

SECTION III

Donors
and Prospects

Identification and Cultivation of Prospects

Wealthy people are not always the best prospects for planned gifts. Experience has shown that widows, widowers, nurses, teachers, missionaries, ministers, farmers, and others with modest incomes often welcome the benefits they receive from making planned gifts.

What Does a Prospect for a Planned Gift Look Like?

Prospect A (to be found in every congregation):

- has celebrated their 55th birthday.
- has contributed time and money to the church regularly for at least five years.
- has few, if any, financial dependents.
- has accumulated assets such as a house, other real estate, life insurance policies, stocks and bonds, savings accounts, mutual funds, an IRA, and so on. If some of these have appreciated in value and are producing little or no income, the owner may be a very good prospect for a planned gift.
- has expressed interest in establishing a memorial for a loved one.

Prospect B (becoming increasingly visible in most congregations):

- is part of a two-income family or is an employed single person between ages 35 and 55
- has contributed time and money to the church for at least five years
- would like to reduce income taxes now and increase retirement income later
- has elderly parents or other dependents who might be named as income beneficiaries of a life income gift
- wants to establish a memorial for a loved one

How Can We Find Planned Giving Prospects?

Some prospects will identify themselves if your church will:

- **Send special mailings** two or three times a year to everyone on church mailing list explaining how a planned gift can benefit donors as well as the church. Make it easy for people to request additional information.

- **Provide speakers** for women's groups, senior citizen groups, couple's clubs, adult education classes, church suppers, and congregational meetings. Speakers can discuss wills, life income gifts, financial planning, income tax savings, investment opportunities, and other things.
- **Sponsor seminars** on personal financial planning that include a discussion of wills, probating estates, life insurance, tax planning, how charitable giving fits into estate planning, Social Security benefits, and so on. See pages 66-76 of this manual for suggestions on planning a seminar.
- **Ask for evaluation.** Ask your planned giving committee to confidentially evaluate everyone on your church mailing list to discover persons who qualify as Prospect A or Prospect B as described above. Also ask your planned giving committee to watch for people whose life situations have recently changed. For example:
 - older persons who are considering selling their family home after having lived there for many years
 - owner of a vacation home who no longer can use it
 - someone who has received an inheritance or unexpected windfall
 - someone who owns stock in a company that is about to be taken over
 - someone who has lost a loved one through death and might like to establish a memorial for that person

Tie Gifts Requests to Church Anniversaries

Also be sure to take advantage of special anniversaries of your church to request gifts for the church endowment.

Other Things Worth Remembering

Many members and friends of your church would like to give more than they now give, but they do not think they can afford to do so. Bequests and life income gifts sometimes make such gifts affordable.

People sometimes respond favorably when asked to consider making a bequest or life income gift that will produce enough income to perpetuate their annual pledge after they die.

Wealthy people are not always the best prospects for planned gifts. Experience has shown that widows, widowers, nurses, teachers, missionaries, ministers, farmers, and others with modest incomes often welcome the benefits they receive from making planned gifts.

Cultivation of prospects should be understood as nurture, as tending, nourishing, encouraging. This will primarily take the form of personal contact, and of keeping potential donors informed of the mission and ministry that is of particular interest to them.

When a church member is ready to make a planned gift, you can best help by:

- listening closely and thoughtfully and assisting the donor in defining personal financial objectives.
- receiving the gift. Say "thank you!" in various ways many times over.
- planning to visit the donor again. Most of your planned gifts will come from "repeat customers."

Donor Testimonies

Have there been members of your congregation who have made significant contributions to the life of your church whose story should be shared? It wasn't necessarily the size of their gift that was the important factor, but rather their spirit, faith, and vision that have served as an inspiration to the generations who followed them.

HERE ARE STORIES OF SEVERAL DONORS who through their vision and commitment have inspired succeeding generations.

Hedwig Peterson (1889–1993)

Hedwig Peterson gained notoriety at age 100 when she was awarded a \$1.25 million judgment against an investment firm. “We oldsters have to be careful,” she said, referring to her stockbroker who took advantage of her age, trust, and failing eyesight by such practices as excessive trading for the purpose of generating commissions. Mrs. Peterson planned to give away her award, including a significant sum to her church, First Congregational Church of Tempe, Arizona, through a UCC gift annuity.

Throughout her life, Mrs. Peterson was an active member of her church and community. She will be remembered for her generous spirit as evidenced through the many gifts she shared with others, as well as this sentiment shared on the occasion of her 100th birthday: “I have this theory that happiness is something that you don’t go seeking, you get it by giving it. It grows by being divided, so the more you give it to others, the more you hold yourself.”

Shelby Light (1906–2002)

“In our home, we had thirteen commandments. There were the usual 10, plus these three: (1) Eat it up, (2) Wear it out, and (3) Make it do. As I was trained up as a child, so I have not departed therefrom. I practice economies that you might find amazing.” Those are the words of a man who after a lifetime of Christian ministry has made over 140 planned gifts to strengthen the church’s mission throughout the world.

“Extravagant economies” is the way the Rev. Shelby Light describes his stewardship. If anyone asks why such a thrifty man gives so much away, he refers the questioner to Matthew 26:6–13, the story of the woman who poured expensive ointment on Jesus’ head. When the disciples asked, “Why this waste?” Jesus replied, “Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me.” Rev. Light shares, “Could it be that the wisdom of God as seen in Jesus is wiser than men—certainly wiser than that of economical Shelby?”

Having known poverty as a child and again in mid-career, he rejoices in his ability to share what many call meager financial resources. His generosity would shame and mystify many whose financial resources are much greater than his. Would that the UCC had more like Shelby Light, who believes and practices “extravagant economies.”

Jane Ellen McAllister (1899–1996)

“You wouldn’t know anything about those days. Our family, the five of us, remembered how our teachers at schools like Talladega and Fisk showed us that although our bodies were in Mississippi, our dreams, our books, our goals, had no limits. There were no color lines in the mind, and if we cared about learning, nothing could stop us from learning. We, that is my family, did not want anyone to forget what the American Missionary Association had given us, and we believe that if you receive, you must give.” So shared Dr. Jane Ellen McAllister about her many planned gifts to benefit Talladega College.

Her gifts reflected the passion of her life endeavors. The first African American woman to receive a doctorate from the Teachers College of Columbia University, Dr. McAllister spent her life in pursuing excellence in higher education for African Americans. As a professor at a number of traditionally African American schools, such as Jackson State and Fisk University, she initiated many programs to upgrade teacher education curriculum.

Her planned gifts were made to fulfill her vision. “It is my dream, my quest that the intangible spirit of the schools founded by the American Missionary Association be preserved to share hope and faith with others.” In this way, Dr. Jane McAllister, an angel of the past, is indeed an angel of the future.

There may be similar stories in your congregation that could be shared to inspire and motivate members in the stewardship of their accumulated assets.