

Stewardship Manual

**A Guide for Year-Round
Financial Stewardship Planning**



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INTRODUCTION

Stewardship is how we use our God-given gifts; it is how we use our talents, our time, and our treasure. Stewardship is the way we use all our resources to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world. It is an ongoing commitment.

The decisions that we make about money are crucial. Financial health speaks to our whole attitude about money, including how our understanding of God's goodness influences all of our financial decisions.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

At Eastminster Presbyterian Church, the Stewardship Committee assumes the responsibility to carry out an effective year-a-round financial program. To this objective, the committee's program attempts to recognize the following six elements that identify a financially healthy congregation.

1. Understand that all giving, of ourselves as well as our financial resources, is in response to God's goodness and generosity. God gives, then we respond, and we spend our lives learning and growing in our response.
2. Discuss money in the context of worship instead of considering money a disreputable subject that should not be confused with the sacredness of worship. This distinction should not exist within Christ's church.
3. Understand that the offering is an integral part of corporate worship. Just as we bring our gifts of wine and bread to God's table, we present ourselves as an offering through our financial gifts.
4. Talk about money openly and candidly in all aspects of the church's life, realizing that how we use our money says a great deal about our values and priorities.
5. Engage in mission beyond its own doors and interprets this mission (both local and worldwide) through a planned year-round program. When people know how their money is used to do God's work, they are reinforced in their giving.
6. Plan long-range for its program objectives and financial needs. Budget development is a long-term process.

STRATEGIES FOR MEETING OUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

At Eastminster, we have found that there are six essential elements found in successful financial Stewardship planning. Each of these elements has found successful expression in some way in our church's financial programs. Not only in underwriting the budget, but also in increasing commitment and fellowship in the congregation. The methods used to address these elements

vary greatly. Some methods are highly organized, extensively planned, and elaborately carried out. Others are not.

1. Identifying and Celebrating Members' Values.

Motivation for giving is complex. Many members understand that their motivations come from their faithful response to Jesus Christ. That response, however, needs to be translated into financial commitment. Commitment and motivation to give reflect individual experiences, including early church association, special pastoral care received during crisis, appreciation of the type of ministry our church does or can do, and recognition of the involvement of the Presbyterian Church (USA). The financial stewardship program is a time to build on the enthusiasm members already have.

At Eastminster, the Stewardship Committee attempts to identify the positive attitudes in the congregation, and then to focus on them by using some or all of the following vehicles.

- Pew Points Newsletter articles
- Inserts in worship bulletins
- Present minutes for mission during worship
- Produce brochures telling our congregations story
- Engage mission speakers for special church events
- Prepare eye catching bulletin board displays
- Testimonials

2. Informing Members How Their Gifts Are Used

In order for the congregation to be aware of the various facets of their church's missions and ministries, the stewardship committee has the responsibility to conduct a year-round program of interpretation. This interpretation should be related to the categories of the church budget and use a variety of methods and participants.

It is essential to make the connection again and again between the member's gifts and the ministries made possible because of their gifts. This way the mission is personalized, ownership is developed, and members grow in understanding and faith.

The church's financial story is a source of motivation. When the story is told with warmth and feeling, members will understand that it is through giving that they participate in mission. A regular pattern of mission interpretation will enable our congregation to gain greater understanding of its involvement in mission, in community, and throughout the world.

One of the best ways to tell this financial story is by publishing a Narrative Budget. A Narrative Budget is a written and pictorial narrative of the financial budget. The purpose of this document is to give the congregation a summary of the major expense elements of our annual budget. God has assigned us the responsibility of managing the resources we have been given. Managing God's resources is an opportunity to express our thanks to him for his goodness and to affirm our dependence on him for everything.

At Eastminster, a Narrative Budget was written in the fall of 2014 for the budget year 2015. It contained basic committee expenses, a narrative of how the money was to be used throughout the year, and pictures of some of the committees activities. Since the operation of the committees does not change greatly from year to year, it was deemed not necessary to produce a new Narrative Budget each year. A new estimated budget update should be published annually.

3. Challenging Members to Increase Giving

An essential part of our financial stewardship program is challenging members to increase the percent of their income that they give to the church. The average Presbyterian gives about 2% of their household income to the church.

In this age of pervasive individualism, many persons choose the congregation they joined on the basis of their immediate needs. From that perspective, giving is likely to be based largely on the perceived value of the church or program and will just as likely be curtailed if the church no longer meets the member's expectations. In this context, the fundamental issue in Christian giving is not to make a connection between a believer's checkbook and a congregation's expenses, but to emphasize the much more meaningful relationship between a believer's financial resources and their faith in God.

When we speak of giving as an expression of gratitude for what we have received, we find ourselves on a solid biblical footing. In addition, we discover a new freedom from asking the perennial question, "How large should the budget be?" or "How much should I give?" The question becomes, "Are we living up to our potential as faithful stewards?" Such an assessment requires great honesty. It also requires us to set aside those traditions that may limit vision and restricted enthusiasm.

At Eastminster, each year we run a five week Stewardship Campaign which begins in mid October and ends in early November. The final week is designated Stewardship Sunday. The program is usually a purchased commercial program. It is required that the program be centered around a central bible based theme. The text of the program is divided into four Stewardship messages of approximately five minutes duration, each of which are delivered from the pulpit by different members of the stewardship committee. The message is delivered just before the Offering.

Stewardship Sunday is a worship service dedicated to Stewardship. The bulletin cover reflects the logo of the program. The Message contains a review of the previous four weekly messages, instructions on how to fill out and return the pledge cards of next year, and a challenge to the congregation to increase their pledges. The text of the Pastors' sermon is also taken from the text of the program.

4. Securing the Commitment

Securing pledges and gifts from the members of any congregation is a responsibility that requires a disciplined approach. In most congregations the stewardship committee is responsible for

conducting the annual financial commitment program. There are a number of methods to consider including:

- Every Member Visitation (and/or Survey)
- Small Group Meetings
- Direct Mail
- Congregational Dinner
- Telephone Solicitation

At Eastminster, the stewardship committee has chosen to use the direct mail method for conducting the congregational annual commitment. An information packet is bulk mailed to each member so that they will receive it the week following Stewardship Sunday. This packet contains a cover letter reviewing the bible based stewardship program and commitment instructions. The packet also contains a commitment card, a self addressed return envelope, a weekly giving guide, a check list which the member can return to indicate areas they wish to serve Eastminster, and a bookmark that references the current stewardship program.

5. Affirmation, Celebrating, and Appreciating Member's Gifts

Just as every church member expresses gratitude for God's gifts by becoming a faithful steward, so the community of faith will express appreciation to church members for faithful stewardship. Every gift is important; no gift is too small. Appreciation encourages more generous giving.

The church of Jesus Christ is a celebrating church. It is appropriate to celebrate in worship the success of reaching significant goals and to recognize the committed stewardship of the church. Each person making a financial commitment should receive a note of appreciation and a confirmation of the amount of the commitment.

At Eastminster, upon receipt of a pledge card, a hand written thank you note is mailed in a hand addressed envelope to each contributor.

6. Evaluating the Program

Soon after the final results of the annual financial stewardship campaign have been tabulated, you will want to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. This is the first step in planning next year's program and will help you to plan more effectively. In addition to the statistical results of the program, you may want to examine some non-financial questions as well

CONCLUSION

In our lives as stewards, the gifts we offer; of time, of talent, and of financial resources are holy gifts. They are symbols of love and signs of grace that are offered out of joy and devotion. These gifts are not dues to be paid, or entrance fees to be offered. They are gifts of love. These gifts that we offer to God are symbols of our covenant of love with Jesus Christ, made in response to our understanding of Christ's great love.