

An Effective Year-Round Parish Stewardship Program

The Theology

From the David Gordon program:

God created everything and everything still belongs to God. Our role is to be the caretakers or stewards. We're stewards of our environment, others, and ourselves. The church is the basic channel for our personal stewardship. God is the great giver. Our offerings of time, talent, and treasure are offerings of ourselves in our role as stewards. Our motivation for giving comes from the realization of what God has done and continues to do for us. Stewardship is not just about money; it is a way of life. We can choose to accept this role or not.

Getting Started

- Appoint a *Stewardship Chair and Committee*
- Hold an *Annual Parish Planning Day* to list, prioritize and cost parish needs, desires and projects

Themes

Organize around these themes recommended by Dr. Kennon Callahan, a Presbyterian pastor, researcher, professor, church consultant:

- *The churches that do the best in church finances have a rich, full, abiding passion for mission.*
- *They are motivated by a theology of service, not a theology of survival. Their compelling, driving spirit is one of giving, serving, loving mission.*
- *People are looking for compassion, community, and hope.*

Narrative Budget

Develop a Narrative Budget (to complement your line item budget) that:

- ◆ Annually updates and tells your parish story emphasizing **mission, community, compassion and hope.**
- ◆ Presents in both narrative and graphical formats the mission work of the parish, what's being accomplished, and how donations are used to support mission and ministry locally, in the wider community, and around the world.
- ◆ Encourages giving from a theology of abundance, not scarcity
- ◆ Shows that when people make a donation, they are not just giving to the church; they are giving *through* the church to make a genuine difference in the lives and hopes of others

- ◆ Includes strategies for the future, newcomer information, marketing and communication plans, and lists of committees and contact persons.
- ◆ Promotes :
 - *Proportional giving* (determining an appropriate level of giving in proportion to your income)
 - *Pre-Authorized Giving* (giving “off the top”, and deducted like your phone or utility bill)
 - *Gift Planning* (contributing to the church from your accumulated assets e.g. *have you remembered your church in your will?*)
- ◆ Includes parish information such as address and directions, telephone and fax numbers, web site address, and service times

Framework

Integrate the following “Seven Secrets to Amazing Stewardship” by Terry Parsons, the Stewardship Staff Officer for the Episcopal Church:

- *Pray - stewardship must be prayer based*
- *Engage the Gospel – it's more than reading and listening; engaging means seriously asking yourself “what you are you going to do about the Gospel message?”*
- *Rebuke scarcity and claim abundance*
- *Say thank you every chance you get (to others and to God)*
- *Teach and nurture “holy habits” (e.g. praying, tithing)*
- *Set the example you want to see*

Keep stewardship “simmering” all year long:

A low-key consistent focus on mission and ministry is the best approach.

- *Bulletins*: regularly use pages of your narrative budget as bulletin inserts
- *Ministry Minutes*: brief parishioner presentations about specific ministries
- *Hospitality, New Member Ministry and Evangelism*: rejuvenate & educate
- *Homilies*: regularly reinforce the theology
- *Education*: selected speakers, topics and seminars such as planned giving, generosity, mission, and ministry
- *Repeat the cycle*: two or three times per year
- *Annual Vestry*: Use the line item budget for reviewing last year, and the narrative budget for outlining next year's plans

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