

# UNDERSTANDING YOUR CONGREGATION'S GIVING CULTURE

Your congregation has a “giving culture.” It has been shaped over many years by your history, size, surroundings, age of membership, and values. It includes stewardship and fund-raising symbols, rituals, and perspectives which give this culture a distinct identity. This giving culture is demonstrated in the language you use and the activities undertaken. It’s embodied in memories and stories. “This is the way we do things around here.” Your giving culture is passed from one generation to another. It may serve you well. It may not. Times and circumstances change. These questions and statements are designed to get you thinking about your congregation’s “giving culture.” Your answers may provide clues for action.

1. When your congregation hears the word “stewardship,” what words come immediately to mind?  
(Check those which come first)

mission  environment  thanksgiving  talent  campaign  time  money  
 possessions  projects  opportunity  offering  caretaker  other words

2. Over the last five years, who leads and conducts stewardship and fund-raising in your congregation?

one or two persons  ongoing committee  temporary committee  pastor  Session  
 Deacons  everyone  other \_\_\_\_\_

3. Over the last five years has there been a particular time when stewardship and fund-raising has been emphasized?  yes  no If so, when \_\_\_\_\_

4. Over the last five years have stewardship and fund-raising approaches been  
essentially revised significantly  
the same modestly changed

5. Is generosity a core value of Christian discipleship in your congregation?  
 not currently  for some  for many  yes, it is

6. Giving has always been a mark of Christian discipleship. The ways in which a believer uses God’s gifts of material goods, personal abilities, and time reflect a faithful response to God’s self-giving in Jesus Christ and Christ’s call to minister to and share with others in the world. How important is this in your congregation?

not  fairly  very  essential  
 important  important  important \_\_\_\_\_

yourself  
key leaders  
members  
pastor

7. What is the attitude in your congregation regarding stewardship and fund raising?

Moan & Groan	Exciting & Committed
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always present	somewhat present	somewhat present	strong foundation
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yourself  
leaders  
members  
pastor

8. Stewardship and fund-raising expectations shape our perceptions, and our perceptions shape our behavior. How would you assess the stewardship and fund-raising expectations in your congregation?

\_\_\_ don't talk about \_\_\_ low expectations \_\_\_ opportunities to grow \_\_\_ very high expectations  
 expectations in meeting expectations

9. God in Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit calls congregations to mission. How would you assess your congregation's understanding of what God is calling it to be and do? Are your future direction and plans, challenges and opportunities, clear and well supported?

unclear 1	2	growing 3	4	clear 5
no support 1	2	some support 3	4	wide support 5

10. People give financially - generously and graciously, eagerly and cheerfully - to God's mission in a number of ways. What ways are present in your congregation?

- \_\_\_ spontaneous giving to unexpected opportunities
- \_\_\_ regular offering
- \_\_\_ special cause or project
- \_\_\_ major project over several years
- \_\_\_ support for the annual budget
- \_\_\_ planned giving
- \_\_\_ others \_\_\_\_\_

11. When someone is asked to give their time and talent in your congregation, what reasons are given?

- \_\_\_ someone has to do it \_\_\_ it's your turn \_\_\_\_\_ your abilities can make a difference
- \_\_\_ a sense of calling \_\_\_ an opportunity to grow in discipleship \_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_

12. The spirit of asking is critical in stewardship and fund-raising. How would you assess this in your congregation?

	half-hearted					gracious
	defensive					sensitive
	negative					positive
1	2	3	4	5		

13 There are many motivations for giving time, talent, possessions, money and many ways to talk about this. For example, people give because of

- compassion - sharing, caring, loving, serving,
- community - fun, fellowship, belonging, a sense of place
- challenge - accomplishment, achievement.
- credible - commendable, reasonable, feasible
- commitment - faithfulness, duty, gratitude, loyalty

What are the motivation factors in your congregation? (Place an X as appropriate.)

<u>motivations</u>	<u>leaders</u>	<u>members</u>	<u>pastor</u>	<u>nonmember</u>
compassion				
community				
challenge				
credible				
commitment				

14. Over the past five years, what metaphor or symbol would you use to describe stewardship and fund raising in your congregation?

Thank you for playing “Understanding Your Congregation’s Giving Culture!” There is much to learn. Hopefully, these questions have stimulated your thinking about stewardship and fund-raising in your congregation, what it is, and what it can become with God’s help and yours!

Two “must read” books led to this instrument. You will learn more if you use them. These are: Kennon L. Callahan, **Giving and Stewardship in an Effective Church: A Guide for Every Member**, Harper, 1992, and Michael Durall, **Creating Congregations of Generous People**, Alban, 1999.

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