

Four Important Ways to Strengthen Your Congregation's Stewardship Ministry

1. Celebrate God's Word
2. Tell how the congregation is making a difference in Jesus' name in the world
3. Ask for growth in giving
4. Thank people for their gifts (all their gifts)

Ask for Growth in Giving

I still think the best way to do this is to have an effective annual stewardship response program.

An Introductory Comment

- The best annual stewardship response program in the world will not rescue a non-existent year-round stewardship ministry.
- A good annual stewardship response program will be a vital component of a good year-round stewardship ministry.

Three reasons people give

Not Your Parents' Offering Plate,
Chapter 2

A belief in the mission

- Does your congregation have a mission?
- Are congregation members able to clearly articulate your mission?
- How have the members had the opportunity to participate in shaping the mission?

Regard for staff leadership

- Like it or not, in a congregation the Senior Pastor is crucial here.
- The importance of the basics ("Pay the rent")

Financial stability of the institution

- People don't give to sinking ships. (Ken Callahan)
- Don't cry wolf. Bad news doesn't motivate.
- If the situation is difficult, talk about fulfilling the mission of the congregation. Don't talk about the need to pay the bills.

As you ask for giving...

- All "asks" for giving should focus on the need of the giver to give, not the need of the church to receive
- Don't use a budget to ask people to give
- Don't talk about the monthly bills
- Focus on the Bible
- Focus on the mission

Is pledging helpful?

- It can help the giver
 - It is an act of Christian maturity
 - It is an act of prayerful discernment
 - It is an act of faith
 - It is an act of Christian community
 - From John Clark, President, The James Company
 - It provides the opportunity to review one's giving and "stay on track" with a plan

Is pledging helpful?

- It can help the congregation
 - It provides an opportunity for Biblical focus on stewardship
 - The congregation can more accurately budget
 - People give more regularly when they have made a commitment
 - Over several years, a modest annual increase in the congregation's budget can make a big difference
 - (A 5% annual increase for 10 years will turn \$200,000 into \$325,779 available for mission and ministry.)

Does it make sense to use the word tithes?

- If so, how can it be communicated as a word of grace?
- If not, how can we answer the question, "What is a generous gift?"
- Since the average mainline Christian in the USA gives less than 2% of household income to their congregation, "Grow toward a tithe." is probably good language to use.

Don't forget to ask for growth in giving

- Are you intentionally asking people to grow in their giving?
- Provide simple ways for people to calculate growth.
 - Step chart
 - Percentage giving charts
 - One-half of 1%
- Encourage regular giving from accumulated assets.
 - Appreciated stock
 - Required Minimum Distributions from IRAs

Segment the ask

- Based on age
- Based on past giving
- Based on past way of giving

What is an annual response program?

An annual response program is a three or four week emphasis when members of the congregation:

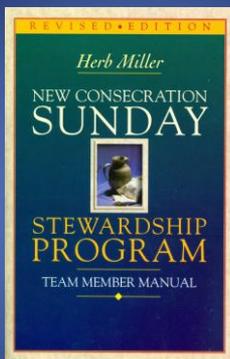
1. Grow in their understanding of biblical stewardship,
2. Learn more about the congregation's ministry, and
3. Are invited to increase their financial support of the congregation.

BECAUSE OF
GOD'S GREAT MERCY 

www.embracingstewardship.com

Walk with *Jesus*

www.elca.org



www.cokesbury.com



Ecumenical Stewardship Center
www.stewardshipresources.org

Make it convenient to give

- Are you asking people to conform to “your” ways or are you adapting to “their” ways?
- Automatic withdrawal as a Biblical model of giving
- Giving on your web site
- Text giving
- Giving kiosk
- Credit card giving for rewards

An idea for 2019

Convene a “give team”

- Assess – How has your congregation asked for growth in giving in the past five years? How did each go?
- Explore – What options are available that you might use in 2019 to ask for growth in giving?
- Plan – Pick one and schedule it for 2019
- Implement – Work your plan

Thank People for Their Gifts (time, talent and treasure)

Thank

- I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers.
–Ephesians 1:15-16
- I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now.
–Philippians 1:3-5

Thanking is a win/win/win

- Thanking builds up the person who is thanked,
- builds up the person who thanks, and
- builds up the body of Christ

Thank  You

Thank

- General ways of thanking
 - With reports of giving – a three paragraph letter from you
 - One great ministry event in the past quarter
 - Thanks for making this and more possible
 - One thing that is coming up in the next quarter that you are especially anticipating
 - In worship – Thanksgiving Moment
 - In newsletter – Have staff and council members do this – tie to mission

Thank

- Specific ways of thanking
 - Pastor intentionally thanks before/after worship
 - Pastor writes five thank you letters per week
 - Congregational thank(er)s

Thank

- Lessons I learned from Luther Seminary (and many other non-profits)
 - How Luther Seminary thanks donors
 - How much of this is transferable?

Develop a plan for thanking

1. Discover what you are doing now
2. Ask yourselves what you would like to do
 - Staff
 - Elected leaders
 - A focus group or two
3. Develop a plan
 - Keep it simple
 - Start small

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