

Gear Up for Fall!

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Fall means money!

Most of our churches are beginning the fall ritual of welcoming people back from summer vacation—and planning their annual stewardship campaigns. As attentions turn to finding the money to support our shared ministries, here are a few things to think about.

Fall can be an opportunity to open our hearts as well as wallets.

We all know that the church needs money to do its ministry. We also know that most churches are uncomfortable talking about money. Unfortunately this sets us up for doing a poor job—both of getting commitments to fund the church's ministry and of helping members grow as informed, joyful stewards. If you're having trouble getting excited about this fall's campaign, read on!

Some Gear to Help your Church Find Next Year's Funding

1. **A Session Willing to Help its People.** Your session is responsible for leading your congregation in all areas of ministry—including finance. But it's not just a responsibility—it's an opportunity to celebrate your congregation's generosity. Has your church ever had a need? Did the members "step up to the plate" and meet it? Then tell them and thank them! Session members are wonderful cheer-leaders.
2. **A Small Stewardship Committee to Dream and Encourage.** The days of large committees are over. And that's not a bad thing. You really only need 2 or 3 members on your stewardship committee. This small group can pick your theme, determine what resources to use and what components (dinner, letters, etc.) to include. Then farm out the work to other people. Involve as many members as you can.
3. **Good Resources to Spark Ideas.** There are plenty of options and samples at our synod website, www.synodrm.org. For more ideas, check out www.stewardshipresources.org and www.elca.org. There are lots of "boxes" available. Use one as a guide—adapt their materials for your congregation. If you're not sure where to look, call or email me—that's what you pay me for. Don't be afraid to stretch!
4. **Teams to Implement Parts of the Plan.** While most people don't want to serve on a committee, they are glad to help with a particular part of the effort. So enlist some members to prepare and host the luncheon or dinner; invite a few folks to help with the special mailings; ask and train some trusted souls to make some home visits and to say thank you to at least a few members. Don't make them do meetings—just the ministry!
5. **Members Willing to Share Their Stories and Values.** It is time to reclaim the lost art of testimony. Members appreciate hearing other members share their own experiences with stewardship because this helps them to review their own ideas. The more open and honest we can be, the more people will appreciate and grow. Being honest with our members can be scary at first—but with time it gets easier!
6. **Lots of Food—and Fun!** Stewardship need not be a boring enterprise riddled with guilt and begging. In fact, it can—and should—be fun! Our members love the church and want to be involved in its ministry. All we have to do is share clear information and invite their support. They will respond! So lighten up and enjoy the season. Help your church family to celebrate God's goodness. And don't forget a lot of dessert!

We're all in this together!