

11 Steps to Stewardship Success

1. **Dream Big!** Even in difficult economic times people will give to a compelling vision or mission. Set the impossible as a goal. God's only limits are the ones we impose by our lack of faith. When it comes to achieving a Holy purpose – “No” is never an acceptable answer.
2. **Start a New Ministry Every Six Months** Everyone should have a ministry. Those who are personally involved in achieving the church's mission/vision by participating in a ministry that excites them are more likely to support the church financially. Never allow the lack of funding to stop a great ministry idea – there is always a first step that costs very little. Money follows ministry – not the opposite.
3. **Teach the Joy of Giving Dangerously** Living generously is a core Christian value that Jesus tried to teach constantly. We should follow that example and incorporate what it means to **Live a Generous Life** in all our spiritual formation programs.
4. **Lead by Example** Key leaders of the church must be committed to its financial support. Members of a governing body who tithe make more visionary decisions about the use of contributions. In addition, those key leaders who make financial decisions should have the opportunity to share the vision/mission of the church and the required funding needed to achieve the vision/mission with congregants.
5. **Know Your Congregation** All fundraising is really less about money and more about establishing trusting relationships. A good database tool will facilitate that relationship by keeping track of certain congregant attributes which will allow the communication of a specific message to people who are most interested.
6. **Have a Plan** Plan in advance for how Stewardship will be included in the annual church calendar and follow a good project management planning cycle for each appeal.
7. **Use All the Tools** Create a clear concise stewardship message regarding what funds are needed and how they will be used. Then, incorporate that message throughout the year using every communication tool you can afford. Remember, you must successfully communicate any idea at least seven times before the message is heard.

8. **Give 'til It Feels Good** Allow congregants to give in a way that is most convenient for them. That means – in addition to the offering each Sunday, people should be able to choose to give online or make regular recurring gifts using credit/debit cards or bank drafts.
9. **Give from All the Pockets** Congregants should have the option to support specific ministries in addition to the General Fund offering. In today's culture, most people "give" less and "buy" more. That is, some prefer to know that their gift is going to fund a specific ministry rather than to a fund that supports ministry in general.
10. **Say Thank You!** Everyone deserves to be thanked for their gifts. There is nothing more important than to establish a written Response Plan that identifies every means of receiving a gift or commitment and defines who will write a thank-you note. The note should be personal, hand-written and sent within 24 hours of the gift if possible but definitely should be received before the next opportunity to give.
11. **Rinse & Repeat** After every appeal or campaign take the time to review the data or results of your efforts. Look for things that could have been done better or more cost effectively and make adjustments to your plans in order to make the next appeal even more successful.

And one to grow on:

12. **Celebrate Your Success** The least effective way to present the new church budget each year is to distribute a spreadsheet of proposed expenses and expect the congregation to be excited about funding new ministry. Instead, throw a party. Celebrate your successes. Talk about the great things accomplished in the past year, let volunteers share their experiences, share comments from those being ministered to; then inspire the congregation with what ministry could be done with the additional funding in the new budget. People don't give because you need the money; they give because, together with God's help, they're changing the world.

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