



Twenty-one Ways to Encourage Gifts to your Mission Endowment Fund

There's a long-held axiom that says "any nonprofit organization [*read: church*] should strive to have an endowment in place that's at least three times the amount of its yearly operations budget."

So if your annual budget or ministry spending plan is \$1 million, you minimally need an endowment of \$3 million. With interest rates being as low as they are at this time, a \$3 million endowment doesn't go all that far in providing yearly assistance to support the ministry of the church.

But giving to a church's mission endowment can be as important and rewarding for your members as giving to the current mission and ministry of the congregation.

Here are some ways to encourage gifts to your church's mission endowment.

- ✚ Take the time and effort necessary to establish the vision, purpose and goals of your church's mission endowment. This deliberative process will already go a long way to cultivate future gifts from your members.
- ✚ Create a mission endowment committee whose task it is to identify, cultivate and solicit endowment gifts.
- ✚ Ask families or individuals who give \$1,000 or more on an annual basis to make an endowed gift large enough to ensure their annual support will continue long after their lifetimes.
- ✚ Do regular feature articles in your newsletter on topics related to various aspects of your mission endowment – profile a donor, talk about the impact of a named endowment fund, etc.
- ✚ Ask an individual or a family to establish a challenge gift aimed at matching those who give to the mission endowment over a specified period of time.
- ✚ Publicize any and all named mission endowment gifts as much as possible when they occur, in order to plant the idea of making a similar gift in the minds of others.

- ✚ Ask Church council members and other members in leadership positions to help identify and, if possible, approach prospective donors to the mission endowment fund – after they have made their own commitment.
- ✚ Develop, with the approval of your Church council, a carefully thought-out list of endowment fund opportunities that can be shared with likely donors – capital projects, programming needs and personnel positions.
- ✚ Produce an attractive brochure that describes endowment giving opportunities and includes a list of existing named mission endowment funds. Be sure to include a “ways to give” section.
- ✚ Announce the launch of appeals to establish mission endowment funds in honor of long-time and respected members.
- ✚ Devote space on your website to mission endowment topics: Q&A, endowment statistics, a list and description of existing named funds, brief articles about members who have made a gift to your mission endowment.
- ✚ Make mention of endowment gifts – and their potential impact – at church-sponsored events.
- ✚ Decide and publicize that all memorial gifts will be given to the mission endowment’s unrestricted fund.
- ✚ Ask someone from a local charity with a sizeable endowment to speak to the Church council about the impact of their endowment on people and programs.
- ✚ Ask groups within the church collectively to establish named mission endowment funds: men’s and women’s groups, charter members, former Church Council members, in honor of your church’s youth.
- ✚ Host a once-a-year event that recognizes all endowment donors and invites other attendees to join in supporting your mission endowment.
- ✚ Establish a special legacy giving effort for your charter members, and ask them to be the first to make pledges to support the endowment.
- ✚ Set yearly quantifiable objectives for yourself: To make x face-to-face calls on prospective endowment donors throughout the year; to solicit x prospective donors for named endowment gifts throughout the year, etc.
- ✚ Discover whether any of your members have connections to foundations and ask them if it would be possible to approach them for a gift.
- ✚ Recognize that an endowment will help your church to fulfill its God-given mission, and will help your members to grow in their stewardship practices.
- ✚ Understand that establishing and growing a mission endowment is a long-term, multi-year (multi-decade!) process, and don’t ever be discouraged if the process seems slow.