

STEWARDSHIP
ON THE GROWING EDGE
A WORKSHOP
FOR STEWARDSHIP LEADERS

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The Giving Cycle

THE GROWING EDGE is built on an understanding of *THE GIVING CYCLE* that evolves in a vibrant congregation that is intentionally charting its future and inviting and affirming its members' support. *THE GIVING CYCLE* is a ongoing circle of communication that involves the congregation in the rhythm of T.A.L.K.:

Telling the story of the congregation's mission and vision

Asking for financial support from income and accumulated resources, and for the investment of time and talent in the church's ministry and mission

Learning and planning for funds development

Keeping the momentum going through education, reflection and affirmation

THE GIVING CYCLE is an ongoing process, not a regimented series of steps. Therefore, depending on the season of the year in which stewardship development begins, and the requirements of a particular church, planning may begin at any point.

Tell the Story

Celebration
Mission & Vision Statements
Case Statement

KeeP Momentum Going

Education & Reflection
Affirmation of Members' Giving
Celebration of the Church's
Ministry and Mission

Ask

Annual Stewardship Program
Time and Talent

Learn & Plan

Evaluation & Analysis

Empowering the "Giving Cycle"

The "Giving Cycle" is fueled by communication. Few congregations are intentional in developing a complete communication strategy that utilizes all the internal and external media that are available. As a congregation begins stewardship development it should review the range of these media and plan ways that they may be utilized to develop stewardship commitment more fully and powerfully.

Communication has two dimensions. One is directed primarily to members inside the congregation and the other includes messages that are sent to the community and wider constituency. While some of media are primarily internal or external in their audience, several have a dual potential.

Most congregations can make a far more creative and effective use of their existing media. In beginning this stewardship development program, review the modes of communication that your congregation is using. The media include:

- Sunday worship bulletin - This is the most widely read communication tool of the congregation. The bulletin typically includes the order for worship, announcements and a schedule of church activities. It is read by both members and non-members who may be worshipping for the first time. Consider these questions:
 - How clearly does the bulletin portray the range of the church's ministry and mission?
 - Does it link this congregation to the wider church and its mission?
 - Are the descriptions of church events directed primarily at "insiders" or are they inviting and clear to the member and especially the non-member?
 - Is the format and layout of the bulletin attractive and easy to read?
- Newsletter - The newsletter is the primary means of many members' contact with the church if they are not regular attenders of worship. Its audience includes the highly committed, relatively uninvolved members, shut-in members unable to participate in church activities, non-residents, friends of the church and recent visitors who are prospective members. Review recent newsletters with a critical eye.
 - Is the format appealing and clear?
 - Do articles connect the congregation with the wider church and its mission?

- Does the content invite and encourage participation in ministry?
 - Are programs and activities clearly described so readers understand their purpose?
 - Are particular ministries of the church highlighted?
 - Is the present giving of members' time, talent and money affirmed?
 - Are important articles and messages clearly placed so they are not lost to those who skim the newsletter?
 - Is the length of the newsletter and the succinct writing of articles conducive to it being read when received?
- **Worship** - Everything that happens in worship conveys messages about the church's life to member and non-member alike. The welcome by an usher and from the pulpit, announcements, styles of music, preaching, leadership by pastors and church members, and the fellowship experienced in the pews all convey who the church is. Therefore it is important to be reflective and intentional on the messages that are being communicated, both intentionally and unintentionally. For example:
 - Does this church appear to be "for members only" or is it welcoming?
 - Is this congregation linked to the wider church and its mission or is it provincial in its interests?
 - Is this church inclusive in its concern for children, youth and adults?
 - Is the energy and vitality of the congregation's life evident?
- **Church Facilities** - The church building communicates silent messages about the church family which makes its home here.
 - Is the building welcoming to the visitor?
 - Is it accessible to those with special needs?
 - Does its condition reflect good care by the members?
 - Is it evidently well used as a tool for ministry and mission?
- **Bulletin Boards** - Hallway bulletin boards are excellent communication devices to member and non-member alike.
 - Are bulletin boards frequently changed to attract attention?
 - Are they bright, creative and festive?
 - Do they reflect the involvement of children and youth?
 - Do they convey the congregation's commitment to mission beyond the church?

- Financial Statements - An often overlooked mode of communication for a church is the financial statement that is sent to households reflecting their financial support.
 - Is the statement quarterly and mailed in a timely manner?
 - Is it accurate and clearly understood?
 - Does it appear to be a bill or is it an affirmation of members' giving?
 - Does it include stories of what members' giving has accomplished?

- Videos - Few tools are more powerful than a well edited-video of the congregation's life. A video portrays not only the faces of the church family but those of people touched by the congregation's ministry and mission. It acquaints viewers with the wide range of the congregation's impact and invites participation. It can be used in:
 - Stewardship promotion
 - Presentation to prospective or new members
 - Reaching out to shut-ins and non-residents
 - Church celebrations and programs.

- E-mail and Faxes - New modes of communication include e-mail and fax which are increasingly utilized. In order to maximize the use of these tools, members and friends should be asked for their e-mail addresses and fax numbers. Often members appreciate receiving communication in this way and substantial savings in postage are realized. Churches may use these media to convey personal notes, meeting agendas, committee reports and other business. More creatively, they may be used to:
 - Convey "thank you's" to members
 - Promote church activities and mission opportunities
 - Send "good news" reports of the church's ministry and mission.

- Web Page - The Internet is an extraordinary medium for communication. A church home page may be created that includes:
 - Information about the church and its ministry
 - Schedules of church events and invitations to participate in them
 - Pictures and recordings of the church's life
 - An archive of recent sermons
 - Links to denominational and other appropriate Web sites.

- Local Newspaper - The local press may be utilized both with advertising and with articles and pictures submitted for publication. Newspapers are often open to receive news of significant events within community churches. Not only do these articles present the ministry of the church to the wider community but they also affirm and inform the church membership. Church activities may also be listed in a calendar of community events and worship services in a directory of places for worship.
- Church Introductory Brochure - Prospective members shop for a congregation in which to become involved. An attractive introductory brochure provides the opportunity to communicate:
 - The congregation's life
 - The range of its ministry
 - Its involvement in mission beyond the particular church
 - Its beliefs, practices and denominational affiliation
 - Its mission and vision
 - Its leadership.
- Radio Broadcast and Cable Television - Use of radio and television has become easier and less expensive. While congregations have typically used them to broadcast worship services, they may be used for a variety of other purposes including:
 - Promotion of church activities
 - Presentation of mission involvements
 - Interviews
 - Bible studies
 - Musical presentations.

MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS

The foundation for stewardship development is an articulate presentation of the congregation's mission and vision. This presentation answers the most basic questions at the heart of a church's life:

- Who are we as a unique gathering of God's people in this time and place?
- What is the mission and ministry that we are called to share?
- What is our vision for the future of our congregation?
- What are the specific goals that will empower this vision?

Mission Statement

The first step in the development process is creating a mission statement: a concise, focused, engaging statement of purpose. Corporate management consultants recommend such statements for business in a form that can be committed to memory, so that every employee can express the company's mission and fulfill it in his or her work. Similarly, a congregation's mission statement can be so clear and inviting that every member, and certainly every leader, can share the succinct statement.

Many congregations have such a statement. Developed by church leaders in dialogue with the congregation, the statement is often printed on the cover of the Sunday church bulletin, may be framed and posted at the entrance to the sanctuary and is often shared with new members as they join the congregation. A mission statement focuses the purpose of the congregation. It is not a creedal statement though the convictions of the church may be stated. It is an affirmation of what the church believes it is called to be and do. An effective mission statement is not a generic description of any faithful congregation, but is an articulation of the unique mission of a particular church given its heritage, community context and distinctive emphases in ministry and mission. A congregation that knows its purposes has a *compass* to guide its faith journey, a *tool* to evaluate its work, and a *focus* that unites the congregation in common purpose.

One congregation frames its mission in these words:

Community Church is a welcoming community with varied backgrounds, talents and ages, bound together by a common faith in God as revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit we are dedicated to:

- celebrating God's love
- nurturing individual growth

- sharing our faith and
- serving the needs of others.

The operative words in this statement stand out: *welcoming, celebrating, nurturing, sharing, serving*. If this statement is an accurate statement of the congregation's purpose, all the congregation's ministries and mission commitments can be arrayed in these categories.

Although a mission statement does not often need to be revised, it does need to be regularly examined. A mission focus is relatively constant, however if the context for a congregation changes, the mission statement will need to be adapted. Therefore as a church undertakes the renewal of its stewardship life, it is crucial to review the adequacy of its mission statement. Is it an accurate description of the congregation's purpose? Is it unique to this company of God's people? Is its language fresh and inviting?

Vision Statement

A mission statement alone, however, is not sufficient. Ever changing is the way in which the mission is carried out as the congregation's ministry evolves and unique challenges and opportunities emerge. A mission statement must be joined with a vision statement that describes the unique hopes and dreams of the congregation. If this is our mission, where are we headed as a church? What are our goals to claim the opportunities and challenges that God has set before us?

Few congregations have such a vision statement. The absence of such a vision is a crucial barrier to growth in giving and discipleship. Without a vision a congregation becomes wedded to a maintenance mode of ministry. The attention of leaders and members is drawn to managing present programs and not envisioning and claiming opportunities. Members often see no reason to increase their giving or change their level of involvement.

Vision is a magnet for new commitment. It stirs the imagination of members, awakens fresh dedication and invites members to review their priorities and investments of time, energy and money.

THE GROWING EDGE program begins with a lively dialogue about your congregation's mission and its companion vision. What is God calling us to do in our unique context for ministry and mission? The more sharply the mission and vision are focused, the greater the possibilities.

THE CASE STATEMENT

After the mission and vision statements are completed, the next step is the writing of an articulate *Case for Commitment*: the story of the opportunities before the congregation and the difference they will make in the congregation's future. The case for commitment provides more detail on the growing edges of the congregation's life and is ideally a one or two-page document that serves as a compass for leadership. It describes why the church is engaged in this mission and vision, and the impact it will have on the congregation's future. It serves as the foundation for all invitations to serve, and all communication. An effective case for commitment will:

- **Articulate the vision**
What is the dream for this congregation? In five to ten years how will our congregation be different if we claim this opportunity?
- **Share the impact**
Who are the people who will be affected by this advance in our ministry and mission?
- **Appeal broadly**
An ideal case appeals to many members across the congregation: different ages, interests and involvements.
- **Describe the plan**
What will enable us to claim this vision? What is the cost?
- **Convey a sense of urgency**
Why is it important to proceed now? What possibilities will be lost if action is delayed?
- **Tie the vision to the world mission of Jesus Christ**
What difference does this project make for the mission of Christ in the world? A strong case links this congregation to the future of Christ's work within the world.
- **Be positive and optimistic**
An appealing case demonstrates that the plans are within the resources of the congregation and are not a mission fantasy.

CELEBRATE

The Power of Stories

There is great power in stories.

"Let me tell you a story. . ." Who does not like a good story! Some might be humorous - and some might be heart-wrenching - some true - and some simply fables to enjoy, and others from which we can learn. Stories have been part of humankind since before the written word, as they have been orally handed down from generation to generation. Stories win our attention, captivate our imagination and arouse our curiosity. Stories dominate our conversation. As we share stories, we invite others into our world. Listening to stories provides an entre into others' experiences.

Stories are, therefore, one of the most powerful media to communicate the panorama of the church's ministry and mission. Every congregation has a fascinating story. The story includes the church's history, its present mission and ministry, as well as its future visions. A church's story also includes the stories of the individuals whose lives have been touched by the ministry of that congregation.

Discovering your church's story- and the wealth of individual vignettes within it- can be an exciting and valuable experience for a congregation. An inter-generational supper, an officer or congregational retreat are possible settings to have people begin to discover the stories of your church.

Moving beyond the prosaic facts and figures and the listing of church activities and events, stories bring to life the impact of the gospel we proclaim and live out.

Consider the difference in the two following ways of portraying a ministry of one congregation.

Our church provides an office at no cost to the Westside Legal Aid Clinic. Each Thursday afternoon and evening volunteer attorneys staff the clinic, which last year served over three hundred clients.

OR

One Thursday evening last October a woman and her seven-year-old daughter entered our church building looking for the Westside Legal Aid Clinic. Tears ran

down her face as she told the volunteer lawyer how she had been locked out of her apartment by her landlord for falling behind in her rent. She had been laid off her job, and her former husband was behind in child support. She had only the clothes she wore and had been staying with a friend. She wondered how she could gain access to her apartment to get her belongings and where then she could live. The attorney on duty that night made arrangements to meet her the next day to negotiate with the landlord. He made an appointment for her with the City Social Service Center to help her find financial assistance and support in finding a new job. And he referred her to our own Deacons, who gave her several bags of groceries and bought two toys for her daughter's upcoming birthday. We welcome Westside Legal Aid Clinic to our church because it provides compassionate service to people with special needs. You the members of this church offered the love of Jesus Christ to this woman and her daughter—all through your faithful support of our church. Thank you for caring.

Which more powerfully conveys the power of our church's ministry? The first paragraph is a cold statement of fact. The second brings to mind the faces of a mother and child, and awakens joy and gratitude for the church's ministry, and the opportunity to share in it.

The Power of Your Congregation's Stories

Every congregation has a myriad of stories to tell, engaging tales of the gospel in action. Many of the stories are unknown to members because they experience only a small slice of the congregation's life. Consider, for example, the many members whose primary experience of the church is Sunday morning worship, and have no awareness of the seven-day-a-week, morning, afternoon and evening ministry of the church.

What are the stories of your congregation? Consider the following possibilities:

- a pre-school child's experience of the Nursery School, provided by a scholarship from the Board of Deacons
- an elderly member's participation in the church's Worship Videotape Ministry
- the Youth Fellowship's involvement in clearing a site for a Habitat for Humanity house
- members' ministry to the homeless, sharing sandwiches and blankets in the inner-city on a cold December night
- a gathering of members for Bible study during their lunch hour in a downtown office suite.

These stories may be used in a variety of ways:

- Sunday morning worship in a series of "minutes for mission" entitled "The Faces of Our Ministry"
- a regular column in the newsletter called "Good News from First Church"
- the church annual report
- an insert in the quarterly financial statement sent to members
- the annual stewardship brochure.

ASK!

The first stage in stewardship development is to develop a clear understanding of God's unique call to your congregation and to articulate its mission and vision. Before leaders have a right to ask anyone to support the church, they must work to discern what a faithful response to God means in this time and place. Once these questions have been answered, leaders have a privilege: the opportunity of inviting members to be partners in this shared mission and vision.

Asking is an ongoing process of *building relationships*, reaching out to members rather than expecting them to simply respond to the church's leadership.

The acronym, L.I.N.K., describes the stages of building such relationships:

Lift Interest
Inspire Reflection
Name the Opportunities
Keep in Contact

Lift Interest

Church leaders, deeply invested in the church's work, often assume a greater level of interest and awareness of the church's mission and vision among members than is the case. Acquainted with the range of the church's mission and ministry, they presume the same perspective exists among the church family. These assumptions represent one of the greatest barriers to growth in members' commitment.

The first stage in asking is lifting members' interest. Rarely is this accomplished by simply discussing the financial needs of the congregation. Simply presenting a budget, for example, makes the exciting story of the church's ministry and mission merely a matter of numbers. Far differently, the most effective manner of lifting interest is to translate the financial requirements of the church into engaging stories of the Good News of Jesus Christ touching people's lives through this particular congregation and its members' gifts of time, talent and financial resources. In other words, *think people not numbers*.

Whatever means leaders choose to invite members' response should provide ample opportunities to share the stories of the church's life, and to provide chances to share their own stories with one another. The more carefully leaders have articulated the church's mission and vision, and listened for stories in the rhythm of the congregation's

life, the more abundant their resources will be for this sharing.

Inspire Reflection

The second stage of asking is inspiring members' personal reflection. Once the stories of the church's life are told with excitement members are led to consider their own possibilities for involvement in this ministry. Members discover that they are linked to this ministry both in what is already happening through their gifts and what is yet to be. Members may even begin to dream of the stories of mission that are yet to be told.

Name the Opportunities

The third stage of asking is naming the opportunities to respond. These should not be assumed as self-evident to many members, who may know only a small range of the panorama of ministry and mission. Instead leaders can provide a wide array of possibilities for response that include:

- Gifts of Time
- Sharing of Talents and Spiritual Gifts
- Commitments of Accumulated Resources and Income.

Keep in Contact

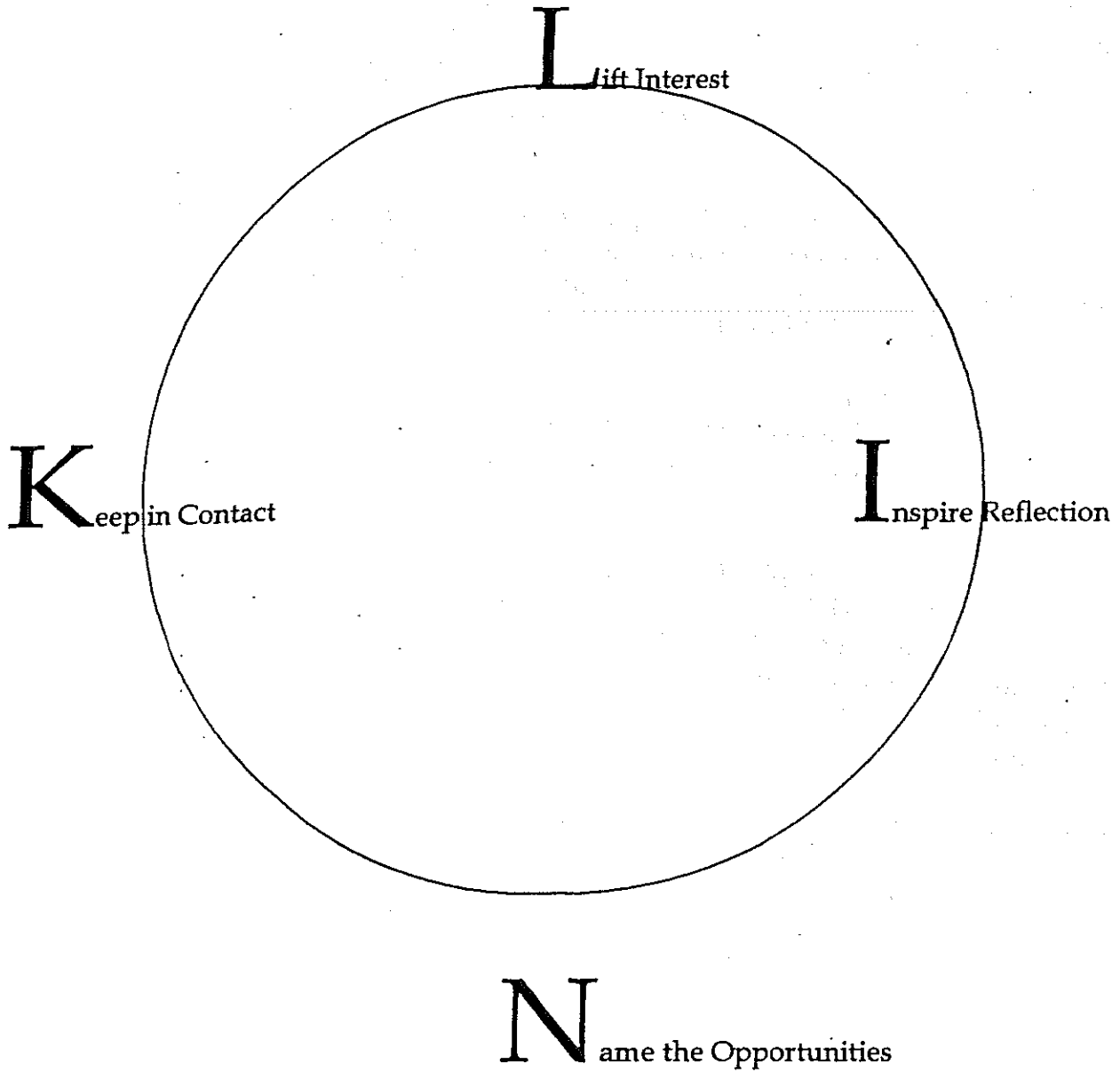
The final stage of asking is keeping in contact with members. As members learn the stories, reflect on the possibilities and respond with their gifts, they become more firmly linked as "partners in the gospel." Members should never feel that their gifts of time, talent and money are unimportant, unnoticed or unappreciated. The more members feel valued and affirmed, the more attuned they will be to continue to hear the stories and discover their continuing place in the church's life.

Similarly, the more members believe that their gifts are important to the ministry and mission of the congregation, the more they will perceive that they are partners with others and linked with their fellow members. This linkage ensures that members do not feel they are spectators or supporters of mission that others are doing, but are integral members of the family, inspired to renew and expand their commitment.

L.I.N.K.

Unless a congregation *links* with its members in these ways, it will not begin to motivate the potential response of members' sharing of their time, talents and money. For this reason, whatever stewardship strategy, and especially its communication component, is chosen by a congregation should include all of these elements.

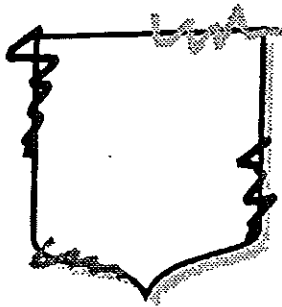
THE ASKING CYCLE



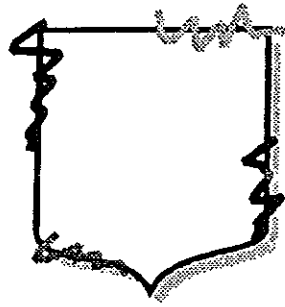
THE DIFFERENT POCKETS OF MONEY

Most stewardship promotion has been preoccupied with encouraging members to disciplined proportionate giving from their income. Congregational leaders may even say, "our people are giving as much as they can," because they assume that the only resources available to fund the church's mission come from members' income, which may be limited in some cases as members live from retirement earnings. The reality, however, is that most members have other "pockets" of financial resources on which they may draw. Many members may even be unaware of the extent of their financial resources, especially as stocks and property have vastly appreciated in recent years.

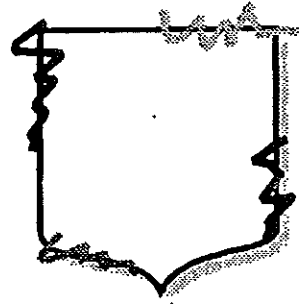
Of equal importance to an annual giving program, focused primarily of giving from income, is a planned giving program which encourages and enables members to be stewards of their assets. This is more than simply a funding strategy for the church, but an essential dimension of calling members to be stewards of the gifts they have received from God.



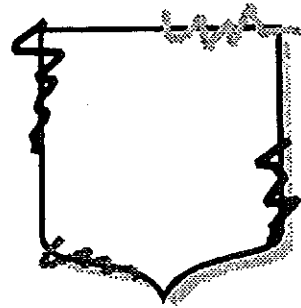
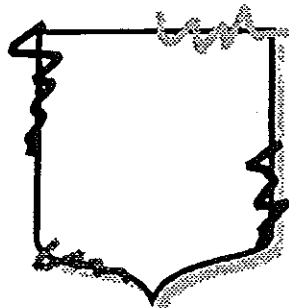
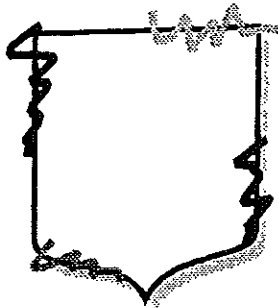
Income



Stocks and Bonds



Mutual Funds



Savings
and CDs

Retirement Accounts
such as IRAs

Real Estate and
Other Property

TARGETED COMMUNICATION

The larger the congregation, the more useful it may be to target communication to different categories of members. This enables addressing particular messages to groups of members with common interests, attitudes, motivations, patterns of involvement or concerns, rather than a single message that may not be appropriate for all members. The categories may include:

- Pledging and non-pledging members. Those presently financially committed to the church's mission require a different approach than those not so committed. Similarly, non-pledging members may be divided into two categories: those with identifiable giving and involvement, and those with no identifiable giving or involvement.
- Involvement in the church's ministry and mission. Members may be categorized by their involvement and interest in different dimensions of the church's ministry. These may include:

- Children's and youth ministry
- Mission outreach
- Worship
- Music.

- Membership tenure. Members have a different relationship to a congregation depending on the years of their membership. Categories may include:

- Long-term members, over ten years
- Mid-term membership, five to ten years
- New members, less than five years.

- Generation. Members may also be divided by their age and generational cohort. This may include:

- G. I. and Civic Generation
- Baby Boomers
- Generation X.

These generations have different motivations for giving, and different

dispositions toward the institution of the church. G.I. and Civic generations have a strong institutional loyalty, while Baby Boomers are very concerned with the particular benefits or impacts of the church's mission. Generation X members are interested in hands-on opportunities to be involved.

- Level of giving. Typically, a relatively small group of member households pledge and give a disproportionate amount of all pledges and gifts received. For example, 10-20% of households may give 60-80% of all gifts received. A different message may be fashioned for this group, or the typical large group of members who give nominally.