A Generosity Audit Guide
Author: Rev. Dr. Clayton Smith

The Following is a Proposed Plan for a Dynamic Local Church Stewardship and Generosity Audit Process:

Invite Your Key Lay Leaders, Committees and Teams

- ***Trustees***
- ***Investment***
- ***Memorial Committee***
- ***Church Council***
- ***Endowment or Planned Giving Committee***
- ***Capital Campaign Leaders***
- ***Stewardship and Generosity Team***
- ***Pastor and Staff***
- ***Others who may have a financial focus like, mission, education, etc.***

This event might best be sponsored by the Finance Committee.

Sample Agenda: (Please adapt and modify the agenda to best fit your needs)

Welcome and Introductions	***Finance Chair***
Devotional and Reflection Time	***Pastor***
Begin with the Key Question:	***Consultant or Facilitator***

<u>Why</u> take the time to do a Stewardship and Generosity Audit?
List what your goals are for this meeting. (see options below)

The process is valuable because it offers the follow benefits:

- Informs your decisions about what ministry initiatives, mission projects, or programs in your church could be continued, improved, started or discontinued
- Make a case for increased leadership resources and funding for your stewardship program to help members become better in stewardship and generosity practices
- Enables you to strategically plan ways you can improve stewardship and generosity programs that will provide more vital ministry and mission
- Encourages you to complete your in-house audit and do an external audit of factors in your community and economy that influence generosity today
- Other needs and benefits for your church?

Begin your planning process to see if you need a strategic plan.

If you've ever been through a SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) you will know that this process is helpful. You identify what you're currently doing, what you want to do, and where the gaps are between reality and your vision.

Then, you write a strategic plan that bridges the gap between what you have now and what you need in the next three years. Keep in mind that all you do is based on your local church's mission, vision, and purpose statements.

Generosity grows when it is mission focused!

The process has at least four steps:

1. Begin with a self-analysis on how your stewardship and generosity program currently works

    - Strengths
    - Weaknesses
    - Opportunities
    - Threats

2. Your task is to discover what new measurable goals and objectives are needed for each of the next three years. (1-3 per year)

3. Prepare a new strategic plan for Stewardship and Generosity Ministry, evaluate and revise it in January of each year for the next three years.

4. Better understand how others see your church's ministry:

Be an investigative reporter and ask lots of questions.
Interview key leaders and get their responses.
Begin by asking questions to document the current stewardship and giving process.
Because stewardship happens across many areas of ministry, start by asking a series of questions:

What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to your church's overall financial stewardship program?
What giving models need attention?
What financial educational and budgeting classes do you offer?
What new models and programs need to be started?
Does the Stewardship and Generosity Team have a voice and vote on the Finance Committee or Church Council?

Who is in contact with donors and key leaders that could be interviewed– pastors, staff, volunteers, and others?

Sometimes your church may want to hire a professional church-related firm or consultant to assist to make this more objective and confidential.

If you've ever been through a Business Process Analysis (BPA) or non-profit S.W.O.T. Analysis you might see some similarities. You must identify what you're currently doing, what you want to do, and where the gaps are between reality and your vision. Then, you can write strategic stewardship plan that bridges the gap between what you have and what you want. Keep it simple. Take one step at a time.

Your process may have at least four steps and may require two or more meetings:

First Session can begin with a S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS –

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION: (someone in each group take notes)
Small Group Recorder reports back to the larger group.

Determine how your program currently works: ask lots of questions.

The first steps are straight forward asking questions and document your current stewardship process. Because generosity happens across many areas of ministry, start by asking each area a series of questions. These are basic questions so be sure to add several questions that speak to your specific situation at your church.

What are the **strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats** to your church's financial stewardship program?

Here are some key questions for you to consider:

First time and Large Gifts:

- What happens after a large/major gift is received?
- How are acknowledgement letters (with tax language) generated?
- Who signs the thankyou letters/notes?
- What reports are produced that document recent gifts? Who receives these reports?

Foundation Endowment and Funds and Legacy Gifts:

- How many members have made a planned gift?
- Do you have an active Endowment Committee or Legacy Team?
- Do you consult with your area UMC Foundation for help and planning?
- Do your major donors receive personal acknowledgements after major gifts?
- Is there a set process or society for recognizing donors?
- Do you offer estate planning or legacy workshops?
- How do you keep ongoing track of your donor interests?

- What is your goal for new legacy gifts each year?
- Do you prepare an Annual Legacy Report?

Annual Stewardship Campaign:
- How are new members welcomed and expected to return a commitment card at the time they join?
- Are all members expected to make an annual estimate of giving?
- How are members who have lapsed/long lapsed tracked?
- Is there a way to track donor interests?
- How do you say thank you for those who return a commitment card?
- What percentage of your members return an annual commitment card?

Designated/Restricted Fund Process:
- If they ask, are donors informed about how they can set up a designated or restricted fund?
- How is the donor's intent for the funds documented?
- Is there language which protects the church from spending the funds if the restriction is no longer viable?
- How is stewardship information about the donor documented?
- How do you make annual giving the priority before receiving a designated gift?
- Do you review all designated fund balances at least annually with the finance committee, staff, and church council?

Memorial and Enduring Gifts:
- How are memorial gifts acknowledged?
- Do you have an annual memorial report to the congregation for the gifts received and those who have been remembered with these gifts?
- Do you have examples of potential memorial gifts that families can choose from?
- Does your memorial committee follow up with all families and donors?
- Do you have a memorial book or on-line memorial tribute?

Annual Giving:
- How often do members receive solicitations in worship? Other requests?
- How often do donors receive a thank you about the impact of their gift?
- Do you thank first time donors?
- Is there a system in place to track relationships, groups, activity?
- Is there a way to track donor interests?
- Do you offer electronic fund transfer and other online giving options?
- Do you mail quarterly and year-end financial statements?
- How many and what type of biblically based financial management classes do you offer? What books, classes, or resources would fit your congregation's needs?
- Are you reaching different generations? Do you have a focus on baby boomers?

- How many communication channels are available for stewardship – social media, web, mobile, phone, etc.?
- What stewardship initiatives already exist?

Strategic Mission and Emergency Appleals:

- How often do you take special offerings?
- Do you take Christmas Eve and or Easter Mission Offerings?
- What are the other fundraising events that you have each year?

Rating Your Congregation's Generous Giving:

How would you rate the effectiveness of your stewardship education and support for these sources of gifts? Rate on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the highest:

___ Spontaneous giving
___ Pledged giving
___ Un-pledged and loose plate offering
___ Special/Emergency appeals/offerings
___ Capital project/building giving
___ Designated giving – donor directed
___ Planned gifts to the Foundation/Endowment Committee
___ Memorial Gifts
___ New Member Giving
___ Other

Second Session: Drafting your Strategic Plan

What are the Top Three Strategic Needs for your church in the next 12 months?

Analyze and prepare a report of your congregations giving in the above areas for the past three years. Ask yourself, what areas of giving need to improve. You may then want to write a three-year plan. Limit each year to no more than 3-5 measurable goals.

Work with your Finance Team (and Consultant, if needed) to determine your overall Stewardship and Generosity Strategic Plan. The next three steps are very important. Your goal would be to have a **clear and concise** development plan (keep it **simple** and base it on your church's vision and purpose) for each giving plan or model. You may want to work on improving one plan/area at a time.

Determine which model is the greatest priority. For example, you may want to first develop ideas to improve the Annual Stewardship Campaign Program.

These models need to complement each other, not compete. Each model can be a focus at different times of the year to build a culture of generosity in your local church.

- Annual Giving Plan (completed by the Stewardship and Generosity Team)
- Planned Giving Plan (completed with the help of your Area Foundation and Planned Giving, Legacy Team, or Endowment Team)
- Memorial Giving Plan (completed by the Memorial Committee)
- Strategic Mission/Emergency Giving Appeals (Senior Pastor and Staff)
- Major Donor Development Plan (Senior Pastor and Key Staff Leader)
- Capital Campaign/Building Fund (as needed)
- Other Fundraising events

Key Leaders Follow up Steps:

- Determine how your giving programs and models currently work (S.W.O.T.) Measure the results in the last 3 years. Average the last 3 years to determine your giving goals for the next year.
- Determine goals and objectives for giving in the next 12 months and then next 3 years. Start with 2-3 achievable goals and add other additional goals each year. Annual goals should be specific, measurable, achievable, results focused, and time bound.
- Reconcile current models with new goals and objectives--what works and what needs to be improved?
- Write a new three-year plan. *Always base these goals* on the church's vision and mission, and purpose statements.

Third Session: Finalize your Strategic Plan for Stewardship and Generosity

Write a new three-year strategic plan to improve the stewardship and generosity of your church based on your church's vision and purpose. Ask the Church Council and Charge/Church Conference consider and approve.

Key Questions that can be addressed by your Strategic Plan:

1. How often do members receive special giving appeals in worship? Other requests?
2. How often do donors receive information about the impact of their gift?
3. Is there a system in place to track members' areas of service?
4. Is there a way to track donor participation and interests?
5. Do we use mobile giving, kiosks, or other giving program like electronic fund transfer?
6. How many communication channels are available to celebrate and teach stewardship and generosity education – social media, web, print, phone, etc.?
7. What ongoing stewardship initiatives already exist? What programs are not fruitful and need to be eliminated?
8. Will your pastor use uplifting stewardship and generosity stories/lessons in sermons at least quarterly?

9. Ask yourself, what are the top three areas of giving that need improvement? What are your next steps?
10. What stewardship and generosity educational classes and training does your local church need to create a more generous church?
11. Will your local church leadership support your pastor's leadership to direct the funding ministry?
12. Will the pastor, in cooperation with the financial secretary, have access to and responsibility for professional stewardship of congregational giving records? (The Book of Discipline, UMC, 2016, paragraph 340,2c.)

For more information read:

PROPEL- Good Stewardship, Greater Generosity **by Clayton Smith**
Abingdon Press https://www.cokesbury.com/Propel

For questions, contact:

Rev. Dr. Ken Sloane, ksloane@umcdiscipleship.org
Rev. Dr. Clayton L. Smith, claytonlsmith@icloud.com

Rev. Dr. Clayton L. Smith, Retired Executive Pastor,
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