



Key words for a financial appeal

TN19 Training Notes series: Administration

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From time to time most churches find themselves with a special need to find a large sum of one-off money.

The most obvious example is a major building project. £50,000 may be classed a 'large sum' for some churches. For others it may be something like £3 million or more.

But there are other examples too: a special missionary project or a short-term staffing requirement. Most difficult of all is the clearing of a debt. These notes focus on such one-off needs, rather than the related but rather different requirement to increase annual giving to cover extra staff or other costs.

The list is presented in alphabetical order – but all the points overlap. Anything asterisked means that term comes elsewhere in the list.

Capital (or possessions)

Capital projects need to be funded out of members' capital, or out of a major cut in annual expenditure, or a major increase in annual income.

- 1 People need help with thinking how this might be done. 'Capital' includes giving a proportion of all savings held, selling possessions that are not really required (eg. a car or a TV), moving to a cheaper house.
- 2 Major changes to expenditure might mean sacrificing that expensive holiday, delaying the improvement to the house, aiming to live a radically simpler lifestyle.
- 3 Think capital not revenue. Pray* for no cut-back in normal giving both for the church and for mission projects.

Communication

It is difficult to over-communicate but easy to mis-communicate. The exercise calls for ingenuity and the involvement of means other than the spoken or printed word.

- 1 Keep the project in the news week by week – without it becoming the focus of all church life. Let people know how the total is rising. Perhaps have a one-minute headline spot in the prayers* at each service. Centre it on worship.
- 2 Connect everyone with it in some appropriate way. This may well mean talking face-to-face to every family (so including all ages) to put the vision across, to explain the plan*, and to help people realise their responsibility. Back this up with personal letters.
- 3 But communicate and connect with vision* rather than with a fund-raising campaign. The funding will come if the vision is grasped. Help everyone to 'own' the vision.
- 4 Give the project a name and identity – with good back-up literature or web-site.

Give-away

Many churches feel it appropriate to fund other needy parts of the Christian Church worldwide.

- 1 This can be done by giving a fixed proportion of the amount coming in to this other project (some choose 10%). This increases the total required.
- 2 Another means is to have a separate 'thanksgiving project' one year later – but perhaps with a target amount fixed in advance so you do not duck the issue when the time comes.
- 3 Or you can simply offer two boxes on pledge/giving forms: one for your project, one for the give-away. People decide themselves how much to give to each.

Leadership

Projects of this kind are high-risk events that require bold leadership. Consider the following.

- 1 The church leader's role is to keep the vision* uppermost in people's minds as the project develops and to ensure there is helpful teaching* throughout.
- 2 The leadership team of the church (in whatever form this is seen) leads by example. One very obvious means is for the team to pledge to the project first, so that the membership know that their leaders have already promised a certain sum before they are approached.
- 3 The leadership team needs to be united in its enthusiasm for the project. Do not go ahead until there is this level of commitment. Better to wait than be divided.

Membership

An appeal should be a time when the whole church community is involved: young and old, rich and poor.

- 1 Involve teens and children in appropriate ways. This may involve using means other than direct giving.

- 2 Consider very carefully those who are in debt or have little to give. This is not easy, but it would be wrong to exclude people from the project and the vision*. Use widow's mites: which may involve time, skill or prayer rather than money.
- 3 See the whole exercise as a family event for all, not a financial exercise for a few privileged people. A project of this kind should unite a congregation and build their faith together.

Options

Some have been mentioned already. Others, which need thought and decision, include the following.

- 1 Direct giving alone or the use of other means as well.
- 2 Asking church members only, or widening it to the local community or to trusts and other bodies. (One key question: who benefits from the final outcome?)
- 3 Delay building work until all the money is promised, or start when a certain proportion is in.
- 4 Whether to seek professional help or not, or to seek Lottery funding or not.

Planning

Major appeals do not just happen. They require a considerable amount of careful planning – or you can be in trouble.

- 1 What is the timescale envisaged? Some churches work over years, others seek to encourage pledges for quite massive sums all on one Gift Day. ("One appeal for this, then all our other appeals can be evangelistic ones.")
- 2 There needs to be a careful budget and some idea of how this sum might be raised both in timescale and in individual sums (some find it helpful to list so many gifts of so much, to produce the right total, known as a 'table' or 'pyramid' of gifts).
- 3 You need a dedicated planning group for the whole exercise. Allow plenty of time to plan a Gift Day.

Prayer

If you think you can do it yourselves, then you won't need to pray and the best of, well yes, luck! Otherwise put God at the centre of everything.

- 1 See it as a venture of faith, not of fund-raising. Many projects are a test of discipleship and bring people back to the kernel of their faith.
- 2 Pray the money in with all kinds of different prayer events involving everyone, including children.

Teaching

A project of this kind provides opportunities for teaching on giving, on vision*, on faith and, above all, on possessions*. Try to ensure that you do not muddle teaching and fund-raising.

- 1 1 Chronicles 28 and 29 is an ideal passage and David's prayer is rich in concepts that are just as relevant now as then. The key concept is a theology of possessions. Get that right and all else flows from it. Today's society is dedicated to ownership; Christians are prone to be sucked in to this attitude.
- 2 Teaching for one-off appeals needs to be seen as rather different from teaching for week-by-week giving. Consider themes such as God's generosity.
- 3 Do use an external speaker as an enthusiast and as a teacher who is independent of any benefit from the outcome.

Vision

This is a rich word, used in both Christian and secular settings. Make sure you consider every angle of it. Although last in these notes, it should come first in your thinking.

- 1 A Christian vision has to come from God himself. We are not talking about a visionary leader* enthusing people to follow him or her (although that may be part of it). Are we as sure as we can be that this project is God's idea and not ours?
- 2 There are many possibilities for its human source. It may be the minister, but it may come from others in the congregation, or from circumstances, or from a combination of all kinds of things.
- 3 Vision must be more important than any appeal. People respond to vision, not to projects as such, nor to being made to feel guilty. The money must remain a means to achieving the vision. Sadly, it often becomes the vision itself, without people realising this has happened.
- 4 Vision must be more important than any building. Like appeals, buildings are means to ends and never the end itself. You build to do something that needs shelter of some kind. The vision is that activity, not the tent around it. Sadly, many buildings have become the vision.
- 5 The vision of the church must be greater than the vision for this project. If all the vision is in the project, then the project has no context. And when the project is complete, there will be no ongoing vision (something I have seen happen several times).

These notes are available at www.john-truscott.co.uk/resources/training/tn19.pdf. They cover a possible background for a practical training event for a church soon to embark on a major project. There is a fuller treatment of this theme in Article A16, *Funding a capital project*. For indexes of all items available on the site, visit the [resources page](#).

Contact John if you would like to enquire about the possibility of his advising you on a major project.

Cartoons are by Micki Hounslow for filing categories of Leadership, Management, Structures, Planning, Communication, Administration. File TN19 under Administration.

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