

THIS IS WHAT I LEARNED FROM YOU ABOUT STEWARDSHIP...

So far I have met with 11 of our 12 clusters at the events about Financial Stewardship. In attendance were both lay and clergy; about 60 people in all. The events were designed to offer the current wisdom in stewardship, and resources that are available to you. Please check the synod website for the 6 page handout that was distributed. The discussion was rich and for almost everyone it was the first time that they had discussed stewardship at a cluster gathering. Here is what I learned from those who attended:

- Many people have become good stewards because they witnessed their parents' generosity towards the church, and in some cases it was quite a sacrifice.
- There were some beautiful stories of joyful giving. Cheerful givers are inspiring.
- Stewardship is a sensitive issue and many churches are not strong in this area.
- Most Pastors are not comfortable talking about financial stewardship because they are afraid it sounds self serving. Those pastors who focus on the giver and on the mission of the church do well in stewardship education. Pastors need support and encouragement as stewardship leaders. They have had little education in it. A few Pastors stand out in their innovative approaches.
- Many are using the *Make It Simple* program available at www.elca.org/stewardship
- Some churches have their Annual Congregational meeting in November and so it would be helpful to hold stewardship education events in May next year.
- Asking a person directly to pledge or to increase their giving is a step that many have never taken. We practiced asking. We need to be able to talk about the mission of the church and pray before asking people to give generously. "Know your product".
- Most churches separate their Financial Stewardship program from Time and Talents.
- Asking non-members to contribute to a ministry such as a Food Pantry was a new idea. One church that does so has advertised in the paper, uses Pay Pal, and reminds us not to commingle funds with the church finances.
- One-to-one phone calls and visits to share the mission of the church and to ask for support works well: by the Pastor and lay people.
- People respond to incentives and a plan: "If every family gave \$50 then we could..."
- Thank people for their giving - take time to acknowledge their gifts. Find someone in the church to be aware of people who are giving – especially visitors. Build relationships with those who give generously; take them to lunch and thank them.
- Quarterly statements and thanks to members help them keep track of their giving.
- There was considerable conversation about the amazing benefits of "first fruits" giving. One church is proud to declare itself to be a *First Fruits Congregation*
- Lay people have not received enough communication about the need for Mission Support to the Synod and Church-wide. They do not know about the work of the Synod and the hardship that is being faced right now due to the great loss of giving.
- "Stewardship is everything I do after I say 'I believe'" was a favorite quoted.

Several people expressed interest in ongoing conversation about stewardship. Let me know if you or anyone else is interested in being part of these "Tables". I look forward to finding out about your financial stewardship emphasis over the coming months.

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