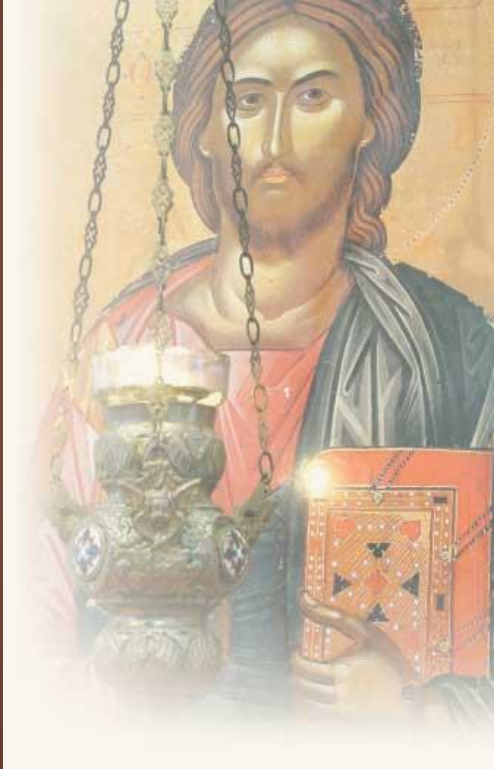




Christian Giving

Thanksgiving Projects in Action

Giving for God's Work

David's hymn of praise and thanksgiving for the people's offerings toward the building of the Temple in Jerusalem:

"But who am I, and who are my people that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? [For] all things come from You, and of Your own we have given You."

(1 Chronicles 29:14)



We give for growth and flourishing from God;
in ourselves, our communities, and our world.

Funding the Church includes:-

- **CHRISTIAN GIVING**
- Fund Raising (e.g. social events)
- Buying Church goods (e.g. vestments, vessels)
- Selling Church goods (e.g. candles, books, icons)
- Loans from parishioners
- Grants from Trusts
- Wills and Endowments

But we are only going to consider **CHRISTIAN GIVING** ... as this is the only form that Scripture and Tradition emphasise.

The Principles of Thanksgiving Projects

- In Christian teaching, money is a spiritual issue and this concerns issues of attachment / detachment. The parable of the rich young ruler, (taken up in the Life of S. Anthony and the teaching of the Fathers generally), all stress this point:- The righteous care nothing for their own lives (detachment) but everything for God — the only possible enduring and fruitful attachment. This attachment or simply, love makes authentic and freely made thank-offerings possible.
- Christian giving therefore is driven by a sacrificial faith and has nothing to do with "keeping the roof on" or "sugaring the pill," (fundraising). How each community deals with this teaching and practices the asceticism of almsgiving has to be worked out in each context, but the basic principles must be taught and embedded. They form the theory and praxis of any Thanksgiving Project.

What the New Testament says (1):-

- **THE GOSPEL** "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich." [2 Corinthians 8:9]
- **THANKSGIVING** "... for the rendering of this service not only supplies the wants of the saints but also overflows in many thanksgivings to God." [2 Corinthians 9:12]
- **JOYFULLY** "for God loves a cheerful giver ..." [2 Corinthians 9:7]
- **WILLINGLY** "... for they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will."
- **SACRIFICIALLY** [2 Corinthians 8:3]

What the New Testament says (2):-

- **GENEROUSLY** "... he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully."
[2 Corinthians 9:6]
- **TRUSTINGLY** "... and God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work."
[2 Corinthians 9:8]
- **REGULARLY** "On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up as he may prosper ..."
that is:- PROPORTIONATELY [1 Corinthians 16:2]

What About Tithing?

- Tithing (giving 10% of one's income to God's work) is an Old Testament standard but the New Testament emphasises a faithful, joyful, sacrificial response - proportionate to our income - not a "law." We should, therefore, teach PROPORTIONATE giving, not tithing as such.
- Recognise that proportionate giving includes ALL our charitable giving, not just to the Church.
- We PRAY to God concerning what PROPORTION of our income should be given to Church and what proportion to needy causes. People may need help with the maths, eg. $5\% = \text{£}1$ for every $\text{£}20$. Gross income should usually be used but disposable income is acceptable. These proportions should be prayerfully reviewed on a regular basis.

How Does a Thanksgiving Project work?

- Every year – shortly before the end of March OR the parish's financial year - a Sunday is chosen as **Thanksgiving Sunday**.
- On this day at the end of the Liturgy the people will complete a **Pledge Card** (Template "A" – slide 9) with planned weekly or monthly giving for the next year.
- Two weeks before Thanksgiving Sunday each household will receive a **teaching leaflet** (Template "B" – slides 10, 11) which will have as its FINAL page a projected budget for the following year. This will inform the peoples' prayer. A private family or personal commitment will be made on the basis of this leaflet. It should not be discussed with anyone else.
- It is **ESSENTIAL** that the cards be completed **at the end of the Liturgy**. This is communal as well as personal offering in prayer.
- The Cards will be used by the **Recorder** to issue envelopes or standing order forms and form the basis for Gift Aid recording where relevant.

Template “A” – slide 9 – Specimen Thanksgiving Sunday Card

SPECIMEN



[Name of Trust] [Year]
[the Charity serving Name of Parish or Mission]

Thanksgiving Sunday, **[Date]**

Reference
(Office Use)

Name: Phone:

Address:

Postcode: Email:

With faith and prayer, I/we have decided to give to **[Name]** Trust the sum of:

£ : p each week / each month (underline your choice)

I understand that if my circumstances should change I can amend my giving at any time.

IF YOU PAY UK INCOME TAX please tick **BOTH** boxes below (even if your method of giving is not changing).

- I will give by **PAYMENTS FROM MY BANK**
(No bank account? you may still use the cash basket)

☐

Need Church Bank details? YES / NO

- I am a UK tax payer and I want to use **GIFT AID**
(25% extra for the church from HMRC!)

☐

Need a Gift Aid form? YES / NO / DONT KNOW

Signed: Date:

Template "B" – slide 10 – Specimen Thanksgiving Sunday Leaflet (pages 1 and 2)

SPECIMEN

Thanksgiving Sunday at the Liturgy on (date)

[Theme / Feast / Fast if any]

[Title of the Sunday allocated:
eg., 2nd Sunday in Great Lent etc]



[or another appropriate graphic]

[Parish or Mission title]

THANKSGIVING SUNDAY LITURGY – [Date]

Christian giving is our responsibility as God's stewards, both for the ministry of the Church and for the relief of the poor. We renew our giving every year to the Lord's work in conformity with the teaching of the holy fathers, (especially Sts. John Chrysostom and John the Merciful), and the teaching of Scripture. Consider:-

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| THE GOSPEL | "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich."
[2 Corinthians 8:9] |
| THANKSGIVING | "... for the rendering of this service not only supplies the wants of the saints but also overflows in many thanksgivings to God."
[2 Corinthians 9:12] |
| JOYFULLY | "for God loves a cheerful giver ..."
[2 Corinthians 9:7] |
| WILLINGLY | "... for they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will."
[2 Corinthians 8:3] |
| SACRIFICIALLY | |
| GENEROUSLY | "... he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully."
[2 Corinthians 9:6] |
| TRUSTINGLY | "... and God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work."
[2 Corinthians 9:8] |
| REGULARLY | "On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up as he may prosper ..."
that is:- PROPORTIONATELY – a part or percentage of your income.
[1 Corinthians 16:2] |

Template “B” – slide 11 – Specimen Thanksgiving Sunday Leaflet (pages 3 and 4)

[Name] Trust serves the parish / mission of [Name].

WHAT SHOULD I (OR WE, AS A FAMILY) DO NOW?

Please **pray** to the Lord for him to tell you what **part** of your income you should dedicate in thanksgiving to his work. Please do not think of an amount and then work backwards to the proportion! Pray about the *part or percentage of your income* you are going to give to God's work over the next year.

The biblical guide to proportionate giving is of course the tithe or 10%, that is 10p in the £1. **However, in Christ we live in grace, not by laws or rules.** For some on low incomes this might be too much, (but, remember the widow's offering at the Temple) For others it could be not enough. **Please pray about it!** There is not one standard that applies to all.

ONLY GOD CAN TELL YOU WHAT IS HIS WILL.

PLEASE DO NOT ASK THE CLERGY OR ANYONE ELSE WHAT TO GIVE.

DO NOT DISCUSS OR JUSTIFY YOUR DECISION WITH ANYONE EXCEPT GOD.

EXERCISE YOUR FAITH IN THE LORD WHO PROVIDES FOR ALL OUR NEEDS

SO, AFTER I'VE PRAYED WHAT NEXT?

On **[DATE]**, (or beforehand if you are away this weekend), you will have an opportunity at the end of the Liturgy and in a moment of silence to complete your pledge card (provided). This action will confirm and offer in the Divine Liturgy what you will have already committed to the Lord in prayer at home. Unless you are away, this card will only be distributed at the Liturgy. It is essential that we commit prayerfully and together.

- Our preferred method for your giving is by **BANK STANDING ORDER**. Reliable income for the church should not depend on the reliability of our memories! If so moved, you can always give in addition to your bank standing order by cash or by card.
- **IF YOU PAY INCOME TAX** please use **GIFT AID** by ticking both boxes on the card.
- **NON TAX PAYERS** can give by cash in the collection basket or in the candle box.

WE DO NOT RECEIVE MONEY FROM ANYONE ELSE FOR OUR RUNNING COSTS!

Neither the Government nor the Archdiocese gives us anything by the way of grants etc. for our running costs. We stand and fall by God's grace on our own.

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HOW WILL THE PARISH'S INCOME BE ALLOCATED?

The [Financial Year (N)] Church Budget

[Give details of the estimated Community Budget for the next year, facts only].

Practical Arrangements (1) – Thanksgiving Sunday

- **Nobody must be left out** – makes sure everyone gets a teaching leaflet two weeks before and a pledge card on Thanksgiving Sunday.
- If someone is **going to be away** on Thanksgiving Sunday then they may have a pledge card before they leave to complete at home and return. This is the ONLY exception to the rule that the cards are to be completed at the end of the Liturgy (after the second “Blessed ...”)
- On Thanksgiving Sunday the pre-printed cards are handed out immediately before completion **inside an envelope with a pen**. The cards are completed **in silence** although the priest may offer a **prayer**. They are **collected and offered** in the Altar.
- Those **unable** to complete a card should simply sign it without an amount. That way nobody visibly does anything different from anyone else.
- **Envelopes or Standing Orders / Gift Aid forms** are issued as soon as possible. Make sure that the name(s) are written on each envelope set.

Practical Arrangements (2) – Thanksgiving Recorder

- The Recorder sorts the cards and marks the giving for each on a **confidential record** which shows a weekly register of income (by Envelope or Standing Order). The records must identify those who have chosen to Gift Aid their giving so that the necessary information is always available to make the regular claim on the Inland Revenue.
- The **Recorder** need not be the Treasurer or the person who banks the collection. **Cash handling** should be under dual control. Only a very limited circle of people should have access to the **confidential** records.
- The Recorder needs to be the person who makes the claim for **Gift Aid** tax refunds from the Inland Revenue. The parish or trust and the Recorder will need to apply to the Inland Revenue for this purpose.
- Loose cash collections *, other sources of income and Thanksgiving Income will constitute the parish's yearly **budget**. PUBLISH THIS!

** Loose cash collections are assessable for Gift Aid up to a maximum of £8,000, i.e. up to £2,000 tax refund at the current standard rate of tax (2022/23).*

Preparing a Thanksgiving Project (1) – The Council (i)

- **Pray, Lead, Plan** --- Pray, Teach, Share --- Pray, Execute, Review
- Under “Leadership” it is vitally important that the Parish Council is **UNANIMOUS** on the decision to go ahead before anything happens. When that decision is made each member of the Council is given an advance copy of the **Teaching Leaflet** (designed by the Priest).
- A **second Council Meeting** is then scheduled at least two weeks later to **plan** the practical details of the implementation of the Project.

Preparing a Thanksgiving Project (1) – Timeline (ii)

- **Pray, Lead, Plan** --- Pray, Teach, Share --- Pray, Execute, Review
- The **first Thanksgiving Sunday** may be in the middle of the parish's financial year. It may or may not be close to the end of the tax year. Either way less than a full twelve month's supply of envelopes will be used and the second Thanksgiving Sunday will be less than twelve month's distant. Ideally the parish's financial year should end on 31st March (to tie in with the fiscal year used for Gift Aid) with Thanksgiving Sunday a little before that; steering clear of course of any early date for Pascha or a Sunday where the clocks moved forward!
- Once the date of the first Thanksgiving Sunday has been fixed, **work backwards** from that point the weeks you will need for preparation. For parishes that use them, you will need to order envelope sets from **Lockie Ltd.** <https://www.lockiechurch.com/> or another supplier in good time, (usually at least 3 months in advance in Lockie's case to take advantage of their discounts). Have a stock of Bank standing Order forms and Gift Aid forms printed ready for use.
- Once the system is in place you will only need to issue the **teaching leaflet** each year at least two weeks prior to each Thanksgiving Sunday. Revise it from time to time.

Preparing a Thanksgiving Project (2) – The Community

- Pray, Lead, Plan --- **Pray, Teach, Share** --- Pray, Execute, Review
- At least two weeks before the first Thanksgiving Sunday (coordinated with the leaflet issue) the congregation will need to hear a brief **verbal introduction** to the Project from the parish priest and perhaps also the Treasurer / Warden etc. Reference should be made to the **Teaching Leaflet** distributed that day and its purpose.
- In this crucial two week period before Thanksgiving Sunday the priest and Council need to do everything possible **prayerfully to educate and inspire** the community in its preparation for its commitment.
- At this time, **those being away** on Thanksgiving Sunday may be issued with pledge cards to complete and return either before departure or after their return.

NO ONE ELSE MUST HAVE CARDS BEFOREHAND.

Preparing a Thanksgiving Project (3) – The Commitment

- Pray, Lead, Plan --- Pray, Teach, Share --- **Pray, Execute, Review**
- In the two weeks before Thanksgiving Sunday the community both in groups and individually must pray for a faithful response. The priest may take the opportunity at this time to teach or preach on the theme of Christian Giving but he must resolutely refuse to answer such questions as:- “*How much should I give Father?*” **People should pray privately** about this before coming to church on Thanksgiving Sunday.
- The Treasurer / Recorder and others appointed with him / her need to make sure that all the **stationery and practical arrangements** are in hand before the start of the Liturgy on Thanksgiving Sunday. Envelopes and Standing Orders must be issued in good time after Thanksgiving Sunday ... that is before the last year's set expires. Standing orders of course only need to be reissued if the amount changes. Everyone paying tax should complete a **one-time Gift Aid Form** as published by HMRC / Charity Commission.
- After Thanksgiving Sunday, the pledges total and the forthcoming budget must be widely published. The Council should then consider and review the **parish's own giving** to worthy causes and other charities. Progress reviews should be regular.

Typical 3 Month Timeline for the Introduction and Running of a Thanksgiving Project

<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>SUNDAY COUNTDOWN</u> (includes week following)	<u>SCHEDULED TASKS</u>
An indeterminate period of discernment by the clergy	Pre Council	Discern the right time to introduce a Thanksgiving Project (TP) to the parish. Informal conversations may take place at the discretion of the parish priest.
Parish Council No. 1	S12	Formal adoption of a TP by a required unanimous vote of the Council. No further progress can be made without that unanimity. If approved, the Council is briefed on the stages of preparation and their involvement. Date of Thanksgiving Sunday is fixed at least 3 months ahead of this meeting. ¹ Giving envelopes are now ordered in readiness for Thanksgiving Sunday.
Consultations	S11	Councillor consultations with the parish priest as required.
Parish Council No. 2	S10	The second Parish Council meeting to make practical preparations, including ordering of envelopes, stationery and the setting up a Working Party to deliver on the Thanksgiving Sunday preparations.
Working Party	S9	Working Party meets to allocate jobs after drawing up a task list. The Stewardship (Gift Aid) Recorder could easily be someone else than the Treasurer, but if possible, this should not be the Parish Priest. All records of course must be kept in accordance with GDPR (Data Protection) law.

¹ Avoid major feasts and in the case of Christmas, the whole of December and for Pascha of course, Great and Holy Week. Avoid also Sundays when the clocks change! It might be better if you can set your year end as the 31st March, not 31st December, to coincide (more or less) with the fiscal year ending 5th April. This will (more or less) synchronise your Gift Aid claims with the fiscal cycle, (quarterly claiming is recommended).

Typical 3 Month Timeline for the introduction and running of a Thanksgiving Project (2)

Working Party	S8	Working Party preparations continue.
Working Party	S7	Working Party preparations complete.
Parish Education	S6	Announcement to the Parish (1) with simple explanation, Q&A.
Parish Education	S5	Announcement to the Parish (2) with further explanation, Q&A.
Parish Education	S4	Conversations in the Parish with Parish Councillors and clergy full involved.
Parish Education	S3	Conversations in the Parish with Parish Councillors and clergy full involved.
Parish Prayer and Fasting	S2	Teaching leaflet published and emailed to all parishioners with paper copies available in church. Prayer and fasting to inform household decisions begins.
Parish Prayer and Fasting	S1	Continued prayer and fasting leading to a household decision on (1) the proportion of income to be given to God's work and (2) the amount.
THANKSGIVING SUNDAY	S0	The pledge cards are completed in silence at the end of the Liturgy before the Blessing and Dismissal. These are collected, offered with a prayer and given to the Treasurer / Gift Aid recorder for analysis, envelope / standing order preparation and parish budgeting.
Review and Planning	S+1	Envelopes issue in church together with Standing Order and Gift Aid forms.
Review, Planning and Parish Reporting	S+++	Parish Council and Working Party joint meeting to review before the Annual Meeting convenes to approve the accounts and the budget for next year. ²

² Ideally, the Annual Meeting should take place within a month of Thanksgiving Sunday. The parish's calendar should take all these factors (including the fiscal year) into account when planning and adjusting.

St. Aidan's Orthodox Church, Manchester – a Case Study

Thanksgiving Project implemented from 1995

