

## **Congregational Gift Acceptance and Use Policy**

Up until now, few congregations have considered the necessity of creating a gift acceptance policy, much less a gift “use” policy. Yet, many of us have heard stories of congregations who’ve experienced a significant period of discord due to receiving an unexpected, large monetary gift from a deceased congregational member. Too often there are unyielding and differing opinions on how these types of gifts should be used.

Over the next 10-15 years, due to an aging population, we can anticipate congregations experiencing a significant increase in the number of memorial gifts, and the typically larger estate gifts. For this reason, congregations are encouraged to create a “Gift Acceptance and Use Policy” now, in anticipation of receiving such gifts. It is hoped that strategic, clear thinking in advance of receiving such gifts, will allow your policy to be “mission-driven” rather than “money-driven”. With planning and forethought, these gifts can be a blessing to the congregation and more specifically, the congregation’s ministry.

These extraordinary gifts, gifts beyond the congregation’s regular Sunday offering, can and should be used to transfer the blessings that God has bestowed upon the congregation. These gifts allow congregations to develop community-based mission driven programs, or to support ministries well beyond their own doors. As congregations enter into the planning phase of creating such a policy, they should keep in mind that stewardship without mission is unnecessary, and mission without stewardship is impossible!

To assist congregations with the process of developing such a policy, the Foundation has developed a comprehensive “Congregational Gift Acceptance and Use Policy” that congregations are encouraged to adapt and adopt for their own use. While some sections may be used “as is”, there are other areas of the policy requiring congregational input, based on the congregation’s current financial position. Congregations are free to use the suggested policy in its entirety, or edit it as they feel necessary.

Due to the complexity of some areas of the policy, also available is a “Commentary” companion document that provides additional information, rationale, and guidance for each section, attempting to address issues in a plain and practical manner, particularly in those areas of the policy requiring congregational input.

As we think about the purpose of every congregation, we realize that all the blessings God has entrusted to a congregation should be used for His purposes. Transferring these blessings is not about building bigger barns, but instead about finding more ways to share God’s love.

For further information on the Gift Acceptance and Use Policy, contact your Lutheran Foundation Canada Gift Coordinator.