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# Simple Stewardship Ideas

*Some Money-Saving and Value-Added Suggestions for Congregations*  
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## Communications/Office

### **Cost Saving**

- Reduce postage costs by maintaining an accurate membership list and inviting people to receive newsletters, etc. by email rather than mailed hard copies.
- Don't print in color.
- Stock fewer colors of paper so you can buy each color in bulk.
- Consider sharing office staff/equipment with another congregation.
- If your congregation pays for its email account separately from your Internet service subscription, consider switching to a free Gmail (Google) email account.

### **Cost Neutral (FREE!)**

- E-Mail "Blasts"--regular communication to members with email
  - MailChimp (free for up to 2,000 subscribers) has revolutionized our CLC E-News!
  - Will not send from Yahoo! accounts, but Gmail and private domains work.
- Social Media: Facebook, Twitter, Blogs
- Release videos on YouTube (Be very careful of copyright infringement, though!)

### **Some Additional Cost**

- Podcasting: PodBean
  - There is a free package for PodBean, but most congregations will probably do best with the \$8/month (or maybe \$3/month) packages to podcast sermons. CLC currently pays \$8/month to power the On The Way Podcast (daily ELCA Lectionary devotions).
  - Makes it easy to list your podcast on iTunes, which helps listeners find it and subscribe to it on their smartphones.
  - Provides an embeddable media player that you can put on your website (and pass along to others so that they can put it on their websites).
- Mass text message services
  - Phone Apps: You may pay for the app, but you use the text messages you already have with your mobile phone plan. (Group Text! for iPhone, MightyText for Android)
  - Ez Texting: A very simple, pay-as-you-go service controlled through their website ([www.eztexting.com](http://www.eztexting.com)). You only pay when you send texts. At their current rates, it would cost only \$5 to send messages to 100 phones - a great way to send snow cancellations or other rare notifications!
  - There are other services available that are geared specifically toward congregations, but these cost a lot more money and you need to be sure you'll use them enough to get your money's worth.
- Website builder services: Yola, Weebly, Squarespace
  - These companies (and several others) provide simple tools to help you design your site, and they are simple enough that many people in your congregation could probably help with the site maintenance!
- Register your own domain for your website. It helps to have a fairly clean and coherent name (e.g. [www.christlutheran-monticello.com](http://www.christlutheran-monticello.com)) that is free of extra bits at the end.

## Worship

### **Cost Saving**

- Reusable bulletins can reduce paper usage and printing costs and save hundreds of dollars. Consider using a folder as a cover for extra durability.
- Prepare and print your own reading inserts rather than ordering them
  - CLC uses the Words for Worship CD prepared annually by the ELCA (about \$200), but you could piece it together from Bible websites with NRSV translations. If you want to take that more difficult route, though, you should ask a lawyer or someone else who is well-versed in copyright laws.
- Reduce office help hours by simplifying your weekly materials.

### **Cost Neutral**

- Consider purchasing pew Bibles instead of printing reading inserts, as the one-time expense will eventually level out with the recurring printing expenses. One challenge to consider here is congregational singing of psalms--people will have to switch from the pew Bible to the hymnal.

### **Some Additional Cost**

- Consider whether your congregation would use video screens instead of paper bulletins. Paper and printing costs will be reduced, but be aware that it may take several years to offset the equipment startup cost. Also, this is a major cultural change in the congregation that requires significant investment to be done well and that needs broad congregational support.

## Facilities

### **Cost Saving**

- Sell parcels of congregation-owned land, or rent them to farmers.
- Consider sharing facilities with another congregation (e.g. joint office, food pantry).
- What meetings/programs does your congregation conduct in the building that could be done just as well off-site? You might consider holding committee meetings or Bible studies in public places like restaurants, or at a member's home.
- Reduce water usage for lawns and gardens by mulching, using rain barrels, etc.
- Install thermostats with scheduling features to optimize heating/cooling patterns.
- Cut energy costs by replacing outdated lighting, windows, and HVAC technology.
- Faith in Place ([www.faithinplace.org](http://www.faithinplace.org), based in Chicago. Urbana contact person: Rev. Cindy Shepherd, 217-493-5046) can help guide this effort.
- You may also be able to find some simple upgrades through your power company. For instance, Ameren Illinois has resources to help you assess the building's energy efficiency.

### **Cost Neutral**

- Offer your building for community use--sometimes, groups will pay to use your space, and even if they don't, the extra utility bills may be dwarfed by the community goodwill you could generate!
- Start a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm--if you are interested in this, check out Sola Gratia Farm at St. Matthew, Urbana (Pastor Bob Rasmus).

### **Some Additional Cost**

- Look into alternative technologies, such as solar panels and geothermal heating/cooling, especially if your congregation is building a new structure. While the initial investment can be very high, the cost savings could be huge as energy prices continue to rise.