

Practical guidance for the preaching series

Preaching plays an important part in growing a culture of generosity. This paper offers practical guidelines on the extensive preaching resources within Giving in Grace.

The preaching series is at the heart of a Giving in Grace programme and it is important to be clear about its purpose. The sermon never asks for money. Rather, it speaks of what God has done for us in Jesus and how we might live generously in response to his grace. Stewardship preaching is not about getting the gift but nurturing the giver. Seeking the financial resources for the ministry and mission of the local church is part of the wider task of growing faithful, obedient and joyful givers.¹

The four preaching tracks

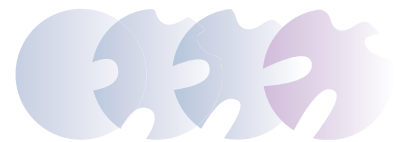
Choose from one of four separate preaching tracks that enable the preaching to mesh with the rich variety of worship patterns and traditions in church life. The first step is for clergy and others responsible for the preaching series to explore the resources and decide which track best suits local needs and ethos.

- **Matthew:** select three or four standalone passages from five parables of Jesus found in Matthew's Gospel. This series is supported by background notes, sermon reflections by Dr Jane Williams, and liturgical provision.
- **Luke:** this preaching series explores four well-known money-themed parables in Luke's Gospel. It differs from the Matthew track in that the four passages create a themed four-week preaching series, Seasons of Giving. However, as with Matthew, it is possible to select from the passages and preach standalone sermons. It is supported by liturgical resources, background notes by Canon Peter Howell-Jones, and a small-group study. There is also a suite of all-age resources to accompany this series.
- **2 Corinthians 8 and 9:** this preaching series explores Paul's detailed teaching on giving. Where so desired, it perhaps lends itself to a more expository style of preaching. It is a four-week series but can be adapted to three weeks if required. The series is supported by sermon notes, sermon reflections by Bishop John Packer and a three-week small-group study.
- **Exodus:** taking a very different approach, this is a fully resourced all-age preaching series exploring five money-themed passages in the Exodus story. It can, of course, be edited to be a shorter preaching series. It is supported by an adult bible study and additional young people's materials in the form of Godly Play scripts and picture-based Action Scenes.



How many sermons?

The length of the preaching series depends on local considerations and the choice of preaching track. Three sermons should be considered the minimum; go for two and, if people miss a Sunday, they have heard just one sermon. However, local considerations may suggest more or less preaching.



Fix the preaching dates

The first sermon in the series marks the launch of the Giving in Grace programme. Plan the date far enough in advance to allow for adequate time for the planning group to prepare for the programme.

- Try to preach on consecutive weeks, partly for consistency and focus, partly to avoid the feeling that the series lasted for many weeks.
- Avoid the main Christian festivals for obvious reasons. However, a patronal festival or church anniversary can work well and Lent provides a very helpful focus.
- Try to work around infant baptisms or services to which you expect many visitors. Don't appear to be taking advantage of more people to talk money.
- Include all Sunday services in the preaching and the programme; it is a matter for the whole church family.

Thanksgiving Sunday

Two weeks after the end of the preaching series, plan for a Thanksgiving Sunday. This is the occasion for offering to God in our worship the returned response forms, which represent congregational pledges and serve to mark the close of the Giving in Grace programme for the congregation. See the more detailed guidance under Designing the Programme in More Resources at the Thanksgiving Service tab.

Harvest festival

Autumn is a popular time for running a stewardship programme so planning groups will need to take Harvest Festival into account. With its themes of abundance, celebration, offering and dependence on God, harvest-tide is rich with stewardship possibilities. Additional guidance can be found under Designing the Programme in More Resources at the Harvest Festival tab.

A financial presentation

Many churches choose to include a financial presentation in the preaching series. Sometimes a brief financial presentation is included in a service alongside the sermon. In other churches, a financial presentation may be more substantial or more creative. This can be accommodated by blending in some biblical material and so replacing the sermon or by making the sermon a little shorter and adjusting other aspects of the service. Take a view on whether a financial presentation is appropriate and how to integrate it into a sermon series. Further guidance is at Designing the Programme in More Resources at the Financial Presentations tab.

Who does the preaching?

Money talk must be done and done well by those who are identified with the leadership of the church. Many Anglican dioceses have a stewardship officer, lay or ordained, who will be willing to preach, and guest speakers can be invited but this is not an excuse for local church leaders not to preach.



Clergy must not be seen, fairly or unfairly, to distance themselves from money. They must preach but it is not always an easy ask. Lay leaders must give permission and encouragement to their clergy to address this subject. Likewise, lay readers and lay leaders who regularly preach should also play their

part. As noted in thinking about the planning group, research suggests that congregations prefer that money matters are shared between laity and clergy. This research was not about lay people preaching but, where lay leaders preach routinely, there is value in their preaching on stewardship also.

Personal testimony

Lay people can also make a significant contribution through the offering of personal testimony. On this, see the guidance under Designing the Programme in More Resources at the Lay Testimony tab.

Note

ⁱ This paper should be read alongside *Why Preaching Matters* found under Designing the Programme in Preaching at the Why Preach? tab.