

# Session One: Funding Your Ministry – Continuing the Good News

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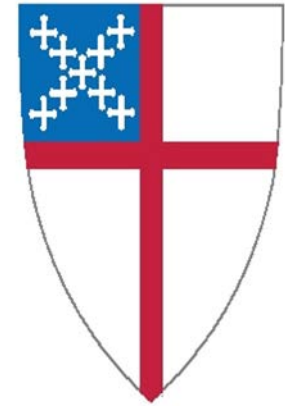
*Session One: Introduction*



# Sobering Statistics

- ▶ Since 2021, the Episcopal Church has witnessed:
  - ▶ 3.5 % decline in membership
  - ▶ 36% decline in Sunday attendance
- ▶ However!
  - ▶ 8.3% increase in contributions
  - ▶ 3.3% in average pledge amount
- ▶ This is an unsustainable trend

*Session One: Examining the Trends*

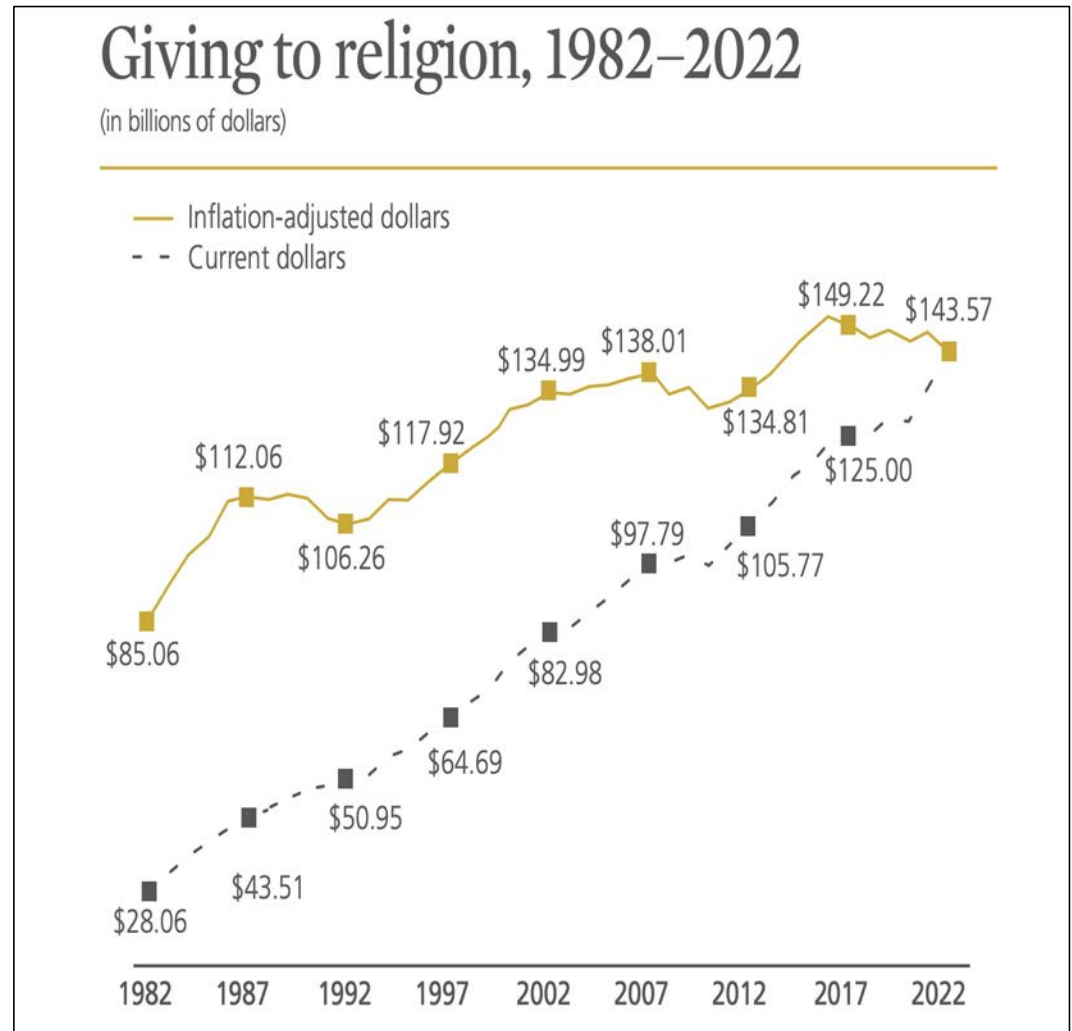


# Sobering Statistics

Since 1982, giving to religion has increased steadily.

Adjusted for inflation, in the US we moved from **\$85.6B to \$143.57B in 40 years**

Source: Giving USA 2023 *Key Findings*



*Session One: Examining the Trends*

# Sobering Statistics

Yet, our market share compared with other charitable sectors has **decreased by nearly 50%**

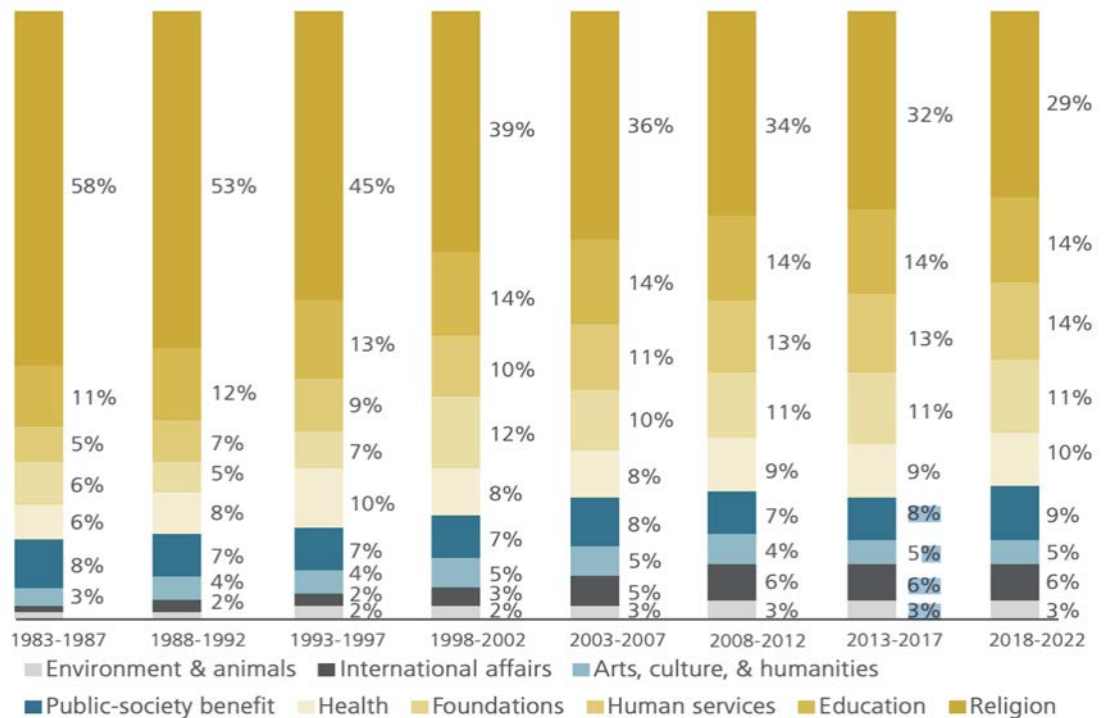
In **1983**, **58%** of charitable donations were for religious institutions. **Today it is 29%**

Source: Giving USA 2023 *Key Findings*

*Session One: Examining the Trends*

## Giving by type of recipient: Percentage of the total in five-year spans, 1983–2022\*

(adjusted for inflation, 2022 = \$100)



\* Does not include "unallocated" or "giving to individuals"

# Reversing the Trends

**There is hope! We can reverse the trends!**

- ▶ Run efficient campaigns that reach everyone
- ▶ Diversify ways people can give
- ▶ Include more voices
- ▶ It's ok to talk about money in church! Get comfortable with it



*Session One: Examining the Trends*

# TENS Theme for 2025

What is the good news that you cannot wait to share with the world? What stories do you have that need to be told, that can help others relate to the world around them? How do you inspire generosity in others by your words, actions, and witness?

The theme of our campaign materials this year focuses on our storytelling, on the way we tell our friends and neighbors about our faith, our ministry, and our mission. What is your good news?

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*And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord,  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior..."* **Luke 1:46-47, NRSV**

*Session One: Materials*



**Tell Out  
My Soul**



**Proclama  
mi alma**

# Recommendations for Your 2025 Pledge Campaign



*Session One: Materials*

# Seasonal and Weekly Inserts

- ▶ Six **Seasonal Inserts**
- ▶ Ten **Weekly Inserts**
- ▶ Showcase a story of struggle, hope, and **Good News**
- ▶ Relate the Gospel to **our stories**
- ▶ Pose a **thoughtful reflection** question

*Session One: Materials*



**Tell Out  
My Soul**

## Every Valley: An Advent Reflection

Each year as the calendar turns to Advent, I find myself thumbing through my music library to pull up The Messiah. Best known for its ending movements and the rousing Hallelujah Chorus, the first movement is my favorite, and the one I begin humming to myself in early December. The prophets tell us of a great power, a person to come, who will level the field and reveal the right path. "Every valley shall be exalted," the Tenor boldly asserts!

Whether it is the Tenor stepping forward for the first solo aria, or visions of a prophet standing in a rocky, winding landscape, the effect is the same: a great work starts with a promise, with a proud proclamation, with someone to point the way. The prophet has something exciting to share with us, something so important that the barriers that stand in the way of hearing and acting on their words will melt away. There is an exchange happening here: the prophet has something to share, and we, who hear the message, have something to receive. When we do, the shock waves of those words will batter down mountains and smooth the rough edges within us.

This same transformation happens when we share our gifts with the church. Our investments of time, talent, and treasure are the natural response to having heard the words of the prophet and having been changed by their message. However you respond to the prophet, the world around you is being made ready to receive what you will share with it. And in every direction, as the chorus answers the Tenor, "The Glory of the Lord will be revealed." [@tens](#)



### Questions for Reflection:

As you ease into Advent this year, pay attention to the tug of the prophet - what is it that you are hearing? How does it cause you to act? Does it fill you with the urge to share that good news and goodness with others?



Cn. J. Davey Gerhard serves as Executive Director of TENS: The Episcopal Network for Stewardship, and works diligently each year to make space for Advent amidst the busy December hustle.



THE EPISCOPAL  
NETWORK FOR  
STEWARDSHIP

# Weekly Inserts

- ▶ Showcase diverse messages of abundance in communities of faith
- ▶ They can be used in a post-service **coffee hour** as a forum for discussion, or in a **weekly small-group meeting**
- ▶ Each reflection suggests a couple of questions designed to **engage us on stewardship** topics
- ▶ The reflections can also serve as **inspiration for a sermon** on stewardship

*Session One: Materials*



**Tell Out  
My Soul**



**Proclama  
mi alma**

# Narrative Budgets

- ▶ Line-item budgets are important, but they don't tell the whole story. **Don't allow your budget to control** the conversation about the case
- ▶ Consider including a **narrative budget**
- ▶ <https://www.tens.org/resource-library/tools-best-practices/creating-a-congregation-narrative-budget/>

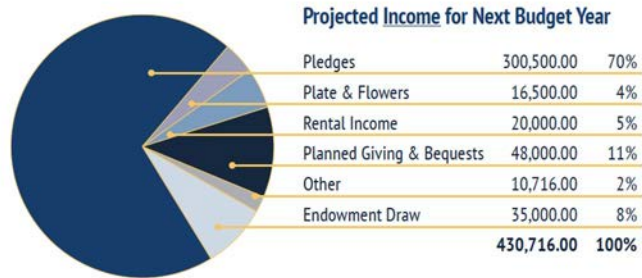
*Session One: Materials*

<p>How to Create a <b>NARRATIVE BUDGET</b></p>	<p><b>SAINT SWITHEN'S</b> Narrative Budget</p>
<p><b>1. CHOOSE</b> an image that best represents the church. <i>Examples might be the building itself, the congregation seated at services, or the clergy in action.</i></p> <p><b>2. WRITE</b> a short summary of the congregation and its mission.</p>	 <p>St. Swithen's is a community of ... &lt;summary of congregation and mission.&gt; A narrative budget spreads fixed costs, like utilities, facilities, and salaries across program areas so that we see the impact of our money.</p>



## How We Fund Our Budget

Like many communities of faith, we **rely on pledges and gifts** from our members to support our ministry. Pledges account for 70% of our annual income, with plate offerings and other special offerings comprising another 6%. We are **entirely self-funded**. We do not receive financial support from the diocese for our operations.



## How We Allocate Our Budget

Our budget reflects the values we shape and share with the world around us. Each of us in our varied ways, employing our many blessings and gifts, build a better world through our love of God, self, and neighbor. We align our budget with the work of our life together.



*Session One: Materials*

By describing your budget in terms of your ministry priorities, you are drawing a direct line between the dollars donated and the work being done.



# Testimonials Tell the Story

*There is no better way to communicate impact than for members to tell their stories of support*

## Include things like:

- ▶ What made them come on their first Sunday and keep coming back?
- ▶ What program or ministry they love best
- ▶ What their children have learned in Sunday School
- ▶ A time when the community was *there for them*

*Session One: Stewardship Best Practices*



# Testimonials Tell the Story

*Ministry Impact Reports are Important Stewardship Messages*

**Ask volunteers or ministry-beneficiaries to share:**

- ▶ What the program means to them
- ▶ What joy they have in serving (tell a story)
- ▶ What makes them feel good about this program / ministry
- ▶ What it would mean if this ministry didn't exist

*Session One: Stewardship Best Practices*



# Make Planned Giving a part of your Campaign

- ▶ Your pledge card should ask if your members have made provision in their estate for the church, or if they would like to.
  - ▶ Soft asks repeated frequently plant the seed that legacy gifts are important spiritual tools
- ▶ Many members consider legacy gifts to be a “pledge legacy” – the ability for the church to receive a lifetime gift equal to their annual gift in perpetuity
- ▶ The number one reason people do not leave a legacy gift is because they were not asked!



*Session One: Stewardship Best Practices*

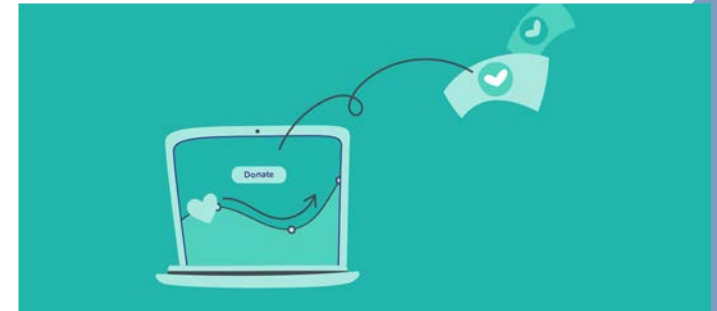


# Virtual Stewardship

*Every congregation should have the ability to collect donations and pledges online and via mobile platforms.*

## **For plate and pledge:**

- ▶ It is no longer usual for individuals to carry cash. More and more people use their credit and debit cards for transactions.
- ▶ Receipts are automatic, as are thank-you acknowledgements
- ▶ Most donation software gives you at least basic information to reach out to visitors – at bare minimum, an email address or phone number tied to a real name
- ▶ More donors rely on online or mobile platforms to make recurring or one-time gifts to nonprofits than ever before.



*Session One: Stewardship Best Practices*



# Maximize Donations by Maximizing Opportunity

- ▶ Publicize and implement multiple ways of making gifts for annual campaigns
  - ▶ Gifts directly from retirement accounts (Qualified Charitable Distributions)
    - ▶ Many donors use their Required Minimum Distribution to make their annual gifts
  - ▶ Donor Advised Funds
    - ▶ Donors make a grant from their DAF for the church
  - ▶ Bank Checks / ACH transfers
  - ▶ Online Platforms
  - ▶ Mobile Giving
  - ▶ Workplace / Matching Gifts
  - ▶ Stock and Securities

*Session One: Stewardship Best Practices*



# Other Revenue Streams?

- ▶ Your mission funding strategy might be like a confluence of rivers
  - ▶ Donate a Car
  - ▶ Silent Auction
  - ▶ Spaghetti Dinner
  - ▶ Craft Fair / Rummage Sales
  - ▶ ...



*Session One: Stewardship Best Practices*



# Strategies for Difficult Topics

- ▶ Create Safe Space
  - ▶ **Nurture all voices** but keep any one voice from dominating
  - ▶ Allow silence or time to process – **give space** for introverts
- ▶ Keep things positive
  - ▶ That doesn't mean everything has to be “just fine”
  - ▶ **Dwell on what's possible**
- ▶ If running small groups, train your small-group leaders or conversation partners on facilitation
  - ▶ **Leaders don't need to have all the answers**
- ▶ **Pray for each other** in group and outside of group
  - keep each other in your hearts



*Session One: Talking about Money & Faith*



# Challenges in Stewardship

*How to talk about money when there is economic fallout from inflation or other disruptions*

- ▶ There is **no shame** in a household pledging less this year than other years. Every gift matters.
- ▶ Remember, **some families are not struggling right now**, so some of your members may be able to increase their giving.
- ▶ **Every conversation about pledges is a pastoral one.**
- ▶ **Check in with clergy** about the people on your list, and follow up if **pastoral concerns** arise.
- ▶ We remember the Great Recession in 2008-2009. We recovered, and we will recover again. **This too, shall pass.**
- ▶ Christians are people of Hope.
- ▶ **The work of the church is more acute in times of need.**

*Session One: Talking about Money & Faith*



# Challenges in Stewardship

*How to talk about stewardship if your congregation is facing budget cuts, program cuts, or staff reduction*

- ▶ Keep your conversation **focused on the mission**
  - ▶ The work of the church continues because the needs of our neighbors are still present.
  - ▶ We may have fewer resources to spend on mission, so we find other ways to do the work of God.
- ▶ Did your congregation receive any assistance from the diocese or other organizations?
- ▶ There may be some members who can make extraordinary gifts to cover these unexpected shortfalls.
  - **ask them**



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# Challenges in Stewardship

*How to talk about stewardship in times of uncertainty*

- ▶ Our times are often uncertain, it is our **Christian hope** and our prudent planning that can help us prepare and survive this uncertainty.
- ▶ **Pledges can be changed** throughout the year if circumstances change – we are open and honest
- ▶ We can also make gifts from securities or other channels which **may be performing better**.
- ▶ **The most important thing is to teach that all giving matters**, regardless of the amount. Be prayerful.



*Session One: Talking about Money & Faith*



# Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry is a model of design thinking or development that focuses on what is **possible**, what is **good**, what is **exciting**. It purposely does not ask negative questions or frame problems. It is a solutions-based, inclusive way to engage in respectful conversation.

In your small-group discussions using the weekly inserts, consider asking the following appreciative inquiry questions:



*Session One: Talking about Money & Faith*



# Appreciative Inquiry

*Use these or other questions to get the conversation started...*

1. Ask the questions posed in the reflection.
2. What ministry of our congregation is most hopeful or most exciting to you? Why?
3. If money were no object, what service to our neighborhood / neighbors would you hope to begin? Why?
4. What are examples that you can name of nonprofits, organizations, or other churches that are doing remarkable work in our community? Why are they inspiring to you?
5. Which of your gifts are you most willing to share with our church? (Some examples: music, accounting, website, answering the phone, yardwork, translation, invitation, having fun, leading groups, cooking food...) Why?

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# Asking for Money for Mission

## *How to make the ask*

- ▶ Renewal: Susan, this year we are raising more money than ever to fund our youth program, outreach to elders, and to help our community. Mary and I made our gift to the campaign, will you join us in supporting the campaign this year?
- ▶ Increase: Jonathan, my husband and I increased our giving this year because we want to see our congregation grow. Can you make a stretch gift to the campaign this year?
- ▶ Tough Year: Dick and Bill, your giving to our church has been so faithful all these years, and I know this has been a tough year for you. Still, I am asking you to make a gift to our pledge campaign, no matter the amount. Will you?
- ▶ Newcomer: Cindy, you and your family are new to our congregation, are there any questions I can answer about why we raise money through pledges or how you can join us?

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# Breakouts

*Get into diads, and pick one of the scenarios:*

- ▶ Renewal
- ▶ Increase
- ▶ Tough Year
- ▶ Newcomer

In addition to making the ask, what resources do you need?

- ▶ Strategies
- ▶ Materials / support documents
- ▶ Conversation prompts

*Debrief in your small group*

*Session One: Talking about Money & Faith*





Thank you!

For more information, tools, webinars, and resources, visit [www.tens.org](http://www.tens.org)

Our password for 2025: Luke1:46

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