

A STEWARDSHIP HANDBOOK

Building a Customized Stewardship Action Plan

“Give, and it will be given to you.
Good measure, pressed down,
shaken together, running over,
will be put into your lap.
For with the measure you use it
will be measured back to you!”
(Luke 6:38)



For more information, contact:
Rev. Dr. B. Keith Haney
Assistant to the President for Stewardship
Iowa District West, LCMS
409 Kenyon Rd, Suite B, Fort Dodge, IA 50501
Email: Keith@iowadistrictwest.org
Phone: 515-573-0053

Stewardship is the faithful and joyful response of
God's people, entrusted with managing all of life's resources
to serve His purposes and benefit our neighbors.

HOW TO WRITE YOUR ACTION PLAN

Your customized action plan should clearly outline the steps and tasks needed to achieve your goals. A well-crafted action plan ensures that everyone involved understands their roles and makes it easier to monitor your progress.



1. Define your goal

2. Create and prioritize tasks

3. Allocate resources

4. Add deadlines

5. Monitor progress

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“ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ”
(Colossians 3:16)



MY STEWARDSHIP JOURNEY...

My second parish was where I was trying to figure out how to teach stewardship to my congregation. While praying, I dealt with my own self-doubt and inadequacy. Despite being regular and active members of our local church, we didn't openly discuss this growing up. Unless it was budget season, it wasn't a topic the long string of short-term or vacancy pastors tackled every year. Lord, how would You like me to lead something I haven't seen modeled much? My feeling was that it wasn't sincere. As a result, I drew on my Sunday school experience. What biblical accounts are connected with me?

A powerful example of stewardship is Joseph's wise management of Egypt's resources during seven years of plenty and seven years of famine. The story can be found in Genesis 41-47. I could lean on how God provides for His people. Putting our trust in His loving and gracious arms is all we need to do. People in my church who were not taught stewardship, could recall how God had been faithful in their lives. We shared those stories and grew in our understanding of the extravagant grace of our Heavenly Father.

It's a daily struggle for all of us to put God first. But there is forgiveness at every turn and unspeakable joy in the journey. It is my prayer that you would make His Word your joy, His counsel your guide, and His presence your peace.

~Rev. Dr. B. Keith Haney,
Stewardship Partner



in this Handbook, a custom stewardship action plan can be formulated for the congregation which will be designed to address the specific needs and goals that have been identified.



3. Acquire the Necessary Valuable Resources

Do not be frightened by the size of the task.

“Then David said to Solomon his son, ‘Be strong and courageous and do it. Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed, for the Lord God, even my God, is with you. He will not leave you or forsake you, until all the work for the service of the house of the Lord is finished’” (1 Chronicles 28:20).

Once Iowa District West has reviewed the assessment, a short list of helpful resources will be developed and given to the congregation to address the objectives. Every congregations' needs are different, but often, the simplest tools prove the most effective. Commonly recommended resources include:

- Bible studies with Leaders' Guides
- Campus Planning spreadsheets
- Short and fun videos
- Teaching through the children's message
- Stewardship bulletin messages
- Faith Sharing Tools
- Church revitalization assistance
- How to recruit a Stewardship Task Force
- Key Bible verses for preaching & teaching
- Stewardship testimonies
- Tools for uncovering spiritual gifts



4. Teach the Congregation Vital Stewardship Steps

When the congregation has received its recommended resources for their particular needs from the district, then it is time to teach the vital steps — to the pastor and stewardship leaders, as well as to all in the church. First, the pastor and leaders will

determine, with guidance from the district, the best ways to teach these materials. Whether it be in person, online, group videos, Q&As, weekend retreats, and/or any combination for what would be most effective in growing the Gift of Giving in that place. Then the most valuable steps occur: implementing the action plan and following through with the needed commitments.

Often, three different basic approaches emerge for educating a congregation about stewardship. The first is a “do-nothing” approach which robs the congregation of the opportunity to clearly hear and apply God's Word. The second approach centers on using stewardship programs that focus on a “single goal” or cause alone. Although this can yield some short-term success, often people return to their own previous habits after a while. The final approach is founded upon the consistent preaching and teaching of stewardship principles in many and varied ways. In this “scripturally-founded” approach, people in the pew come to understand both their identity as thankful Christians and their role as joyous stewards of God's gifts to them.



5. Rejoice in God's Will & Blessings for the Congregation

After teaching and exploring God's Word as the means to a thankful heart and the Gift of Giving, it's time to rejoice — in prayer and praise — with a special coffee hour or potluck dinner after a celebratory worship service. Then in faith, while congregational leaders model a culture of thankfulness, the whole church will learn to rejoice in their Lord Jesus as they look forward to meeting their stewardship goals, committing to increased tithes, and managing financial wellness.

IMPLEMENTING A 5-STEP STEWARDSHIP ACTION PLAN

Discussion topics, tools & resources to help grow God's people in the grace of giving.

The process follows a specific and purposeful order:



1. Start with the Power and Assurance of Prayer

Building a mindset of stewardship in any congregation is an ongoing effort. Therefore, the need for prayer is continual. Those at the helm of a congregation's stewardship effort should consider the Scriptures and this Leader's Prayer as the foundation of an unceasing plea for the Lord's strength and guidance:

A Leader's Prayer:

"O Lord God, our loving Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, You are the giver of every good gift. Strengthen our faith and work within us the spirit of Christian stewardship. Empower us to live lives full of joy, thankfulness, and praise, even in times of trial and temptation. Empower us to give generously so that Your Kingdom may be spread throughout the world. This we ask through Jesus Christ, Your son our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen."

Pray for the Lord to bless and lead the congregation's stewardship efforts:

"Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!" (Psalm 90:17).

Pray for the congregational leadership to be empowered by the Spirit to make their best efforts and then in faith leave the results up to the Lord: "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:23-24).

Pray for everyone in the congregation to hear, learn, digest, and continually apply these scriptural teachings in their daily lives: "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness" (Colossians 2:6-7).

2. Assess the Congregation's Stewardship Needs

Another purpose of this Handbook is to assess a congregation's current stewardship practices, immediate needs, and future goals. The process of assessment starts with a conversation between the congregation's stewardship leaders and the District, followed by some standardized questions, and an optional but very helpful financial analysis. By reading and completing the following assessment process

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS & ANSWERS TO BEGIN

Why a Stewardship Handbook?

When people are transformed by God's Living Word, everything changes. Priorities change, purposes change, practices change and an insatiable thirst for the Word of God emerges.

There are hundreds of theology books on the topic of stewardship, but very few are purposely configured to help congregational leaders develop and execute multidimensional stewardship activities. That is the very purpose of this Handbook.

Who is this Handbook written for?

Any and all individuals in a congregation who will lead the charge toward growing a Christian stewardship mindset: pastors, elders, lay leaders, those with the Gift of Giving (Romans 12:8), and anyone else looking for tangible ways to plan and execute a congregational stewardship action plan.

How can this Handbook help a congregation's stewardship?

This Handbook provides guidance and direction that will emphasize and capitalize on the implementation of six key congregational activities:

- Stewardship of the Word
- How to Grow the Weekly Offering and Givers' Hearts
- Uncovering Spiritual Gifts
- Special Appeals, Capital Campaigns and Crisis Help
- Budgeting, Campus Planning, Investing and Loans
- Memorials, Bequests, Planned Giving and Endowments

What about Scripture & theology?

In congregational life, the role of teaching and preaching is clearly laid at the feet of the pastor and other leaders. The District can provide pastors with a complete list of stewardship themes from the weekly lectionary with some key verses as suggested texts, as well as a variety of Bible study themes and some guidance for Scripture-based stewardship campaign language and focus.

Can Iowa District West be contacted for assistance and guidance?

Absolutely! Feel free to call us to discuss your specific needs, challenges and goals. Meetings can be set up either in-person or over Zoom.

Please contact Rev. Dr. Keith Haney (Iowa District West)
cell: 515.573.0053
email: keith@iowadistrictwest.org



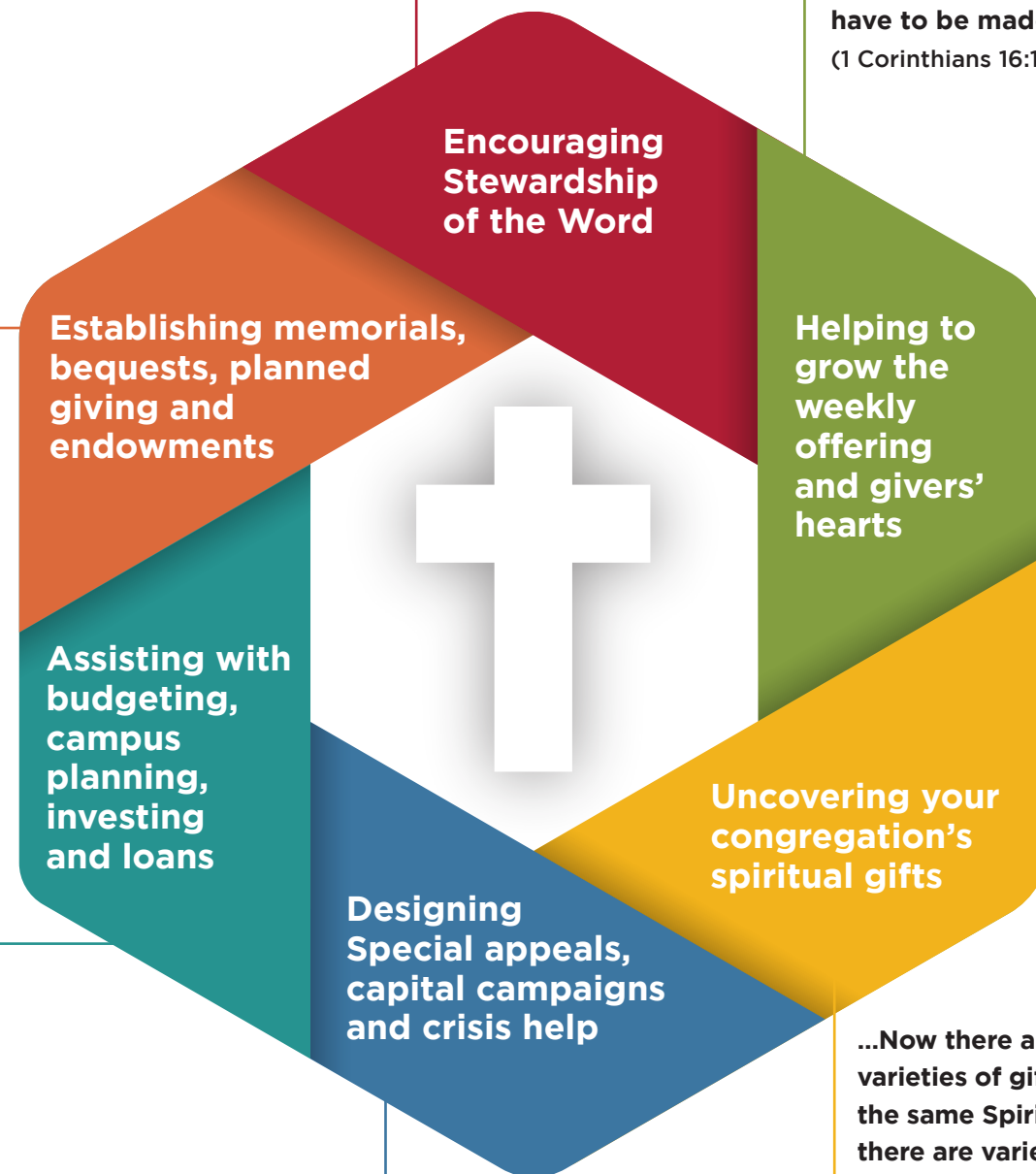
SCRIPTURAL GUIDANCE FOR STEWARDSHIP ACTIVITY

...And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, nor shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor & for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God. (Leviticus 23:22)

...For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? (Luke 14:28)

...according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you to make the word of God fully known. (Colossians 1:25)

...On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)



...But just as you excel in everything — in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in love for us — see that you also excel in this grace of giving. (2 Corinthians 8:7)

...Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)



PLANNING THE BASIC ACTIVITIES FOR A STEWARDSHIP ACTION PLAN

As you can tell from this Handbook, a variety of helpful stewardship activities can be implemented successfully. However, it's important to focus on a few this coming year and then more in the following years as needed. Below is a list of the most common stewardship activities (in no special order).

Stewardship Activities

- Meet with the pastor to discuss the summary report that resulted from your congregational assessments.
- Develop stewardship education plans and goals for implementation.
- Outline specific Sundays that will be part of your stewardship education.
- Contact the LCMS Foundation to sign up for weekly and monthly bulletin announcements.
- Review annual stewardship education resources and materials.
- Meet with people having interest or responsibilities for worship, Christian education, and theme materials.
- Ensure that the annual giving statements for previous years are distributed to church members.
- Ask prayer teams to support your efforts.
- Appoint individuals or small teams to carry out specific tasks.
- Try to recruit 2-3 stewardship committee members.
- Review the 5-year giving history of the congregation with your team.
- Plan 3-5 children's messages for worship.
- Plan and observe a wills-awareness or legacy-giving Sunday.
- Order or develop stewardship campaign materials.
- Plan Bible studies that relate to the various dimensions of stewardship outlined in this Handbook.
- Provide mid-year financial reports to the congregation.
- Set up a kick-off meeting to discuss strategies for the next mini capital campaign or fundraising effort.
- Write thank you cards to your volunteers.



SIX DIMENSIONS OF STEWARDSHIP APPLICATION

Stewardship of the Word

...according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you to make the word of God fully known. (Colossians 1:25)

- Help us increase the number of people actively involved in the study of God's Word.
- Provide resources to equip people with simple, relational & biblical ways to share the Gospel.
- Recommend a list of books & on-line learning platforms for Gospel sharing.

How weekly offering grows givers' hearts

...On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)

- Help us build a stewardship emphasis that encourages generosity without being offensive.
- Explain the "blind pledge" system that helps leaders develop a budget while allowing people to keep their giving between themselves and the Lord.
- Share ways to weave stewardship principles seamlessly into our weekly worship.

Uncover your congregation's spiritual gifts

...Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)

- Help me find on-line gift inventories, and assessments.
- What practical tips and strategies will help increase the number of people serving God in ministry?
- Which Bible studies are available to understand "spiritual gifts" vs. interests, skills, and abilities?

Please mark the items you would like to address in the next 18 months. Check as many as you want. We can help you sort out the priorities and timeline afterward.

Special appeals, capital campaigns and crisis help

...But just as you excel in everything — in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in love for us — see that you also excel in this grace of giving. (2 Corinthians 8:7)

- Help us with creative ways to organize special appeals to fund small projects (\$5k-\$100k).
- Where can I find biblical examples of capital campaigns and what can we learn from them?
- What Christian development principles are transferable to church fundraising?

Budgeting, campus planning, investing and loans

...For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? (Luke 14:28)

- Please share examples of congregational budgeting, narrative budgeting, restricted and unrestricted funds, and general concepts for clearly communicating with the congregation.
- Learn how to move from fixing the latest broken item in the church, to a comprehensive needs analysis and facility plan that increases extraordinary gifts.
- Please have someone call me about loans, or short- and long-term investments for our congregation.

Memorials, bequests, planned giving & endowments

...And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, nor shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God. (Leviticus 23:22)

- Help my congregation establish, promote, grow, revive, and manage an endowment fund.
- How can we encourage more people to remember the church in their will or estate plan? (schedule a 1-hour luncheon presentation after the church service)
- Help us establish or modify our memorial fund policy to encourage more designated and undesignated gifts for the sake of the Gospel.