

The book *Creating Congregations of Generous People* is written for volunteers who work on their parish's stewardship pledge campaigns. These volunteers are very unique people within our parishes because stewardship can be a hard sell. These stewardship volunteers usually feel called to the task because they themselves have experienced God's Grace. Their jobs become difficult when they realize their understanding of generosity is not always the same as their fellow parishioners. Author Michael Durall shows a stewardship team how to avoid numerous traps and obstacles, and provides hope in pointing out new pathways a congregation can take to become more generous.

Many times we don't realize a congregation can choose a new way of being. We don't ask ourselves what kind of people we want to become. Instead, we simply accept the culture of our parish, which may or may not strive to bring its people to higher levels of generosity. When we think we cannot become more generous; we then accept the statistical fact that 20% or less of us are the major givers in a congregation. We use generalities, past practices and even myths to describe why our church's donation totals do not escalate over time. We simply accept who we are. The result is that we can restrict our mission. More critically, we lose opportunities to engage parishioners and help them strengthen their faith.

We need a primer on how to create congregations of generous people.

In this penetrating book, Durall explores what makes some people generous and others less so. He examines varieties of giving because, as the book strongly states: "Clergy and lay leaders do not sufficiently understand parishioners' attitudes toward the use of money in their lives, nor their giving intentions". In other words, they don't understand why certain people respond generously and others, not at all. Why do typical pledge drives end up being routine matters and not matters of the heart? Why is there skewed giving (the 80-20 rule) where fewer donors give more than half? Why do giving patterns within our churches persist? What is it that keeps us away from becoming the generous people our creator wishes us to become?

These are difficult questions. Durall provides a simple method to summarize a congregation's giving records to reveal giving patterns and trends. This critical understanding is needed to lead a reluctant congregation to give more. The book gives practical suggestions, case examples and comprehensive discussion of church decision-making. *Creating Congregations of Generous People* is both compelling and valuable for stewardship committees, vestries and clergy. I found the author's grasp of church politics, and his suggestions for moving forward particularly illuminating.