

Segmenting Givers/Targeted Appeal

It can be highly effective to customizing your stewardship appeal letters to target as many as four different groups. The idea is to “meet people where they are” on the journey of faith and giving, and to help lead them toward lives of increasing generosity. The letters/packages that you send out to each group will be largely the same, with a few nuances outlined below.

Determining the composition of these groups is more of an art than a science; suggested numbers may vary within your congregation. Of course, generosity is proportional to means; someone who gives a smaller amount may be more generous than a large-dollar giver on a relative basis. You know your congregation best! There tends to be a very strong correlation between worship attendance and other involvement in church life and an individual or family’s level of giving. Lifting up and celebrating the church’s vision and ministries in a variety of ways – including a narrative budget – and inviting people to participate in the life of the church will be most effective in growing your congregation’s giving.

A: Church Leaders & Other Largest Givers (top 20% - biggest potential for growth)

1. Pastor sends personal, hand-written note to each person/family, thanking them for their participation in the church’s ministry.
2. Stewardship appeal:
 - a. Thanksgiving to God for their faithful leadership
 - b. Giving as spiritual practice, part of discipleship
 - c. “Case for the church”: spiritual home, embodied by its members and empowered by the Spirit (no outside material support), opportunity to participate in doing God’s work in the world, etc.
3. Invite this group to prayerfully consider growing in faith and giving by increasing (a) their pledge by a given percentage*, or (b) the percentage of their income that they give to God’s work through the church. [* Note: This percentage should be higher than what you are hoping to grow your budget for ministry next year; if your goal is 5% overall, ask this group for a 10% increase.]
4. Charts to consider including – for all groups:
 - a. narrative budget
 - b. “step up to the next level” graph (example attached)
 - c. proportional giving (see p. 40-44 of “Annual Enlistment Program” materials)
5. Follow-up:
 - a. reminder phone calls: “we’re counting on you”
 - b. personal thank you from stewardship chair and/or pastor for pledges received
 - c. quarterly pledge & church status report – another opportunity to thank!

B: Faithful, Fair-Share Givers (next 40%)

1. Pastor letter optional.
2. Stewardship appeal: as above, with particular emphasis on making a meaningful gift that connects faith and giving.
3. Suggested % growth in pledge may be lower than for group A, in line with hoped-for increase in overall budget.
4. Same.
5. Same.

C: Yet to See the Light (final 40% & non-pledgers)

By mathematical definition, there will always be people who give less than the average. A number of things may be going on for people in this group:

- The church is not a priority for them. Gulp. For those of us who give as an act of faith and who are passionate about the church's vision and ministries, that is hard to accept. Invite them to share your joy and to be generous, but don't get too frustrated and burn yourselves out if it doesn't happen for others right away. Keep your energy positive!
- They may have grown up in a different faith tradition and not understand that "we are it" in terms of the church's financial resources. Education regarding the church's sources and uses of funds to support your ministries may help.
- They may rely on a perception (myth or old pattern) that a few "angels" will carry the load for others who are not as well off (people usually underestimate their own resources relative to others). Show the distribution of giving and invite them to stretch and join others who are giving at a higher level.
- They may have concerns about something that is/not happening in the life of the church and/or there may be a pastoral care issue. Seeking feedback may help the pastor and church leadership care for the congregation.

D: New-members

New members may need more explicit guidance regarding how to think about their giving in connection to their faith, and where to start in determining how much to give. A personal visit from a member of the stewardship commission who is a faithful giver may be effective.