

INTRODUCTION TO THE *CSW 2000*

Little did we know in 1993 the *Congregational Stewardship Workbook* would meet with success throughout the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and even beyond the LCMS. Find a need and meet it. We did. The need: practical stewardship material that people could use to address the multitude of stewardship issues at the congregational level. How we met the need: putting together the first edition of what became known as the *Congregational Stewardship Workbook*. Thousands were sold and thousands were used throughout the church. Hundreds of people from across the country attended sessions designed to introduce and walk through the workbook. That was years ago. Much has happened in the world of stewardship during those years. For a variety of reasons, there has been an explosion of new writings and research on the many issues under the umbrella term stewardship. Two things have contributed to the changing stewardship scene over the past decade: careful research published for general consumption, and technological advances impacting stewardship (internet information, electronic giving and computer analysis of just about everything, to name a few).

These changes in stewardship over the past decade brought us to the point where a revision of the "old, tried and true" *Congregational Stewardship Workbook* was needed for the church. For about a year four editors and a sizeable number of authors worked on a revision. Users of the previous workbook will recognize many similarities to the original workbook published in 1993. However, new chapters have been added to *Congregational Stewardship Workbook 2000*. These chapters reflect the changing scene in stewardship. All chapters, where new or old, have been newly written, rewritten or edited for this revision. Congregational stewardship leaders know the issues in stewardship facing the local congregations are at times the same issues from the past coupled with new challenges, issues and concerns. Such changes are reflected in the revised workbook.

An exciting event occurred in 1998 when our church body in convention adopted eight Biblical Stewardship Principles "commended to the church for use in guiding stewardship education and appeal efforts in congregations as well as synodical entities, agencies, and auxiliaries." In one way those principles are not new. They simply reflect what God's Word states concerning the principles and practices of stewardship. In another way the principles *are* new. For the first time in our history, our church body has articulated in writing the principles from the Bible which will guide our stewardship activities at all levels in the church. Because of the publication and adoption of those principles, you will see them on the inside front cover of each booklet and throughout the *Congregational Stewardship Workbook 2000*.

Once again, many people contributed to this final product—authors, editors and secretaries. While a tedious task for all at times, it all came together with few problems, for which we thank the Lord. Thanks also to all the contributors and workers—who are truly Christian stewards.

Financial assistance for this project came from AAL, Appleton, Wisconsin, to help in the production and introduction of this revision.

In the original preface, we included the following paragraph:

"Many stewards working together and using their unique resources and gifts from God make the original idea and dream a reality. Much can be done when Christian stewards use available resources to achieve a goal. We rejoice when that happens in the local parish. May this labor contribute to such continuation of stewardship growth and action in the future." This is true also about this revision. Use it as a resource to assist the congregation to meet the varying stewardship challenges, issues and needs before it in this new century.

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CSW 2000 PURPOSE

In 1993 a first edition of this workbook filled a need in the church for a resource that gathered the best practical stewardship wisdom. What was published exceeded all expectations, and was immediately deemed of great value not only within The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, but also in other denominations.

Now we have assembled a revision and expansion of that original edition. Once again, we sought out the best practices in stewardship within the church. Authors and editors went to work to communicate those best practices to you.

AUDIENCE

This new edition, like the original, is for congregations: pastors, lay leaders, members. It especially serves your church's Stewardship Board or Committee by presenting a systematic way to address the issue of motivating members to live a stewardship lifestyle.

Yet, the key to a congregation's stewardship life remains in the hands of the pastor. His understanding and practice of managing the gifts God gives to His people are important in carrying out the mission of the congregation. That is why consideration has been given first to how the pastor will use this workbook. The first section, dealing with theological underpinnings, complements the last section on personal stewardship issues for the pastor.

STEWARDSHIP AS LIFESTYLE

Since 1993, the understanding of the term "stewardship" has expanded significantly beyond the management of money. It has grown to include the entire lifestyle of the Christian in response to God for His love in Christ. As such, this revision presents a broad picture of the Christian steward.

The steward's life is based in Scripture, so the beginnings are theological. A needs assessment instrument evaluates the stewardship life of the congregation, and prescribes a course of action to meet specific needs. The actions are focused in congregational leaders serving as a committee, task force or board. They deal with issues of organization and implementation, of education and financing.

UPDATED RESOURCES

Information is readily accessible to everyone in this electronic age. Being informed today means having access--not in knowing everything. So another purpose of this workbook is to

provide sources for information. It is complemented by references to the internet and resource web sites. Bibliographic updates and additions to the workbook chapters will be available electronically. The inclusion of a CD Rom adds flexibility to the use of the workbook.

Through 2000 years of change since the time of Jesus, God has kept His church contemporary--able to apply itself to every new situation among humankind. The timeless nature of the Gospel message should give us encouragement as we face present and future challenges and opportunities for the Church. Carrying out the Great Commission as responsible Christians involves us in wise and proper use of time, employing all the personal and corporate gifts and talents God gives and creatively funding the mission. All of that is stewardship. That's why it is critical for us to continue to grow in this area of ministry in the church.

What God has in store for us as we carry out His mission is tapped through our management of the blessings He gives. It is our prayer that this workbook will contribute to unlocking God's store of gifts for you and your congregation.

CSW 2000 USER'S GUIDE

Users of the first *Congregational Stewardship Workbook* (CSW) will notice a number of format changes in the revised edition. The changes came after securing input from users of the CSW. Our intent is to improve the product and ease of its use.

- *Congregational Stewardship Workbook 2000* is in a booklet format. Rather than provide everyone with a large workbook from the start, you can distribute copies of the booklets as you study them. You may either copy pages, buy additional booklets or print sections from the CD-Rom.
- Each booklet contains the following items: the purpose statement for the workbook, a stewardship definition, the eight Biblical Stewardship Principles and a list of the contents of the entire workbook (back cover).
- The *Congregational Stewardship Workbook 2000* is available on CD-Rom for both MAC and PC, and includes PDF software. The disc is included with your printed copy of the workbook.

We suggest each stewardship committee member keep two binders on stewardship: 1) the binder for the various sections of the *Congregational Stewardship Workbook 2000*, and 2) a binder to keep the minutes and plans of your congregation.

While each booklet includes the eight Biblical Stewardship Principles, you should secure copies of the publication, *Biblical Stewardship Principles – A study Guide* (S21822). This resource is available from Concordia Publishing House (1-800-325-3040). The guide includes information on each of the eight principles: the principle, its meaning, guidance from God's Word, implications of the principles and discussion questions. One way for the congregation to work through the eight principles would be to take the first 30 minutes of each stewardship meeting to study and discuss one or two of the principles. You may choose to use the other theology booklets in the *Congregational Stewardship Workbook 2000* in the same way. The challenge: begin your meetings growing in Biblical understanding of stewardship. Conclude this time of your meetings with prayers on behalf of the stewardship life of the congregation and the specific needs of the committee members. Such an approach makes for better meetings. This is stewardship of stewardship time!

BROADENED DEFINITION OF STEWARDSHIP

Please note the definition of stewardship: "Christian stewardship is the free and joyous activity of the child of God and God's family, the church, in managing all of life and life's resources for God's purposes." It is more than money! Stewardship; is about managing ALL OF

LIFE AND LIFE'S RESOURCES. Stewardship is whole life and multi-dimensional. The definition says it. The stewardship principles confirm it. This workbook provides resources to assist you in developing such a stewardship focus in your congregation. The challenge for all of us is to develop all the dimensions of stewardship for our people. It is about money (not just the portion given to the church, but 100 percent of our resources) but it is about much more than money.

As new items develop in stewardship and in stewardship resources over the years, go to your district's web site for updates. Both district and Synod web sites provide useful up-to-date information and resources. Go to them often. Suggestion: identify one person on your stewardship committee to check out these sites and report new items at your meetings.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RESOURCES

This workbook suggests many resources. They include non-Lutheran sources and publications. Don't be afraid of these resources. They contain much fine material to inform our Biblical understanding of stewardship and its practical implementation at the congregational level. Use such resources; but, use them wisely and with a certain degree of discretion. Your pastor can be of great help to you in evaluating such materials. The key to doing stewardship is—does it center in Jesus Christ and does the suggested stewardship activity flow from a Gospel (as opposed to Law) motivation?

Also suggested are various tapes, videos, and web sites. It has become much more than books, programs and audio tapes over the last decade. Take advantage of all the resources in various formats. If you have a church library, consider putting some of the new and practical stewardship items in your library. Be sure to put write-ups of these new items in your church newsletter so people know of their availability. Stewardship Committee: hand out copies of resources secured to members of the committee. Before putting the resource into your church library, have a member share information about the resource with the entire committee and write a review of the resource for the church newsletter. An agenda for a great stewardship committee meeting: Bible study on a stewardship principle and/or a portion of the *Congregational Stewardship Workbook 2000*, prayer time, resource review, business matters, prayer and closing.

HOW TO BEGIN

Usually, when using a tool like the *Congregational Stewardship Workbook 2000*, you start with page one and work your way through to the end. However, since this workbook contains

a large number of sections applicable to the stewardship life of congregations, proceeding that way would be a mistake. It would not be long before you got bogged down (and probably bored). We recommend an alternative process.

FIRST, select the people to complete the Needs Assessment Inventory (NAI) in the first booklet.

Duplicate copies of the NAI for each person. While you may wish to let people complete the NAI at home, experience suggests slow or limited response will result. Instead, gather people on Sunday morning or at a special session. The NAI will take 30–45 minutes to complete. By following the recommended steps, you will have a step-by-step plan for using the many resources of this workbook.

SECOND, work through the Theology Section. Our stewardship practice should grow out of theological understandings. This may take several sessions. A suggestion: Take the first part of your stewardship committee meeting (at least 30 minutes) to work through a piece of the theology section. Let the theology of stewardship permeate all of your meetings. For example, study the eight stewardship principles one or two at a time at each committee meeting.

Specific needs vary from congregation to congregation. Because of this, using the Needs Assessment is critical. It helps determine your unique and specific needs. Growing in stewardship must be done one congregation at a time based on each congregation's needs.

God bless you as you use this workbook to help your members grow as joyful stewards!