

TAKING THE LEAD IN GROWING FAITHFUL FINANCIAL STEWARDS

Confident and committed leadership is necessary to inspire people to grow in the spiritual discipline of financial stewardship. **All growth in stewardship is inspired, not demanded.**

The congregation inspires its members by being committed, joyful, proportionate givers of its own financial resources. If the congregation will not trust that God will provide what is needed even if it gives away a significant portion of its own financial resources, most members of the congregation will not trust God enough to give away a growing portion of their own personal financial resources.

Pastoral and lay leadership in the congregation inspire the members and others who worship with them to grow in financial stewardship by talking about their own practice of stewardship and how it relates to their faith in the Good News of Jesus. People in the congregation will rarely grow to give more than the leaders of the congregation.

Mission interpretation will inspire people in the congregation to trust, not only God, but also, the effective management of the congregation to turn their gifts into ministry. Most people need to hear of the varieties of ministries that are provided by God through the congregation and the outcomes of those ministries for people. Likewise, people need to hear about the ministries provided by the Synod and Churchwide expressions of the church in order to believe that these people can also be trusted with their gifts for ministry. Mission interpretation enables people to express their generous hearts and wills through the ministries of the church in good confidence.

Pastoral and lay leadership inspire people in the congregation to be thoughtful and prayerful in their decisions to give by being enthusiastic supporters of an annual opportunity for Christians to commit themselves to a disciplined level of giving. Each year people are given a chance to deliberate, in the context of God's gracious gifts to them, about the amount they will return to God for ministry through the church. Such a stewardship emphasis focuses on the need of the giver to give rather than on the need of the church to receive or to "meet a budget". The people of God want to give to God; but they often need a specified period of time to remember to be thoughtful and prayerful as they consider making an estimate of what they intend to return to God for ministry through the church.

Pastoral and lay leadership inspire people in the congregation to exercise thoughtful and prayerful decisions in all financial decisions, not just in their giving to God through the congregation. Purchases, savings, donations, and investments are moments when our faith in God is proclaimed to the whole world. These are moments when we manage our financial resources in a manner that reflects the values of the owner of these resources – God – rather than those of the managers – us – or the culture in which we live. We recognize that God takes delight in recreation and laughter and, even, frivolity, but also expects God's stewards to reflect God's own priorities as we make decisions about the way we use our financial resources. God owns all our money, not just what goes into the offering plates.