



# Steward Tips

Central/Southern Illinois Synod

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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 Teaching Stewardship Values, and “Three Legs of the Financial Stool”.

## Teaching Stewardship Values



Through words and deeds, every person and every congregation make a statement about what is important to them. The ELCA has a “Stewardship Life & Ministry Values Readiness Tool” that is available as a free downloadable resource at [www.ELCA.org/resources](http://www.ELCA.org/resources)

For example, on a scale of 1-5 with “1” representing strong disagreement and “5” representing strong agreement, how would you rate the following comments based on your understanding of “Christians trust in God’s abundance” as a value statement:

- \_\_\_ The object of Christian Stewardship is to share what we own with others.
- \_\_\_ The earth has sufficient resources to provide enough for all.
- \_\_\_ I often feel anxious about whether I will have enough to “make ends meet”.
- \_\_\_ God always provides enough for those who are faithful.
- \_\_\_ Most people are grateful for what they have.
- \_\_\_ Most people feel that they have earned what they have.
- \_\_\_ I usually end up giving more than I can really afford.

There are no “right” or “wrong” answers. These questions will help you to discover where you are and to identify areas for future growth.

Other values included in the resource are: The Bible and tradition give us guidance; Stewardship affects all aspects of life; Stewardship expresses our interconnectedness; Christian stewardship engages our culture; and Financial health is an expression of faith.

Visit [www.ELCA.org/resources](http://www.ELCA.org/resources) to see other stewardship resources.

### For Further Consideration

1. Who has had the biggest impact on your life in terms of helping you to develop your values about stewardship?
2. What stewardship values do you think every Christian ought to have?
3. How does your congregation teach people to be generous?

# Three Legs of the Financial Stool



by Pastor Nikoli Falenschek

In any congregation or nonprofit tracking the origins of money can be difficult. However, knowing where your organization's monies come from can be extremely helpful, not just for annual pledge drives but also for long-range visioning.

Sometimes, it can be easy to become entrenched in the day-to-day (or year-to-year) challenges of funding congregations. When this happens, we forget to think about the long-term goals and dreams which sustain ministry. To help hold the short-term and long-term financial responsibilities in tension, *The Three Legs of the Financial Stool* will help us to think more holistically about money.

The three legs of the financial stool are: **income**, **wealth**, and **estate**. Each leg refers to a different financial part of a person or giving unit. For visioning and sustaining purposes, congregations must incorporate the nuances of each leg into their financial goals and dreams. To focus on only one of the legs, for example, income, might severely limit the breadth of ministry in a particular organization. Here is how it works:

**INCOME** refers to people's paychecks, the monies they receive on a weekly or monthly basis from their employment, retirement package, etc. In *The Three Legs of the Financial Stool model*, people pledge out of their income to the general operating budget. Those monies which sustain households on a yearly basis also sustain the church on a yearly basis. This is the leg of the stool that is most frequently called upon to sustain an organization's day-to-day operations.

**WEALTH** refers to accumulated wealth—that is, monies tied up in house, cars, materials, stock, etc. In *The Three Legs of the Financial Stool model*, it is primarily the wealth of a congregation which makes capital campaigns successful. People are called to give of their wealth for bigger projects in the congregation, e.g. capital improvements, social programs, benevolence projects, etc.

**ESTATE** refers to that which people leave behind when they die. In *The Three Legs of the Financial Stool model*, all of the funds left to a congregation in a will usually go to support an endowment fund. Endowments are a lasting and responsible tool for nonprofit organizations as well as a wonderful way to preserve the memory and ministry of a deceased member. These funds will not be used then forgotten, instead, the endowment uses an estate gift to fuel great things in the future. The idea here is that the principle of an endowment would be protected from withdrawal, and only a portion of its annual interest would be available for use.

It is important to remember all three facets of financial stewardship, both on individual and corporate levels. People give frequently from their income for general operating expenses, less frequently from their wealth for capital improvements and other projects, and finally estate gifts usually go into the endowment.

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