

Ventures in Growing Stewards

by Pastor Jenna Couch, Zion (Jubilee), La Porte City



When my mom's youngest brother was a little boy, they attended a church that used to pass communion around in the pews in a similar fashion to that of the offering plate. One particular Sunday, the offering plates had already been passed around the congregation and it was time for communion. As they began passing around the communion trays, my uncle mistook it for another offering and shouted quite loudly to his father and thus, the rest of the congregation, "Get out your wallet, Dad! Here they come again!"

At a young age, my uncle knew what it looked like to give. He saw the plate being passed around and knew that giving money was the appropriate response. Even though they had already collected an offering, he was ready to encourage his dad to give yet again! That offering plate was a cue to give.

What are your images of giving? What are the giving patterns in the congregation you attend? In the last 20 years, many congregations have seen a decline in regular giving and volunteering due to many factors.

These include:

1. America's culture of mass consumption
2. Pastors' fear of discussing money
3. Ignorance of Christian teaching about financial giving
4. Mistrust of leadership or organizations
5. Lack of conversations about money among Christians
6. Failure to adopt routine methods for giving.

(from "Passing the Plate: Why American Christians Don't Give More Money," by Christian Smith and Michael Emerson with Patricia Snell. Oxford University Press, 2008.)

How does your congregation talk about money, giving, and generosity? Is stewardship something you only talk about once a year? Are you ready to begin or continue these discussions?

I just returned from a "Ventures in Growing Stewards" training event at the Lutheran Center in Chicago. The Ventures in Growing Stewards program for congregations is an incredible resource that encourages leadership teams to begin, con-

tinue, or reframe conversations regarding stewardship and giving within congregations.

The basic set up consists of four workshops that leadership teams of at least three or more people from congregations will attend throughout the year. Typically, we look for about five or six congregations to be involved in the program at one time. At these workshops, these teams will learn about resources and tools that can be used in their congregations to help grow stewards and engage in healthy dialogue about money, giving, and generosity. Overall, it seems that the intent of Ventures is to teach people how to be stewards rather than how to do stewardship.

If you think your congregation is ready to learn about a variety of ways in which you can grow stewards and be stewards, contact Pastor Mark Anderson for more information.

To download this article or other stewardship resources, visit www.neiasynod.org/stewardship.

Host a Namibian youth

The Northeastern Iowa Synod will host two youth from Namibia July 3-14, 2015. We are looking for host families (preferably with youth attending the 2015 Youth Gathering). If you would like to host, please contact Pastor Joelle Colville-Hanson at the synod office, 319-352-1414 by Oct. 27.

Portico retirement, finance seminars offered

Portico Benefit Services will offer two seminars at the Churchwide offices:

[Get Answers to Retirement Planning Questions](#)

Wednesday, Nov. 5, 2014

Learn more at www.porticobenefits.org/NewsEvents/Events/Pre-RetirementSeminars.

[Minimize Debt, Optimize Assets, and Strategize for Retirement](#)

Thursday, Nov. 6, 2014

Learn more at www.porticobenefits.org/NewsEvents/Events/Financial-WellnessSeminars.