



# StewardCAST



The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod • Stewardship Ministry ■ April 2012

## Stewardship: A Continuing Priority in the Congregation

“Biblical stewardship is a life-style with the Cross at its center.”

“Stewardship is no optional alternative for the congregation; it is the very stuff of its life together.”

• Ronald Petry

The “Best Practices in Christian Stewardship” theme continues in this issue of StewardCAST. In his book, *Partners in Creation*, Ronald Petry writes a chapter on the important issue of stewardship as a continuing priority in the congregation. The list that follows is an adaption of that chapter.

### Stewardship: A Continuing Priority

#### 1. Biblical study.

“Apart from serious study of the scriptures, stewardship will not be seen in its fullest dimensions. (Helge) Brattgard underlines this (in his book *God’s Stewards*) when he says, ‘Our investigation [of the scriptures] has often given occasion for the statement that the Christian concept of stewardship has a total dimension’ (page 37). It is imperative, therefore, that the pastor engage in careful study of the Bible, drawing upon skills of language, method, and interpretation, utilizing the best available commentaries and other writings...If stewardship is to be a priority in the congregation, then careful encounter with the biblical witness must be a substantial priority for the pastor. Biblical stewardship is an emphasis, but more than that, it is a perspective, a way of understanding and relating to life, so that the pastor’s study of virtually any biblical passage will have stewardship overtones...Biblical study is a first step in making stewardship a continuing priority in the congregation. **It does not automatically follow, however, that study will lead to action**” (page 66; emphasis added).

#### 2. The pastor and his leadership.

“If stewardship is not seen by the pastor as a priority, it will have a difficult time and likely will not be given priority status by the congregation...This is not to say that a congregation will be unable to generate enough money to keep itself going if the pastor is not in there pitching. It is to say, rather, that if biblical stewardship is to be understood and

practiced in the church, the pastor’s leadership will be a key to its happening...The pastor brings certain skills in relation to the Bible, congregational life, the care of persons, and making the connections between faith and the experiences of everyday living. These skills should be in a process of continuous development. They should also be recognized by the congregation so that they can be employed to the fullest” (page 64).

#### 3. The congregation’s organization.

“The congregation’s organization is another factor in making stewardship a priority. If there is no group that is assigned and takes seriously the task of stewardship development, it will be difficult for the pastor alone to make any major stewardship impact on the congregation. Therefore, one of the early steps in making stewardship a priority would have to be the finding or creating of such a group if none exists. **Whether a new group or not, the pastor will need to relate to it so that persons might be helped to see stewardship as a broader concern than giving money to the church or counting the offering, as important as these are**” (pages 66-67; emphasis added).

“This is to emphasize once more stewardship as a Christian way of life. **The pastor and all other committed adults will recognize that the first task is to understand and practice Christian stewardship in their own lives. Secondarily, they will serve as examples or models for others**” (page 67; emphasis added).

#### 4. A plan for action.

“Assuming that the congregation does have adequate organization and that the pastor is prepared to function as a spiritual and executive leader, what are some of the plans and actions that will help make stewardship a continuing priority?”

- a. The task of **training** persons who are elected or appointed to the stewardship group will belong to the pastor.
- b. The pastor’s role as **teacher** may find express in other ways: in a bible studies with stewardship themes for all members, as a resource person who brings biblical expertise to groups within the congregation, and in the church membership classes.
- c. **Preaching** will be another useful tool for the pastor who desires to make stewardship a priority. Pastors can preach on stewardship issues when they appear in the readings for

the week. Using the words “steward” and “stewardship” when appropriate as they relate to the text will help members see stewardship in its wider sense and not think of it as related only to money.

- d. Another way stewardship will be kept a priority in the congregation is through the **counseling** ministry, particularly in premarital and marital counseling.
- e. “Stewardship teaching in the church ought also to encompass a reality many persons would prefer to avoid, namely, **death and dying**. There are questions related to this part of the life cycle that need to be considered within the context of biblical stewardship. For example, ‘What disposition shall be made of my body? Do I want to express my concern for an unsighted person by donating the corneas of my eyes? ... What about my estate? How shall I continue even in death to provide for family members and support the mission of the church?’ These are questions the pastor together with the congregation’s stewardship group might raise in various ways. While individuals must come to their own answers, the process of seeking those answers is one in which we can share constructively together in the church” (page 69).

Petry says, “**The fact that persons who have been in the church all their lives do not understand what it means to be God’s stewards is strong enough evidence that careful training and long-term education are needed**” (page 68; emphasis added).

Petry concludes the chapter by stating his purpose in writing it: “The purpose is twofold: first, to suggest that biblical stewardship should become a continuing priority in the congregation—not the only priority, but a continuing one; and, second, to identify and describe some specific ways by which the pastor, working with a stewardship group, can make this happen” (page 69).

## Resources

Stewardship resources to help keep stewardship a priority in the congregation are located at [faithaflame.lcms.org](http://faithaflame.lcms.org).

Newer resources on the [faithaflame.lcms.org](http://faithaflame.lcms.org) website are the *Stewardship Primer* and *Guidelines for Christian Stewards*. The *Stewardship Primer* focuses on the basics of Christian stewardship and is helpful as a discussion piece for steward leaders. *Guidelines for Christian Stewards* is a helpful tool for teaching members what it means to be a faithful Christian steward.

**Check out the LCMS Online Store for Additional Stewardship Resources ■ [www.lcms.org](http://www.lcms.org)**

To get to the LCMS Online Store go to [www.lcms.org](http://www.lcms.org) and click on the “Resources” tab. The Online Store tab is on the lower right side of the “Resources” window.

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## StewardCAST

*StewardCAST is a monthly stewardship resource provided by Stewardship Ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Rev. Wayne J. Knolhoff is the Director of Stewardship Ministry. He can be reached at [wayne.knolhoff@lcms.org](mailto:wayne.knolhoff@lcms.org)*

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