



The Importance of Establishing A Gift Acceptance Policy (GAP) in your Congregation

A GAP defines the types of gifts that a church may accept that will help it to fulfill its mission, and is important for the following reasons:

- A GAP can encourage philanthropy, as members think about new ways in which to make gifts to their Church.
- It can help a congregation better to understand what can be given, how gifts are given, and even why they are given.
- It can protect a church from feeling obligated to accept irrelevant, difficult or cumbersome gifts.
- A GAP can also encourage discussions with potential donors before a bequest is finalized, to ensure that the gift will be of true and significant benefit to the Church.
- A well-thought out GAP can prevent conflict within the Church when a gift has been offered that has the potential to be transforming – or divisive.
- Accepting gifts on a case-by-case basis creates inconsistency and can lead to resentment and conflict; a GAP sets objective guidelines that are followed year after year.
- Such a policy sends the message that all restricted and non-cash gifts will be evaluated by a Gift Acceptance Committee, and can encourage unrestricted cash gifts.
- Perhaps most important, a GAP can prevent *donors* from making mistakes, when they have a clear charitable desire and intent.

When your congregation puts a gift acceptance policy into place, it's important to involve as many members as possible in the conversation, and approve the policy by congregational vote. And then: don't put the GAP on the shelf and forget about it. Review it annually, and publicize it to congregation members regularly. Use it as a vehicle for encouraging discussions about philanthropy, your congregation's endowment and/or long term mission goals.