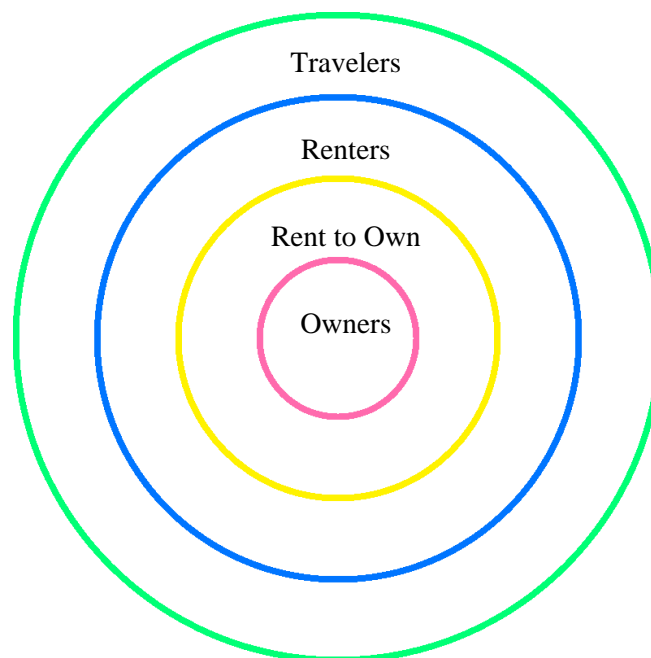

DEMOGRAPHIC CONSIDERATIONS STEP 3

Parish stewardship efforts should be based on strategic considerations of the people served. Many of our parishioners vary in their personal commitment to parish life. Stewardship lived, in the life of a parish, reaches out to those who may not appreciate the value of a life based on Formation, Hospitality, Prayer, and Service. It is valuable to take deliberate steps to identify our parishioners to make all our efforts effective. The following model lists examples with descriptions identifying target groups:

- A. “Owners or core parishioners”– People who are actively involved in ministry giving of time, talent, and treasure. These people know their faith and are bedrock to parish ministry.
- B. “Rent to Own”– People who attend Mass regularly and may be involved in ministry at a basic level. Engaged when invited or see a need they believe in. Believe in the church but need catechesis.
- C. “Renters”– People who attend Mass with some regularity, not involved beyond attending Mass. Easily pulled to other denominations. May have children in the parish school or religious education program. Can be engaged when invited. Need catechesis.
- D. “Travelers”– People who attend Mass once or twice per year. May attend Sunday worship in other denominations but come back to the Catholic church for significant events such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals. Not very engaged.

This list can easily be modified to individual parishes, however, the concept remains the same. Each parish needs to engage specific groups *where they are at* when information is disseminated, and stewardship efforts are promoted. One size does not fit all. To grow ministries, the way each parish extends an invitation to specific groups needs to be customized to engage new and active members. Trust in God’s help to reach out to all.



Model showing how a demographic survey can look.

Steps for demographic considerations using this model:

- 1) This is not a judgment call on members' spirituality, only a practical view of where parishioners are at.
- 2) This means of organizing the parish is to be kept confidential. The purpose is to reach out and evangelize those who do not respond to ordinary parish activities.
- 3) Identify or categorize the entire parish. If the size of parish makes this process unrealistic, categorize a percentage of the parish to understand the whole.
- 4) When communicating parish activities, it is necessary to consider each group individually. The parish bulletin is perfect for *Owners, and the Rent to Own* groups. However, this same vehicle will be lost on *Renters and Travelers*. Personalized mailings, phone calls, and quarterly newsletters would be much more effective for *Renters and Travelers*. Keep all records as up to date as possible to effectively communicate to these two groups. NEVER remove any parishioner from your parish data base based on attendance or lack thereof.
- 5) Another economical means of communication, often overlooked, is a professional and current web site. Many parishioners are using the internet as a primary source for seeking information and communication. If you do not have a well maintained web site, begin discerning if one is necessary for the size of the parish.
- 6) Begin selecting new ministers from other circles. The process will come with a reasonable amount of failure for numerous reasons. However, *Renters and Travelers* will not normally volunteer for ministry. Others may only volunteer due to the need of the parish rather than the person's need to give.
- 7) Personal invitation is mandatory when engaging people in all groups. Personal invitation breeds hospitality and provides a personal touch to parishioners in outer groups.
- 8) Gratitude should be displayed to all who accept the invitation to ministry in any parish. It is poor hospitality to accept a person's service without thanking them for it.

Following these steps will engage each parishioner right where they are and bring them into the life of the parish and into the life of Christ. It is our obligation to reach and lovingly accept each person's need to give back to their parish.