

## Understanding & Evaluating your Pledge Campaign

How you describe the performance of your campaign makes a difference to your members and helps influence their giving. When we make the decision to share campaign statistics with our members, we want three outcomes to answer our congregants' questions:



1. To give members a snapshot of how the campaign performed – *did we meet our goals? How much did we raise?*
2. To give members a sense of where their giving ranks with others – *am I a typical donor? Or an outlier? What would happen to the church if I increased my giving? What if I had to decrease it?*
3. To stress the theological importance that every gift matters, and every contributed dollar impacts the ministry of the church – *does my gift matter to my community?*

### What does it mean to meet our goals?

At the annual meeting, we often give a report of the fall campaign and present the budget for the year to come. It is essential that in this report that the Finance Committee and the Stewardship Committee are together in showing how our gifts are tied to our mission. Describing our budget as a mission-based document, enabling us to impact our community, serve our neighbors, and take care of each other and our building gives us a sense that our church finances are more than line items in a budget. That means that when we meet our goals in the campaign, we are not just paying our bills, but we are living our Gospel mandate to seek and serve.

When presenting your campaign success:

1. How much did you raise from how many gifts?
2. If you asked for commitments of time and talent, how many people responded?
3. How many new gifts did the campaign receive?
4. How many households increased their giving?
5. Did anyone indicate that they would like information on planned giving or including the church in their estate plans?

## How does my gift fit in with others?

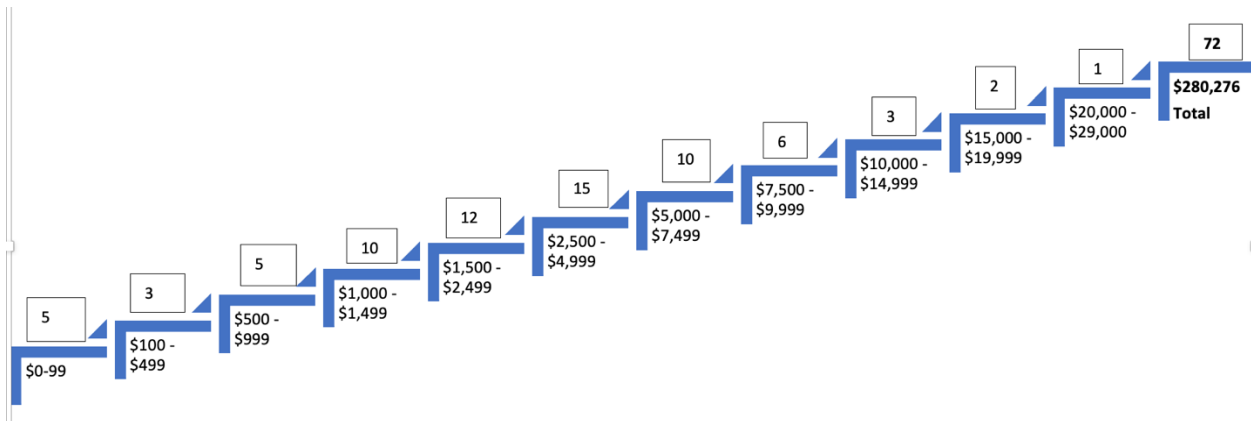
Knowing how our own gift fits into the overall picture of giving in our community helps us understand our own impact. We want our members to feel good about their giving, just as we want them to prayerfully consider their gift, explore how they might be able to increase their giving of time, talent, and treasure, and share their enthusiasm for supporting their church to their neighbors and friends. Consider sharing a few different tools to help members understand their giving.



For this article, let's imagine St. Swithen's Church and look at its recent campaign performance.

### Steps

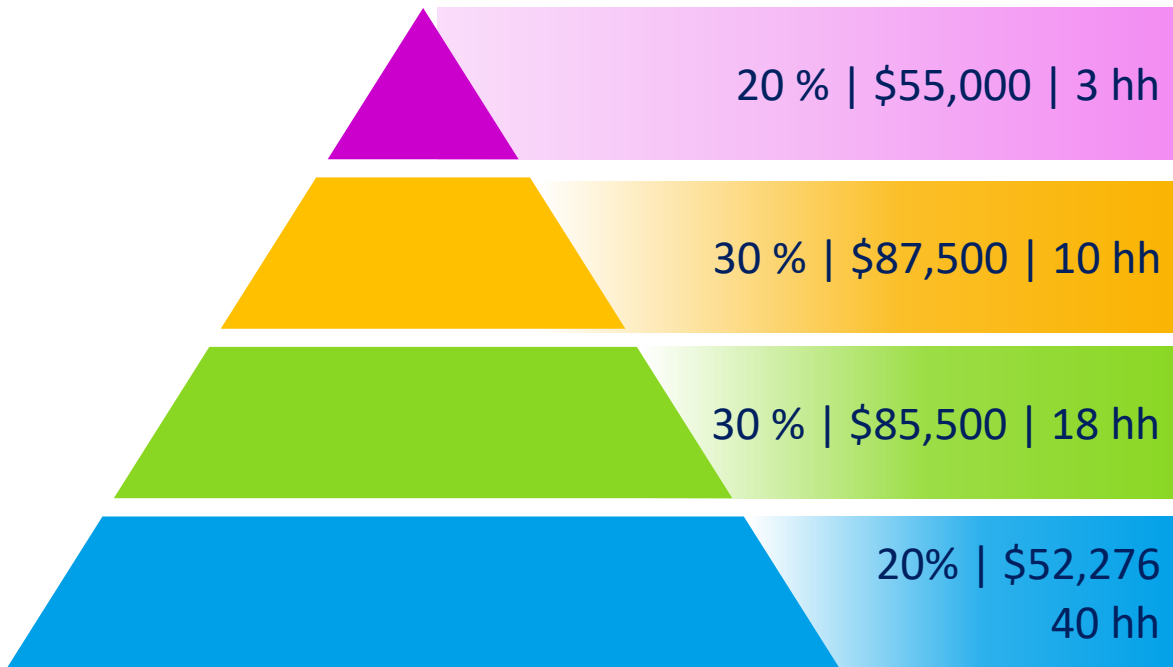
The Steps method shows how many gifts fall into a particular range. It helps us to see how many small gifts and a few large gifts often make up our annual giving spectrum. We can easily locate ourselves there and understand how our gift impacts the whole giving. This tool is particularly useful when we are asking people to consider increasing their giving – it gives them a gentle step to rise to the next level of generosity.



Here we see that St. Swithen's raised \$280,276 from 72 households. Each range lists the number of gifts received within that range. Well done, St. Swithen's!

## Pyramid

Like the Steps document, the Pyramid helps us understand our giving patterns. It particularly shows how the giving total is impacted by each level of giving. How do the smallest gifts combine to create a solid base for our campaign? How do the largest gifts enable our ministry.



Here we are able to see that the top 20% of gifts come from just three donors, while the base 20% come from 40 households.

### When to use the Mean and when to use the Median

How many times have you heard your finance chair or stewardship chair report about the average pledge? Let's take the example of the St. Swithen's campaign described above:

|                  |           |
|------------------|-----------|
| Total Giving:    | \$280,276 |
| Avg Gift (Mean): | \$3,893   |
| Median Gift:     | \$2,500   |

If you were a newcomer to St. Swithen's, and you heard that the average gift is almost \$4,000, you might fall out of your pew. That is a lot of money for many households, and far above what many Episcopalians pledge to their church. But if you heard that the median

gift, or the typical donor, is \$2,500 you might have a better understanding of what people in your community give.

When we use *average pledge* we distort true giving, we promote a false minimum that might scare off our members, and we hide the typical donor – that middle gift – that is the most common in our campaign.

We encourage you to share pledge data with your congregation, using household data and the tools shown above to help your members make their best gift to support the mission and ministry of your congregation. For more information, we encourage you to watch our webinar on Evaluating Your Pledge Campaign available here:

<https://www.tens.org/webinars-events/tens-webinars/evaluating-your-pledge-campaign-2022/>