

STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT

Stewardship Principles

“Christian Stewardship is the practice of systematic and proportionate giving of time, abilities, material resources and influence, based on the conviction these are a trust from God, to be used in service for the benefit of all people, in grateful acknowledgment of Christ’s redeeming love, caring for and managing all that God has given us.”

What Stewardship *is not*:

- a once a year event;
- all about money;
- fund raising;
- meeting a budget;
- just about us.

Stewardship *is*:

- about making choices, as individuals and in a community;
- more than giving money to our Church;
- faith rising;
- disciple making;
- about being faithful disciples, caring for and managing all God has given us;
- the commitment of time, abilities, material resources and influence;
- a trust from God, for the benefit of all people;
- treasure management that helps us escape the trap of selfishness by keeping ourselves spiritually focused on God;
- the grateful response to Christ’s redeeming love.

Healthy and vibrant Stewardship Commitment grows out of a healthy and vibrant faith community---
Stewardship Commitment is a piece of the whole.

Recruit a Stewardship Task Force or a Stewardship Team

- The Pastor needs to be a key member but not the leader of the Stewardship Team for the Stewardship effort to be effective.
- The Stewardship Team should be intergenerational in terms of its membership.

Year Round Approach

Why?

What does a Year Round Approach Involve?

- See “Stewardship Commitment Timeline”
- See Chapter 8 “Implementing a 12-Month Stewardship Program in Creating Congregations of Generous People by Michael Durall. An Alban Institute Publication

Commitment Campaign Programs

- Direct Mail
- Personal Delivery
- Consecration Sunday
- Sunday Worship
- Congregational Dinner
- Small Group Meetings

Every Member Visitation

What Works Best?

1. Every Member Visitation
2. Combined Sunday Worship/Consecration Sunday, followed by a Celebration Meal
3. Direct Mail with story telling leading up to the mailing

Determine what will work best for your congregation. A Challenge Goal needs to be a part of the program as well as telling the congregation what mission the increased resources will fund.

Establish a Challenge Goal for Giving by the Session

- Challenge the congregation to increase their level of giving by 1% of their income as they move toward the Biblical tithe of 10% and beyond.
- Challenge the congregation to increase their level of giving by a % of what they are currently giving, such as 5% or 10%.
- Challenge the congregation to increase their giving by moving from one level to the next. (Least effective)

In challenging an increase in giving, tell the congregation how the increased giving will be used; so Committees, Commissions and Task Forces need to prepare a plan as to what they hope to do with the increased giving---all, of course, centered on mission. Such plans should be in place by June prior to the Campaign so the challenge can be established during the following September. Be sure to emphasize the joy and spiritual growth members will experience from their increased giving.

The Challenge needs to be stated in all Commitment Campaign materials, as well as what the church will be able to do with its increased resources.

Ten Keys to Successful Stewardship

- Be Prayerful
- Celebrate who the church is, what the church does, who its people are
- Be Visionary
- Communicate
- Involve Many
- Think In Terms of Funding Ministry...not Fund Raising
- Be Inviting...Not Threatening
- Challenge Your Congregation
- Try A New Approach
- Be Willing to Give Time and Energy

Generational Realities in Financial Discipleship

GIs / Civics

1901-1924

- Stewardship

Seniors are much more likely than any other group to describe themselves as religious; feel absolutely committed to the Christian faith.

Express appreciated for past support and loyalty to the congregation's life and traditions and for the legacy the GIs have given to the congregation.

While GIs often find themselves asked for money, they are seldom asked for input, ideas, or problem-solving, so asking for such input on some issue in the congregation can be helpful.

Be willing to get to the bottom line. It is helpful to emphasize the big picture of the congregation in concrete terms, particularly numbers.

- Create a chart, graph, etc. of the total congregational giving and make certain the entire congregation receives it. Encourage members to ask “Where would our church be if everyone gave as I do?” or “What percentage of my income is God calling me to give?”
- Use a guest preacher as part of your Commitment Campaign, but have him/her preach the Sunday before Commitment Sunday. (Most people come to Commitment Sunday with the minds made up as to what their commitment will be.)
- Include a catered congregational Celebration Meal on Commitment Sunday.
- Follow up letters to those who haven’t responded, but personal contact is far more effective and creates a quicker response. Follow up by e-mail can be very effective as well.
- Keep the congregation informed as to the progress of the campaign.
- A personal thank you call to those who have made a commitment is affirming and worth the effort.
- Personal thank-you letter with several signatures to everyone who makes a commitment including the amount of the commitment made.
- Send all Stewardship snail mailings by “first class mail.”
- Use a “Narrative Budget” in telling the church’s mission story.
- Involve as many church members in the Campaign as possible!
- Include Stewardship Commitment as a part of New Member Classes---this is a key learning opportunity for those who have no clue as to what Stewardship Commitment is all about! Don’t be afraid to say what is expected in terms of membership and giving.
- Establish Electronic Transfer of Funds.
- Be bright, be brief, be done and have fun!

Some Don’ts

- Don’t try to do it all by yourself---create a Team or Task Force. The more people involved in a Stewardship Commitment Program, the more successful you will be.
- Don’t cut corners---do it first class or don’t do it at all
- Don’t be afraid to spend money---you have to spend it to make it.
- Don’t be afraid to ask the congregation to increase their level of giving---if you don’t ask, the congregation seldom responds.
- Don’t use a “Line Item Budget” or a “Dream Budget” in attempting to tell the church’s mission story.
- One Stewardship Letter will not fit the entire congregation. Send different letters to different people--make specific requests.