



## **Year-Round Stewardship Characteristics and Practices**

A variety of definitions and examples of year-round stewardship are available in church curriculum and resources. This summary draws on several of these “year round stewardship” descriptions and groups a variety of examples and practices into two categories: 1) activities that witness to stewardship principals and 2) activities that invite deeper spiritual growth and participation. Examples are drawn from stewardship resources and from ideas shared by various congregational leaders.

Congregations will need to adapt these ideas to fit their own ministry setting. Each congregation is challenged to define year-round stewardship for themselves in light of their leadership style, congregational culture and stewardship practices. Whenever we are able to incorporate stewardship theology into the practical experience of ministry throughout the year, we begin to practice year-round stewardship.

### **WITNESSING PRACTICES: Sharing, Proclaiming, Affirming**

- 1) Year-round stewardship leaders are positive, inspiring, realistic and faithful. They demonstrate and honor joyful affirmations and witnessing opportunities concerning gifts, blessings and giving. Practices include spoken affirmations, quotes and stories in communication resources, bulletin inserts, testimonials (written or spoken), worship mission moments, preaching, and offertory liturgy, skits and/or other liturgical acts. Connecting giving with mission activity is essential.
- 2) Donors receive information about the missions made possible through giving regardless of the size, including special campaigns and second mile giving. Practices include giving statements that highlight mission updates, personalized letters, phone calls, and bulletin, newsletter and website notices describing progress on special projects. Finance and/or Stewardship Committees need to practice transparent financial reporting and use narrative budgets to publicly share with the congregation the ministry story and focus on mission commitments.
- 3) Pastors are role models and should be comfortable sharing their giving and tithing spiritual journey as well as their personal financial stewardship. Basic finance and budget experience, planned giving knowledge and good listening skills are helpful. Pastors need to learn how to make appropriate “asks”.
- 4) Worship attendees experience year-round stewardship through preaching, liturgy and worship that celebrates God’s generosity and acknowledges their role and responsibility as stewards. Recognizing that the stuff we accumulate is often the biggest impediment to spiritual growth, maturity and joy. The liturgical seasons offer a fresh perspective on year-round stewardship throughout the year.

## **INVITING ACTIVITIES: Learning, Exploring, Challenging**

Leadership recognizes that groups learn, experience and are challenged in different ways that connect with their unique perspectives and needs. Various groups are invited and engaged in creative ways designed to fit their reality and life stage. A broad range of activities and opportunities in stewardship development will ensure that the whole congregation enters into the experience of year-round stewardship.

The following descriptions identify some typical congregational groups and a sample of ideas for inviting growth in stewardship awareness and practices. Implementation needs to be adapted appropriately to fit the culture and characteristics of each congregation.

- 1) Children and youth learn to appreciate stewardship through experiential activities. Congregations can invite participation in a variety of giving opportunities, worship offertory participation (ushering, liturgical processions, or leading the offering dedication), testimonials, or fund-raising or mission projects. Discovering they can provide services, ask adults for support and raise funds for mission are powerful skills that will last a lifetime.
- 2) Adults can be challenged to deepen their stewardship awareness by being invited to offer testimonials; inviting, training and recognizing offering counters; and learning about tithing (tithing chart, step chart). Some leaders hold dinners or meetings with different levels of donors (see Church of the Resurrection) or offer some form of appropriate recognition/challenge for different levels of donors.
- 3) Stewardship studies, group discussions or presentations on stewardship invite people to learn about stewardship and giving opportunities. “Living for Giving”, a five session study, is available through the Foundation. Study materials and curriculum are bountiful. Workshops, brochures or informal gatherings can introduce planned giving and/or estate planning, gift annuities, wills, and donor designated funds as viable giving opportunities.
- 4) New members can be introduced to spiritual disciplines and giving opportunities through a variety of orientation practices. Hospitality can be extended through new member dinners, orientation sessions, invitations to participate in worship, mission projects or simply hearing the giving and tithing stories and/or experiences of others.
- 5) Year-round stewardship leaders honor the spiritual discipline of inviting members, at least annually, to set a personal giving commitment, using the tithe or striving toward that goal. Giving commitments are defined as a percentage of resources (proportional). Amounts may vary as income changes during the year; however, an estimated amount is still provided to the Financial Secretary for budget building.