or gfletcher@stalbans.anglican.org

Geoff Fletcher - Diocesan Stewardship Development Officer, Holywell Lodge
January 2009