



The Top Five Reasons Churches Should Have A Ministry Of Legacy Giving



In today's economic environment, a legacy giving initiative can help you tap the hidden potential of your most generous and loyal donors and transform the growth trajectory of your organization. The Greatest Generation is disappearing. The first wave of Boomers is retiring and worried about outliving their assets. Many are planning their legacy now. Are you ready?

1. Legacy Giving is a healing ministry.

Many church members, both those who are wealthy and those of average means, suffer from the *wounds of wealth* and often feel burdened by decisions about the distribution of their assets at their death. For church leadership with a scarcity mindset, it may be difficult to appreciate that some members worry about leaving too much money to their children and may be inspired by the opportunity to express their values by making a significant bequest to the church.

When a member is invited to consider making a bequest, it is often a time when s/he contemplates how s/he wants to be remembered – in essence, their legacy. These conversations often lead to a natural re-prioritization of those institutions that are most important to the member and his/her family.

2. Legacy giving conversations can be transformational for the church and the member.

The desire to make a difference is almost universal, regardless of one's religious tradition. Making a legacy gift is one way to make a permanent difference in the church's future. Your members are already making legacy gifts to the Salvation Army, World Vision and their alma maters because they've been asked – and many may want to make a difference for their church, an institution with which they generally have a much more intimate and sustained relationship.

3. Legacy giving can unlock the generosity of your congregation.

National research shows that donors with documented bequests give twice as much annually as donors who have not made a bequest. While it is not clear whether the more generous donors are more likely to make a bequest or those who make bequests also contribute more annually, there is a relationship between the two that churches cannot afford to ignore. Legacy gifts can lead to major gifts. Often, after making arrangements for a significant legacy gift, members realize that they will neither experience the joy and satisfaction of that gift nor will the church benefit until they are gone. Some members may re-think their commitment and decide to experience the joy of giving by making a significant gift while they are alive.

4. Legacy giving manages risk.

The most generous members in a church congregation are often its oldest. What happens when the three most generous members in a church die? In some cases, it could take ten or more *giving units* to replace each member's annual stewardship commitment. This places the congregation at financial risk – a risk that can be avoided.

5. Many families want to document and celebrate their family's history with the church.

The opportunity to create an endowment for outreach, education, pastoral sabbaticals, facilities or music excellence is a timeless way for members to demonstrate their lifetime commitment and devotion to the church. Many long-time members have experienced a deep engagement in these aspects of a church's life. A legacy gift helps to ensure that these precious ministries will continue to thrive.

See more at: <http://www.horizonsstewardship.com>