

Stewardship

A ministry description for local church leaders

Introduction

Often thought of as involving only the raising of money, the true ministry of stewardship is helping believers become disciples of Christ in the use of all the resources God has provided. This includes the management of one's body, material possessions, abilities and time.

Jesus spent much time discussing the material aspects of life. He knew His hearers couldn't understand the great principles of His kingdom unless they had an understanding of their "steward" relationship with God. He told the gathering in His Sermon on the Mount that, "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:21).

God asks the church to be a fellowship of individuals sharing a common purpose and caring for one another as they grow in faith. The New Testament speaks of the church as the "body" of Christ (Eph. 1:22).

Christ calls us into His body for the purpose of establishing a saving relationship with Him and the community of believers. As Ellen White comments, "Every believer should be wholehearted in his attachment to the church. Its prosperity should be his first interest, and unless he feels under sacred obligation to make his connection with the church a benefit to it in preference to himself, it can do far better without him. It is in the power of all to do something for the cause of God." (Counsels on Stewardship, page 42).

The church is meant to be a learning experience for each member. The members are to "stir up one another to love and good works" and "forsake not the assembling of ourselves together, but encourage one another" in Christian growth (Heb. 10:24-25). This is one way in which church members care for and minister to each other.

A local church stewardship secretary or finance committee chairperson, like any other church officer, is a minister. Every Christian believer is called to ministry, gifted by the Holy Spirit, and in baptism ordained for ministry.

God supplies each person in the church with the resources for ministry—scripture, spiritual power, God's character, and spiritual gifts.

The recognition of God's ownership leads to financial faithfulness. This faithfulness is manifested in returning an honest tithe and thank offerings to God for His abundant provision and His sustaining power.

Duties of the Local Church Stewardship Leader

The ministry to which a person is called when he or she becomes the stewardship leader of a congregation, whether the title is finance committee chairperson or stewardship secretary, can best be described in the following ways:

- 1. Education.** The systematic sharing of stewardship principles with church members is the most important phase of the stewardship leader's responsibilities. This involves the planning and implementation of a stewardship education program, assisting the pastor on World Stewardship Day in December, planning and/or conducting stewardship classes,

tithe and offering education during worship, and teaching stewardship concepts during Sabbath School, in new member classes, midweek meetings and on other occasions.

2. Planning and budgeting. As a member of the church board the stewardship leader should be knowledgeable concerning the overall plans of the church, and assist in helping to develop funding resources to achieve the local church growth strategy. He or she should also take a key role in the planning and budgeting process, either as general coordinator or an active participant. It is vital that church plans and the church budget be one connected whole, not two separate activities.

3. Finance committee meetings. Although it is best in smaller congregations for the stewardship leader to chair this committee, it is essential that he or she be an active member. The stewardship leader can give practical advice based on his knowledge of the congregation and can help to integrate the giving, spending and total stewardship of money in the congregation.

4. Visitation. The stewardship leader is usually the coordinator of any visitation committees organized in conjunction with stewardship education. This includes sitting with the pastor and church board to set up the schedule of visits, determine who the visitors will be and the purpose of their visits. It also involves the actual follow through, overseeing preparations for visitor training and orientation, creation of name cards, obtaining materials, and communicating with all involved.

5. Conference representatives. The stewardship leader represents the local conference in the development program of the sisterhood of churches, as well as any offerings that involve a wider sphere than that of the local church. The congregation will look to you for information, answers to questions and honest reporting on the results of their giving to the world mission of the Adventist Church.

Resource Materials

The following resources are recommended for your ministry. You can purchase these by calling AdventSource (800-328-0525), the Adventist Book Center (800-765-6955) or your local Christian bookstore.

Behind Stained Glass Windows, by John and Sylvia Ronsvalle.

Discoveries in Partnership, by Marvin Moore. Leader's guide and participant booklet for a seminar on stewardship.

God's Plan for Managing Your Money, by Paul S. Damazo. Attendees learn to plan for current and future financial needs. Series includes three videos and workbook

Personal Giving Plan Kit, by NAD Stewardship Ministries. A complete kit for implementing a giving plan in your church.

Detailed handbooks and informative leaflets have been prepared on every aspect of stewardship education. Call AdventSource for their catalog of Stewardship resources.

Visit AdventSource On-Line at www.adventsource.org/stewardship for a complete list of the latest resources available for local church leaders. You can place an order or request a catalog by calling 1-800-328-0525.

For information about additional resources and answers to your questions call the Adventist Plusline at 1-800-732-7587 or visit them on-line at www.plusline.org.