

Episcopal Diocese of West Texas

Issues that Affect Giving Practices

How we have come to know what we know about God and how we feel about the Church has a very significant effect in our financial giving practices.

Stewardship isn't the Episcopal word for fund-raising. The steward is one who is called on to manage something that belongs to someone else. That means two things: **First, it isn't really ours, and second, ours is a position of trust and responsibility for that for which we are called to care.**

How we know that it really isn't ours is grounded in how we know God. The way we carry out the trust and responsibility for what we have been called to care for is grounded in how we feel about the church.

Stewardship, the word, comes from the Old English term sty-ward and reflects the practice of appointing particularly reliable workers to be wardens of the pig sty; thus, sty-wards. These wardens, living under the word, or the direction, of the lord of the manor, were to become trustworthy custodians of those resources that were indispensable to the life and well-being of the whole community. They were to lovingly and prudently care for that over which they had authority.

When the ancient scriptures were being translated, the biblical Greek word oikonomia was translated as stewardship. It was perhaps an act of inspiration that brought the scholars to adopt this term. For it connects the several motifs for an understanding of the gospel and responsible living in community:

That is, all persons are to become stewards, servants of God. We are to become persons with responsibility, that is with an office, having authority in the communal life. We are responsible for the physical resources necessary for existence, and we are expected to be diligent in the very earthy tasks assigned in the world, for the very fate of the community depends on our trustworthy custodianship.

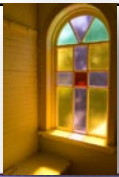
We are called on to be stewards of each other.

This is our understanding of being God's stewards. We are called on to be stewards of each other. Sometimes we are called to be students and sometimes mentors. We each have a role to play in our family in Christ.

This is where all ministry starts: we reach out to others. We reach out to support each other. Sometimes we reach out to be supported. This is something we all are called to do every day of our lives. A smile, a word spoken in a moment of need, a hug when we feel alone.

We all do this, and we probably don't always realize it. That is what being family is.

How we come to know what we know about God is important to our strategies for programs in the church. For our purposes, we are looking at how we have come to know God and the Church. We have discovered that there are six dominant ways in the church today. There



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may be more. New ones may appear in the future. Each of us has had a unique experience, yet there are *common threads* that tie us together and help us to understand each other.

The six ways of knowing and being known by God commonly observed in the Episcopal church are Traditionalist, Anglo-Catholic, Rationalist, Evangelical, Charismatic and Social Activist. (See explanation at [How We Know What We Know \(Epistemology\)](#)).

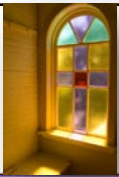
Below is a summary of the starting points for how we know what we know. Almost all of us will be a mixture of these, but there will be one category underlying and supporting all of the others.

- **Anglo-Catholic:** Faith is grounded in the sacraments, experience of worship, and church aesthetics. Focus is on worship.
- **Charismatic:** Faith is grounded in experiencing the presence and gifts of the Holy Spirit. There is also a quest for personal authority and affirmation. Focus is on worship and personal faith experience.
- **Rationalist:** Faith is discovered in paradox. The faith journey and scholarship are of primary importance. Focus is on education.
- **Traditionalist:** Faith was formed in childhood. They love the old ways and traditions of the church and often find change difficult. Focus is on pastoral care and life in the Christian community.
- **Social Activist:** The quest for justice is primary. Many read the Bible and believe in acting on the principles of biblical social justice.
- **Evangelical:** Faith is grounded in the conversion experience and a personal relationship with God. The Bible is of primary importance. Focus is on evangelism and the disciplined Christian life.

A very important thing to do is serious reflection on the nature of your congregation. Recall the voices heard in conversations concerning what it is about the ministry of the church that is important to the members. If your congregation is strongly traditionalist for example, this has serious implications for the type of stewardship education and commitment program that will be effective.

Many congregations will be primarily of two of the groups, e.g. the traditionalists and rationalists frequently find themselves together. Your primary approach should be designed to send the Stewardship message or messages that are appropriate to each group.

Give careful consideration to the voices you recruit to communicate with the entire congregation. Even though they are tithers, frequently evangelicals and charismatics are not usually the most effective people in communicating with traditionalists.



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Social activists, while essential for mission since they help us to face the brokenness and injustice in the world, are seldom appropriate leaders for a stewardship process, unless they happen to be in a congregation of social activists.

Learn to listen to the voices in the congregation to recognize who may be the most effective communicators for the dominant groups in the parish.

The Episcopal Church is wonderfully diverse and complicated. It makes program decisions, especially stewardship, tough. But it makes our community life rich.

Adapted from the **TENS** A Manual for Stewardship Development Programs in the Congregation