

## **Ten Functions of an Effective “Stewardship” Committee**

Effective stewardship leaders are confident, courageous and competent. They are the leaders who activate the spiritual vitality of those they serve.

Most congregations struggle with how to organize “stewardship” because it is not clear exactly what that means. To some stewardship means “budgeting,” to others it means developing “financial independence” and to still others “balancing” the budget. None of these definitions suit our understanding of Biblical stewardship, and they usually results in negative experiences in congregations and denominations.

Healthy congregations are not concerned about balancing their annual budgets at the end of the year. No Biblical support exists for developing financial independence. Very few families operate on a line-item budget. If we were to base our church spending on the way many spend in their homes, the credit abuse would be great. There is in this situation a great opportunity for us to learn about stewardship and financial accountability.

We invite you to begin a new journey to stewardship health by taking the functions below and discussing a different one of them with your leaders each month for one year. You might also consider renaming your Stewardship ministry to more accurately reflect the mission of the Church? One congregation renamed its group “Resources Commission,” another “Life Management Team” and a third congregation called its group “Mission and Stewardship.”

**Function #1. Discern Your Own Mission and Stewardship Journey.** In order to lead others on their stewardship journey, it is important to recognize the fact that you have walked some aspects of their road ahead of them. Develop a way of telling about your journey to date, not as an accomplished steward, but including your struggles.

**Function #2. Have Your Mission and Stewardship Strategy Clear in Your Mind.** Reframe your stewardship vocabulary about “need” or “budget” into asset-based language. Do regular mission interpretation at worship, in the newsletter, with Mission Partners.

**Function #3. Build up Your Mission Interpretation and Stewardship Team.** Your number one requirement as a leader is to build a team. How does one build a team? The answer to that question is a little like the tourist who asked, “How do you get to Carnegie Hall?” The person replied, “Practice, practice, practice.” Teambuilding does not come with a diploma. It is the spiritual gift of leadership that we describe.

**Function #4. Seek Out Future Leaders in Mission and Stewardship Team.** Mentoring is basic to healthy organizations. Identify and enlist potential team members and base their selection on their individual giftedness.

Function #5. **Organize Your Mission and Stewardship Strategy for Thoroughness.** Develop monthly mission and stewardship emphases. Calendar the monthly preparatory tasks as well as dates of events. Delegate opportunities to serve.

Function #6. **Plan and Implement Congregation-wide Consultation.** Become aware of what spiritual gifts are missing on the team. Develop a training plan. Enlist outside speakers and leaders as often as possible for annual response programs, planned giving and capital appeals.

Function #7. **Provide Mission and Stewardship Education.** Institute a daily prayer life for missions and stewardship that is as natural and frequent as breathing.

Year-round...

Workshops, Seminars, StewardShops... Bible Studies... Children's Messages in worship... Sermons... Budget Development guidelines, including Line Item and Program Budgeting (also known as Faith Challenge Budgeting)

Function #8. **Publicize Mission and Stewardship Regularly.** Plan year-round stewardship education in Sunday school. Print stewardship articles regularly in newsletters, bulletin paragraphs.

Function #9. **Become Acquainted with Mission And Stewardship Resources.**

The ELCA has numerous resources that are excellent. The Area Ministry and/or synod stewardship staff people are available. Read one of the good books on giving.

Function #10. **Follow up Intentionally and in a Structured Manner.** Connect with those who were not present for any meeting, any program. The follow up contact can be a matter of choice, but no follow up builds apathy and resentment quickly. One way to use options for follow up is to divide those who are to be contacted into "unequal thirds." One will be visited, one will be telephoned and one will be written a letter. Have criteria for how the three groups are determined. Make sure that every member is contacted every year in one way or another.