

Why a PCC should

consider wills and legacies

Each year around 3,000 parishes across England benefit from a legacy. Some parishes accept these as a welcome unexpected gift, whilst others openly encourage their people to make a legacy to their Church. For many people, leaving a gift in their will is a final opportunity to say thank you to God for his blessings to them and to help the development of their church family.

Many churches have not considered this topic at all. They have not thought through the importance of encouraging church members to make a will, nor developed a policy on how to use money donated through legacies. This leaflet aims to help your PCC consider these issues.

Jesus taught us that our life does not consist of the abundance of our possessions, but that we should be wise stewards. 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

Leaflets are available to raise awareness. Two standard ones are offered:

- A fully printed leaflet encouraging people to make a will and revise it regularly, and to consider leaving a gift to the Church.
- A coloured leaflet that you can overprint with your church's details and a brief message, using a local copier or computer printer.

Further information packs are available to help people preparing to make or revise their wills.

www.churchlegacy.org.uk offers a wide range of resources for parishes. The parish resources section includes templates, magazine articles and on-line ordering of leaflets.

For further information:

www.churchlegacy.org.uk

The Church of England's Legacy Information Line:

08445 870875 (A LoCall Number)



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 can cause unnecessary complications for their families and friends, and can often mean that their wishes are not carried out. There are several good reasons why we should encourage people to make a will: pastoral care, good personal financial management, and teaching on Christian stewardship. Making a will and keeping it up to date is often a simpler and less expensive process than many 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 development projects, not simply to fund current operating expenses. PCCs need to agree a policy on how legacy income will be spent, and then how this will be communicated 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:

The policy of the PCC is to use legacies to help 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 key thrust of any programme is to get people to review their wills regularly as part of their everyday Christian discipleship.

Promoting the opportunity to leave a gift to the church should be kept sensitive and low key, drip feeding messages in different ways over the years. Messages for different groups (e.g. young families, empty nesters, very elderly) should be tailored to their particular needs.

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.