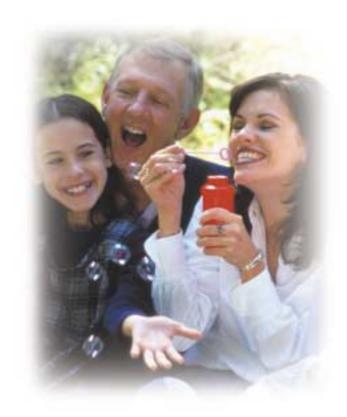


# Planning Whole Life Stewardship



# Congregational Stewardship Workbook 2000

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# Planning Whole Life Stewardship

# **Synopsis**

"So what is stewardship?" asks James Hudnut-Beumler. "It is the responsive practice of human beings tending to what has been placed in their care by God. It is the responsive practice in the sense that it is something people do because of what God has first done for us. Stewardship is the peculiar response that we can make to our creator who has blessed us with gifts and given us responsibility for creation and for the Gospel."

This section offers readers the challenge of seeing stewardship with new eyes. Over the centuries the church has wrestled with how to develop both revenue and disciples. God has richly blessed the church when it has

sought to follow Him faithfully. When the

church has failed, it has jeopardized the welfare of many. Stewardship and money are both deeply rooted in the human heart. It follows that confusion is inevitable, but confusion also provides opportunity for dialogue and the development of greater insight. We need to separate stewardship from fund raising so that we can be better stewards of both.

The intent of this section is to stimulate dialogue by presenting a tray of "seedling thoughts" to be planted in the soil of people's lives

and congregational processes. These thoughts are organized around five core areas: Grace, Gifts, Gratitude, Growth and Generosity. Thoughts not typically emphasized in stewardship programs are:

- Stewardship involves all life, not just church.
- Stewardship builds on the congregation's stewardship of people.
- Stewardship is more about investing than giving.

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- Stewardship is communal as well as personal.
- Stewardship in community is about the development of gifts in people.
- Stewardship of community involves dialogue and spiritual discernment.
- Stewardship is about accepting what people have to offer when and where they can offer it.
- Stewardship is separate and distinct from fund-raising.
- The transition point from stewardship to funding the church occurs when a generous response to God's grace overlaps with a compelling vision, passion for mission and sense of need.

# Introduction: Grace, Gifts, Gratitude, Growth, Generosity

"The real voice of discovery consists not in seeing new landscapes but in having new eyes" Marcel Proust

"Giants In The Earth" by O.E. Rolvaag is a novel about Norwegian immigrants set on the prairies of South Dakota in the 1870s. The immigrants were very poor, and just barely scraping by as they

attempted to build a life for themselves in a new land. While they waited for the harvest from the first year, their basic food was oatmeal porridge. Per Hansa was one of the main characters and an enterprising fellow. When they first reached the prairie, he quickly planted potatoes, and so was able to bring in a crop long before any grain could be harvested. Per

Hansa was eager to sell his potatoes to other settlers so he could raise some desperately needed cash as he attempted to become established as a farmer. He traveled to some other settlers and asked if they would like to buy some potatoes. This is what happened:

[The man responded], "Potatoes, you say? Well, now!" His wife stood beside him, her fact was long and drawn ... suddenly she wept." Have you got any food in the house?" demanded Per Hansa.

"Er-yes, as long as the cow gives milk!" It was the woman who supplied this information.

Then Per Hansa burst out laughing, "Listen here, woman, you run in after a pail, and we'll treat you to a decent meal." And this is sure, it didn't take the woman long to produce the pail!

Per Hansa grabbed it from her, filled it with potatoes, and gave her a quick look—then looked again. He poured the potatoes out on the ground, filled the measure once more and gave her a second pail full. (In the end, he gave her 16 pails full, and promised to bring another wagonload!)

Per Hansa also gave them ... some fish, half a pail of carrots ... and the nicest melon he could find on the load. "Don't kill yourselves eating now!" were his parting words to the man and woman. Again he sat on the wagon, creaking along toward the yellowish-blue horizon.

Per Hansa couldn't remember when life had been so much fun! He wasn't a rich man; indeed by any of our standards today, he was very poor. But out of his poverty he gave freely and richly to

those who had even less. And in his giving, he found life! True life! Abundant life! (Paraphrased from Evangelical Lutheran Church in America website.)

This story is a wonderful account of stewardship and generosity set in the context of everyday life. No doubt, we would all acknowledge that it captures the essence of Christian stewardship. Note there is no reference to church or to money. Yet if you ask almost any person in the pew what "stewardship."

ardship" means, you will hear two words all too frequently, namely, "church" and "money." Why have we come to associate stewardship so closely with giving money to the church? We need look no further than the stewardship materials denominations and consultants produce. While they differ somewhat in quality and packaging, they carry essentially the same message.

- We recognize and celebrate that everything comes from God.
- We give from what we have been given.
- We give to our congregation.
- We recognize that when we give to the congregation we give to God.
- We set aside God's share first.
- We give regularly.
- We give proportionately.
- We are blessed in our giving.

All these messages are important, but they offer an incomplete view of the rich concept of stewardship. At its core, stewardship is how we recognize, receive and respond to God's grace—not how we support our church.

"Stewardship as a concept is cheapened when we use it as a synonym for financing the local church. If we are going to use the word stewardship, we need to liberate it from the narrow construction we have placed on it over the years" (James Hudnut-Beumler).

In Western society the church has adopted a corporate organizational model. Money has become the exchange medium in getting things accomplished. Goods and services are given a dollar value, so we calculate how

much each dollar will buy and the cost in dollars of any particular need. This same model is used in the church to evaluate the participation of individual stewards: How much have they contributed to the "company"?



Something more sinister is happening within the church as we follow this model: People are more likely to translate the entire mission of the congregation only into dollars and cents. Rather than give of themselves,

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which includes investing time and abilities, the response is often to hire the job done.

To teach the rich concepts of stewardship that are found in Scripture, a new emphasis on what some call "lifestyle stewardship" is necessary. In reality, stewardship is managing all of life and its resources.

Stewardship certainly includes funding the church, but the two concepts are not identical. True stewardship can emerge only out of a sense of individual giving in a wider sense, which includes recognition of community and life as a whole.

Since stewardship is multi-dimensional, confining expectation and performance only to a giving chart flattens out stewardship, allowing none of the depth described in Scripture. A positive aspect of a deeper understanding of stewardship is that from the earliest examples in the Bible, such stewardship development always results in adequate funding.

For too many congregations the quest is to "find a good program that will increase giving." We need to abandon that philosophy and work toward equipping ourselves to better deal with stewardship and money. To do that we need to be able to talk about both in community, to help people discover where real value lies in God's economy and to work toward ordering our personal and collective lives accordingly. The real strength of any endeavor comes in people working together to discern and develop what will work for them at this time. We have the capacity as individuals and groups to address the challenges we face.

# Grace, Gifts, Gratitude, Growth, Generosity

Stewardship begins and ends with grace. Stewardship is our response to God's abundant grace in all aspects of life. Ephesians 2:8-10 says it so well: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Stewardship is accepting from God a personal and community responsibility for all of life and life's affairs. It is wise managment and investment of God's resources to achieve His purposes. It is about "living" not "giving." It is about "being" as well as "doing." Stewards protect, expend and add value to assets, ideas, dreams, values, processes and philosophies placed under their control by the owner. Stewards manage property, people, dreams and resources they do not own.

Dr. Wesley K. Wilmer, vice president of University Advancement, Biola University, offers this definition of stewardship: "Stewardship is a faith and world view with God at the center which suggests:

• God has provided all our resources,

- God has given each of us the responsibility to manage these resources as stewards.
- God will ultimately hold us accountable for how we use His resources. Stewardship is God's way of raising people—not man's way of raising money. God is working in us to help us become the people He wants us to be [as] we learn to give. Stewardship is God's order for man's relationship to God, not man's relationship to an organization."

Peter Block, well-known business consultant and author of "Stewardship, Choosing Service Over Self-Interest," defines stewardship as "the willingness to be accountable for the well-being of the larger organization by operating in service, rather than in control, of those around us."

"So what is stewardship?" asks James Hudnut-Beumler. "It is the responsive practice of human beings tending to what has been placed in their care by God. It is the responsive practice in the sense that it is something people do because of what God has first done for us. Stewardship is the peculiar response that we can make to our Creator who has blessed us with gifts and given us responsibility for creation and for the Gospel."

Our own definition of stewardship, used for almost 50 years, remains: "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.

# The Essence of Stewardship

The essence of stewardship is wrapped up in Matt. 22:37-40: "Jesus replied, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Stewardship is knowing the difference between being an owner and a caretaker. Stewardship is about caring for and developing resources. It does not mean that we give away everything we have. It means that we invest and manage it the way God intends. We cannot give what we do not own. The only thing we have to "give" to God is what He first gave us: our will. Stewardship begins with surrender to the Lord. Only after we have surrendered ourselves to the Lord do our gifts of time, talents and resources fit into proper perspective "and they did not do as we expected but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will" (2 Cor. 8:5).

Joseph Fletcher, in his chapter on "Wealth, Taxation and Stewardship" in "Moral Responsibility: Situation Ethics at Work," said, "A sub-Christian twist comes when we begin to think of our giving and sharing as our mercy to the less fortunate, instead of seeing it as a stewardly handling of God's wealth to fulfill God's purposes."

### Stewardship is more about investment than about giving.

"Giving" suggests ownership and we "own" nothing except our will. "Giving also implies a release from ownership and responsibility. Luke 19:11-26 makes it abundantly clear that we are called to do more than

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simply return what we have been given or give it away. We are called to invest the gifts, talents, resources and passions that we have for return, a kingdom-focused return. Perhaps we should therefore emphasize Christian giving less and Christ-centered investment, development, managment and distribution more. God's gifts to us are free, there are no strings. However, there is responsibility and accountability for a gift's wise and

productive use. Stewardship is protecting and growing the owner's assets with fierce intensity. Stewards are like managers of large investment funds that take money entrusted to them (but does not belong to them) and then spend every ounce of their intellect and creativity protecting and growing it. To whom much is entrusted, good management is expected. Stewardship responsibility extends across all domains of life and embraces all things that we can dream about and influence as well as those things we have discretion over. The questions we need to constantly keep before us are:



- What do we "give" to God?
- What do we keep for our personal consumption?
- What do we invest in others?
- What do we invest in ourselves?
- Why?

### Stewardship is measurable performance that is open for evaluation.

The scrutiny of our personal and community stewardship involves self-evaluation, assessment by others and by God. The daily decisions we make as stewards literally reverberate throughout eternity. Matthew 25:14-30 and 31-46 both present the question: What did you do with the time, talents and resources I left in your care?

In relation to LCMS Biblical Stewardship Principle No. 4, we realize that stewardship is both personal and community. Stewardship is usually focused on the personal dimension. Yet the concept of stewardship is equally valid in community. The language of stewardship has begun to be extended in a meaningful way from individuals to communities.

### Personal stewardship:

For individuals, stewardship begins with our responding to God's grace by seeking what God desires for us. The ultimate act of stewardship is to seek to be who God desires you to become. Richard Bolles expresses it so very well in his little book, "How To Find Your Mission in Life." Bolles says that our first mission, which is one we share with others, is to "seek to stand hour by hour in the conscious presence of God, the one from whom our mission is derived." Our second, and again one that we share with others, is to "do what you can moment by moment, day by day, step by

step, to make this world a better place, following the leading and guidance of God's Spirit within and around you." Our third mission is one that is uniquely ours. It is to "exercise that talent—your greatest gift—which you most delight to use, in the place(s) or setting(s) which God has caused to appeal to you most, and for those purposes which God most needs to have done in the world."

### Community stewardship:

Stewardship within community means working as an individual in community to identify and employ common resources for God's presence and grace through each individual in the community. Just as the individual steward reaches a level of greater potential for service, the community is empowered to accomplish vastly more for itself and others by working together than it could accomplish as individuals. Scripture tells us that gifts are given to build up the church (1 Cor. 14:12; Eph. 4:12-13, 29). Such activity focuses especially on the congregation and its potential for carrying out its mission in the community.

Community is greater than the sum of its parts. There is a special stewardship required to develop the potential of community. It nurtures the idea that people can and do discover new insights for the group and for themselves. Such stewardship values people, listening, discernment, story and dialogue.

A key element of the stewardship in community is what the community does with people's time, energy, creativity, talent and other resources. People will, for various reasons, give themselves to an organization in extraordinary ways. Leaders and governing bodies of congregations must be especially sensitive to this and not compromise stewardship of the people they serve in their zeal to meet organizational goals.

### Leadership is stewardship:

Like other work of people of faith, leadership depends on the vigorous and responsible use of the talents and resources God has given to us personally and collectively to build up the body of Christ and the Kingdom. Lovett Weems, in his book "Church Leadership," says, "Leadership is in essence a ministry of stewardship. It is through the proper stewardship of purpose, time, resources, opportunities, challenges and energies of the people of God that vital ministry and mission take place. Leaders are indeed good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

Peter Block, in his book "Stewardship, Choosing Service Over Self Interest," says: "In its commitment to service, stewardship forces us to yield on our desire to use parenting as a basic form of governance. We already know how to be good parents at work. The alternative, partnership, is something we are just learning about. To succeed in being good stewards, leaders, especially pastor leaders, need to allow people to practice their own autonomy where their talents, time and resources are concerned. Being too much in control, defining progress toward goals and rewarding people for reaching them, does not always honor their capabilities. Stewardship leadership serves congregations and other organizations and being accountable to them without taking control."

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Followership is stewardship: Followers practice stewardship in how they follow. Dr. Robert Kelley has written extensively on followership. In his book, "The Power of Followership," he defines five types of followers based on critical thinking (the ability to think for oneself instead of being told what to do) and initiative (the willingness to assume ownership instead of the constant need for prodding, supervision, etc.). Kelley's book is probably the best book on discipleship there is, even though it is written for the business client. Kelley outlines a path for each type of person to become an exemplary follower. In so doing he calls attention to the need for different approaches to discipline and suggests what those might be. The key is that we recognize stewardship extends into every dimension of life.

Suggest one opportunity you could provide for each of the following that would help each better see God's grace in their lives.

Individual			
-			

Community			
•			

Leaders _		

# **Grace, Gifts, Gratitude, Growth, Generosity**

as given the gifts, talents, passions and necessary to care for His world and carry an of reconciliation to people. Each of us and talents unlike anyone else's that support g. The first goal must be to use those gifts to e work of the kingdom. The challenge the ces is to help people discern and develop the have and the relationships they need so that and collectively they can become more like e God desires. Stewardship of gifts places a us strain on communities, for it implies that we lexible enough to seek to shape the community e gifts that are present. It means knowing our ing ourselves to develop them and affiliating with people and organizations that encourage their discovery and growth.



Stewardship is about creativity:

God has created each person and each community of people to seek to become who He formed them to be. Each person and organization has a special set of gifts, a special calling, and a special way to creatively respond to God's desire for them in this world. The key to helping congregations become good stewards of the Gospel for the people they serve is to have a world-view that is large enough to embrace the diverse gifts God has entrusted to members and to trust that God is at work among them. To the extent it can, the congregation will benefit from members' energy, talent and resources. If it cannot, then the gifts those people bring are lost, possibly to the person, and possibly even to the kingdom. It is in this area congregations face their greatest challenge.

Congregations need to see themselves as gifted people that are both gathered and scattered. The people of God are far more than a congregation, administrative structure and professional workers. Some people work in a vocation directly associated with the church; most do not. Clergy and other church workers serve God in their vocation; others, through their vocation. Too often we value work in the church more highly than other work. In most cultures there is a close connection between work and the needs of the culture. Everyone works, many outside the home, many for money.

We have erred in not valuing work in general but rather valuing work in terms of money or contribution to the church. Work is a fundamental building block in society. Economy is the context. We need to understand economy in a more holistic way, to think of all of life as part of God's economy. While some consider the market place in which values are decided to be morally neutral, in reality, it is not. Christians need to be concerned with the right things being done in God-honoring ways.

Our challenge is to make the work we do count without making it count for everything. We can do this best by remembering three things: 1) God is at the center of our work; 2) Because God is at the center of work, our definition of work must be a generous one; and, 3) the work matters to God. Those who are closely in touch with the stewardship ideal practice stewardship outside the church quite naturally and usually without self-consciousness. Many of the pathways into business are being blazed by Christian men and women who seek to be good stewards of the gifts God has given them and their organizations in their everyday lives.

Loren Mead observes in "Financial Meltdown in the Mainline" that the financial problem of mainline churches "is probably caused by our lack of nerve, our fearing to face the spiritual dimension of our lives and our society. The crisis of the churches is a call to us to become a community that celebrates the presence of God in the midst of life and the things of life."

It is the job of the steward to literally stand in for the owner during long absences. We are standing in for God. The core of stewardship is a covenant of trust. Owners only relinquish control when trust flows from them to the steward. God has placed trust in us by giving us free will, His world, His Word and His Son. God entrusts each of us with gifts, talents, resources, time and a solemn commitment to carry His message of

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	salvation and reconciliation to the world. Stewardship is about our willing-
Notes	ness to place our trust in God by investing generously from all that we have care of. Such stewardship involves risk because we must relinquish our
	sense of ownership and place our sense of future and well being beyond our ability to control.
	Activity 1:
	How could our congregation take steps to better identify and use people's gifts?
	·
	Activity 2:
	What steps can we take to honor members for their life of stewardship outside the church?
	.
	Grace, Gifts, Gratitude, Growth,
	Generosity
	Stewards are grateful people; grateful for the honor of being trustees of the possessions of the cre-
	ator of the universe. We understand, if only in part,
	the breadth and depth of the gifts God has entrusted
	to us. We seek to more fully appreciate the gift of life in its knowns and mysteries, the gift of the Gospel, the gift
	of relationships, the gifts of talents and creativity, and
	the gift of the world in which we live. Our response to God's grace is an attitude of gratitude and desires to
	seek what God desires for us.
	Gratitude begins with the small graces God blesses
	us with in ordinary everyday life: small moments of insight, joy and laughter, peace, relationships, quiet, pain
	and anxiety, prayer, reflection and study. Experiencing
	God everywhere in every day enables us to discern and
	respond to His loving presence in all dimensions of our life.  It is through wakefulness, listening, deep empathy and con-
	cern with helping others that we become more aware of God's rich bless-
	ings and great gifts. Deep gratitude that ultimately leads to generosity
	begins with an overwhelming sense of God's abundant grace to us in all
	aspects of our world and our life.  How can the church encourage generosity? By graciously accepting
	what people contribute. Be prepared to receive what people have to offer
	when and where they offer it. Provide opportunities for people to respond

to specific passions and talents. Often we ask people to contribute what we think they need to give toward what we think needs to be done. A far better approach is to ask people what they have to give.

Bill Shore, founder of Share Our Strength, a multimillion dollar non-profit that collects funds for organizations seeking to feed the hungry, began by asking chefs for money to buy food. He soon learned that those chefs would much rather give their time and creativity than their money. The same was true for artists. So he adapted Share Our Strength to accept what people had to offer when and where they could offer it.

Can we be flexible enough to receive the gifts people have to give? What if the organization's needs/wants differ from what people have to give? Shore's experience seems to suggest that people need to contribute what is meaningful to them. Stewards help match contributions with needs.

# Time is perhaps the single most important way that people today have to respond generously.

People understand when their time is valued. Leaders must be good stewards of their own time as well as others' time. Yet, how much time is wasted in the organizational processes and activities of our congregations each day? Some churches are able to raise large amounts of money to support quality staffing, programs and ministries, and many people offer generously from their financial resources to support many of these. But if we have received only their money and not offered them an opportunity to give of their time and creativity, where are we?

### Money

In an economic context, money is simply a medium of exchange. It allows us to convert our intellect, our energy, our creativity, our passion and our resources into a form that can be easily transported, converted, transferred, distributed and grown. But money is also an expression or index of personal and organizational worth. It is an outward sign of an inward state. Money in a very real sense is us, because at some deep level money taps into who we are and how we have chosen to invest our time and energy.

Money needs to be an open subject in congregations. Rather than being in a struggle with money, we ought to experience the freedom that Jesus Christ promises to give us from it. Some people suggest that the only way to be free of money is to reject it. But when we reject money, we also reject the tremendous gift that it represents. A better way to be free of the affliction of money is to understand our feelings and to talk about it. Too often we dodge the issue of what money means and how we relate to it and to God. Any path to truly meaningful stewardship involves dealing with money and its relationship to our identity at both a personal and community level. From a biblical perspective the issue is not our wealth, but rather what we do with what we have been given (Matt. 25:14-29). Because we treat money as a powerful reflector of personal and organizational spiritual health, we need to make it an open subject for dialogue within congregations

Proportional giving, even tithing of money, is a starting place rather than a desired end. It is an early step in a developmental process leading to

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spiritual maturity in the same way that Jeremiah speaks of the transition from the old covenant to the new in Jer. 31:33-34. The impact of the gift is far different for a person making \$30,000 per year who gives 10 percent than the gift of a person making \$300,000 per year who gives 10 percent. In the first case the person keeps \$27,000 for their own use, while in the second, the person retains \$270,000. God is maker and owner of all and wants a commitment that all we have is available for His service. Rev. Ed Bacon, rector of All Saints Church (Episcopal), Pasadena, Calif., sees tithing "as a sign to ourselves and to God that all of our resources are going to be used for the spread of the reign of God. So it's not a matter of giving 10 percent to the church so I can take 90 percent and do with it what I want. Rather I give 10 percent to the church to remind me that the other 90 percent is to be spent on the reign of God also. This is done through my children's education, through cars and clothes and on and on." See the chapter on "Frequently Asked Questions" in this resource for a short discussion of tithing.

Activity:

How can our congregation provide ways for people to give what they want, when they want, in the way they want?

# **Grace, Gifts, Gratitude, Growth, Generosity**

Congregations and pastors need to help people with the conceptual and practical dimensions of personal stewardship growth. However, discipleship and stewardship develop slowly. Our goal is to build disciples—and disciples are generous people.

People need help with the practical dimensions of seeking to become generous people. The question is how best to help them learn stewardship? Once-a-year programs that emphasize giving and money do not do it. People need mentoring, modeling and story-telling. They need to have stewardship before them continually to let them know it's important every day of our lives in everything we do. Presenting stewardship in the context of all of life creates the proper perspective and keeps the focus on a steward's growth and gifts.



Dialogue offers a wonderful way for people to develop their stewardship and break down barriers about money. People and congregations often behave in an insecure way around the issues of personal values and the everyday choices we make. If faithful stewardship and love of God have

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value, then we need to talk about how the various things in our lives relate to that. Autonomy and personal freedom are big issues in our society. The tragedy is they cut us off from dialogue we can be having related to our hopes and fears about life. Telling stories is a wonderful way to develop this dialogue because stories communicate deep truths about life.

A narrative approach to stewardship can begin with stories about choices: stories that allow people to be open with who they are, what they are concerned with and what options appear open to them. People can only become the sort of people they can imagine themselves to be. We need to hear the stories of people, communities, congregations and organizations that are seeking to become better stewards. We need to hear stories of saints who have lived their stewardship in both ordinary and extraordinary ways and we need to continually link these stories with God's master story in the Bible. Most of our failures to live generous lives are not failures generated by lack of knowledge or will, but the result of too little imagination.

Sharing our stories is valuable, but if a person or community genuinely seeks self-understanding and transformation to live more generously and faithfully, then they must begin to script their life the way they would like to live it. In congregations it is critically important that pastors continue the stewardship dialogue from the pulpit. Personal and community stewardship need to be major topics all year in every forum—from worship and Bible study, to committee and board meetings, to small groups and neighborhood conversation.

Because money plays such a major role in our life and identity, it must be one of the principal subjects on the table. Personal stress about money has deep roots in contemporary culture, difficulties with money and wealth and misunderstandings about the relationship of money to human worth. One of the best ways we can break the hold of this taboo against discussing money and money worry is to talk about money in the context of our congregations. Then we owe it to each other to also practice good listening. God's people are generous people. They reflect a generous God.

Stewardship is not sharing a once-a-year program; it is an everyday way of life. A once-a-year program reinforces the notion that stewardship is something we do more than who we are. Stewardship is about all life, about the choices we make everyday in everything we do. Stewardship is about living a lifestyle that honors God. Stewardship reduced to an annual program weakens the concept.

### Stewardship is not about control but development.

Control is often an issue in the operational and educational processes within social groups, whether churches, governments, schools or other organizations. The challenge leaders face is to seek to exercise control only so far as it enables development of both personal and organizational gifts. Control is not the model God offers us. He loved us so much that He created us in His own image, entrusted us with His world and finally sent His Son to die for us. Yet the first gift He gave us was free will. Ought not our stewardship of His creation reflect a similar approach? Control that stifles development saps the energy and creativity from people and from organizations. Peter Block in his book Stewardship, Choosing Service over

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Self-Interest asks why do we think we have to control that for which we care most deeply? See the chapter in this resource "Growing Christian Stewards" for more ideas.

Activity:

List ways the congregation can encourage members to talk about their stewardship struggles and victories with each other.

# Grace, Gifts, Gratitude, Growth, Generosity

## Generosity is the fruit of good stewardship.

Our response is to share what God has given us as stewards in all the venues of life. Not all generous people are Christians, but all Christians are to be generous people. The fruits of the Spirit listed in Gal. 5:22-23 (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control) are all generous responses. In opposition to Christian generosity, our society presents a strong self-focus in virtually every dimension. We cannot assume that people will automatically understand generosity in the biblical contest. Such generosity must be taught and modeled. The real question is, "How much of what belongs to God do I seek to gain and maintain for myself?"



### Plenty versus scarcity.

One of the greatest blocks to generosity is insecurity. It is hard to be a giving person if you are concerned if there is enough for you and your family. Uncertainty and scarcity drive insecurity. Why do I believe that if I give something away that I will be left with less? Scripture teaches that God's

grace assures us the exact opposite is true. Most of us operate from a scarcity model. God operates from a plenty model where more results from giving, not

less. A good example is the feeding of the 5,000. The disciples operated from the model of scarcity: "How can we divide this food to serve so many?" Jesus operated from a plenty model by multiplying the food to serve so many.

There is a "plenty" model for social group, one that is much more representative of God's economy. That model recognizes that in groups of people, there

will always be divergent opinions. The challenge is how to handle that divergence. There are three possibilities: 1) win/lose, where one person(s) or group(s) of people win and another person(s) or group(s) lose; 2) a compromise is worked out minimally acceptable to all; 3) the group works together to achieve a new level of response that lies beyond win/lose or compromise. Viewing the world as a source of plenty assumes that people can work above their self-interests.

We cultivate generosity by enlarging the imagination and valuing the gifts and talents people have been given.

The transition point from stewardship to funding the congregation is where a generous response to God's grace overlaps with a compelling vision, passion for mission, and sense of need.

## Activity:

How	would o	our c	ongrega	ation ha	ive to	change	to wel	come (	divergent	ideas a
"wea	lth"?									

# Resources

Block, Peter. Stewardship: Choosing Service over Self-Interest. Berrett-Koehler Publisher, 1996.

Bolles, Richard Nelson. *How to Find Your Mission in Life*. Ten Speed
Press, 1992.

Hudnut-Beumler, James. *Generous Saints*. The Alban Institute, 1999.

Kelley, Robert. The Power of Followership: How to Create Leaders People Want to Follow, and Followers Who Lead Themselves. Doubleday Books, 1992.

Mead, Loren B. *Financial Meltdown in the Mainline*? Alban Institute, 1998.

Rolvaag, Ole Edvart. *Giants in the Earth: A Saga of the Prairie*. HarperCollins, 1999.

Weems, Lovett H., Jr. Church Leadership: Vision, Team, Culture and Integrity. Abingdon Press, 1993.

"Tithing: It's More Than The Number Ten." Stock Number S21858.

Department of Stewardship Bible Study. Concordia Publishing House: 1-800-325-3040.

"Stewardship Every Sunday." Short stewardship applications drawn from one of the assigned readings in the A-B-C and annual series for each Sunday in the church year. Stock Number S16053, Concordia Publishing House: 1-800-325-3040.

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