

Why a PCC should consider Wills and Legacies



Each year around 5,000 parishes across England benefit from a legacy. For many people, leaving a gift in their Will is a final opportunity to say thank you to God for his blessings to them. It is also a way to make a lasting difference to the future of their church and community.

Many churches have not considered this topic at all. They

have not thought through the connection between Christian stewardship and gifts in Wills, nor developed a policy on how to use money donated through legacies. This leaflet aims to help your PCC consider these issues.

Encouraging church members to leave a gift in their Will is important, but encouraging them to write a Will is even more so. Ever since the first edition of the Book of Common Prayer, the Church has highlighted the importance of making Wills and keeping them reasonably up to date.

Action

The PCC is encouraged to put legacy giving on its agenda for a forthcoming meeting.

Resources to help you

There is a dedicated website with information on making and revising Wills and leaving a gift to the Church at www.churchlegacy.org.uk

There is a range of literature available to help you which can be downloaded from www.churchlegacy.org.uk or ordered from pack@churchlegacy.org.uk

- A Short Guide to Encouraging Giving through Legacies
- Leaflets you can customise to your parish
- A free pack offering help and support to church members writing or revising their Wills

Your diocese may have further material to help you. www.parishresources.org.uk offers a wide range of resources for parishes and includes a section on legacies too.

For further information please visit:
www.churchlegacy.org.uk

The Church of England's Legacy Information Line:
08445 870875 (A LoCall Number)



 THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Produced by the Christian Stewardship Network of the Church of England and the Church in Wales.

Legacies and Wills

decisions that will help the PCC



- Why the Church encourages people to review their Wills.
- What you need to decide about Wills and legacies.
- Why the PCC should make a legacy policy.
- How to encourage legacy giving to your parish.
- Resources to help you.

Why every Christian should have a Will

For nearly five hundred years the Church of England has encouraged its members to keep their Wills up to date. The Book of Common Prayer instructs clergy to remind those who are sick: *“let him be admonished to make his Will, and to declare his debts, what he oweth, and what is owing unto him; for the better discharging of his conscience, and the quietness of his Executors. But men should often be put in remembrance to take order for the settling of their temporal estates, whilst they are in health.”*

Every year many thousands of people die without leaving a Will. This means that a court will decide how to divide their estate and who should look after any dependents, often causing additional upset and expense for loved ones left behind. Making a Will and keeping it up to date is the only way church members can make provision for the people and causes they love. This is simply good stewardship - and it may be easier and less expensive than people imagine.



Action

The PCC should affirm or reaffirm its commitment to encouraging people to make and review their Wills as part of their Christian stewardship.

A Policy on legacies



Most people will only leave gifts in their Wills if they think the church will use them for worthwhile special projects, not simply to fund current operating expenses. PCCs need to agree a policy on how legacy income will be spent, and then communicate it to the congregation! It is advisable to discourage restricted legacies since the needs of the church will change over time. So the policy might be something like:

We welcome gifts in Wills and our policy is to use them to fund significant development projects in the parish, whether buildings, equipment or staff. As circumstances change over the years, it may not be possible to fulfil specific donor requests, so church members are encouraged to leave gifts in their Wills for the general purposes of the parish. The PCC will discuss with executors the most appropriate use of the gift in the light of current projects and the donor's known areas of interest in the church (e.g. children & youth, music, buildings).

Action

The PCC should agree a simple policy on using legacies, and communicate this to the congregation.

Promoting legacies

Legacies can make a vital difference to a parish's local mission and ministry, whether used for additional staffing or to improve church buildings and facilities. The aim should be to help people see writing a Will and reviewing it regularly as part of their everyday Christian discipleship.

Gifts in Wills should be seen as a natural part of Christian giving, but promote them in a sensitive, low-key manner, drip-feeding messages in different ways across the year. A new leaflet, A Short Guide to Encouraging Giving through Legacies may help you; download it at www.churchlegacy.org.uk or order your free copy from pack@churchlegacy.org.uk.



Action

The PCC should appoint someone willing to encourage legacies and giving in the parish. There are lots of resources available to help them in this important ministry.