



Episcopal Diocese of West Texas

Issues Affecting the Success of the Commitment Program

An effective commitment program intentionally relates to the decisive factors of success: **leadership**, **context**, and **congregation**. That is, the ability and commitment of the leaders, the socio-economic environment of the church and the kind and number of people who make up the membership are the main factors that determine the shape of all successful programs.

It is, therefore, important to spend time diagnosing the current situation of the congregation. What did you do last year and the two or three years prior? What worked, what didn't and why? What are the realities of the congregation now in contrast to how it might have been the prior few years? Things to consider include:

- Are there lots of new members vs. fewer members vs. not much change?
- Is there an upbeat economy vs. anxiety producing economic conditions?
- Is there a new Rector vs. no Rector vs. same Rector as for many past years?
- Is there an energized leadership team vs. leadership exhausted from the latest capital improvement project?
- How is the perceived level of trust of the leadership?
- Is there a sense of vision for the future of the congregation?
- Are we a very large or a very small congregation?
- Are there only a few families (or endowments) who essentially provide the vast majority of the annual operating financial support for the congregation vs. 25-40% of the households that provide at least 80% of the financial support?
- What is the general understanding of the theology of stewardship in the congregation (go out and ask the leadership, don't guess).
- Is the parish in conflict or generally depressed?

**All of these things, and more, have an influence
on the kind of program that is best suited
for the culture of the congregation in any given year.**

By analysis of the current conditions in the congregation vs. those that are desirable, the leadership will be able to identify, select, and design both the education and commitment programs. For obvious reasons, all of the key leadership of the congregation should be involved in this evaluation.

Perhaps the single most common factor that weakens the stewardship development efforts in a congregation is the tendency to procrastinate. The earlier that dates are set, the program designed, the materials ordered, publicity begun and workers recruited, the more effective the program will be!

Adapted from the **TENS** [A Manual for Stewardship Development Programs in the Congregation](#)