

# Year-Round Congregational Stewardship

## Six Best Practices

Operational Management  
(includes financial)

Stewardship Integration in Worship

Stewardship Formation  
(education and discussion opportunities)

Stewardship Leadership  
(clergy and lay)

Spiritual-Nurture Opportunities

Engagement in Social Justice Concerns

Per capita giving in churches that engage these practices is higher than average per capita giving in The United Church of Canada.

Generosity is growing in The United Church of Canada and per capita giving is increasing annually. Congregations engaging in the stewardship best practices identified in this pamphlet experience the greatest growth in per capita and total giving.

Identify what your church is already doing and note potential growth areas. To develop an integrated year-round congregational stewardship strategy, choose one practice from those listed in this pamphlet and add an additional item every six months.

# 1. Operational Management

## Sound Fundraising Methodology

1. Mission clarity: review and adjust the congregation's mission at least every three years.
2. Narrative budget: develop a narrative case statement that tells the congregation's story and connects dollar amounts with the congregation's ministries.
3. Annual giving program: ask members and adherents to make estimates of their annual giving.
4. Multiple opportunities for financial generosity: ensure people can give in many ways throughout the year (e.g., regular offering, Pre-Authorized Remittance [PAR], special offerings, fundraising events, planned giving).
5. Donor appreciation: send givers thank-you letters with quarterly and annual reports.

Congregations that use these five stewardship operational best practices generally experience giving that is higher than average per capita giving in all United Churches, *if* they are done in the context of year-round stewardship development. Some of these United Churches have per capita giving that is double the national average. Their per capita giving is growing at a faster rate than national United Church giving.

Some congregations carried out all five operational best practices with no worship and formation components. They experienced decreased giving.

It's essential to carry out sound fundraising methodology in the context of the other five stewardship best practices identified in this pamphlet.

# 2. Stewardship Integration in Worship

## “Stewardship Every Sunday”

Congregations that lift up stewardship every Sunday experience higher per capita giving than other United Churches. This includes the following practices:

1. Plan worship with stewardship worship resources.
  - *Minutes for Mission*
  - M&S bulletin covers with stewardship prayers
  - stewardship bulletin inserts (no cost)
  - online stewardship worship resources at

[www.united-church.ca/planning/theme#stewardship](http://www.united-church.ca/planning/theme#stewardship)

- Stewardship Seconds in bulletins

2. Preach stewardship almost every week.

- Nearly any biblical text has stewardship implications. The subject of money and possessions was Jesus' second most frequent topic for preaching and teaching.
- Use the online lectionary-based stewardship Sermon Starters at [www.united-church.ca/planning/theme/sermonstarters](http://www.united-church.ca/planning/theme/sermonstarters). Sermon Starters coordinate thematically with Offering Invitations (see below) and with the bulletin Stewardship Seconds.

3. Nurture young stewards through children's messages.

4. Celebrate the offering as an act of worship.

- Adding an Offering Invitation is the simplest change for the greatest effect in a comprehensive stewardship strategy.
- Each week, explicitly invite people to give, as one way to connect their lives with God's work in the world.
- Offering Invitations and prayers linked to lectionary texts for each week are found at [www.united-church.ca/planning/theme/invitededicate](http://www.united-church.ca/planning/theme/invitededicate).

Congregations with high per capita giving were 42% more likely than other United Churches to use four or more of these resources. The percentage increase in per capita gifts over six years in high per capita churches that use five stewardship worship resources was more than three times greater than the increase in per capita giving in all United Churches.

## 3. Stewardship Formation

### Create a Culture of Gratitude and Generosity

The primary purpose of stewardship formation is to nurture individual and communal identity as stewards and disciples, rather than as consumers. A secondary (and welcome!) outcome of good stewardship formation is greater generosity.

Congregations with higher per capita giving are more likely than other United Churches to offer

1. stewardship formation opportunities for young people in

- youth confirmation
- Sunday school
- Children's Time in worship

2. adult stewardship discussions in

- membership classes
- Bible study or other small groups

- gift planning education: how to arrange major gifts and end-of-life gifts
- personal-finance training and budget counselling for individuals and families

Congregations that offer personal-finance training experienced 25% higher per capita giving than most United Churches. Growing congregations and those with high per capita giving are twice as likely as most United Churches to offer this kind of program.

Congregations with both gift planning and personal-finance training experienced per capita giving 46% higher than most United Churches. Churches with high per capita giving were twice as likely as other United Churches to offer gift planning and personal-finance training. Their per capita giving was more than double that of the rest of the United Church.

Regional financial development staff can assist congregations with gift planning programs. Their contact information is at [www.united-church.ca/getinvolved/donate/howto/planned/planners](http://www.united-church.ca/getinvolved/donate/howto/planned/planners).

## 4. Stewardship Leadership

### Leadership Development and Support

Churches with clergy and lay members involved in wider church roles (presbytery, Conference, General Council, etc.) experienced per capita giving around 50% higher than most United Churches. A recent study also indicated churches that sent leaders to stewardship training events experienced increased per capita giving of 29–36% higher than most United Churches.

## 5. Spiritual-Nurture Opportunities

Understanding one's identity as a steward goes hand in hand with spiritual growth. People growing in discipleship tend to be generous with their lives, including their money. Congregations with high per capita giving and those offering stewardship discussion opportunities for adults were more likely to offer opportunities for spiritual nurture, such as Bible study and small group ministries.

## 6. Engagement in Social Justice Concerns

Involvement in community social outreach correlates positively with financial generosity. A recent study indicated churches with high per capita giving were three times more likely than most United Churches to offer five or more such opportunities. Per capita giving in all United Churches with five or more social justice commitments (in addition to financial) was 18% higher than in most United Churches. In churches with more than seven such opportunities, it was 23% higher.

## Greatest Impact

Operational management practices had the greatest impact when done with worship and formation components.

## Most Long-Term Potential

- preach stewardship
- conduct personal-finance training
- nurture new stewards (young people and new members)
- offer multiple ways to give
- say “thank you”

## Resources to Support Stewardship Best Practices

*“Stewardship Development: Connecting to All Aspects of Church Life”*

Information, resources, and research on stewardship to help your congregation make connections with worship, outreach, congregational life, and more.

Available at: [www.united-church.ca/files/sales/ucrd/catalogue\\_stewardship.pdf](http://www.united-church.ca/files/sales/ucrd/catalogue_stewardship.pdf)

*“The Year-Round Congregational Stewardship Plan”*

A detailed month-by-month plan to help your congregation integrate stewardship into preaching, worship planning, and education/mission throughout the year.

Available at: [www.united-church.ca/files/exploring/stewardship/stewardshipplan.rtf](http://www.united-church.ca/files/exploring/stewardship/stewardshipplan.rtf)



### **Stewardship Development Office**

Serving congregations and community ministries

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