



HELPING CHURCH LEADERS TRANSITION FROM THE PRESENT TO THE FUTURE

Number 101 • July 6, 1998

CHANGING PATTERNS OF CHURCH STEWARDSHIP

It is a “stealth crisis,” looming in the future yet few leaders are addressing the issue. And it is an issue that affects every congregation, regardless of size or location, and every institution supported by organized religion. The issue is the supply and distribution of money to support mission and ministry in the 21st century. To quote one social observer, “the times, they are a changing.” Central to the issue is how stewardship is addressed in local congregations. Brian Kluth, President of the Christian Stewardship Association (414.483.1945, www.stewardship.org) has identified nineteen changing patterns of church stewardship; we have selected the following eleven as representative shifts.

ISSUE	PREVIOUS PATTERN	EMERGING PATTERN
Stewardship is seen as	Budget, bills, buildings	A vital aspect of Christian discipleship
Focus	The church needs money	Christians need to receive biblical financial teaching
Christian Education	Little or no biblical financial or stewardship teaching	Stewardship teaching is integrated into curriculum for all ages (Sunday school, small groups, seminars)
Membership orientation	Financial and giving information is basically ignored	Financial and giving information and guidelines integrated into membership orientation and materials
Preaching	Ignored or once-a-year stewardship message	Annual stewardship series and/or stewardship and financial principles woven into messages
Giving Statements	Sent out annually with no appreciation expressed and no accompanying information	Mailed out quarterly with appreciation and church financial information included
Staff	Stewardship is in NO ONE's job description	Lay leader(s) or Associate Pastor of Stewardship. Oversees integration of stewardship teaching in Sunday school, small groups and seminars. Oversees lay counselors (in the areas of spiritual gifts, career guidance and debt counseling). Responsible for missions, capital campaigns and written financial communications to the congregations
Worship Service	Announcements are made about the church's bills, budgets or financial shortfall	2-3 minute lay testimonies about how God taught people to give 10% or more. Use of dramas/skits. Major financial needs are communicated in writing
Giving Patterns	The assumption is that most people give and give on a weekly basis. (Note: Reality is that 30-50% of regular attenders' giving records are <u>blank!</u> Many givers give on a monthly or twice-a-month basis)	Churches are offering people ways to “give” to God according to the way the “receive” from God (Weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, send in offerings by mail, electronic funds transfer, stocks/bonds, year-end bonuses, etc.)
10% Giving	10% giving is ignored entirely or is taught as the ultimate goal in giving	Giving 10% or more is taught as the starting point of faithful stewardship living
Business Meetings	Detailed financial reports that most people do not understand	Summary pie charts and major financial goals (detailed financial reports are made available later to anyone who would like them).

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