THE EPISCOPAL NETWORK FOR STEWARDSHIP

Breaking Through the Pledge Plateau

Best Practices

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Learning Objectives

1. Analyzing trends in giving – understanding donor relations
2. Identifying and teaching the Mission
3. How to recruit, train, and support leaders who lead
4. How to measure impact in your community
5. How to adapt your approach to fundraising

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Lessons from Nonprofits about donor relations

- Donor Relations can apply to churches as well as nonprofits
  - Our members have **many motivations to support the congregation;** we can't make simple assumptions based on old models
    - Generational changes
    - Some member still give out of a sense of *duty*, but many more give because of *impact*, or *belonging*
  - It is a responsible and ethical part of stewardship to **analyze our members' giving and understand how to motivate them**

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Why donors plateau

Lessons from Nonprofits about donor relations

- What does it mean to analyze **donor trends?**
  - **Congregational leadership should have a good sense of how members' giving is performing year to year**.
    - You can run reports with individual pledging units and the names removed, if your culture desires confidentiality
  - Run your report to show at least three years side by side

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Why donors plateau

Lessons from Nonprofits about donor relations

- Employ a *Moves Management* exercise to your pledge campaign
  - Process to learn, strategize, intervene, and move a donor from one level to another
  - Affinity – how does your mission resonate with a member
  - Access – how close are you to a member
  - Ability – how much is a member able to give / what can be expected

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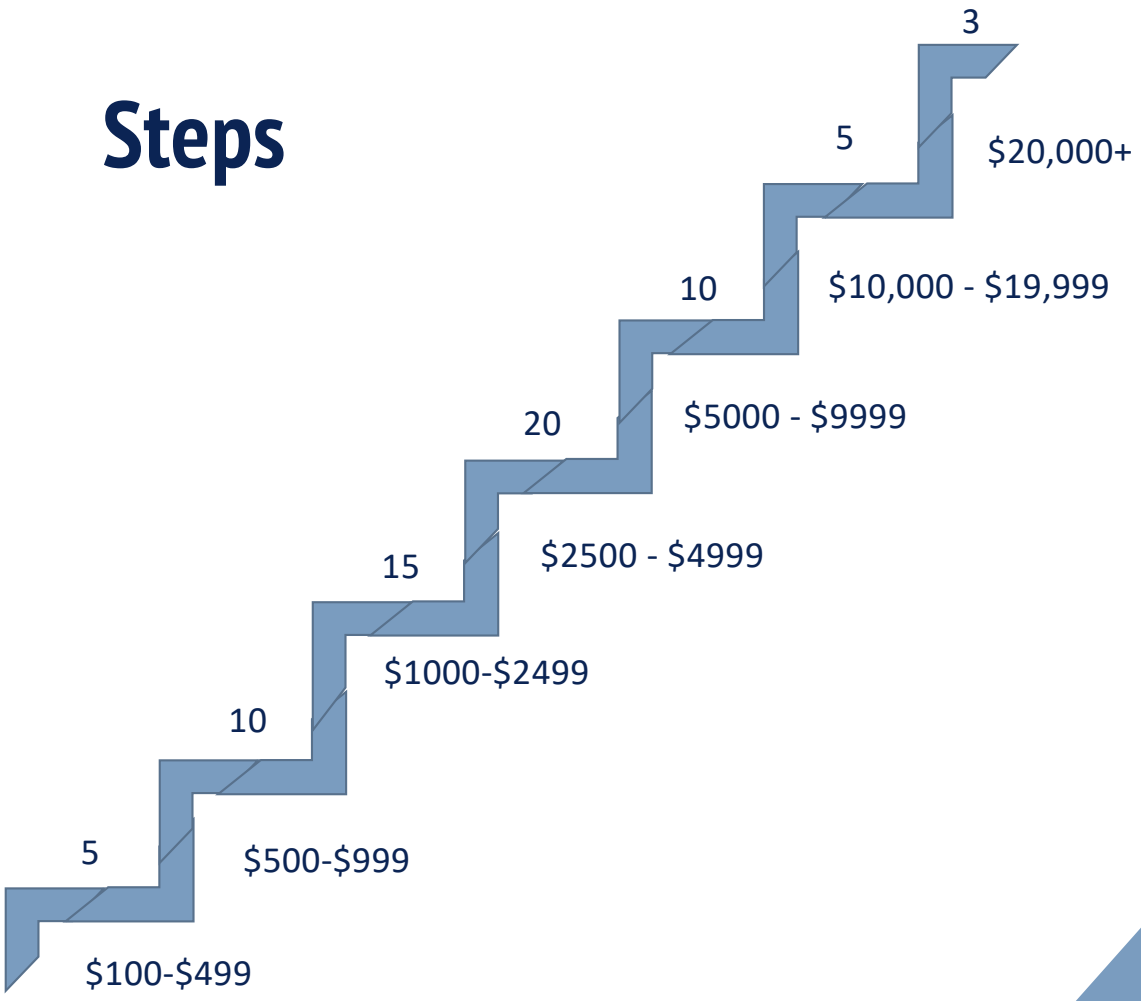
Why donors plateau

Steps



Why donors plateau

- **This congregation has 68 households that pledge.**
- **Together, they contribute $272,800**
- **Average gift size is $4012, a little above the national average**
- **This tool can be used to envision what it would be like to move up a level, and how much that would increase the pledge campaign totals**

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Proportional Giving

Annual Income	Weekly Income	Beyond the Tithe		Tithe	Proportional Giving								
		15%	12%	10%	9%	8%	7%	6%	5%	4%	3%	2%	1%
$20,000	$385	$58	$46	$38	$35	$31	$27	$23	$19	$15	$12	$8	$4
$25,000	$481	$72	$58	$48	$43	$38	$34	$29	$24	$19	$14	$10	$5
$30,000	$577	$87	$69	$58	$52	$46	$40	$35	$29	$23	$17	$12	$6
$40,000	$769	$115	$92	$77	$69	$62	$54	$46	$38	$31	$23	$15	$8
$50,000	$962	$144	$115	$96	$87	$77	$67	$58	$48	$38	$29	$19	$10
$60,000	$1,154	$173	$138	$115	$104	$92	$81	$69	$58	$46	$35	$23	$12
$70,000	$1,346	$202	$162	$135	$121	$108	$94	$81	$67	$54	$40	$27	$13
$80,000	$1,538	$231	$185	$154	$138	$123	$108	$92	$77	$62	$46	$31	$15
$90,000	$1,731	$260	$208	$173	$156	$138	$121	$104	$87	$69	$52	$35	$17
$100,000	$1,923	$288	$231	$192	$173	$154	$135	$115	$96	$77	$58	$38	$19
$120,000	$2,308	$346	$277	$231	$208	$185	$162	$138	$115	$92	$69	$46	$23
$150,000	$2,885	$433	$346	$288	$260	$231	$202	$173	$144	$115	$87	$58	$29

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Why donors plateau?

Giving Data Tells a Story

- **Stop talking about an "average pledge…"**
- **Avg. pledge** *distorts true giving picture*
- **Avg. pledge** promotes "false minimum"
- **Avg. pledge** often pulls to a "magnetic middle"

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Why donors plateau?

Giving Data Tells a Story

- 138 Households (units) estimated for 2020
- $297,923 total estimates
- **Average** ($\overline{x}$): **$2,159**
- *Median* (M): $1,550

Church of the Advent
Sun City West, Arizona

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Why donors plateau?

Giving Data Tells a Story

- 110 Households (units) estimated for 2021
- $255,156 total estimates
- **Average** ($\overline{x}$): **$2,320**
- *Median* (M): $1,810

Church of the Advent
Sun City West, Arizona

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Why donors plateau?

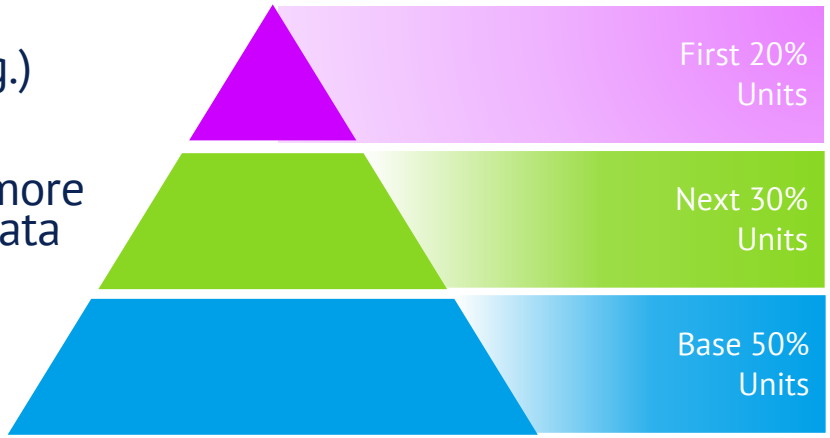
Estimates of Giving Pyramid

Shows the wider range of giving in a congregation

Total for 2021: $255,156 **Avg. $2,320** *Median = $1,810* ***110*** *units*

It shows:

- Mean (Avg.)
- Median
- Provides more relevant data



People mentally place themselves on the pyramid once they see it

Why donors plateau?

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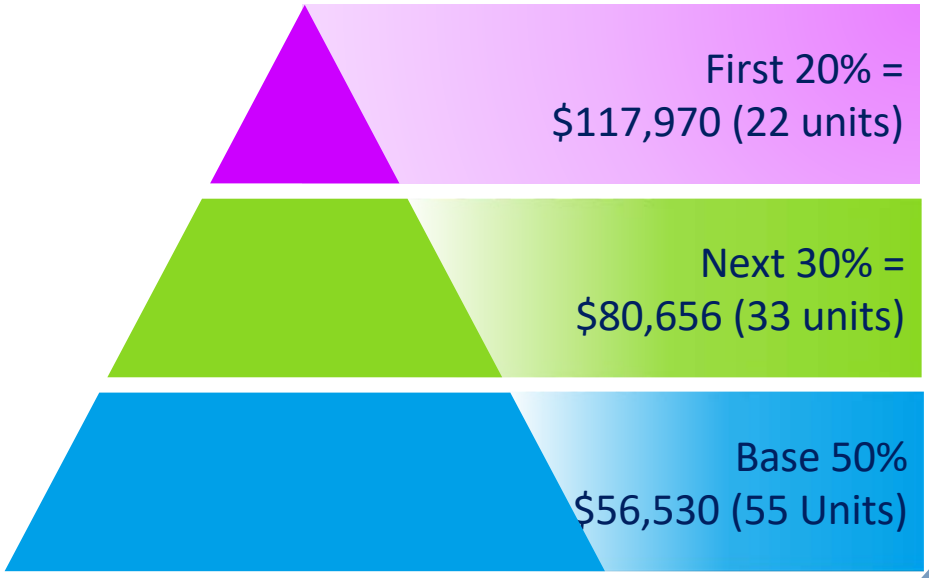
Estimates of Giving Pyramid



Why donors plateau?

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Estimates of Giving Data

Total of Estimates $255,156 110 Units *(100%)*

Avg. $2,320 ***M: $1,810***

- First 20% of Estimates 22 Units = $117,970 *(46%)*

  Avg.: $5,362 *M: $4,800*

- Next 30% of Estimates 33 Units = $83,646 *(33%)*

  Avg.: $2,444 *M: $2,400*

- Base 50% of Estimates 55 Units = $53,540 *(21%)*

  Avg.: $1,028 *M: $1,080*

Why donors plateau?

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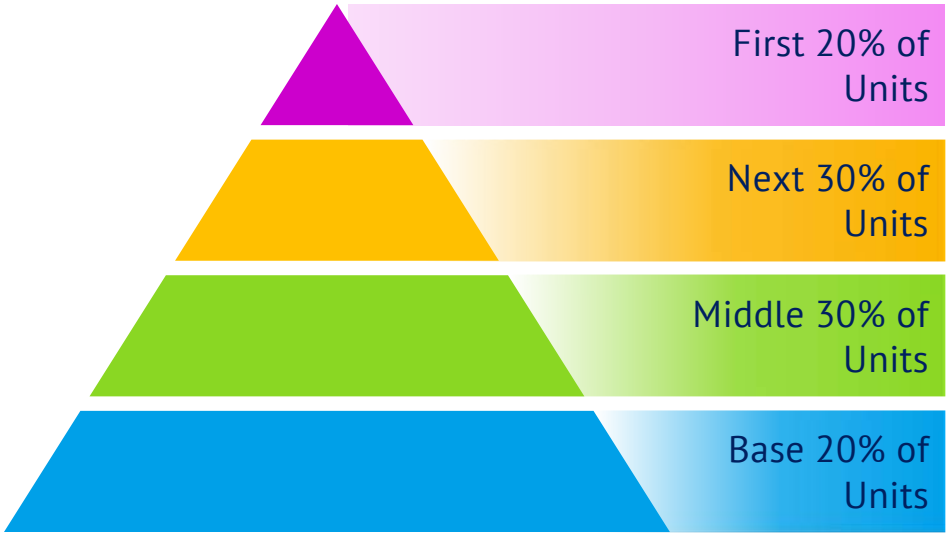
Estimates of Giving Pyramid



Why donors plateau?

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Estimates of Giving Data

- First 20% of Estimates 22 Units = $117,970*(46%)*

  Avg.: $5,362 *M: $4,870*

- Next 30% of Estimates 33 Units = $83,646 *(33%)*

  Avg.: $2,444 *M: $2,400*

- **Mid 30% of Estimates** 33 Units = $42,480*(17%)*

  Avg.: $1,322 *M: $1,200*

- **Base 20% of Estimates** 22 Units = $11,060 *(4%)*

  *Avg.: $**586*** *M: $**560***

Why donors plateau?

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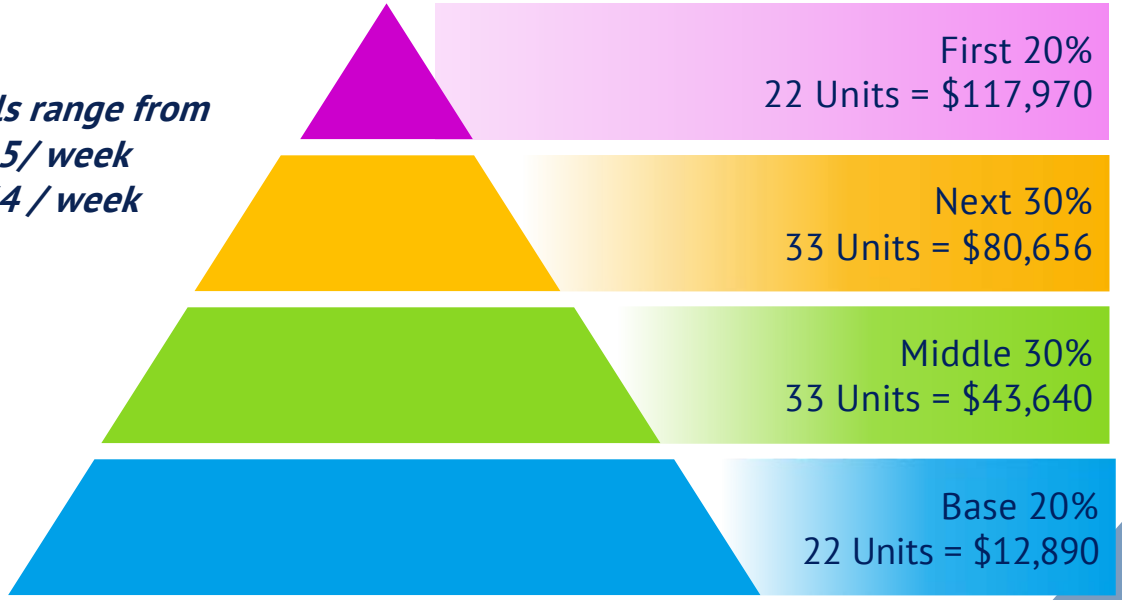
Estimates of Giving Data



Totals range from $225/ week to $4 / week

20% of first gives ~ $103 a week

Why donors plateau? **20% of base gives ~ $11 a week**

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Lessons from Nonprofits about donor relations

- Where does a pastoral relationship fit into all this analysis?
  - Donor Analysis sometimes feels like we are removing the individual from the relationship. **But in church, we know we can't do that.**
  - When we look at donor data in church we should
    - **Pray** for that individual or family
    - Note changes in pledge or fulfilment as **possible pastoral issues**
    - **Remember what we know about them** through our relationships to know how to approach them

Why donors plateau?

Tip: It's not just the clergy who hold pastoral relationships with members. We all take on this role as sisters and brothers.

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Lessons from Nonprofits about donor relations

- Donor Fatigue is real
  - Churches have often thought they were immune to donor fatigue, **but our members get just as bored** with our approach as any other donors would
  - Donors who are **still in their earning years** who are making the same gift year over year are likely fatigued. *These members are on a pledge plateau*
  - *Now, let's explore how to help them*

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Your Mission

- Do your members know what your mission is? Are you sure?
  - Bringing Christ to the World
    - Is a fine mission. It's a little big for a single church, though.
  - Serving our Neighbors
    - Serving them what? Or how? Be specific.
  - A Place Where All are Welcome
    - Sounds nice, but welcome to do what? Why?
- Everyone in your congregation should know what your mission is

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Your Mission

- Mission should be
  - Impact-focused
  - Local
  - Inspiring
  - Inclusive
  - Aspirational
  - Easily articulated
  - Teachable
  - Accessible
  - Revisited from time to time as the neighborhood and membership change

Mission-focused Members

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Your Mission

- When your members know your mission, they can
  - Tell others about it
  - Get behind it
  - Pray for its realization
  - Advocate for it
  - Input their ideas
  - Support it with their gifts of time, talent, and treasure
  - Pull in the same direction

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Your Mission

- Don't assume that members know what your mission is
  - Vestry goals for growth
  - Long-term plans
  - Capital plans
  - Program incubation
- Teach about your mission
- Preach about your mission
- Communicate frequently about your mission

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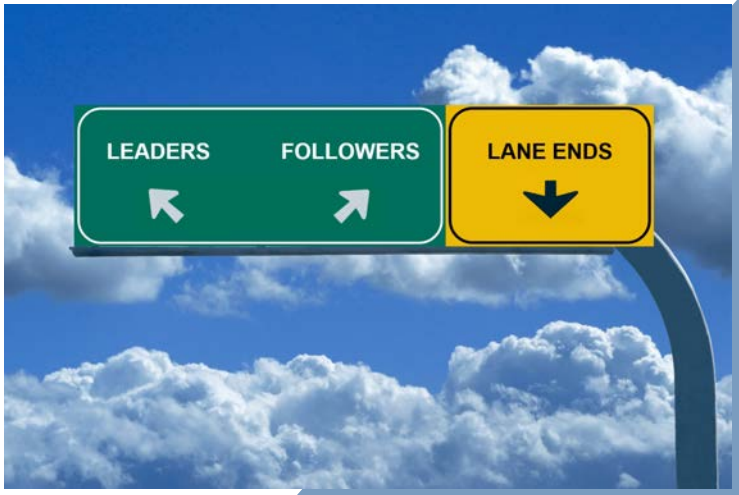
Mission-focused Members

Are your leaders leading?

- One of the most significant reasons that members do not donate (or donate more) **is because their leaders do not ask more of them**
  - Stewardship or vestry that talk about money in public only during pledge season
  - Focus on the pledges and not on generosity



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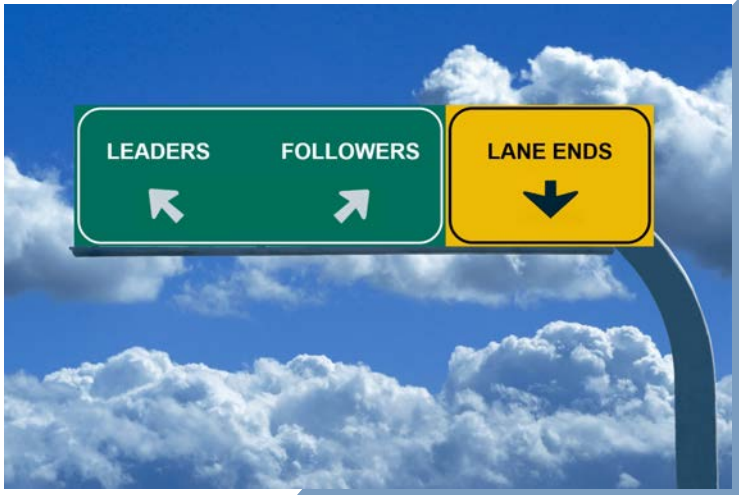
Are your leaders leading?

- The stewardship team is NOT the fundraising committee. As important as it is to raise money for church ministry, **the focus of the stewardship team is to encourage Christians to use their God-given gifts in ways that honor God.**
  - Formation
  - Prayer
  - Generosity and Gratitude
  - Inspiration



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Alignment

- Generosity and fundraising ministry **should be in alignment** with other program areas
  - Adult and youth formation
  - Confirmation and inquirers classes
  - Budget and finance
  - Planned giving / legacy
  - Capital committee / buildings & grounds
  - Communications, newsletters, website, social media

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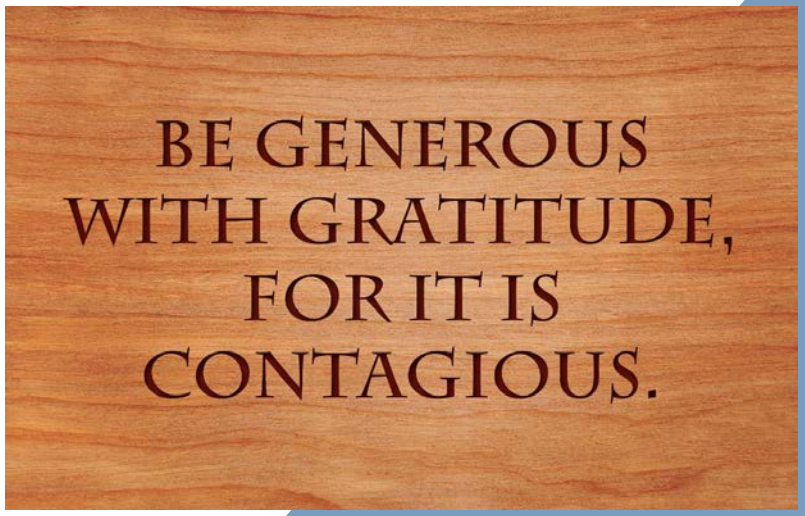
Generosity

- Are your leaders generous?
  - They don't have to make the largest gift, but their gift should set an example
  - Your leaders should talk about their giving
    - What inspires them
    - Why they choose to make a gift
    - Advocate proportional giving
  - Do they show up at events? Are they publicly supportive?
  - Do they support each other and the decisions that they make?



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Recruiting Generous Leaders

According to the Rt. Rev. Dan Edwards, Bishop of Nevada, **your stewardship committee should be in place by Easter**.

- An effective team will raise more money to *fund the church's mission*.
- They *engender support and appreciation* for all the other parish ministries.
- The project is a chance for the members of the team to *form or deepen relationships* that are the lifeblood of the congregation.
- They spread *a spirituality of grateful generosity,* thereby enriching the lives and enlarging the souls of the congregation.

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Recruiting Generous Leaders

- *People who know people:* The team's strongest influence is on their friends. You need people who are connected.
- Diversify the team according demographics like age, gender identity, and racial identity.
- If the congregation has more than one worship service, include people from the different worship services on the team.

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Recruiting Generous Leaders

- *People who love the congregation.* The Campaign Team represents the congregation to the congregation.
- How they feel about the congregation and its leadership, both lay and clergy, will come across.

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Recruiting Generous Leaders

- *People with a heart for stewardship*. Not everybody is born to raise money or is comfortable asking for it.
- Find the people in your congregation who have such a heart for the mission that they can boldly ask their peers to support it.
- Stewardship is about more than the pledge campaign, it is the life of generosity and worldview of abundance that leads us into Christian community.

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Recruiting Generous Leaders

- ***People with skills.*** The chair needs organizational skills to get the job done – like running a meeting, ending with action steps, and setting up accountability.
- ***People with credibility***. Who you appoint to the team tells the congregation whether this is important or not. You need someone on the team who has the respect of the congregation.
- ***People with time***. Choose someone who can be freed up from some of his or her other church work for a year. Do not choose your wardens, your treasurer or your finance committee. *Counting money and raising it are usually incompatible.*
- ***People who can give themselves***. These do not have to be your wealthiest members, but the team needs to be able to set an example of generosity.

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Impact is Investment

Your church cannot simply expect people to give out of a sense of obligation.

There is an increasing desire among donors to know that their financial contributions are doing more than keeping the lights on—they want to know that their money is making a difference.

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Impact Inspires

Measuring Impact

Not every congregation has big visible outreach ministries that have wide and noticeable impact. How do you measure impact in your church?

- How many new people joined your church?
- Did attendance increase in your small groups or Sunday school?
- Did you partner with local nonprofits to accomplish mission-focused work?
- What was committee, guild, and task force participation like?

Impact Inspires

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Measuring Impact

1. Attendance
2. Missional participation
3. Volunteering
4. Online activity
5. Giving
6. Event outcomes
7. Connections
8. Growth
9. Attrition

Track, publicize, celebrate, analyze, and communicate about these measures

Impact Inspires

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Changing your Approach

Reasons members give uninspired gifts (in order)

1. No one personally reached out
2. Same letter as last year
3. Same theme or approach as other years
4. Nothing new to report, no reason to increase
5. Church isn't growing
6. Community is changing
7. Budget problems

2018 Study from Tithe.ly

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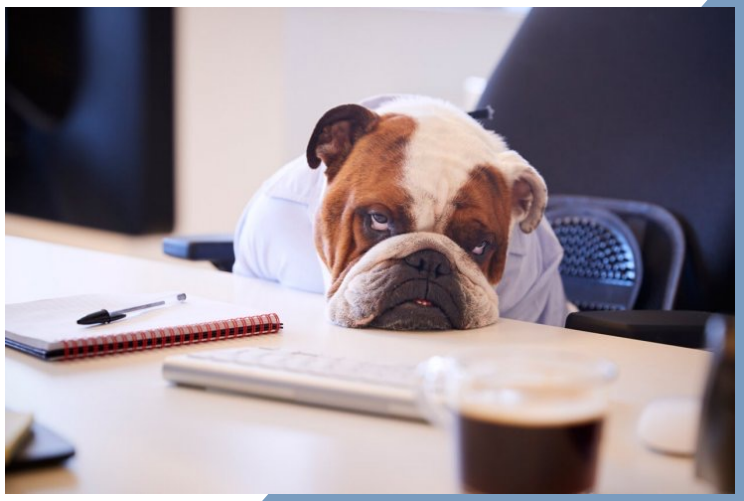
Adapting Case & Materials

Changing your Approach



Are your campaign materials boring?

- *Do they tell the story of the congregation?*
- *Do they give measures and metrics about mission?*
- *Are they focused on the bills or the Bible?*
- *Are they focused on the budget or the mission?*
- *Do they have pictures? Testimonials? Videos?*

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Changing your Approach

This year we will:
Serve 5200 hot meals
Educate 58 children
Gather for 124 services
Provide Christmas gifts for 100 unhoused kids
Plant and harvest a community garden
… **and so much more!**

St. Swithen's has been Serving the Blue Hill Community for 108 years

Join us in doing God's Work today!
www.stswithens.org/donate
www.tithe.ly.com/stswithens
www.paypal.com/stswithenschurch

Front of 3x5 card

Yes! Have a narrative budget
Yes! Have a great pledge campaign website!
Yes! Have a great brochure!

And …

If you can tell the story of your church on the front and back of a 3x5 card, you really have a great pitch!

Back of 3x5 card

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Adapting Case & Materials

Great Case Statement Elements

- What is the need?
- How can you tell this is a pressing need?
- How is your church going to address this need?
- What will be the benefits of your action?
- What are the negative consequences if you fail?

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Consider creating a Narrative Budget

- A Narrative Budget tells the story of your money and mission
- Spreads the fixed costs (salaries, building, utilities, administration) across program areas instead of line items
- Helps members understand the real impact of their funding on the mission (funding mission instead of funding a budget)
- https://www.tens.org/resource-library/tools-best-practices/creating-a-congregation-narrative-budget/

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Adapting Case & Materials

TENS Theme for 2021

The theme and image for ***Every Perfect Gift*** are wrapped in the metaphor of the butterfly and chrysalis.

To the ancient Greeks, the butterfly represented the image of rebirth and freedom. The word they used for butterfly was *psyche*, and if you are thinking that sounds familiar, you are correct! It also means spirit. The humble and beautiful butterfly contains the philosophical and spiritual idea of the soul breaking free from its shell — free to **discover, to inspire, to create, to communicate, to share.** ***These are the results of our gifts of time, talent, and treasure***

Keeping the Conversation Going

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Thank you!

For more information, resources, and videos, find us at www.tens.org

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