



CONGREGATIONAL
STEWARDSHIP
WORKBOOK

Our Ability to Respond



**Congregational Stewardship
Workbook 2000**

© 2000 The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Department of Stewardship Ministry

Permission is granted to copy or print portions of this resource for local use when the copyright notice below accompanies the copy. Other than the files on the original CDR that accompanies this resource, any storage, electronic or photographic, by any means in any medium, is restricted.

Notice to accompany copies:

“Copyright © The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Used by permission.”

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture is taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

Booklet design, layout and CDROM by Production Express, 810 Villa Gran Way, St. Louis, MO 63026.
Printed in U.S.A.

Notes

the “Suggested Plan for Discussion, Growth and Action” with your Stewardship Committee to work and grow toward balance in your congregation’s stewardship life. The eight response/abilities and accompanying worksheet might also be used to good effect in small groups within your congregation as part of a yearly stewardship emphasis.

Congregational size has implications for ministry structures (cf. appropriate section). Smaller congregations may delegate this responsibility to one person. Larger congregations may have a committee.

Suggested Plan for Discussion, Growth and Action

1. Reproduce copies of the worksheet “Balancing Stewardship Response/Abilities” (page 9).
2. Ask each committee member to indicate his or her perception of your congregation’s “balance.”
3. Reassemble as a group to discuss the issues, determining how each was balanced, and asking the Lutheran question, “What does this mean?” for our committee as we lead stewardship in our congregation.
4. Remember discussion of the issues is key, not necessarily full agreement.
5. Note the Scripture sections pertinent to the response/ability.



Response/Ability #1

The first priority of a stewardship committee is:

Either to spend priority time with each other in Scripture study, faith-sharing ... and prayer for each other and the congregation...

Or to spend priority time in planning and overseeing the yearly budget, developing the yearly stewardship emphasis, and monitoring the congregation’s time and talent inventory.

Obviously, these are not mutually exclusive choices ... no “either/or.” Although the stewardship committee may have responsibility for the congregational budget, the committee must have a vision far beyond mere fund-raising. The primary focus of a Stewardship Committee (or any congregational leadership team) must be spiritual growth.

The spiritual vitality of a congregation will never grow beyond the spiritual vitality of its leaders.

The agenda of the committee begins with:

- prayer with and for each other
- Scripture with and for each other
- faith-sharing with and for each other
- care for each other



The Smalcald Articles of the Lutheran Confessions identify the mutual conversation and consolation of the brothers and sisters in Christ as a primary vehicle for the Holy Spirit's work in His people. Jesus says, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. ..."

Response/Ability #2

The primary purpose of our congregation's stewardship emphases is to:

Either to increase each member's giving of time, of talent, of care and of money...

Or to help our stewardship leaders grow.

Without the giving of time, of talent, of care and of money, the congregation as an institution cannot exist. However, the congregation is called to a purpose far beyond mere existence. The Christian congregation is a primary matrix created by God to provide meaning and purpose for His baptized children and to provide a context for each individual member to grow up into Christ. The primary response/ability of a Christian leader is to help other leaders grow. This means that, at the very least, the Stewardship Committee members are gathered by the Holy Spirit to help one another grow in Christ. Read and discuss Rom. 12:1-8. If the stewardship team members are nurturing one another through prayer, Scripture study, faith sharing and care, then the congregation's other stewardship leaders will be both led and impacted by this growth.

Response/Ability #3

The congregation's most valuable tool in enlisting support for projects and asking people to give is:

Either to promote support for Christ's mission and ministry through the budget...

Or to encourage giving for the giver's sake.

Enlisting support for the congregation's mission and ministry is important. An informed giver is a more motivated and fulfilled steward. However, stewardship leaders should first emphasize first-fruit giving for the giver's sake. Giving is a loving Creator's unique plan for the individual Christian through which the Holy Spirit develops trust in God's constant care and rescues from a self-consumed life of idolatry and covetousness. "The love of money is the root of all evil," St. Paul warns both the young pastor Timothy and the church of all ages. God in asking for first-fruit giving—first love, first commitment, first quality—seeks not to burden us with new legalisms, but to affirm our purpose in life as stewards of all He creates.

First-fruit giving of time, talent and treasure is not an optional matter, but is foundational to a healthy Christian lifestyle. His plan is for the steward's sake as well as for the mission's sake. In raising up the congregation's budget as a need—no matter how noble—without first raising stewards motivated by trust, love, and thankfulness, we run the risk of manipulating members into giving.

Notes

Notes

Consider the example of our Heavenly Father: “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” In addition to being the simplest and most profound expression of the Gospel, John 3:16 presents the most fundamental stewardship expression. Motivated by God’s love, we give of ourselves so the mission of Christ and His church is accomplished.

Our stewardship model—Our Heavenly Father, Who gives us His Son

Our stewardship motivation—Jesus Christ, Who gives us His Holy Spirit

Our stewardship mission—Managing God’s gifts to us (life and life’s resources) that the world would know and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Response/Ability #4

The most important qualification for a congregational stewardship leader is the ability:

Either to manage his/her personal possessions well...

Or to be an example of spiritual growth leadership to the congregation.

This sounds at first like a real “no brainer.” However, a second and third reflection on this response/ability may reveal a tension between public and private stewardship, and between an authentic stewardship lifestyle and mere church membership.

Healthy, growing congregations share a number of characteristics:

- Leaders who are role models in Christian lifestyle, church and Bible class attendance, prayer life and first-fruit giving.
- Leaders who live by the forgiveness of sin, not by personal successes, life station, or any other accomplishments—real or supposed.

What does the forgiven life look like? It is a life which:

- seeks by the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit to manage all of life and life’s resources to the glory of God and the benefit of the neighbor;
- seeks to serve God’s people by a life that models Jesus Christ in the congregation; and,
- seeks daily renewal in the remembrance and celebration of Baptism.



Response/Ability #5

Stewardship emphasizes focus:

Either on the steward's heart...

Or on the steward's pocketbook.

Sam Houston, the hero of Texas independence, was stopped as he descended into the river for baptism with the warning, "You forgot to take your wallet out of your trousers!" To which according to legend Houston responded, "I cannot remove it. My pocketbook needs baptizing more than any other part of me." Houston has it right for all of us. He kept his baptism and his possessions together.

Popular piety suggests if the Lord has a person's heart, the pocketbook and all other possessions necessarily follow. However, Jesus speaking of our stewardship life seems to reverse the order. "...where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matt. 6:21). The first and most significant indication of repentance and the forgiven, free and full life in Christ is not necessarily a flurry of church activities, but a generosity of spirit and the grace of giving.

In addressing the heart issues of stewardship (life's longest journey still remains not first from earth to the stars, but from the head to the heart), leaders will with great patience, gentleness and clarity continually direct God's people to both heart and treasure (2 Cor. 8:7).

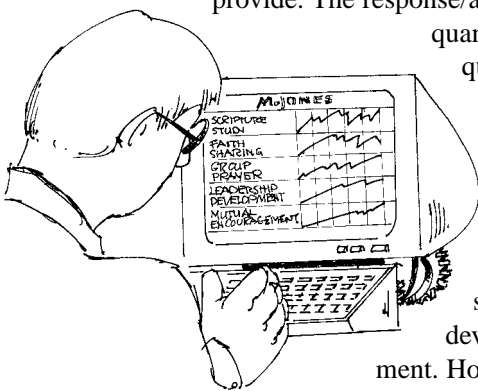
Response/Ability #6

To ensure members are contributing regularly to the life of a congregation:

Either work to involve members in a variety of congregational activities...

Or track their record of contributions.

There is no question that involvement in congregational life and activity can be a satisfying dimension to church life. However, these activities are not ordinarily ends in themselves, but rather enjoyed for the sake of the relationships created and the sense of personal accomplishment the projects provide. The response/ability does not grow from the quantity of involvement, but from the quality of relationships.



Activity for its own sake is no guarantee of a growing stewardship life. Many members expect leadership responsibilities will be paths to a deepening spiritual life through Scripture study, faith sharing, group prayer, leadership development and mutual encourage-

ment. However, studies indicate many active leaders are at risk of burnout due to disillusionment with the unspiritual nature of many church activities. Priority

Notes

[illegible]

Notes

time and attention need to be given to assure that ministry activities are pathways to Spiritual growth. "They gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will" (2 Cor. 8:3-5).

Response/Ability #7

Special offerings in a congregation even for significant missions and ministries:

Either take away from regular offerings...

Or put an unnecessary strain on the givers.

Contrary to much popular thinking, special offerings, if providing real answers to real needs presented clearly and personally—enhance regular giving. The presentation of needs without hopeful answers will always yield disappointing results. Answers must be presented as well as needs. Offerings today are less and less prompted by loyalty to institutional requests, and more and more prompted by the possibility of personal commitment and involvement. People want to know their investment of time and money will make a difference. Our Lord's promise, "...inasmuch as you have done this to the least of my brothers...you have done it to me," resonates with younger and newer disciples (Matt. 25:31-46).

This experience of contributing over and above present giving habits can be deeply satisfying and heart-opening, and may also lead to increased giving for regular congregational missions and ministries.

A word of caution: the project must accomplish its stated purpose without a large percentage going for overhead.

Response/Ability #8

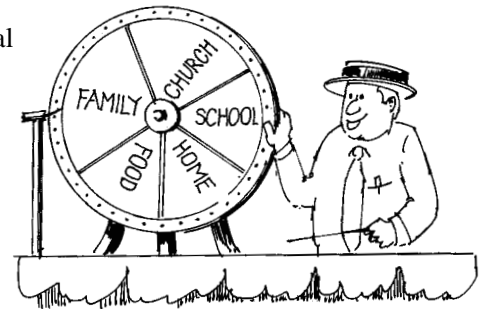
The annual plan for financial commitments emphasizes:

Either a dollar amount per week (month, year)...

Or a percentage of annual income.

The Scriptural plan for offerings consistently lifts up proportionate giving as the model for our commitments of time and treasure. Although this percentage of income can readily be translated into a dollar figure, the emphasis should always be a stewardship life that grows in proportionate giving toward the tithe and beyond. The healthy stewardship life emphasizes giving of our resources that is **FIRST, REGULAR and PROPORTIONATE**.

St. Paul, in speaking of a special offering for the church in Jerusalem, encourages the Corinthian Christians to set aside a sum of money proportionate to income (1 Cor. 16:2).



Balancing Stewardship Response/Abilities Worksheet

Duplicate these pages for each committee member's individual response. In the exercise below, evaluate your current perception in balancing stewardship response/abilities. Mark the number that most closely describes how you *currently* view each either/or statement. Use the ratings to begin discussion of what you think *should* be a proper balance.

Response/Ability #1

The first priority of a stewardship committee is:

Either to spend priority time with each other in Scripture study, faith-sharing, and prayer for each other and the congregation...

Or to spend priority time in planning and overseeing the yearly budget, developing the yearly stewardship emphasis, and monitoring the congregation's time and talent inventory.

Either		Both/And			Or	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Response/Ability #2

The primary purpose of our congregation's stewardship emphases is:

Either to increase each member's giving of time, of talent, of care and of money...

Or to help our stewardship leaders grow.

Either		Both/And			Or	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Response/Ability #3

The congregation's most valuable tool in enlisting support for projects and asking people to give is:

Either to promote support for Christ's mission and ministry through the budget...

Or to encourage giving for the giver's sake.

Either		Both/And			Or	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Response/Ability #4

The most important qualification for a congregational stewardship leader is the ability:

Either to manage his/her personal possessions well...

Or to be an example of spiritual growth leadership to the congregation.

Either			Both/And			Or	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Response/Ability #5

Stewardship emphases focus:

Either on the steward's heart...

Or on the steward's pocketbook.

Either			Both/And			Or	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Response/Ability #6

To ensure members are contributing regularly to the life of a congregation:

Either work to involve members in a variety of congregational activities...

Or track their record of contributions.

Either			Both/And			Or	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Response/Ability #7

Special offerings in a congregation even for significant missions and ministries:

Either take away from regular offerings...

Or put an unnecessary strain on the givers.

Either			Both/And			Or	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Response/Ability #8

The annual plan for financial commitments emphasizes:

Either a dollar amount per week (month, year) ...

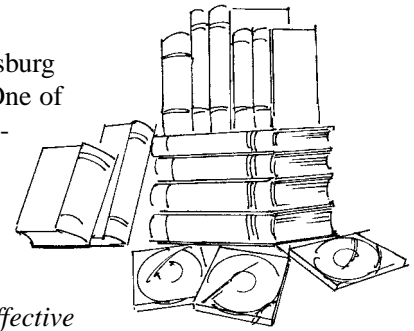
Or a percentage of annual income.

Either		Both/And			Or	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Notes

RESOURCES

Helge Braatgard, *God's Stewards*, Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, Minn. One of the few comprehensive, in-depth theological studies of the principles and practices of stewardship written by a Lutheran. Both a biblical and confessional perspective.



Kennon Callahan, *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church*, Harper and Row, San Francisco, Calif. 1983.

Basic congregational tool with specific helpfulness to congregations in the stewardship of administration and financial resources.

Kennon Callahan, *Effective Church Finances*, Harper and Row, 1992.

Focuses specifically on the work of financial stewardship in the congregation. Readable and while not all the information is useful, yet this is a nice basic text for the practical dimensions of financial discipline.

Oscar E. Feucht, *Everyone a Minister*, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. This remains one of the best books on the priesthood of believers. It highlights the stewardship principle that each Christian is gifted and is to function as a part of the body of Christ. A study guide, prepared by Kent Hunter, is available from the Church Growth Center in Corunna, Ind.

Douglas John Hall, *The Steward, A Biblical Symbol Come of Age*, revised edition. An excellent book on the meaning and significance of stewardship. Emphasizes that stewardship is not a means to an end but the heart of the sanctified life. Lutherans may challenge some of his conclusions, but this is still a "must read" book.

Kent R. Hunter, *Moving the Church into Action*, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo., 1989. An excellent practical resource for congregations on the stewardship of the Great Commission. Deals with the stewardship of leadership both for pastors and lay leaders.

T.A. Kantonen, *A Theology of Christian Stewardship*, is available from the Department of Stewardship as electronic copy. A basic stewardship text. Especially helpful in relating the importance of the Holy Spirit to the effectiveness of stewardship in the life of individuals.

Loren B. Mead, *Financial Meltdown in the Mainline*, The Alban Institute, 1997. A study of the changing giving behaviors of individuals and denominations in the past decades. A very helpful piece as background for understanding why "what worked" 10 years ago may be counter-productive today and why changing denominational loyalties and mission perspectives affect the local congregation.

Charles M. Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards into Communities of Spiritual Care*, The Alban Institute, 1995. Provides insights and disciplines to assist congregational boards and committees to grow from mere organizational concerns to the larger concerns of spiritual growth and a deepening

Notes

[illegible]

Notes

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Notes

[illegible]