

## **Speaker Profile**

Graham Collings is a professional fundraiser, consultant and trainer with 35 years of experience working for a wide variety of charities and organisations. He specialises in raising funds for capital projects in churches and for Christian causes. He has given advice and practical help to over 50 church building schemes with targets ranging from £200,000 to £6 million. He is a former trustee of Living Stones, the charity which advised churches on building and community projects, and also has experience as a grant giver with HLF, Big Lottery Fund and The Funding Network.

## **Graham Collings Independent Fundraiser**

Fundraising is not a difficult skill to learn, and most churches have some experience of it. But any large-scale campaign needs the right techniques and tactics, and careful planning if it is to succeed. This session will cover key areas such as:

- Timescales and where fundraising fits in to your project planning
- The stages of your appeal – plans and strategy
- Who does what - managing fundraising
- Methods and techniques for raising funds both within and outside your church
- Some dos and don'ts

Dozens of churches have raised six and seven figure sums for their building projects over the past year - yours could too!

## **Learning Points – Fundraising**

1. **Are you ready to start asking for money?** It's tempting to rush into asking people for money quickly, but have you reached that stage? Is the vision clear? Has your project been fully costed? Have you set out a strong case for support? Is your target realistic, and what are your plans for fundraising?
2. **Have you done a Community Audit or a Business Plan?** Larger projects may well need both of these. Funding bodies will be looking for evidence that your project is needed, and that it is well-planned and realistic. Working on these is also a good way of getting church members involved.
3. **It's not just about the building.** Your plans for the new extension may look wonderful, but most donors are more interested in the benefits for people. How will church members benefit? How will the project enable you to work more closely with the wider community? What will you be able to do that you can't do at present?
4. **Develop the case for support.** A useful exercise early on is to list and discuss all the key points and messages about your project – the scope of the work, why it's important, all the benefits, costs, etc. This helps to clarify and strengthen the fundraising messages.

5. **Ask church members first.** The appeal must start with church members, who should be as generous as they can be. External donors will want to know that church members are fully behind the project before they commit themselves.
6. **Be open about money.** For fundraising to be effective, you'll need to be upfront about levels of giving needed, funding targets and deadlines, and church finances in general.
7. **Not just a Gift Day.** Gift Days can be very successful, but will not achieve much on their own. Meetings, one to ones, and presentations will be needed to explain the project, build motivation and enthusiasm, and deal with objections and concerns.
8. **Be realistic about external funding.** Is your project likely to be of interest to external funders? Do some research first to check the potential and identify sources in your area. What have other churches achieved?
9. **Devise some funding proposals.** "Please support our appeal" is not enough nowadays. Donors prefer to pay for, or contribute to, something specific, e.g. the cost of a room, furniture or equipment needed, your work with children or elderly people. Details and costs of these need to be worked out so that you can send targeted proposals to relevant funders.
10. **Team effort.** The appeal will need strong leadership, a steering committee of some kind, good administrative support, and lots of people helping through prayer and in many different ways. The fundraising process works best when lots of people are involved in lots of activities – but well coordinated and within a short timescale.
11. **Appeal timescale.** Enthusiasm and momentum can soon be lost if things are allowed to drag on. Fundraising should be top priority for your church – but only for a limited period. Depending on the size and complexity of the project, plan for the appeal to be completed in roughly 2 years, i.e. 6 months for preparation and planning; 3 months for the members appeal; 12 -15 months for the external appeal.
12. **Fundraising is a people business.** Letters and leaflets have their place, but any major appeal needs people talking to people, e.g. to persuade members about the levels of support needed, to convince the sceptics, to identify and use contacts that people may have, and not least to convey your enthusiasm!

*Graham Collings*