

The Official Stewardship Panic Kit

By The Rt. Rev. Greg Rickel & Tom Gossen

Introduction

In recognizing the importance of Stewardship as a year-round endeavor and, in fact, as a way of life, we also realize that most parishes, in our busy lives, have not reached that goal and suddenly awake when the cool Fall breezes first begin to blow and feel the dread of yet another stewardship campaign. We believe that this does not have to be this way but we know that it is in more cases than not. With that in mind we are offering our help through this kit. You will find in it some short term and long-term strategies as well as some instant resources such as pledge cards and letters that you are free to copy, alter, and use as you please.

At the end of this kit you will find a suggested timeline for what happens throughout the year on a Stewardship Committee. First, of course, is that the committee becomes a standing committee, meeting year-round, and not simply a committee to collect money at the end of the year.

We highly recommend The Episcopal Network for Stewardship (TENS) as well www.tens.org

We begin with some quick Do's and Don'ts, the Don'ts first so we can finish on a high note!!

Don't....

1. Don't ..Ask people to give to the budget. This seems to limit God's grace. The budget should be a celebration of God's bounty not a limitation. Think about the budget coming after the campaign. The main thing to remember here is that if you have always trotted out the budget and said, "Hey, let's hit this," try instead to offer the people a way to give out of thankfulness for all they have been given. Work hard, trust God, and the budget will come together. In fact, we suggest that you let the finance people deal with the budget, and let the stewardship people create the environment where conversion and transformation to the reality that it is out need to give, not the church's need for our money that is most important for our souls.
2. Don't...do what you did last year. If you have done the every member canvass, the pony express, or the big event for as long as you can remember is it any wonder that people think stewardship campaigns are boring and something to be endured rather than enjoyed? Even if something worked last year better than ever, do something different. You can always come back to the other. If you need ideas we have them and you will find some in the short-term bibliography that is attached.
3. Don't...have all your focus on the "Fall Beg-A-Thon" As mentioned earlier if the only time the people of your parish hear about stewardship and even money, is at the annual beg-a-thon then is it any wonder that they turn and run at the mention of the word? Stewardship is our way of life as people of faith and especially as Christians. Talk about it often, year-round.
4. Don't...utilize guilt and manipulation. Trust God more than that. Tell people the story of our faith. Ask them to think of all they are thankful for. Do a well thought out and structured program with real appeals and than let the Spirit move. As we say, "Don't "should" on people"
5. Don't expect all people to be in the same place spiritually regarding money—this is a process not an event. The worst thing that could happen is to expect or even resent people because

they do not seem to be where they “should” be on this whole issue. What you can do as a parish community and as a stewardship committee is create an environment where conversion is possible. The rest is up to the Spirit.

6. Don't....succumb to the scarcity mentality. The scarcity mentality is running rampant in the Church. Examples are donation cups at coffee pots and, one I can tell when a consultant came to the parish where I was Vicar and said, “those toilet paper rollers that only give you one sheet every pull!!” When confronted with that we pulled the pins on those so that you can have as much toilet paper as you want!!! Scarcity is also represented by the phrases, “we can't do that because we don't have the money..” “we don't have enough, people, money, resources,” etc. etc. The truth is, and it is a hard truth to swallow, we choose most of the situations we are in. When you honestly think about it, there is more than enough out there in any of our parishes to do what we want. But we all make choices.....
7. Don't...appeal to the needs of the church as much as to the need for the person to give. Appealing to the needs of the church may work short term but it will not convert people to the true reason for giving. The reality is doing a bit of both with the latter as the place you will see long term change and increased giving.
8. Don't only speak about stewardship as being about money. It is far more. Enough said.
9. Don't ...confuse people with capital campaign and operational campaign. These are necessary but be clear with them. In most cases the operational campaign is the first priority, the capital campaign above and beyond this. Be up front about that.
10. Don't...get locked into maintenance thinking. We are about mission, which is bold and aspiring. Maintaining only will lead to death. Mission will lead to life and growth.

Do....

- 1 Do begin every stewardship meeting with Bible Study and prayer (examples attached) Why wouldn't you? The committees we have started say that the Bible Study and prayer time is worth coming to if nothing else. It is a must foundation for this work.
- 2 Do remember that stewardship is year-round and, most importantly, a way of life.
- 3 Do begin year-round education and talk of money, time, talent, and resources.
- 4 Do name what you are doing and what you are dreaming about. Name all of the ministries, activities, outreach that is being done from your parish community. Do make a case for thankfulness and abundance in the life of your parish.
- 5 Do dream big!! Dream dreams people will find unbelievable, dreams most people can't imagine.
- 6 Do preach, teach, live abundance mentality. Abundance is seeing, believing, and saying that we have all we need to do everything God is calling us to do. Our faith calls us to rebuke scarcity at every turn. (See example above)
- 7 Do use a consultant from outside your congregation whenever possible and use them early (see timetable). Consultants can be objective and can give you insight that can help your congregation move beyond what has always been. These are most likely available in your diocese. Call the Office of the Bishop.

- 8 Do talk about giving as a response to the gifts we have been given as thanksgiving rather than guilt. One way for people to begin to work on this is to really calculate what percentage of their income they give to the Church. Many people have never done this. It might be too scary!! We have attached some helpful guides to help people begin to think about proportional giving.
- 9 Do advocate that the firstness of a gift is more important than the tenthness. The first fruits, as Scripture tells us, are the most important part of the gift. We give the first, the very best, of what we have been given, not what is left over. Think back to when we were an agrarian society and realize that the gifts brought were produce and animals and what was given was the best of these, the first, not what was left over.
- 10 Do talk about your story regarding money, the struggle with stewardship, proportional giving. And get other people to tell their stories. We are afraid to talk about money, much more than sex now. And yet, an American Express Financial Advisors study revealed that 66% of Americans spend more time thinking about money than they do about sex, health, or relationships. In fact, we spend roughly 80% of our time earning, spending, and thinking about money. How could something so prevalent not have an impact on our spirituality. It does!

Where can I get some help??

Below is a list of resources. We have put these into short term and long-term categories. If your main concern now is to get a campaign in full swing we suggest spending your time and money on short-term resources. However, after that we strongly encourage you to spend time with the long-term resources.

Short Term Resources

The Episcopal Network for Stewardship www.tens.org. I recommend joining this group, reading, learning, and inwardly digesting their work and considering going to their conferences when offered. All the materials below are available as PDF downloads on the TENS website.

A Manual for Stewardship Development Programs in the Congregation edited by Thomas R. Gossen. This material will help you develop your stewardship team and organize for now and the future

The Festive Meal Commitment Program by Thomas R. Gossen and Lonnie Schrieber. This is a practical manual on how to put this program together in your congregation. It includes ideas and a timeline.

The Personal Note Commitment Program by Thomas R. Gossen and Lonnie Schrieber. This is a practical manual on how to put this program together in your congregation. It includes ideas and a timeline.

The Cottage Meeting Commitment Program, The Home to Home Delivery Commitment Program, and The Faithful Member Home Visitation Commitment Program by Thomas R. Gossen and Bruce A. Rockwell detail step-by-step "how to" for these three practical programs. Each includes suggested outlines for training programs that are designed to gather together representative of no fewer than 25% of the parish households.

Long Term Resources

Stewardship and Giving: How to Increase the Financial Support of your Congregation by the Very Rev. Kevin Martin. Alternatives for Simpler Living This group sends a regular catalogue of resources that are quite good. They put out the book, *Whose Birthday is it Anyway?* at Christmas and they also distribute *Unplugging the Christmas Machine* with the Leader's Guide which makes an excellent Adult Christian Education Program. I did this last year during Advent and it has been requested again for this fall! You can reach them at PO Box 2857, Sioux City, Iowa 51106, 1-800-821-6153.

Behind the Stained Glass Windows by Sylvia and John Ronsvalle. This book gives the result of a multi-year, cross denomination study of giving in the Church. It is an excellent resource that will help you at least not feel alone in what you see happening in the culture and in your parish. Excellent book.

The Financial Planning Workbook: A Family Budgeting Guide by Larry Burkett, Crown Ministries and/or the Diocese of Atlanta. Make sure and ask for the Episcopal Edition. The Diocese of Atlanta asked Burkett if they could use his material and name but publish an Episcopal version which he agreed to. This is very much what it sounds like and is quite good for working with groups of people who want to get control of their finances.

Freedom of Simplicity by Richard Foster, Harper-Collins. This book continues to be the "bible" for those in stewardship and the simplicity movement. It is an excellent book. I give my stewardship committee chapter 7 to read and ask them to read the rest.

God the Economist: The Doctrine of God and Political Economy by M. Douglas Meeks. Very theological look at the idea of God as economist. Meeks makes a very interesting argument in this book in an attempt to reclaim this part of God in our understanding of God.

Grateful and Generous Hearts by The Rev. Dr. John H. Westerhoff, Morehouse. This is the third in his series from the St. Luke's Pastoral Institute and I think it is quite good. It is the shortest book on this list and yet one of the most compact in terms of material. I would highly recommend it for stewardship committees and vestries and anyone else who wants to know more about stewardship.

Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace: Miroslav Volf. Simply one of the finest theological works on the role of money and possessions in our spiritual lives.

Final Thoughts

This is an "absolute minimum, last-minute-panic" program. No training program is included, and it is therefore not something to use but once in an absolute emergency.

Year Round Timetable

January	Reflect and evaluate last years education program and Pledge Campaign and talk about next year's campaign. Recruit new members for committee; say good-bye to those going off. Get on calendar of consultants for upcoming year. Plan bulletin inserts and newsletter pieces for upcoming year.
February	Spend time on time and talent. Assess ministries in your parish.

Begin to firm up trainings and select program you want to do.

March-April

Have ministry fair in your congregation. Celebrate the ministries
And time your congregation puts into the life of your community and each
other in a big way each year.

May-June
July-August

Take a break

September

Plan for and hold workshop for those working in pledge drive.

October

Kick-off for annual drive

November

Wrap up annual drive.

December

Take a break

This is just an example. Of course there is more and more. Reading a book together and discussing it each time you come together is a worthwhile exercise. Don't forget to also do Bible Study and prayer each time you come together. Get creative and make stewardship fun and something that is celebrated all year long.