



Steward Tips

Central/Southern Illinois Synod

August 2016

Part of our stewardship ministry is to assist individuals and congregations with the development of financial strategies that will help them to be good stewards of the resources that God has given them. This issue of “Steward Tips” focuses on “Shifts in *Stewardship*”, adapted from the ELCA’s “Stewards of God’s Love”, and “16 Ways to Increase Giving in Your Church”.

Shifts in Stewardship

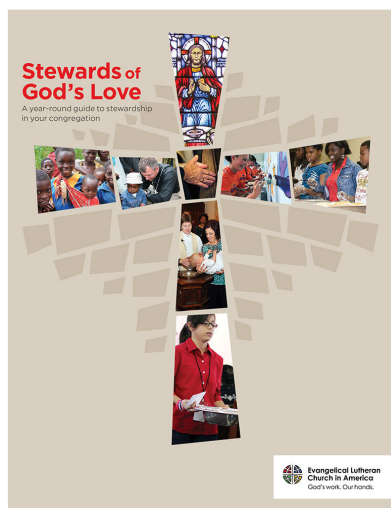
A new approach to stewardship requires shifts in the way that we think and talk about stewardship:

Old Way of Thinking

New Way of Thinking

- | | | |
|---|----|---|
| “Stewardship is about paying the bills.” | —> | “Stewardship is about loving God and my neighbor.” |
| “Stewardship is about money.” | —> | “Stewardship is about my whole self.” |
| “How much of what is mine should I give?” | —> | “How much of what is God’s should I keep for me?” |
| “We don’t have enough?” | —> | “God has provided for us in abundance.” |

The new approach to stewardship is not primarily about paying the congregation’s bills. Instead stewardship is about how the congregation can do God’s work together. It is about how the congregation can live out God’s call to love God and our neighbors together. Stewardship is directly tied to discipleship. It is no longer about the congregation’s need to receive, but about the giver’s need to give. Stewardship is a way of life. It is not just about what is given to the congregation, but about how generous we are with all that God has entrusted to our care both inside and outside of the church walls and in our homes.



Every congregation benefits as an active partner in the ELCA’s mission to share God’s boundless love with the world. The stories of our congregations are filled with powerful examples of how lives have been changed because of our generosity, particularly the benevolence that is shared from congregations of this church’s 65 synods and the churchwide organization. This is known as ELCA Mission Support. In this way, the practice of stewardship becomes more holistic and occurs year-round. Stewardship can no longer be used as a synonym for money, but extends to all of life, all of the gifts that God has entrusted to our care. So, stewardship sermons, forums, and all other things stewardship-related must be intentionally holistic, rather than sliding back into a sole focus on financial stewardship. It is a practice that is preached, discussed and lived out at different times throughout the year.

—Adapted from the ELCA’s “Stewards of God’s Love: A year-round guide to stewardship in your congregation, 2013, pp. 7-8.

16 Ways to Increase Giving in Your Church

1. **ESTABLISH A YEAR-ROUND STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE.**

There is more to stewardship development than the annual every member canvass. Stewardship learning and performance flourish in an atmosphere of quiet but constant cultivation.

2. **SET HIGHER GOALS.**

The giving potential of the congregation is far beyond its accustomed level. Only unprecedented goals produce unprecedented performance.

3. **GET BACK TO FIRST CENTURY COMMUNICATION.**

The early Christian churches had no e-mails, faxes, photocopiers, or printing presses. They prevailed through face-to-face talk; person to person in small groups.

4. **BE A GIVING CHURCH.**

By its own giving, the church sets its members a compelling example. Church giving off the bottom generates members' giving off the bottom; church giving off the top generates members' giving off the top.

5. **RAISE CAPITAL FUNDS SEPARATELY.**

Except for mission churches and preaching stations, few church mortgages are really necessary. You can raise more building funds in any one year than budget funds. Keep capital funds out of the budget; that is expensive and a drag.

6. **GET YOUR BEST AND BIGGEST GIFTS FIRST.**

Rather than mailing the pledge cards and then calling on those who do not respond, call first on your prospective best and largest givers. Spend 85% of your time where 85% of the money will come from rather than on the last 15% where very little will happen.

7. **WEAR HANDCUFFS.**

Be pastor to your lay leaders but don't do their work for them. Keep your hands off the machinery. The question is who is helping whom with those responsibilities.

8. **ORGANIZE YOUR BEST GIVERS.**

Only good givers make other good givers. Nominal givers make only other nominal givers.

9. **TEACH THE HABIT OF WEEKLY PLEDGING.**

Presenting one's offering is an essential part of worship. Sending a quarterly check is no substitute for bringing one's offering to the worship service. Participating in a pre-authorized remittance program is a form of pledging, and often churches will provide tokens to put in the offering plate on a weekly basis.

10. **RECOGNIZE AND HONOR GOOD GIVERS.**

With the permission of the givers—and only then—let the congregation know about “some of the fine giving that is going on around here.” “Let your light so shine....”

11. **PROVIDE INDIVIDUAL GUIDELINES.**

For most families, “How much should we give” is a wrenching decision. Be prepared to offer specific, helpful suggestions for individual cases, not just bland generalizations. A proportional giving chart can be helpful for this purpose.

12. **PROVIDE FOR INDIVIDUAL CONVERSATIONS.**

Counseling about Christian giving should be highly individualized, confidential, and should take place in homes.

13. **ENCOURAGE PERSONAL WITNESS.**

The most powerful, effective stewardship development force within a congregation is the personal testimony of those who have recently experienced the Gospel of good giving.

14. **LET THE CONGREGATION TAKE PRIDE.**

As the level of giving in the congregation rises, publicize the good news and keep it flowing. Let the members take pride in their corporate achievement.

15. **SEE NEW MEMBERS FOR THEIR PLEDGES RIGHT AWAY.**

The next every member canvass is too late.

16. **PREACH THE GOSPEL OF GOOD GIVING.**

It really is better to give than to receive. Honest!

