



StewardCAST



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Stewardship Attributes of the Christian Congregation

Godly stewardship doesn't just happen in the congregation. It requires an educational process that is intentional, systematic, whole life, year round, and for all ages. Christian stewardship education is not easy but it is necessary. Christian Scharen writes in *Faith as a Way of Life*, "One of the most pressing needs of pastoral ministry is to develop, sustain, and legitimize reflection on Christian faith not simply as a set of propositions to believe, commandments to obey, or rituals to perform, but as an orienting force that impacts every aspect of daily life" (p. 5). Connecting faith and life is part of the stewardship task.

Dr. Michael Reeves wrote a paper entitled "The Attributes of a Biblically Generous Church." The following attributes are adapted from that paper. They speak to the issue of stewardship best practices in the congregation.

1. Biblical stewardship is seen as a whole-life issue.

Christian stewardship is not just about money. T. A. Kantonen writes in *A Theology for Christian Stewardship*, "Stewardship is the English word used to translate the New Testament word *oikonomia*. The Greek word is a compound of *oikos*, meaning house, and *nomos*, meaning law. It refers thus to the management of a house or of household affairs ... when the word *stewardship* takes on the new depth and richness which it has acquired in American church life, it is still the best single equivalent of the Pauline *oikonomia*" (p. 2). Roy Bleick adds in *Much More Than Giving*, "In the New Testament, 'stewardship' [*oikonomia*] is never used to designate the action of giving, much less the giving of money. *Oikonomia* relates primarily to the office of administration or management or to the implementation of a plan" (p. 15).

Christian stewardship is about managing all that God has entrusted to our care.

2. The concept of biblical stewardship is woven into the culture and values of the church.

Every church has a culture. *Culture* is defined simply as "the way we do things around here." Every congregation has a macro culture and any number of micro cultures. One of those micro cultures is the stewardship culture. Every congregation has a way of doing things when it comes to stewardship. A stewardship culture that is not tended will often result in a mistaken notion about biblical stewardship and its importance in the life of the congregation and the life of the individual member.

3. Stewardship has strong support from church leadership — clergy and lay.

Pastors are the chief stewards in the congregation. J. E. Herrmann writes in *The Chief Steward*, "It is the privilege and responsibility of the pastor to teach the broad spiritual conceptions of Christian stewardship to his people. He is also to lead them to a practical and fuller expression of the principles as individual Christians and as members of a Christian congregation."

Lay stewardship champions will work with the pastor to see that stewardship is a priority in the corporate life of the congregation and in the individual lives of the members.

Chief stewards and stewardship champions model what it means to be faithful stewards.

4. There is widespread understanding and application of biblical stewardship principles in the congregation.

Holy Scripture has much to say about stewardship. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has prepared a list of Biblical Stewardship Principles that can be taught and discussed in the congregation. The eight principles are

- God's stewards are God's stewards;
- God's stewards are managers, not owners;
- God's stewards are saints and sinners;
- God's stewards are uniquely singular, yet profoundly plural;
- God's stewards are in the world but not of the world;
- God's stewards are loved and loving;
- God's stewards are served and serving;
- God's stewards live with an awareness of the present and future, of time and eternity.

Resources to assist congregations in the study of these principles can be found on the website of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (lcms.org/stewardship).

5. Christian stewardship is regularly reflected in the prayer and worship of the church.

Sermons and prayers using the words *steward* and *stewardship* when referring to whole-life stewardship can do much to dispel the mistaken notion that stewardship is all about money.

6. Godly stewards are being formed in the congregation.

An intentional stewardship-education process that is systematic and whole life done for all ages is necessary to form faithful stewards.

7. There is a designated stewardship leader to champion the cause of biblical stewardship in the church.

Roy Bleick, in *Much More Than Giving*, writes, “To help each member be a good manager of what God has entrusted to him is one of the functions of the Christian Church. Pastors are God’s gifts to the church to perform this service ... Christian growth takes place through the Holy Spirit’s activity in the means of grace. As the pastor seeks to help people become better stewards, he needs to remember that two things are required for growth to take place. The first is to confront the believer with God’s expectation for his life; the scriptural truth that everything belongs to God; the need for a personal examination of his attitude toward God’s Word, of his individual stewardship performance, and of his future goals and objectives; and the Gospel’s strong, unequivocal promises of grace and mercy. The second requirement for growth is a commitment to living according to the will of God, specific measurable objectives, and a strategy for reaching those objectives” (p. 26).

8. A well-developed stewardship strategy with measurable objectives is in place.

Growth in Christian stewardship does not happen by itself. If stewards are to be formed in the congregation, intentional planning will be necessary with “specific measurable objectives, and a strategy for reaching those objectives,” as Bleick mentions above.

9. Stewardship education is part of the regular teaching and training of the church.

The chief steward in the congregation will see to it that the leaders of the congregation, the members of the stewardship committee and all members are trained in this important

aspect of ministry. This can be done by using stewardship devotions with leaders, regular and systematic Bible studies on stewardship themes, and a stewardship emphasis in adult-information classes and new-member orientation classes.

Resources to help in teaching and training can be found at faithaflame.lcms.org.

10. Church members are growing in their understanding and practice of Christian stewardship.

A changed stewardship culture in the congregation through intentional study and application of God’s Word will result in growth in sanctification. God’s Word changes lives.

Resources

Stewardship resources to encourage stewardship attributes in the congregation are located at faithaflame.lcms.org and at lcms.org/stewardship.

Check out especially 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. Both resources can be found at faithaflame.lcms.org.

Visit the LCMS Online Store for Additional Stewardship Resources ■ www.lcms.org

To get to the LCMS Online Store go to 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 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

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