



Generosity ABOUNDS!

Creating a Culture of Generosity in Your Church

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Introduction: Creating a Culture of Generosity in Your Church

Throughout the Bible, God promises abundance and desires for us to share in it. God has given us everything we really need! Our cup overflows with gifts that are unmerited and available for all. When we believe in God's abundance - -that there is enough for all - - we are inclined toward generosity and sharing.

Despite this truth, many churches find themselves struggling with the purpose and practice of stewardship. Although Christians are called to be stewards of what God has provided, talking about money seems distasteful to many in a Christian setting. Fettered by fear, many churches grapple with how to help the church grow, what impact the church is having both on the congregation and in the community; and perhaps scariest of all: what will happen to the church in the future.

Jesus was not afraid to talk about money during his ministry on earth. Yet every time Jesus talked about money, he was really talking about *relationships*. Whether we are grappling with our own money hang-ups or the concerns of our church growth, Jesus asks us to consider the same thing he asked his followers: **What is our relationship to money, each other, and Christ?**

"Who do you say that I am?"

Answering these questions will change your church, no matter its size, makeup, or location. It will begin to unlock the doors and usher in new life and new hope for what is possible in your church. Instead of just raising money, it will create a holistic culture of generosity, in which your congregation is excited to be part of what is happening because they are growing in faith, in generosity, and in the image of Christ.

If your church is ready to begin a process of creating a culture of generosity, consider the following:

1. **Who should be involved?** Ideally this would be a small, diverse group of church leaders along with a few people who are new to the church or who are not in leadership but have influence.
2. **How much time should we allot for this purpose?** You may want to consider: What is our church culture in terms of taking on special projects and moving those projects forward? Do we move quickly, steadily, or slowly? The process can take a few months, up to a year.
3. **When should we begin?**
4. **Are there funds to cover the cost of consultation or printed resources, if needed?**
5. **What is our relationship to technology?** You will need to access the internet, connect with online virtual meeting platforms, and utilize Word and Excel documents, as well as open PDF documents.

When you are ready, contact the United Methodist Foundation of West Ohio if you would like assistance of any kind with this process. Call Susan Black at 380-223-9257 at sblack@wocumc.org.



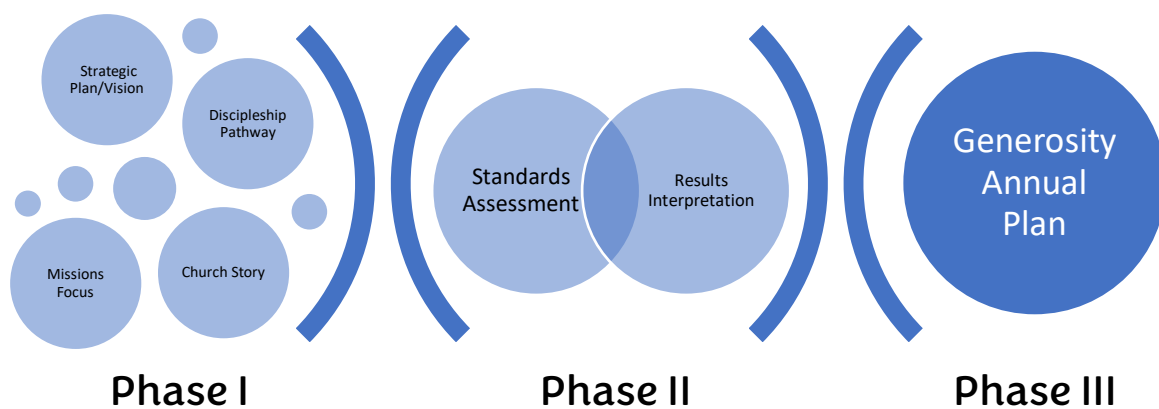
Generosity Abounds! Toolkit and Consultation Program Overview

To help churches answer these crucial questions and plan for creating a culture of generosity, UMFWO has created a stewardship education toolkit and optional consultation process. It was developed with available resources from across the UMC Connection. Built primarily on the stewardship standards of the Indiana Conference and resources from UMC Discipleship Ministries, this toolkit will help churches see their stewardship not as an annual campaign but rather as a holistic process for creating a culture of generosity within the church that ultimately:

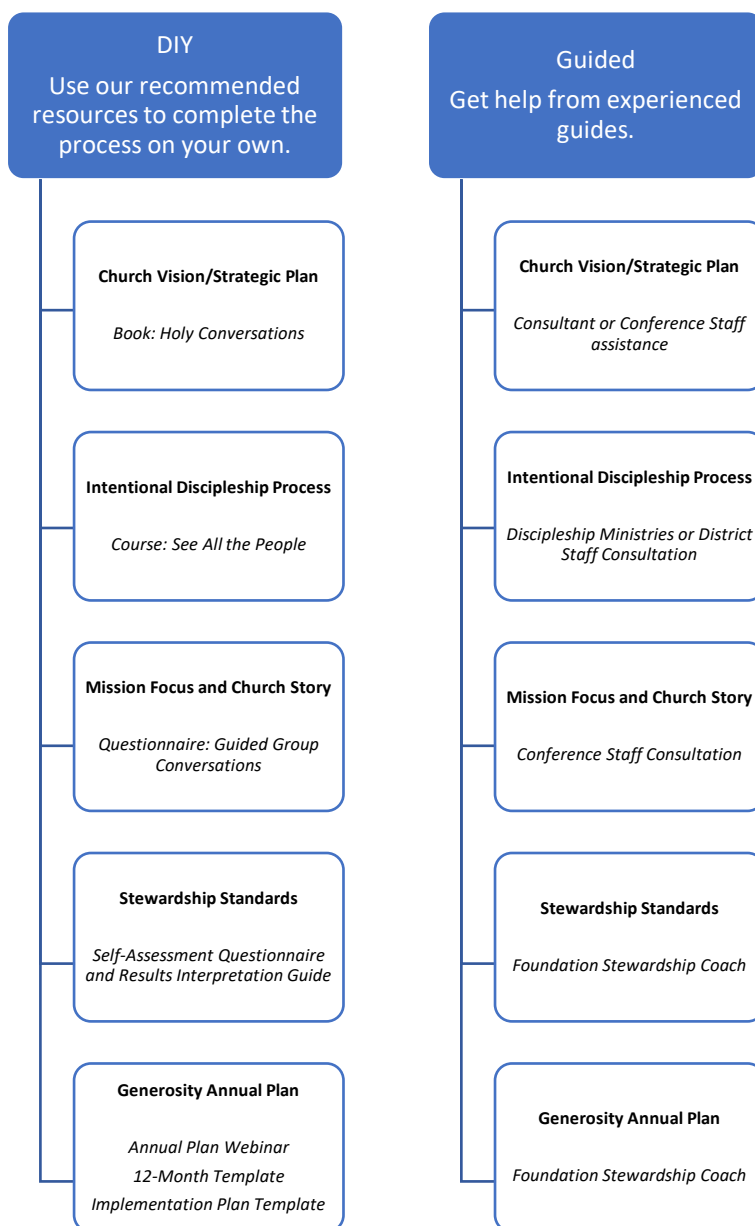
- Increases congregational engagement;
- Increases revenue;
- Strengthens commitment to faith and faithful living;
- Focuses church ministry and mission programming.

Congregations have the option to complete the three phases of the program on their own (“DIY”) using our free curated resources; or to contact the Foundation for assistance with building a team of consultants comprised of Foundation staff, District and Conference staff, Discipleship Ministries staff and outside consultants; or a combination of both DIY and guided options. Here is an illustration of the 3 phases followed by a breakdown of how the program can be accomplished either “DIY” or with consultation.

Phased Approach Illustration



DIY and Guided Options Overview



Phase I

Church Discernment Process

Phase I Prayer :

*Disturb us, Lord, when we are too well pleased with ourselves; when our dreams have come true because we have dreamed too little; when we arrive safely because we have sailed too close to shore. Disturb us, Lord, when with the abundance of the things we possess, we have lost our thirst for the water of life. Stir us, Lord, to dare more boldly, to venture on wider seas, where storms will show your mastery; where losing sight of land, we shall find the stars. We ask you to push back the horizons of our hopes and to push us into the future in strength, courage, hope and love. Amen.**

Introduction to the Church Discernment Process

Before you can improve the culture of generosity within your church, we recommend your congregation begin with a period of discernment. Below are three recommended processes for your church leadership to consider. Ideally, these should be completed before building a stewardship program.

Church Strategic Plan

While it is somewhat unusual for a church to undertake a strategic plan, the process can serve as a guide or map for your church, offering a pathway from where you are to where you want to go. It allows you to analyze your current structure and programs and determine how well these are serving your church and if they should continue, grow, or cease. This process also allows the leaders of a church to dream about what they want the church to accomplish, while considering the resources that will be necessary to get there and crafting an implementation plan to achieve it. (Timeframe: varies from a 2-day retreat to a 6-9 month process.)

Resources for Church Strategic Plan:

DIY:

- Kotan, Kay and Ken Willard. [Strategy Matters: Your Roadmap for an Effective Ministry Planning Retreat.](#)
- Kotan, Kay. [Strategic Planning to Carry Out New Expeditions.](#) (2022)
- Willard, Ken. [The What, Why and Where of the New Expedition.](#) (2022)
- [Focus Strategy Kit: The Ultimate Strategic Planning Tool](#)
- Texas Methodist Foundation Holy Conversations guide (pdf) available from UMFWO.

Guided: The Foundation can recommend consultants to assist you with this process. The cost for a consultant varies.

Alternatives to the Strategic Planning Process

Most churches will choose not to undertake a full strategic planning process for a variety of reasons. As an alternative to a full strategic plan, we recommend completing the following processes.

I. Church Mission and Vision Statement Review: *If you do not have a mission statement or vision statement for your church or have not reviewed it in more than 10 years, consider taking the time to review or craft these messages. This process can be part of a church strategic planning process or a stand-alone activity. (Timeframe: varies from 1 day to 3 months.)*

Resources for Church Mission and Vision Statements:

1. DIY: Read [this article](#) from Ken Sloane at UMC Discipleship Ministries.
2. Guided: WOC and District staff are available to assist you with creating a church mission or vision statement.

II. Church Story Process: *Your church has a story to tell! It is one that your congregation needs to hear, as well as those who are considering coming to your church. Crafting this story is not something that should be left to chance, but instead should be intentionally and creatively written to engage your church and community. (Timeframe: a few hours for the first meeting and up to a month for editing.)*

Resources for Church Story Process:

1. DIY: Church Story Process pdf at the end of this packet.
2. Guided: Foundation staff is available to assist you in writing your church story.

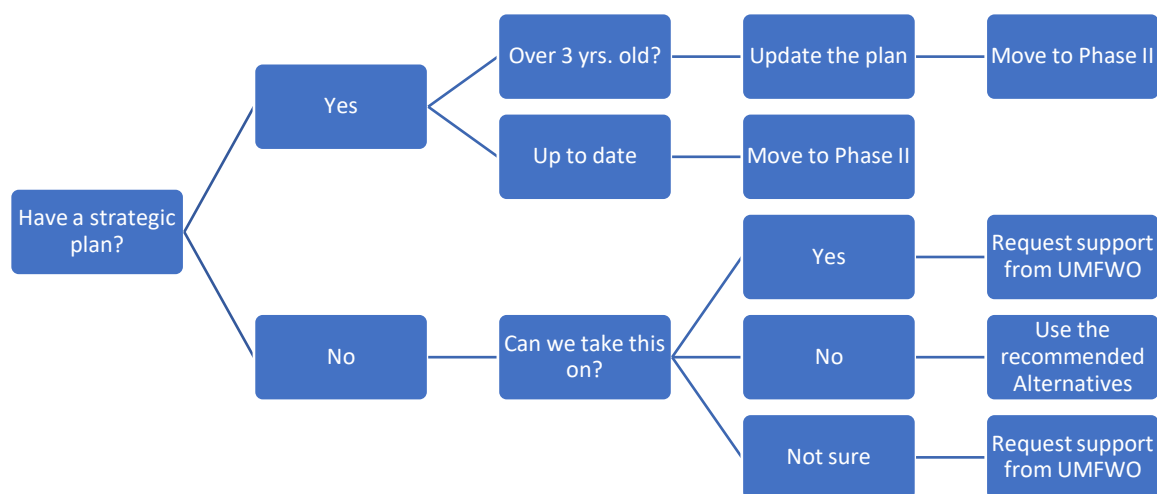
III. Mission Giving Discernment Process: *Many churches support missions and missionaries in a reactive versus proactive manner. Your church has the opportunity to have a greater impact if the congregation considers which missions and missionaries align with the values, goals, objectives, and unique skills and interests of the congregation. When this process is undertaken, the missions and missionaries receiving support from your congregation will enhance your church story and extend the love of Christ into the world with greater impact. (Timeframe: 1-3 months.)*

Resources for Mission Giving Discernment Process:

1. DIY: Mission Giving Discernment Process pdf at the end of this packet.
2. Guided: WOC staff are available to help guide your mission giving discernment process.

Decision Tree for Strategic Planning

If you're having trouble deciding if strategic planning is right for your church, or you aren't sure which path to take, use this decision tree.



Intentional Discipleship System

The most important process any church can undertake is developing an intentional disciple-making or faith formation system or pathway. Intentional discipleship means you know and have planned out the many ways that people new to the faith enter into your church and move to deeper levels of maturity in their relationship with Jesus Christ.

This process involves developing a pathway of discipleship for everyone in the congregation along with plans to promote and support this process as a primary activity. **Even if you choose not to complete the other suggested processes, please prioritize this one.** (Timeframe: 1-5 months.)

Resources for Discipleship Pathway Process:

1. DIY: [UMC Discipleship Ministries See All the People](#)
2. Guided: WOC, District staff and UMC Discipleship Ministries staff are happy to assist you with this process.

Pro Tip: Short on time and want to get to the heart of the matter quickly? After reviewing or crafting your mission and vision statements together, divide your committee in two and ask half to work on the Intentional Discipleship System while the other half works on crafting your church story, and completing a mission giving discernment process. Come back together to share your work and then start Phase II, your Generosity Assessment.

Phase II

Assessment and Results Interpretation

Phase II Prayer

*Gracious God, giver of all we have and hold as stewards; grant the people of this church a deep and abiding awareness that all things come from you – our health, our incomes, our jobs, our talents and our generous impulse. Send your Holy Spirit to help us as we swim against the rising tides of materialism, envy, individualism, and greed in our culture. When we are tempted to think of money as a private matter, remind us that you have asked for part of what we are given, to be returned to you as a symbol of our awareness that you give all we have. And further, help us to help each other in this grace of giving, for you are the lover of our souls and call us to nothing less than transformation in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Introduction to the Stewardship Standards: Basic to Extraordinary

Every church is different. Like a family or an individual, each church has its strengths and weaknesses, its past successes and failures, and its hopes for a better future. Taking stock of your current stewardship practices and weighing those in light of “best practices” or an ideal approach, can be a healthy way to get your leadership engaged and ready to lead in the area of generosity.

In Phase II, you will consider the position of your church on a continuum from Basic to Extraordinary as it pertains to best practices in five key areas of stewardship: Leadership, Education, Mission Giving, Budgeting and Accounting. Let’s look at a description of each type of stewardship approach.

The Basic Approach to Church Stewardship

Churches that employ the basic approach to stewardship typically have a specific time of year in which stewardship is discussed; and/or the pastor preaches on giving 1-2 times per year. This may also include a special “Giving Sunday”, the use of pledge cards or tithe envelopes and the like. Planning for this approach is handled either by the pastor and church staff; or possibly by the church administrative council or Leadership Board.

The stewardship program may or may not employ any particular theme or fundraising guide. It’s unlikely that the pastor knows the giving habits of the members/attendees but, in alignment with the BOD, has access to the records. There are at least two ways and likely 3 ways to give: offering plate, mailed tithe envelopes, and online options.

Personal financial literacy may be encouraged by providing information to attendees on classes such as *Financial Peace University*. Age-group appropriate stewardship education may accompany the once-a-year campaign or be incorporated into Sunday School or small group study. Ideally, church leaders preach and teach the theological basis for financial stewardship. The church may or may not collect and share stories of faithful stewardship among the congregation.

The church may be involved in a variety of mission giving efforts related or unrelated to the UMC. Missionaries visit annually and the church shares information about them throughout the year.

In adherence to the BOD, the church is paying all apportionments. The church creates, presents, and adopts a budget through the action of the local church governing body; and administers and evaluates the financial budget on a regular basis.

The church adheres to basic accounting principles.

The Growing Church Approach to Church Stewardship

A growing church establishes a separate stewardship committee tasked with determining an annual stewardship plan. This plan involves the pastor preaching/teaching on stewardship at least once a quarter and involves one or more special Giving or Celebration Sundays along with age-appropriate stewardship education throughout the year. There are multiple ways to give including encouraging members to give gifts of appreciated assets like stock.

The growing church believes in the importance of personal financial literacy education, so it hosts or conducts its own faith-based personal financial literacy seminar or workshop series. To reinforce the concepts of faithful stewardship, the growing church collects and shares stories of faithful giving as well as stories about the impact of UMC Connectional Giving. The church pays all apportionments and has a speaker about connectional giving at least once a year or every two years.

Mission giving is an important part of church life. The congregation supports one or more UMC missions, and/or missionaries and participates in Special Sunday Offerings that support global missions. Stories about missions are incorporated into the worship experience in intentional and experiential ways.

When it comes to budgeting, the growing church involves laity in determining budget priorities and makes budget information available to the entire church. The church utilizes standard accounting practices and makes regular financial and ministry progress reports to the church.

The Mature Church Stewardship Approach

A mature church not only establishes a separate stewardship committee but trains the committee on stewardship best practices. The committee may seek outside counsel to assist as it undertakes developing an annual stewardship plan as part of the church calendar. This includes planning and implementing specific events to challenge members to grow in their giving. The committee reviews and evaluates the stewardship program annually. There are multiple ways to give, including appreciated assets, and the church has an endowment overseen by an Endowment Committee.

Similar to the stewardship plan, the mature church develops and executes a financial stewardship education plan that includes conducting a faith-based personal financial literacy seminar and offering age-appropriate stewardship education year-round. Mature churches also offer legacy giving education related to estate planning and legacy gifts.

To reinforce the concepts of faithful stewardship, the mature church collects and shares stories of faithful giving as well as stories about the impact of UMC Connectional Giving. These stories are shared in worship along with member testimonials via video, live presentations, and other media. The church pays all apportionments and regularly incorporates connectional giving reports in worship.

The mature church establishes church specific mission goals and giving guidelines; provides quarterly reports on mission goals and results of fundraising to the congregation. The congregation supports one or more UMC missions, and/or missionaries and participates in Special Sunday Offerings that support

global missions. Stories about missions are incorporated into the worship experience in intentional and experiential ways. In addition, the mature church sends members on mission trips related to the mission goals and shares information with the congregation about their experience.

The most important difference in the mature church, when it comes to budgeting, is the use of the narrative budget. This form of budget tells the story, both past and future, of church ministries and mission impact. This information is shared with the church annually in lieu of or in addition to standard budget figures.

The mature church conducts an annual audit or review of financial records and practices in addition to upholding all standard accounting practices. Regular financial and ministry progress reports are made to the church.

The Extraordinary Church Approach

In the extraordinary church, the hallmarks of the mature church are present but there is an additional level of sophistication involving church leadership, donor engagement, stewardship education and church communications. First, the extraordinary church has developed a generosity statement (similar to a mission statement) that aligns generosity principles with what the church believes. Generosity is lifted up as part of the discipleship pathway and equated with other important habits including participation in worship, small group study and mission service. Leaders speak on the vision of the church often.

With this foundational philosophy in mind, generosity permeates all aspects of church life. Church leaders lead by example and are expected to give generously relative to their means. Each week as part of the offering, stories about the transformation happening within the church are shared before the offering. Leaders use abundance mentality language when sharing about the budget; and conduct a survey to gauge donor understanding of church finances, responding with the answers to common questions in an FAQ document. Generosity is a topic discussed in small group Bible studies, Sunday School, and other groups.

Donor relations is paramount in the extraordinary church. First, the pastor knows the major donors in the church. Second, giving data is used to segment donors and create appropriate messages for different levels of giving. Pastors and leaders thank donors often and write personal thank you notes to those who give more. The financial secretary or staff send warm, relational quarterly statements highlighting an important ministry in the church or story of a life changed, or a testimonial. Finally, church leaders report how funds were used including what ministries were funded and what benchmarks were accomplished relative to ministry goals. All efforts are wrapped in prayer and presented with an attitude of gratitude.

Giving in the extraordinary church is easy because donors can text to give, set up automatic payments from credit cards or bank accounts, and there is even a giving kiosk in the lobby.

Now that you have a better idea of how your church might grow in its stewardship practices, it's time to gather your team and complete the standards assessment. Regardless of which level you believe your church falls into right now, start by completing the assessments for Basic and Growing.

Please refer to the handouts at the back of this packet including the opening discussion guide, assessment tool, results interpretation guide, and other materials intended for your congregation to use in Phase II.

Pro Tip: We suggest you allow each person on the team the opportunity to complete the assessment individually and then meet together to review your collective responses. Alternatively, if you feel the members of your team don't have enough information about your specific stewardship practices to answer the questions knowledgeably, then you might ask the Pastor, Finance Committee Chair, Treasurer and/ or Stewardship Chair to complete the assessment first and then share their results with the group for further discussion. Whatever your approach, both the assessment and the results interpretation guides are intended to produce robust conversation about your current approach to stewardship and encourage new, creative ideas about growing in your path to creating a culture of generosity in your church.

His master replied, "Well done! You are a good and faithful servant. You've been faithful over a little. I'll put you in charge of much. Come, celebrate with me!"

Phase III

Generosity Annual Plan

Phase III Prayer

*Quicken, O Lord, we pray you, all members of your church, that we may be alive to the opportunities and responsibilities of our times. Save us from complacency and from fear of new ways; inspire our minds with the hope of your kingdom; give us joy in what lies before us; and stir our wills to pray and to work until your will is done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.**

Introduction to the Generosity Annual Plan

Wow! You've done some incredible work so far. You've completed an extensive discernment process and taken a hard look at how you are currently approaching stewardship; plus you've dreamed about what could be in the future. Now it's time to put all that work into a plan that you can use to unlock the floodgates and achieve a culture of generosity in your church.

Steps for Completing Your Plan

Step 1: Review Resources

Now that you have done the hard work of Phases I and II, it's time to put all your knowledge and ideas together in a Generosity Annual Plan. You will need to view three resources before proceeding:

- Annual Plan Webinar from UMC Discipleship Ministries (
- 12 Month Template booklet pdf – separate document from UMFOW
- [Special Sundays planning calendar example](#)

Step 2: Look Back to Look Forward

Once you have completed your review of these three resources, gather your team for a multi-hour meeting or retreat. During this meeting, use the calendar and implementation plan provided from UMFOW to build your plan and determine how it will be accomplished.

Don't skip this last step! This will be the step that gets you over the finish line and helps you make a significant difference in the culture of generosity in your church.

Look back at your assessments and the notes you took.

1. As a group, decide which activities you will undertake this year and which you will start next year, keeping in mind any decisions you previously made about "stepping up" to the next level of stewardship excellence.
2. For each activity, determine when it will be completed and place it on the calendar.
3. Use the color codes to keep track of leadership activities, education activities, mission giving activities, budgeting activities and accounting activities.
4. Now use the implementation plan to list each task and assign who is responsible.
5. Once assignments are made, ask those groups to come back with their detailed implementation plans and/or to keep you informed of progress at pre-determined intervals.
6. Update your implementation template at least quarterly.

Congratulations! You are on your way to creating a strong culture of generosity in your church!

Notes on Planning Templates:

The templates we suggest are Excel spreadsheets. You may wish to plan and track your Generosity Annual Plan in a different manner if you are not familiar with Excel. The tool you use isn't as important as doing the planning, making a list of tasks, and holding others accountable for completing tasks. Without these steps, your plan will not succeed.

Generosity Abounds! Basic Stewardship Standards Assessment

Handout #1: Opening Discussion Guide

In your group, read the four descriptions of the Basic, Growing, Mature and Extraordinary Church approaches to stewardship aloud. (Found in the booklet.)

Q: Which of these descriptions resonated most with your group?

Q. What questions or comments did these descriptions prompt from the group?

Generosity Abounds! Basic and Growing Church Assessment Tool

*Rate your church's adherence to each standard as follows: 0 Not happening/not sure 1 In process/somewhat
2 Happened in past or planned for future 3 Definitely happening*

Basic Standards – Leadership	Rating	Notes
1. Our church leaders plan a request for financial support from the congregation annually.		
2. Our pastor preaches on stewardship or generosity at least 1-2 times a year.		
3. Our church hosts one giving Sunday per year. (Worship service focused on pledges of support).		
Basic Standards – Education	Rating	Notes
4. Our church encourages participation in a personal financial literacy seminar.		
5. Our Education/SS leaders provide age-group appropriate stewardship education at least one time a year		
6. Our leaders/staff collect and share stories of faithful stewardship or generosity		
Basic Standards-Mission Giving	Rating	Notes
7. Our church supports a missionary or mission(s).		
8. Our congregation hears from its sponsored missionary once every few years; and/or shares information from them regularly in newsletter.		
9. Our church pays all apportionments.		
10. Our church participates in Special Sunday* offering(s)		
Basic Standards – Budgeting	Rating	Notes
11. Our church leadership creates, presents, and adopts a budget.		
12. Our church leadership administers the budget and evaluates it on a regular basis.		
Basic Standards – Accounting	Rating	Notes
13. Our church provides at least 3 ways for people to give (offering plate, envelopes, online)		
14. We have adopted a specific plan for receiving, counting, depositing, and disbursing church funds.		
15. We maintain appropriate records of all receipts and financial transactions.		
16. We record and distribute individual contribution statements.		
17. We ensure that persons handling church funds are bonded.		
18. We make regular financial and ministry progress reports to the church.		

Max Score: 54 Total Basic Points: _____

Extra Points: Growing Church Standards

Growing Standard – Leadership	Rating	Notes
1. Our church established a separate stewardship committee tasked with determining an annual stewardship plan.		
2. Our pastor preaches on stewardship/generosity at least <u>once a quarter</u> .		
Growing Standard - Education	Rating	Notes
3. Our church <u>hosts/conducts</u> a faith-based personal financial literacy seminar or workshop series or class regularly (annually or bi-annually).		
4. Our church provides age-group appropriate stewardship education throughout the year.		
5. Our church shares stories about the impact of Connectional Giving.		
Growing Standard – Mission Giving	Rating	Notes
6. Our church supports a mission or missionary specific to the UMC		
7. Our church hosts a speaker about UMC Connectional Giving at least once a year.		
8. Our church incorporates missions as part of the worship experience in intentional ways.		
9. UMC Special Sundays* are included in our church's annual stewardship plan.		
Growing Standards - Budgeting	Rating	Notes
10. Our church involves laity in determining budget priorities. (Surveys, interviews, focus groups)		
11. Our church makes budget information available to the entire congregation.		
Growing Standards- Accounting		
12. Our church offers ways to give gifts of appreciated assets (like stocks).		

Max Score: 36 Total Growing Points: _____

Add 2 points if you have completed the following: Church Strategic Plan, Church Intentional Discipleship Program, Church Vision process, Church Story process, Mission Giving Discernment Process.

Max Total Score: 100 Total Points: _____

**Special Sundays are: Human Relations Day, UMCOR Sunday, Native American Sunday, Peace with Justice Sunday, UM Student Day, World Communion Sunday*

Handout #2: Assessment Results Interpretation Worksheet for Basic and Growing

If you received a score of 85 or more, go on to the next set of assessments for Mature/Extraordinary starting on p. 21.

If you received a total score between 60-84 follow steps 1-3 listed below. When you are finished, skip to Step 3 on page 27 and have a discussion with your group using the questions listed there. Then go on to Phase III.

If you scored lower than 60 points, complete ONLY Step 1 below and look at the standards you highlighted. Your focus should be on strengthening the basics of stewardship until you can confidently rate your church at 45 or higher in the Basic Standards section. Re-take the assessment after you've addressed these issues.

Handout #3: Post-Assessment Steps for Basic and Growing

Step 1: Covering the Basics

Q: How did you assess your level of conformity with the basic stewardship standards on p.11?

Look at anything in which you received a 0 or 1 and highlight these standards on your worksheet. These should be your first priority to address, so remember to include these in your Generosity Annual Plan in Phase III.

Q: What about the standards where you rated yourself a 2? Why did those standards stop in the past or why have they not been implemented yet if they are in process?

Make a note next to each of those with your group's thoughts about the answers.

Summarize those here:

Now look at the ones in which you received a 3.

Q: If you could take one step forward to the next level of stewardship growth on any of these, which ones would they be?

Rank these standards by putting a number in the margin next to it. Rank your first choice as 1, your second choice as 2, and so forth.

Now compare your top 3 choices to the similar standards within each section of the Growing Standards assessment starting on p. 12.

Q: What would be the next step up for your church in these areas? (Look at the "Next Step Up" illustrations below to get more ideas and see how this could work.)

Decide as a group how to take one step forward in stewardship growth in each area you identify as a priority. Summarize your ideas here:

Step 2: Standards for Growth

Now look at the Growing Church Standards.

Q: Did you rate any as a 2?

Again, make a note on your assessment about why you think these standards haven't been implemented or what may be preventing implementation. Summarize your thoughts here:

If you gave your church a 3 on any of these, congratulations! That means you've already taken a step forward in stewardship growth.

Step 3: The Other Pieces of the Puzzle

Q: Did you receive any points for the other work your church may have done such as a strategic plan or intentional discipleship system?

If yes, congratulations! You're ready to move on.

If no, completing these 5 processes will help your church build a sustainable, more successful stewardship program. Go back to Phase I if you did not address these recommendations previously.

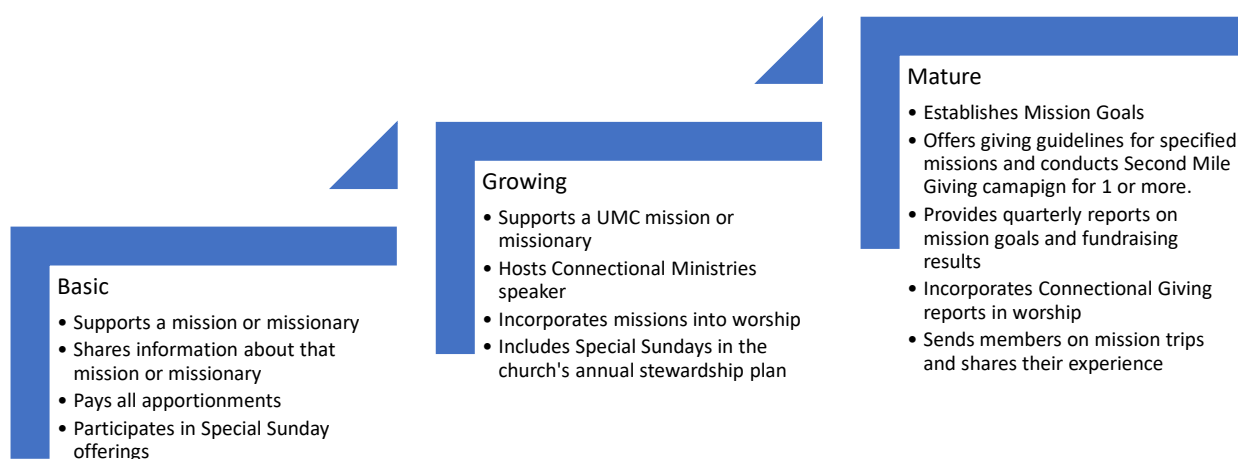
Illustrations: Take the Next Step Up

Use these illustrations to help you see what the next step up would be on your path to greater generosity.

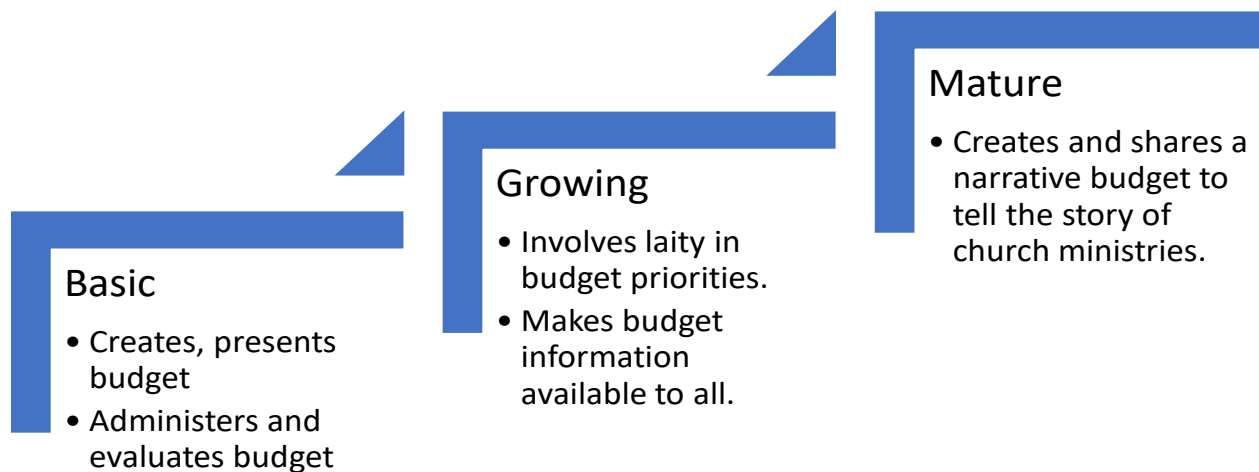
Next Step Up: Stewardship Planning and Leadership



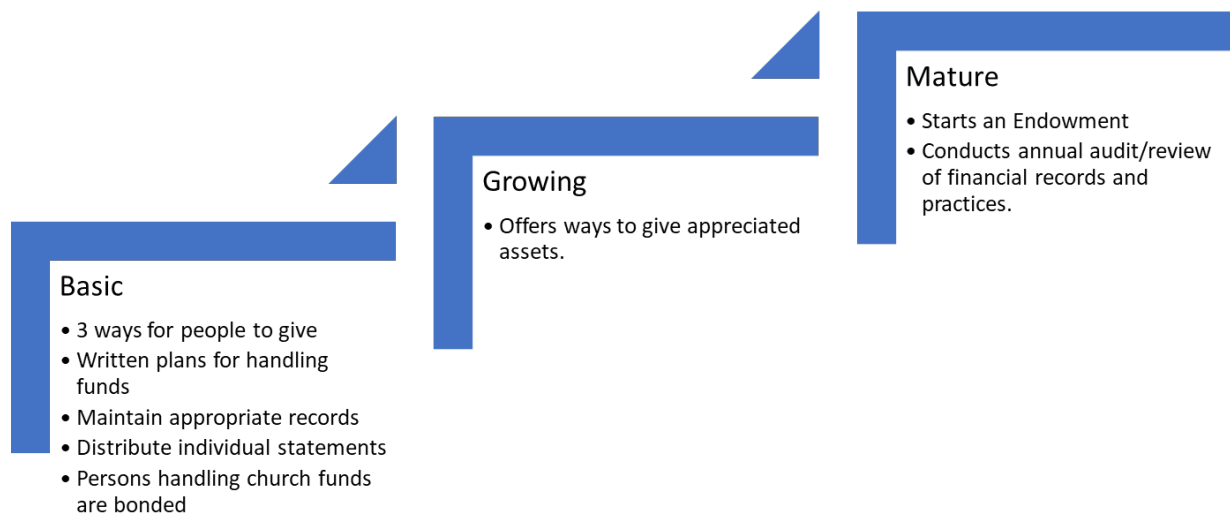
Next Step Up: Mission Giving



Next Step Up: Budgeting



Next Step Up: Accounting



Generosity Abounds!: Mature and Extraordinary Church Assessment Tool

Rate your church's adherence to each standard as follows: 0 Not happening/not sure; 1 In process/somewhat; 2 Happened in past or planned for future; 3 Definitely happening

Mature Church Standards

Mature Standards: Leadership	Rating	Notes
1. Our church trains the stewardship committee.		
2. Our church uses outside counsel to help develop the annual stewardship plan.		
3. Our church reviews and evaluates the stewardship program/plan annually.		
4. Our church implements specific events to challenge members to grow in their giving.		
Mature Standards: Education	Rating	Notes
5. Our church develops and executes a personal financial literacy education plan.		
6. Our church regularly offers education related to estate planning.		
7. Our church uses member testimonials about the impact of giving in worship (written, video or live) throughout the year.		
Mature Standards: Mission Giving	Rating	Notes
8. Our church has established mission goals and provides these along with giving guidelines to the congregation.		
9. Our church conducts a Second Mile Giving campaign for one of the church's identified mission goals.		
10. Our church provides quarterly reports on mission goals and results of fundraising to the congregation.		
11. Our church regularly incorporates connectional giving reports in worship		
12. Our church sends members on mission trips related to the mission goals and shares information with the congregation about their experience.		
Mature Standards: Budgeting	Rating	Notes
13. Our church provides a narrative budget to tell the story (past and future) of church ministries.		
Mature Standards: Accounting	Rating	Notes
14. Our church has an endowment.		
15. Our church conducts an audit/review of financial records and practices.		

Max Score: 45 Total Mature Points: _____

Extraordinary Church Standards

Extraordinary Standards: Leadership	Rating	Notes
1. Our church leaders lead by example and are expected to give generously relative to their means.		
2. In our church there is a high expectation for members to uphold their commitment to supporting the church with their prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness		
3. Our church has developed a generosity statement aligning generosity principles with what our church believes.		
4. Our pastor preaches on the joy of giving all year long and emphasizes <u>generosity</u> over stewardship.		
5. Every Sunday before the offering, our leaders tell stories about the transformation that is happening through our church because of our congregation's generosity.		
6. Our leaders speak on the vision of the church often.		
Extraordinary Standards: Donor Development	Rating	Notes
7. Our pastor knows the major donors in the church.		
8. Donors in our church are asked to give to special projects based on interest, ability, willingness, etc. not just obligation.		
9. Our leaders thank donors often and our pastor writes personal thank you notes to financial leaders/donors.		
Extraordinary Standards: Education	Rating	Notes
10. Our leaders share generosity principles in small groups, Bible studies, and other groups.		
11. Our church leaders lift up generosity as part of the discipleship path and equate giving with participation in worship, small groups, and mission service.		
12. Our leaders wrap all efforts in prayer and an attitude of gratitude.		
Extraordinary Standards: Budgeting	Rating	Notes
13. Our leaders use abundance mentality language when sharing about the budget and asking the congregation to support it.		

14. Our church conducts a survey to gauge donor understanding of church finances; then answers our questions in an FAQ format.		
Extraordinary Standards: Accounting	Rating	Notes
15. Our church offers text to give, a giving kiosk at the church, and automatic bank drafts as well as typical giving formats.		
16. We use giving data to segment donors and create appropriate messages for different levels of giving.		
17. We send warm, relational quarterly statements highlighting an important ministry in the church or story of a life changed, or a testimonial.		
18. We report how funds were used including what ministries were funded and benchmarks accomplished relevant to our ministry goals.		
19. Our church recognizes legacy donors with a recognition society, wall, event or other means.		

Max Score: 57 Total Extraordinary Score: _____

Max total score: 102 Total Score: _____

Handout #4: Results Interpretation Worksheet for Mature and Extraordinary

If your church stewardship program falls in the category of Mature or even Extraordinary, congratulations! Your church is exceeding expectations and hopefully you are seeing the results of that commitment. Churches that start the assessment process at the “Mature” level still have room for growth, however, so it’s important to address those unmet areas.

Step 1: Covering the Basics

Review your score on the Basic and Growing assessments and make sure all these areas are being covered. Prioritize anything that received a 0, 1, or 2.

Step 2: Maturing in Generosity

Review your ratings for the Mature Church assessment category.

Q: Where do you see room for improvement? For example, could the items you rated 0, 1, or 2 change with some intervention?

Make a list of those that could be improved and for each item, specify what resources would be required to achieve it. Summarize your decisions here:

Prioritize this list based on your group’s discernment about the priorities of the church.

Handout #5: Embracing the Extraordinary Group Discussion Guide

Discuss the Extraordinary Standards. Ask the following questions:

1. What kind of culture does a church need to have in order to achieve these “ideal” standards? List some attributes of that church culture.

2. What words would you use to describe your church culture regarding giving?

Do the words you’ve chosen match the “ideal” culture you described in question 1?

3. What would it take to move your church into the Extraordinary Standards category? Are you almost there? Halfway there? Still have some work to do?

4. Pick 3 things you’d like to address this year to move your church into the Extraordinary Standards category. Decide who should be in charge of taking on the work and how often you will report on progress. Summarize your discussion here:

Set a date to retake the assessment and see if your score goes up.

Date to retake the assessment: _____

Keep using the assessment in the future as a guideline and benchmark for your progress as you work to improve the culture of generosity in your church.

Generosity Abounds! Additional Resources

Other Recommended Resources

Classes and toolkits from the UMC:

- <https://discipleship-ministries.teachable.com/p/living-generously>
- <https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/resources-for-starting-a-stewardship-campaign>
- <https://www.resourceumc.org/en/churchwide/umcgiving/generosity-resources/generosity-pastor-and-leader-kit-resources>

Books:

- Moser and Bauknight, editors: *First Fruits: Fourteen Sermons on Stewardship*. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2003.
- Rendle, Gil and Alice Mann. [Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations](#). (2003)
- Malphurs, Aubrey. [Advanced Strategic Planning: A 21st Century Model for Church and Ministry Leaders](#). (2013)

Online resources:

- www.stewardshipresources.org
- www.centerforfaithandgiving.org
- www.parishpublishing.org
- www.Horizons.net (Giving 365)
- <https://www.umfwv.org/stewardship-resources>

*All prayers in this booklet are from the following resource: : <https://edow.org/congregational-resources/stewardship/annual-giving-toolkit/prayers-for-stewardship/>

Resources and Considerations for Incorporating Connectional Giving into Your Church

Every West Ohio congregation is part of a larger, global support system that impacts millions of people around the world in sustainable and strategic ways. In the United Methodist Church, we call this support system “Connectionalism”: it connects your local congregation to our global denomination. By being part of a connectional church, you and your local church are part of a network that can be powerful agents of change and transformation. You are the hands and feet of Christ, deployed on the front lines of ministry for your community and the world. Here are 4 giving pathways for your church to consider.

Giving pathway #1: Apportioned Funds of the Global Church

The United Methodist Church would not be a global church if we did not support one another and work together across countries, continents, and denominations. The main way we accomplish this is through our apportioned funds, a method of giving that proportionally allocates the churchwide budget to conferences and local churches. When your church shares “a portion” of what it collects with the global church, our impact as United Methodists is multiplied a thousand-fold. The apportionments paid to the West Ohio Conference are used to defray the cost of the administration of the Conference, but a significant portion of those funds is passed on to specific needs of the global church. These include the following funds:

- World Service Fund - *basic financial support to the general agencies of the UMC, which provide essential services and ministries beyond the scope of individual local congregations and annual conferences that are highly focused, flexible, and capable of rapid response.*
- Africa University Fund – *supports the ongoing needs of Africa University. For over 25 years Africa University has shaped the lives of thousands of young people all over the continent of Africa by equipping them with the knowledge to alleviate poverty, build peace, stability and drive development.*
- Black College Fund - *provides reliable support for UM-related historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU's), offering a chance to everyone with a dream and a commitment to excel – regardless of race, class, gender, or ethnic heritage.*
- Episcopal Fund - *pays for the expenses of active bishops and for the support of retired bishops and spouses. Today the bishops of The United Methodist Church are providing spiritual leadership to more than 12.4 million persons in a broad range of settings on four continents, including North America, Europe, Africa, and Asia.*
- General Administration Fund - *finances the administrative function of the denomination's general activities, in addition to the maintenance of historic shrines and landmarks.*
- Interdenominational Cooperation Fund - *by sharing a presence and a voice in the activities of several national and worldwide ecumenical organizations, this fund promotes basic human rights and helps Christians around the world stand together for those who are marginalized and persecuted for speaking about their faith.*
- Ministerial Education Fund - *provides vitally needed scholarships through annual conferences, essential funds for the support of our 13 United Methodist seminaries in the United States, programs that encourage men and women to respond to the call to ordained ministry,*

continuing-education opportunities for pastors across the connection and course-of-study education for local pastors.

Find out more about Apportioned Funds [here](#). Individuals can make donations through the United Methodist Foundation of West Ohio.

Giving Pathway #2: The Advance for Christ and His Church aka The Advance Network

UMC Global Ministries oversees this official giving network of the UMC for voluntary, designated, second mile donations. Supporting *The Advance* connects the church in mission through evangelism and church growth, missionaries, global health and disaster response and recovery. Find out more [here](#).

- International Example: Supporting UMCOR disaster relief efforts
- West Ohio Examples: Good Works, Inc. (Foothills); Jackson Area Ministries (Shawnee Valley)

A great choice if you want to:

- Support the work of global missionaries around the world
- Plant new churches and help existing ones grow
- Support community-based health programs
- Give directly to the greatest need through UMCOR

Churches and individuals can give by directing your gift to a specific project via the United Methodist Foundation of West Ohio.

Giving pathway #3: Special Sunday Offerings

Your local church can also support the work of UMC Global Ministries through the well-known Special Sundays offerings. Resources and materials are available for all 6 Sundays [online](#). You can choose to celebrate with other churches around the world on designated Sundays or celebrate on any day of your choosing.

Human Relations Day - *change lives through social justice ministries and outreach through Community Developers, Volunteer Service and Youth Offender Rehabilitation Programs.*

UMCOR (Formerly One Great Hour of Sharing) Sunday - *make a difference in the lives of communities and individuals whose lives have been upset by storms, wars, fires, displacement, and climate change.*

Native American Ministries - *develop and strengthen Native American ministries in the Annual Conferences, Native American rural, urban, reservation ministries and communities relating to the General Board of Global Ministries. Your giving also provides scholarships for Native Americans attending United Methodist schools of theology.*

Peace with Justice Sunday - *Half of the funds collected provide grants to local churches, districts, conferences, and other affiliated organizations that advocate for peace with justice. The other fifty percent of the offering remains in your annual conference to develop local peace with justice ministries and support a peace with justice coordinator.*

World Communion Sunday - support racial and ethnic students in achieving their educational goals while also transforming communities. Fifty percent of the offering provides scholarships for graduate students from the U.S. and other countries. Thirty-five percent supports ethnic scholarships for undergraduate students. Fifteen percent funds in-service training programs for racial and ethnic persons.

UM Student Day - support over 70 loans and scholarships for undergraduate and graduate United Methodist students.

Giving Pathway #4: West Ohio Conference Connectional Ministries

You and your church can support connectional ministries right in your own backyard through the WOC Office of Connectional Ministries. From sharing the Gospel message to reaching out to neighbors in need; from ministering in rural communities to connecting with young adults on college campuses; from helping rebuild homes to engaging the work of social justice - all of these and more encompass the mosaic that is WOC Connectional Ministries. Staff is available to speak at your church about any of these important ministries.

Search <https://www.westohioumc.org/ministries/connectional-ministries> to explore the many ways you can invest in WOC Connectional Ministries, or click [here](#) to donate online.