

Chapter 6

Annual Financial Stewardship Program Options

(This material includes adaptations from "Methods for the Every Member Response" and "Guide for the Every Member Response," Division of Parish Services, LCA)

These options can be adapted to small or large congregations.

Visits in the Home

Every person and family in the congregation is visited in the privacy of their own home and given information, personal witness, time to speak about the church and a request to make a response to the appeal.

Advantages:

- Produces the best results – face-to-face contact results in higher giving
- Provides personal contact
- Members can witness to one another
- Gives opportunity to discuss program
- Allows discussion of commitment
- People appreciate personal contact
- (Younger families may not prefer in-home visits)
- Allows immediate feedback
- People give to people
- Advance visits train visitors

Disadvantages:

- Must have adequate number of visitors
- Often difficult to visit every member
- Requires different method for follow-up
- Not every one will agree to visit
- Visitors may be difficult to recruit
- Some visitors balk at training
- Requires much organization

Visits at the church

Personal visits are conducted with each family and person at the church, such as before or after worship services or at other times when they are there. Follow-up in the home is needed for persons not contacted at the church.

Advantages:

- Provides personal contact
- Fewer visitors needed
- Each visit conducted by one person, not a team
- Allows feedback
- Members witness to one another
- Better presentation of proposed program
- Gives sense of being involved in a significant effort
- EMR can be done in a reasonably short time
- Allows discussion of commitment
- Produces good results
- Does not interrupt weekly schedules
- Limits travel time for visitors; saves fuel
- Major responsibility for visitor is receiving commitment, not

interpretation

Disadvantages:

- May require more follow-up
- Must be done on a specific Sunday (or Sundays)
- Not as personal as visit in the home
- Some persons may not be willing to come for extra time

Congregational Dinner or Breakfast

The whole membership is gathered for a common meal. A good dinner in a festive gathering is best, or a continental breakfast on Sunday morning is possible. A well-prepared program includes a presentation of the information and rationale (including spiritual rationale) of what is being supported, a discussion of needs in money and volunteers, and the reception of pledges. Follow-up is made in homes for pledges not received and for those unable to attend.

Advantages:

- Requires fewer workers
- Training needed is minimal
- Leadership does interpretation of proposed program
- People enjoy being together for good food
- Members have a sense of belonging—builds morale
- Can effectively use audiovisuals
- Members have opportunity to talk to one another
- Encourages pledging (everyone is doing it)

Disadvantages:

- Not as personal as visit (at home or church)
- More follow-up usually required
- Attendance may represent a limited percentage of the membership
- Feedback is limited
- Results may not be as good a visitation

Home Meetings

Members are gathered in a member's home for Bible study and presentation and discussion of the church's program. Families are given an opportunity to retire to a private spot and make a commitment.

Advantages:

- Personal
- Relaxed, informal, hospitable
- People enjoy being with fellow members
- Proposed program can be explained and discussed
- Bible study
- Several meetings can go on at the same time

Disadvantages:

- Attendance may represent only a part of membership
- Results may not be as good as visitation
- Strong leadership essential to keep from being a gripe session
- People who do not come must have follow-up visit (or contact)
- May require additional organization to resolve schedule conflicts
- Hosts may be difficult to recruit

Hour of Commitment

Members come to the church for a devotional experience with hymns, Scripture, meditation by pastor or lay leader; pledge cards are distributed; time is given for meditation and response; cards are placed on altar and dedicated with prayer.

Advantages:

- Most devotional of methods
- Emphasizes spiritual aspects of response
- Members can choose own schedule
- Whole family can attend and go to altar with commitment
- Accurate and immediate record of pledges can be made
- Necessary follow-up can be easily determined
- Requires little training of volunteers
- Few volunteers needed

Disadvantages:

- Proposed program must be interpreted beforehand
- No time for questions and answers
- Personal challenge is limited
- Member may not attend, thus requiring considerable follow-up
- Does not allow for face-to-face challenge

Response at Worship (“Consecration Sunday”)

In advance publicity (newsletter, bulletins, special letters), the members are encouraged to attend worship on “Commitment Sunday.” Pre-addressed pledge cards are distributed as they enter. The service centers on giving information, witness and inspiration. Pledges are received and dedicated. Follow-up by mail or visits are made to those not attending.

Advantages:

- Builds on attendance at worship
- Is spiritually uplifting
- Can put response in proper perspective—pledge is act of worship
- Gives sense of involvement
- Allow whole family to participate
- Is a witness to others
- Shows pastoral leadership
- Does not require a large number of volunteers

Disadvantages:

- Not as personal as a visit
- Feedback is limited
- Does not allow for questions and answers
- Will require follow-up for non-attenders
- Results may be only average

Response through Relay

Materials are passed from member to member. Materials for five or six families are carefully prepared and packaged in a box or carrier according to the theme. Each member is asked to pass the packet on to another family after they have made a sealed response and enclosed it in the packet, which is returned to the church by the last family.

Advantages:

- Involves the whole membership
- Can be fun depending on theme chosen
- Usually gives better than average results

Disadvantages:

- Not really personal
- Requires great deal of organization
- Needs constant monitoring
- Difficult to replace lost packet and pledges
- Requires better than average education and interpretation
- If theme is too whimsical, seriousness of stewardship could be obscured

Mailings with telephone follow-up

Materials and information are mailed with a pledge card. Telephone callers are trained to phone to review the information and to offer time for conversation, and as a reminder to return the card. Follow-up phone calls may be necessary.

Advantages:

- Personal contact (though distant)
- Substitute when visits are difficult
- Every member can be contacted
- Flexible schedule
- Most people comfortable with phone conversation
- Rescheduling of contact easily done
- Members can witness to one another
- Information can be given and received

Disadvantages:

- No face-to-face contact
- Easier for person to say no
- Requires additional communication/education support system

Timetable for an Every Member Response Campaign

1. Prepare – April, May and June

Determine Goals (spiritual and financial)

Consult with Council, committees and others, develop emphases and theme

Decide on a Method

Select published plan, if desired

Establish a timetable

List what needs to be done, when and by whom

Develop sub-committee structure

2. Recruit team members – June and July

3. Prepare letters and materials – July and August

4. Communicate what you're doing – August and following months

5. Provide stewardship education – You've been doing that all year, haven't you? Well, start now

6. Train, train, train – Everyone who is involved

7. Carry out the program – October and November

8. Follow up – November, December and next year

Presentation and consecration of pledges

Thanks to all involved and to all who made commitments

Evaluate and look to next year's program

Continue year-long reporting on results, giving, new programs

Involve new members with information and opportunity for commitment

Principles for Developing an Annual Financial Campaign

1. Inform

Before beginning a campaign, be sure you know what you are asking the congregation to support. A *Mission Statement* is a broader, inclusive statement of the overall reason-for-being of the congregation and its goals. For the Annual Campaign you will want to focus on current emphases and expectations in preparation for the appeal.

This means deciding what there is in your congregation which is especially interesting, new, or important for the future as you carry out your mission statement. Then when you write information for the campaign you will know what to stress. If you begin early enough in the year, you may want to ask committees and other groupings what they see as important or what their dreams are. This involvement will encourage more support for the campaign itself.

A more basic approach, and better stewardship growth, is to emphasize the reason for Christian giving and its Biblical foundation, leaving the Spending Plan details for later. This really is a year-round task that prepares the foundation for a more specific campaign.

2. Interest (Cultivate)

Use all the natural groups of the congregation to communicate why they should be interested in supporting this effort.

Council – Their leadership is vital. The Council is ultimately responsible for gaining the support of the congregation—the Stewardship Committee exists to assist them in the task.

Sunday School teachers – They know how important space and materials are.

Choir – These folks are most aware of the congregation's on-going life of worship.

Auxiliaries – These men and women are often your primary support. Use their gatherings to tell your story of the Biblical foundation and the purposes of your campaign.

Youth – Don't overlook this prime training time; they have a stake in what happens.

Committees – It's their programs you're getting support for.

Congregational gatherings – Even brief presentations are valuable to get across your message.

Individuals – Example: Ask a senior supporter who only attends worship to attend a Sunday School class to speak about something they are interested in, so they see the Sunday School in session.

3. Motivate

The primary motivation for giving is faith in God's great gift in Jesus Christ and thankfulness for that grace. Stretching in giving builds trust in God. Include tithing and percentage giving in your materials.

People give to people. Include stories of what is happening or what will happen in your presentations. Use people to tell of their experiences in the church. Use pictures, even if its merely making a poster with photos for the narthex. People give to things they have had a part in, or in which they expect to have a part.

4. Ask

A financial campaign is not complete unless someone is asked, **as personally as possible**, to respond with a commitment (or gift). Information by itself doesn't do it. You're asking for the most important thing in the world! Percentage suggestions (such as a one-percent of income increase) and percentage giving charts help.

Remember always **to train** anyone who is to present your campaign, whether before a group or one-on-one. They must know your thinking and approach, as well as what you expect to happen.

5. Thank and Report

Anyone who made a commitment should be thanked even if it's in a general way. But all persons must also know the overall results of the campaign and **what it will mean for the ministry to people**. A confidential letter (from Chair or Financial Secretary) indicating what was pledged along with the thanks shows not only your appreciation but subtly indicates your expectation that the pledge will be fulfilled.

Equally important is the Church's faithful stewardship of what it receives. Be sure the Church's support of Synod and other causes are accomplished and make sure that programs you said would be started are done. And in your quarterly letter or in publications tell that story all year long.

Resources

ELCA Stewardship Packet, Annual Mailing to Congregations, Division of Congregational Ministries, 1-800-638-3522, Ext.2756

How To Improve Financial Stewardship, available on the ELCA web site under Stewardship (www.ELCA.org) or through the ELCA Distribution Center, 800-328-4648 (Code #69-4934 - \$4.95 plus shipping). Describes the basic planning elements of six successful financial stewardship response programs:

Commitment at worship	Pie and Prayer
Relay	Home Gathering
Fellowship Meal	Home Visits

Smart Living, ELCA Division of Congregational Ministries

A program of personal interaction, visitation and stewardship of life which includes opportunity for financial response.

Consecration Sunday, Herb Miller, Abingdon Press, Nashville

A booklet on what to do in preparing for a Consecration Sunday. It calls for engaging an outside person to conduct the program, who may be a volunteer, a trade-off with another congregation or professional. Especially successful in reviving stewardship where not much has been done before.

"How To Reach Your Church's Financial Goals" Virgil Hensley, Inc, 6116 E. 32nd St., Tulsa, OK 1-800-288-8520

A low-key approach to a stewardship campaign that does everything by mail.

In the Light of Grace, Discover the Joy, and The Joy of Belonging, Resource Services, 12770 Merit Drive, Suite 900, Dallas, TX 1-800-527-6824

Three self-led direct mail campaigns for mailing to members with provision for response.

Personal Interview Stewardship, Parish Leadership Seminars, Inc. (Rev. Don Abdon) P. O. Box756, Moorsville, IN 46158 1-317-831-8091

An approach to Christian stewardship based on a thorough training of lay interviewers with interviews at the church.

Celebrate the Gift, Leway Resources, Inc., 1-800-72LeWay

Manual and packet of resources for sale; includes four variations for a Consecration Sunday.

Pony Express, Stewardship Resources, Inc., PO Box 75205, Oklahoma City, OK 73147, 800-234-5844

A pre-packaged relay response program.

The Tithing Foundation, The Rev. Norm Nelson, Exec. Dir. 79 W. Monroe St., Suite 1021, Chicago, IL 60603-4907

Materials to encourage tithing. Recommended as a resource by our ELCA Division for Congregational Life.