

# ANNUAL *stewardship* CAMPAIGN



We recognize that an annual stewardship campaign will not work in every church. Each church has a unique history and certain cultural factors are at play.

But for most churches, an annual campaign will be warranted. And even if your church is not at the point where it is open to an annual campaign, some of the ideas and questions presented below may assist your church in growing generosity.

An important thought from Dr. Lovett Weems, of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership: "Research suggests that church members who make pledges usually give at least 30% more than those who do not, and congregations that seek annual financial commitments have significantly higher levels of overall giving."

## Which Stewardship Campaign is Best for Your Church?

Begin by thinking about which type of campaign might work most effectively in your church at this time. How would you answer these questions?

- What approach will people respond to best at this time?
- How will this help people be open to growing their generosity?
- How does the congregation enjoy spending time together—in a large group or small group discussions or meetings? Do they prefer mailings?
- What types of campaigns have you done lately?
- What is your budget, and what is the amount of time to be spent on a campaign?
- What spiritual needs does the congregation have in regards to giving? Has there been discussion about tithing?
- Does the congregation consist of mostly long-term members or newer members?
- What are the goals for interpreting the ministries of your congregation?

## Ideas for an Annual Stewardship Campaign

- 1. Plan it effectively:** Campaigns typically require 3 to 4 months of lead-time for preparations and engagement of the congregation.
- 2. Develop a plan and work it well:** Do you want to develop your own campaign or purchase a commercial campaign that has been tried and revised in other congregations?
- 3. Three suggestions for your campaign:**  
Keep it positive. Keep it biblical. Stress the mission.
- 4. Determine the best season for your campaign**

**5. Remember, people give to ministries, not budget:** Emphasize ministry awareness and positively challenge persons toward growth in stewardship.

**6. Prepare a narrative budget:** It describes the ministries of the congregation in an informative and inviting way. Describes how the church is fulfilling its God-given mission.

**7. Preach with passion and purpose:** The intensive phase of the annual stewardship campaign is the interval in which the pastor can teach, lead by example through growth in giving and preach with passion and purpose.

**8. Emphasize your ministries:** Tell good and encouraging stories about the impact your church's ministries are having in the community. Give compelling motivation for people to invest in these ministries.

**9. Involve many people in the campaign: Build a team!**

Elsewhere we talked at length about the importance of recruiting a strong Stewardship & Generosity Team to give leadership to your church's stewardship efforts and encourage generosity in your church.

It is vitally important that this team be made up of committed Christian disciples who are faithful and growing in their giving, and who feel a calling to help others grow in their generosity. Ideally, they should not be a "seasonal team," meeting just during the campaign season, but a team leading year-round stewardship efforts. Stewardship is a faith issue, and effective work by your Stewardship & Generosity Team can touch and strengthen every aspect of the church's mission and ministry.

**10. Plan your commitment card: Make it easy to understand**

Include all needed information you are requesting. Make sure the person filling out the card puts their name on it (Emphasize this)!

Receiving a commitment card without a name leaves no way of tracking it. State on the card that the commitment is not binding on the giver. It is an expression of their current intent, and can be modified or canceled at any time as life circumstances dictate.

**11. Encourage growth in giving**

In worship, through mailings and in small group settings call for your people to be generous, courageous and faithful. Remind them of the biblical theme "not equal gifts, but equal sacrifice." Financial commitment should be based on one's spiritual commitment. Pastors can help people discover a process to make spiritual decisions that are based on God's will.

Remember that growth in giving for most people happens incrementally. Provide them with a good benchmark for growth. Offer this encouragement as an example: "If you are giving 3% of your income to our church this year, will you prayerfully consider giving 4% next year?" Help them grow closer to a tithe.

## **12. Let the leaders lead:**

### **Consider having your leaders make their commitments first**

Consider having your leaders make their commitments first. Then prior to Commitment Sunday, announce the total of their commitments, the number of increases and the total increase over the previous year's commitments. Let their leadership be an encouragement to the congregation.

## **13. Describe the various ways gifts can be made (expand their thinking):**

An example is gifts of appreciated stock. Encourage folks to think about all the resources to which they have access. But beware, some "gifts" have the potential of bringing problems of sale, management or tax liability. Let the Holston Foundation help!

## **14. Give a final report**

Churches sometimes neglect to give a final accounting of the number of commitments received and the total amount pledged. Your congregants who believe in and support your mission want to know the outcome of your stewardship campaign. If you have a Commitment Sunday it will need to be followed by several weeks of well-planned outreach to those who have not yet responded. For many churches, well over 1/3 of their pledges will be received after Commitment Sunday.

This time of follow-up is crucial and must be done well. After a 3-4 week follow-up period you can present a "final" report. If additional commitments come in after this time (sometimes as new members join) you can update your commitment total in periodic reports.

## **15. Interpret the results of the campaign**

Every stewardship campaign comes in the midst of particular issues, challenges and opportunities that confront a congregation in that moment. Every campaign has context. Pastors and lay leaders need to be aware of this and shape their campaign with these factors in mind. As a final report is given, those factors can be noted in interpreting the results of the campaign. Interpret the results honestly and realistically, but always point toward the hope and strength we have in Jesus Christ, and in our shared calling and mission.

## **16. Say Thank You**

The importance and power of regularly saying "thank you" to your congregants cannot be overstated. It's so important. Thank your people in worship. Thank them in any follow-up letters, newsletters, social media and bulletin updates. Celebrate the end of the campaign and what God has done through their generous commitments to make vital ministry possible in the year ahead.

**17. Insist on accuracy of records in your initial mailings and follow-up:**

Be certain the name, address, commitment amount and other information is checked and re-checked before mailing anything.

**18. Keep the congregation informed and motivated**

Develop a quarterly reminder for the congregation. Share positive stories of what their gifts are enabling. Always be encouraging!

## **How Often Should You Preach on Stewardship Throughout the Year?**

While many times we condense it to 3-4 Sundays during the annual fall campaign, a growing number of leaders encourage you to preach about stewardship and generosity closer to 8 times a year. Sprinkle them throughout the calendar year. Look for strategic times when they would have the greatest emotional and spiritual effect.



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