

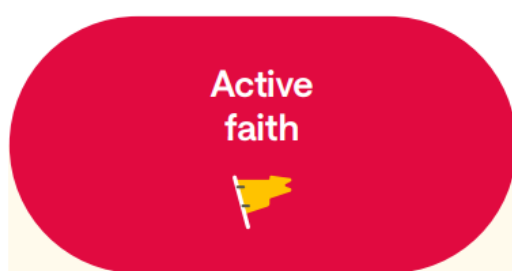
STEWARDSHIP GENEROSITY REPORT

REFLECTIONS FOR LOCAL METHODISTS



Stewardship is a Christian charity which supports churches and charities in their fundraising and administration. They have recently released [results of a detailed survey of charitable giving by Christians](#). This was based on both survey data and structured interviews.

In a context where lack of income regularly feels a limiting factor to our mission and ministry, their key findings and seem relevant and thought provoking for us. Some key findings and questions are set out below and intended to start conversations.



Active disciples donate more of their income to all causes than the general population.

“Practising Christians” (which Stewardship define as attending church and also reading the Bible independently at least once per month) donate twice as much of their income as “Church-going Christians” who attend church at least monthly but don’t read the Bible independently, and five times as much as people who attend church less than monthly (“Cultural Christians”).

What it means to be an active disciple is obviously far more complex, but as researchers they needed to simplify to something unambiguous.

The research findings showed that people identifying as Methodists gave on average less than members of most other denominations, and this correlated to 67% of Methodists surveyed not meeting the “Practising” criteria. Note this is the proportion of income that people give to all causes, not just what they give to their church.

There are obviously many reasons more important than church finances why we would want to encourage people to go deeper in their relationship with Christ!

Does this research resonate with your experience of the depth of discipleship practices across our congregations?

What is your experience of financial giving in congregations which have a sustained focus on supporting and encouraging discipleship practices?

What support does your church/ circuit need to help people across its congregations become more active disciples?

Connection to causes



Most people give, or give more, in response to an appeal or personal approach

rather than being pro-active in seeking causes to donate to.

How often do we talk about giving, generosity and use of money (beyond praying over the offertory plate) in our worship, preaching and teaching?

How could we support Local Preachers, stewards and treasurers to talk more comfortably about financial giving?

People give more when they feel connected to a cause that can make a difference.

How often do our churches make explicit links between giving and the positive impact that this money will achieve through mission and ministry? How often do we say, “if we collectively give X, we will do Y”?

How many people in our congregations know the breadth and depth of what their church and circuit does, and the lives this transforms?

How does this compare to communications from other charities you support?

Unlocking the giving potential



50% of people cannot afford to give any more than they do. We need to be mindful of this, and not put anyone under pressure to give more than they should.

But 50% can afford to give more – these people **refrain from giving more because they do not trust that donations will be used well.**

How do you decide you can trust a charity with your money?

What could our churches do to reassure those in our congregations who can afford to give more that increased giving will make a positive difference?

People who discuss their giving (e.g. to encourage others to support a cause) give more themselves. American Methodist Robert Schnase talks about the importance of testimony about tithing and its effect on the donor in the *Extravagant Giving* chapter of [Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations](#).

What causes/ charities do you talk publicly about your support for?

Could you invite someone to share testimony in or beyond worship about their giving to their church?