

RUNNING A GIFTS IN WILLS EVENT IN YOUR CHURCH



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INTRODUCTION

A gifts in wills event is a wonderful opportunity to talk to people about how leaving a gift in their will can be transformational. For many people, they are not aware you can leave a gift in their will to a church and an event provides an opportunity to inform and invite discussion in a friendly and relaxed environment. A gift in wills event can also provide a key focus point if you are running a dedicated gift in wills campaign. There are several different ways you can run an event and different areas you can focus on. Here are some ideas for content, structure and follow up which may help during the planning phase.

INVITATION

Highlight in your invitation that people will not be asked to leave a gift in their will or make a donation on the day. The event is simply to find out more about this form of giving and to have an enjoyable time at your church. It's a good idea to allow invitees to bring a guest with them. Make it very clear on your invitation how guests can RSVP, where they need to come and the timings of the event, so people feel relaxed and comfortable from the outset.

Dorchester Abbey in Oxfordshire held a gift in wills event to launch their new gift in wills scheme to which they invited regular givers and people who had already included a gift in their will. You can view the invitation here:

<https://www.dorchester-abbey.org.uk/event/st-birinus-legacy-scheme-launch/>

Who to Invite:

- *Your church congregation or regular givers*
- *Church volunteers*
- *Wider community supporters*
- *Friends Groups*

St Mary's Church

Would like to invite you and a guest to join us for a free drinks reception to find out more about how leaving a gift in your will could help St Mary's thrive for future generations.

Over wine and nibbles you will:

- *Get a private guided tour of our tombs and the bell tower*
- *Get information about why gifts in wills giving is so important for St Mary's*
- *Hear about the Church of England's free will writing scheme*

Thank you to everyone who has already remembered St Mary's in their will – we would love to welcome you too and say thank you!

RSVP

parishoffice@stmarys.com

01234 567 8910

SET THE AGENDA

An event should last between one and two hours. Your event could be an evening talk with wine and nibbles which would suit people who work during the day or an afternoon tea and talk if you wanted to run your event at the weekend or during the day.

MAKE IT ENGAGING

You might want to provide some prompt cards to stimulate discussion. For example 'what legacy do you want to leave behind' as opposed to 'how much will you leave in your will to ... '. Again, stimulate interesting conversations.

Surprise people and make it enjoyable. People will expect a depressing evening where people talk about death. Inspire them, have engaging speakers and stimulate discussion. Invest in music, good lighting, high quality wine and food. The most important thing is to make it interesting, engaging and enjoyable.

Whatever the event, include appealing refreshments and make it an event you know will be well attended.

EXAMPLE AGENDA

In no particular order you may wish to include the following:

- *A warm welcome and opening prayers (5-10 mins)*
- *An activity (tour or talk) (20 mins)*
- *Someone speaking about gifts in wills giving and how it can fund your church's vision into the future – ideally your vicar or church wardens will lead this (15 mins)*
- *More information: <https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/lasting-gift-your-church/leaving-legacy>*
- *Someone speaking about the practicalities of writing a will – perhaps your treasurer could lead this (10 mins)*
- *More information: Share your parish gifts in wills promise and policy, your named contact and example gift in wills wording*
- *A legacy story teller such as someone who has already left a gift in their will (10 mins)*
- *Refreshments and opportunity for reflection, questions and discussion (30 mins)*

EVENT ACTIVITY

This part of the event is why most people will attend so make it feel special and relevant. You could try:

- *A tour of your church focussing on an important feature, e.g. stained glass, historical benefactors etc.*
- *A private view of a new exhibition*
- *A new project completed*
- *A special evensong, organ recital or concert*
- *A historical talk about your church or local area*

Other things to include:

- *Invite a local solicitor to talk about the practicalities of will writing*
- *Include information about planning your funeral*

KEY MESSAGES

These are some of the key messages you need to get across to attendees at your event:

GENEROUS GIVING IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

It's good to have someone who is confident talking about this area of giving, to combat any concerns about it 'not being appropriate'. This person can also help to ease the atmosphere and give people a sense of 'it's OK to talk about this'.

Areas to cover:

- *Reflect on your church's mission and vision for the future*
- *Remind people of the current funding priorities*
- *Explain why gifts in wills are important*
- *Share how gifts in wills have been used in the past and the impact they've had*
- *Explain how future gifts in wills could make a difference and how they can be left*
- *Introduce relevant leaflets and information available*
- *Highlight the opportunity to speak to people after the talk*

WILL WRITING

Why every Christian should have a will - We see ourselves as God's stewards, entrusted to use His gifts to us, for the good of our family and our Church family. In thanksgiving, we should also take Will writing seriously – setting our affairs in order and stewarding them wisely to the end of our time on earth and beyond. In talking about gifts in wills you also must talk about death BUT the importance of life, death and the resurrection – as the church, we must talk about all three.

Areas to cover:

- *What a will is and why you need one*
- *Costs and finding a solicitor*
- *Explain (briefly) Inheritance Tax*
- *What a Legacy is and the types of gifts in wills that can be left*
- *Highlight the opportunity to speak to the solicitor after the talk*

GIFTS IN WILLS STORIES

- *Introduce themselves and their connection to the church*

Why they've left a gift in their will or why their family member left a gift in their will (NB don't need to share the amount)

- *Why the Church is important to them*
- *What difference they hope it will make*
- **NB** *this will be the most powerful and persuasive part of the event*

FOLLOW UP

Consider what follow up you wish to do and communicate this clearly at the end of the presentation. If this is your first event, you may wish to simply gather feedback on aspects of event management and content.

People offering to tell you WHY they've left a gift, is really worth knowing. Why? Because then you have a story you can tell others and you gain insight into why someone might be motivated to leave a gift in will to your church. They might in time become a new legacy storyteller.

WHERE CAN I GET HELP?

Your Diocesan Giving Advisor

Emma Denton

emma.denton@cofesuffolk.org

<https://www.cofesuffolk.org/for-parishes/parish-stewardship-resources/legacies/>

National Giving Team

giving@churcofengland.org

For more information

<https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/church-legacy>

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/building-generous-church/enabling-giving/giving-mechanisms/legacy>

