



# Building Stewardship Through a Focus on Ministry Strengths

From the Lens of A Small Membership Congregation

# Introductions

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- The Rev. Ellie Johns-Kelley – Ministry Relations Officer from the Presbyterian Foundation for Allegheny & Chesapeake Region
- Who are you?
- Why are you here today?

# Who are we? – PCUSA context

- Membership has fallen 54% in the last fifteen years
- The number of congregations has fallen 18% in the same period
- 40% of congregations have a membership of 50 or fewer persons
- 19% of congregations have a membership of 25 or fewer persons
- Congregational mergers remain quite rare.

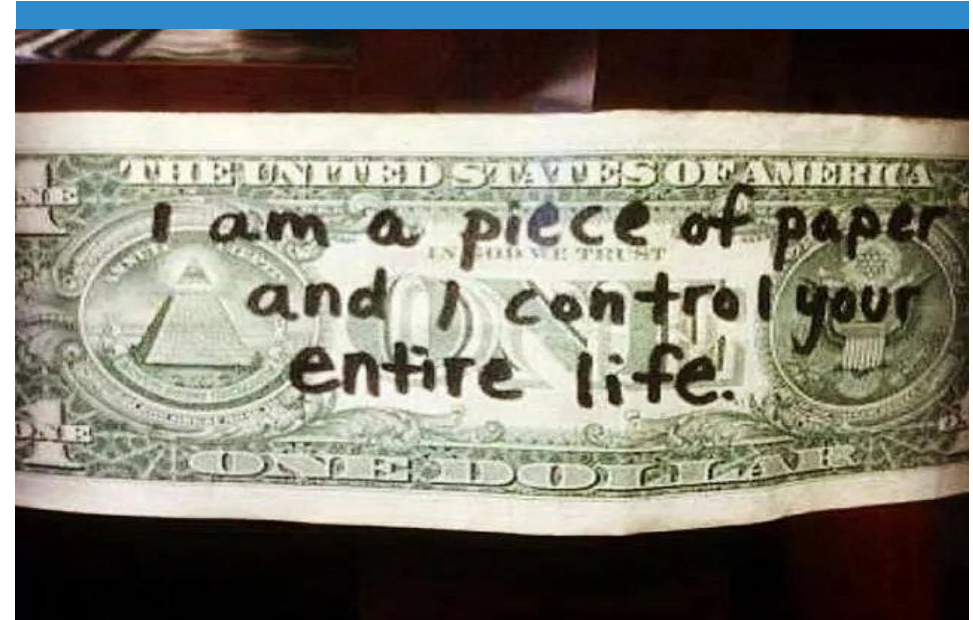


2020 and 2006 PCUSA Comparative Summaries of Statistics

# Who are we? – Wider Culture

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- A materialistic consumer-driven culture of “more” and “mine”
- Great anxiety, uncertainty and fear around money
- Changing motivations for spending and religious giving



# Small Church - Strengths

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- Family
- Worship
- Decision Making
- Respected Leaders
- Ownership
- Communication
- Pastoral Leadership



# Strengths - Family

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- Sense of Family - “a small church with a big family” – a tribe
- Sense of intimacy, accountability
- Difficult to be invisible, anonymous
- Intensely relational
- Rich fellowship
- Genuine caring for one another
- Community- koinonia
- Gathering of generations
- The place where “everyone knows your name”



# Strengths - Worship

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- Worship as the central, defining event in the church's life — the weekly family reunion



# Strengths - Decision Making

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- Community decision-making through informal channels
- Session may not be center of shaping church's direction





# Strengths - Leaders

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- Respected leaders with authority whose authority often exceeds that of pastor, who come and go
- Tribal chiefs; matriarchs and patriarchs whose opinions are watched



# Strengths - Ownership

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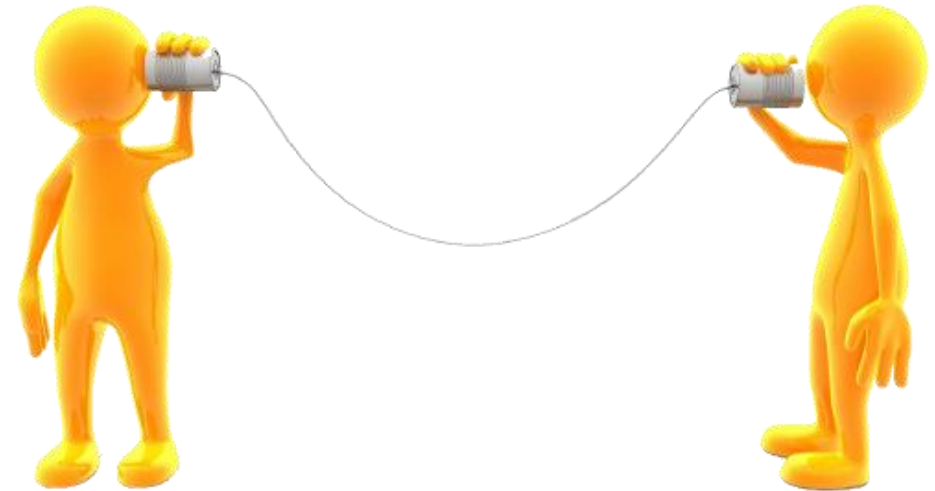
- Resilience – strong survival instinct through short term pastorates, poor pastoral matches, incompetent leadership, internal crises, community context changes; hardy, tough
- High commitment in many members; sense of ownership and responsibility; loyalty; members come to play distinctive roles
- Strong institutional memory; deeply rooted traditions; stories; proud sense of history; strong bonds to earlier generations



# Strengths - Communication

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- Informal communication channels;
- official channels merely supplement an informal network



# Strengths - Pastoral Leadership

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- Relational style of pastoral leadership valued
- Pastor must earn authority and respect



# Strengths- Opportunities

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- Discover Niche
- Mission specialty
- Vision
- Abundance
- Affirmation
- Transparency
- Planned Giving



# Opportunities - Niche

- Discover the church's "niche"
- What are you known for?
- What would the community miss if you were no longer there?
- How are you being the hands and feet of Christ?



## Liabilities:

- Resource restraints
- Budget

## Assets:

- Ownership

# Opportunities – Mission Specialty

- Cultivate a mission specialty that allows personal involvement of members
- A source of identity, focus, and pride

## Liabilities:

- Low self-image

## Assets:

- Communication



# Opportunities - Vision

- Create a vision that compels commitment
- Utilize respected authority figures to change culture and commitment



## Liabilities:

- Short-term focus
- Tight-knit group

## Assets:

- Decision Making
- Respected Leaders



# Opportunities - Affirmation

- Affirm the gifts and generosity of every member
- Celebrate shared ministry and mission
- Tell the stories of the difference the congregation's life has made—the points of grace
- Activate the congregation's memory as a source of energy
- Cherish and honor the heritage as “who we are”



## Liabilities:

- Resistance to change
- Nostalgia

## Assets:

- Family
- Worship

# Opportunities - Transparency

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- Practice financial transparency



## Liabilities:

- Secrecy

## Assets:

- Pastoral Leadership

# Opportunities – Sufficiency & Abundance

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- Work to convert to an attitude and theology of sufficiency & abundance
- Proclaim and live God’s abundant provision for ministry and mission, confronting the cultural paradigm of consumerism, the religion of “more”

## Liabilities:

- Scarcity
- Low Self-Image



# Opportunities – Planned Giving

- Promote planned giving with confidence in the church's future



## Liabilities:

- Short-term focus

## Assets:

- Family

# Activate the Strengths

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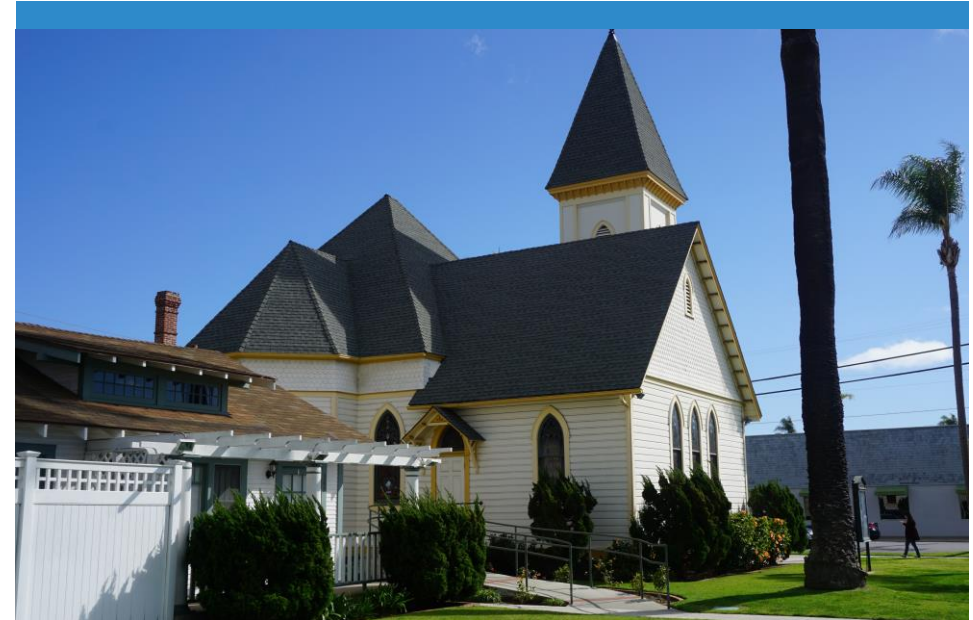
- Utilize worship to cultivate commitment
- Claim the power of relationships
  - Commitment, hope, & confidence are all contagious
- Mobilize respected authority figures
- Remind the church of its resilience and celebrate the memories
- Create the rumor of possibilities – “buzz”
- Affirm generosity – the expectation of high commitment



# Confront the Liabilities

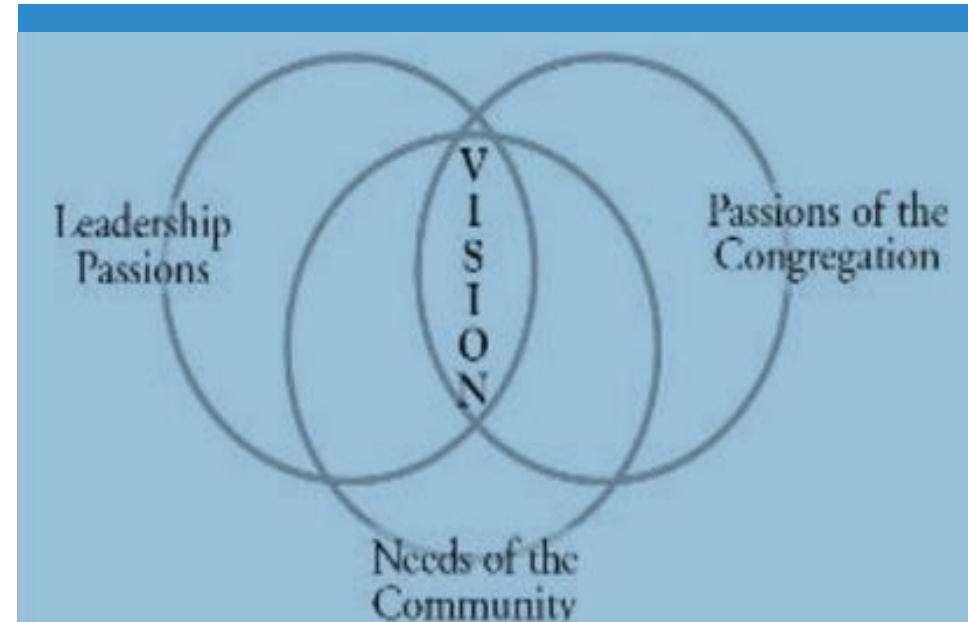
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- Work to build morale
  - Celebrate the small victories
  - Share the stories
- Create a vision for the future
- Confront the scarcity mentality
- Open up the church's finances – no secrets
- Build mission outreach
- Technology/Web Presence



# Mission Focus

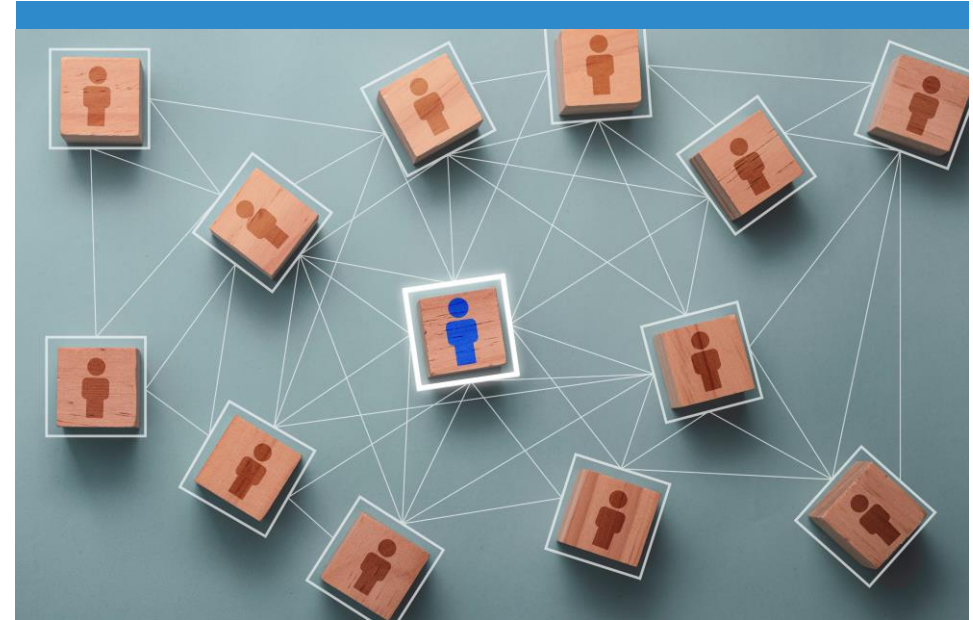
- The focus is outside – serves others
- Make sure members are engaged
  - Know their passions
  - Involve their time and money
- Make sure whatever you do is part of the vision/core values of the congregation
- Create a vision that compels commitment



# Choose Leaders Carefully

- Your most generous members
- Your most passionate advocates for your ministry
- Your most respected members whose commitment is contagious
- Your most imaginative, creative members who can create what works for you

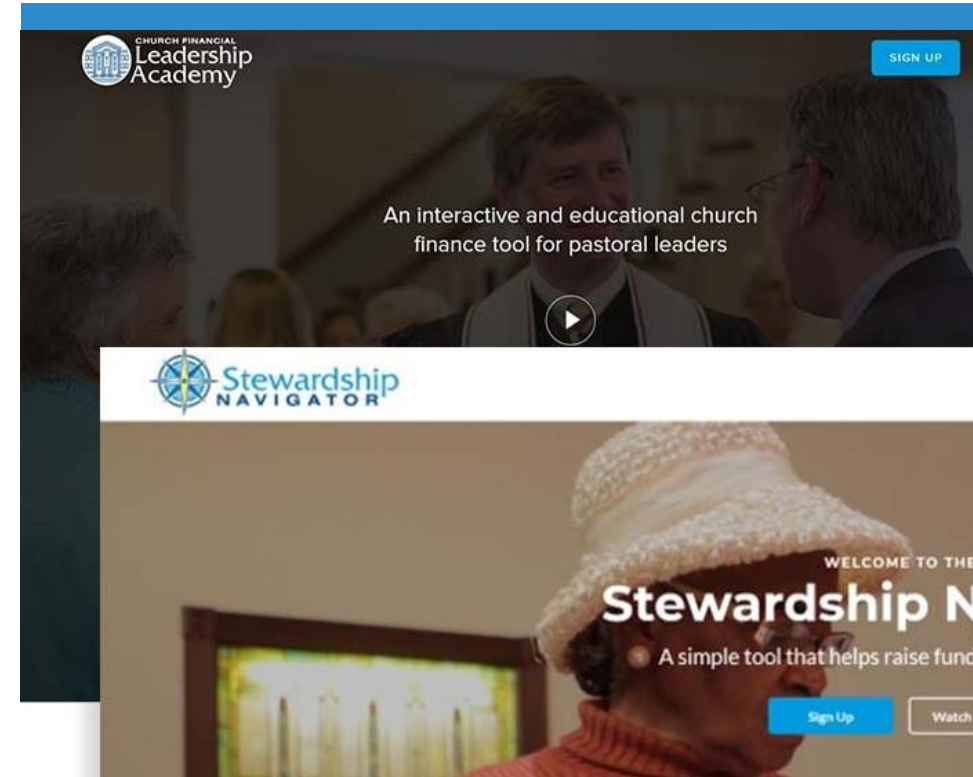
NOT NECESSARILY THE USUAL SUSPECTS





# Nurturing & Equipping Leaders

- Be their cheerleader
- Encourage relationship with the Presbytery/Synod and denominational agencies
- Direct toward resources from your Foundation
  - Presbyterian Foundation
    - [www.stewardshipnavigator.com](http://www.stewardshipnavigator.com)
    - [www.churchfla.com](http://www.churchfla.com) Code: PCUSA
    - Your Ministry Relations Officer
  - ELCA Foundation
    - Regional Gift Planner



# Tell the Stories

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Celebrate shared ministry and mission: tell the stories of the difference the congregation's life has made – the points of grace.



# ASK!

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- Claim the privilege of asking, boldly, specifically, repeatedly
  - Take advantage of telling the story with each offering during worship
- Multiple Channels of Asking and Giving
  - Budget support
  - Major program project appeals
  - Spontaneous giving to special appeals
  - Memorial gifts
  - In-kind and labor gifts
  - Capital projects and campaigns
  - Planned gifts and bequests
- Don't forget your church's "friends" – Give them the opportunity to support your work.
  - Those impacted by your ministry and mission
  - Those who share your vision
  - The wider circle beyond the family

# What about the Campaign?

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- Understand its limitations – commitment is built year-round
- Make sure it fits your church
- Key elements
  - Biblical reflections
  - Telling your unique story and stories
  - Inviting prayerful reflection
  - Asking
  - Responding
- Key Resource: [www.stewardshipnavigator.com](http://www.stewardshipnavigator.com)



# Ways people can give (Make it Easy)

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- Cash
- Check
- Online Bill Pay
- Credit/Debit Card
- Bank draft
- Securities



# Wills and Planned Giving

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- Start promoting it with confidence in the church's future
- Develop a planned giving program
- Create a Legacy Society
- Utilize your MRO (Ministry Relations Officer) or your ELCA Regional Gift Planner



# Thank You

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- Promote the future
- Completing the loop in multiple, creative and surprising ways
- The most neglected aspects of financial development
- Learn from non-profit groups
- Hand-written thank you notes



# Presbyterian

## FOUNDATION



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