

TORONTO UNITED CHURCH COUNCIL

Connecting Resources with Ministry

Church Development Resources

TITLE: Developing a Stewardship Theme Stream

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Stewardship theme materials can make the difference in the life of a congregation! Do I say this simply because I serve in the stewardship office of a North American denomination? No. This fact was driven home to me during my 25 years of service as a pastor.

What did we look for in stewardship materials to be used with the congregation? The first question that the lay leaders and I asked each year was, "What do we want the stewardship materials to accomplish in and for our congregation?" We agreed that the materials must have implications for more than the church's annual fund-raising activities. Over the years, our responses consistently incorporated the following elements.

Unifying The stewardship materials needed to have a theme that would provide a unifying focus. Ideally, this focus would affect not only the stewardship program of the church, but would impact other dimensions of the church's ministry as well. A number of times, this actually happened. The stewardship theme was picked up in other programs of the church and was used throughout an entire program year. In particular, the theme often was used in the church's missionary and educational programs.

Biblical The stewardship materials needed to be biblically based. The biblical base would go beyond merely having a scriptural text accompanying the theme. Biblical interpretation and principles would permeate the materials. This would have the desired result of connecting biblical and theological principles to the financial "nuts and bolts" of the church's life.

Inspirational The stewardship materials needed to be designed in such a way that their use would inspire and stimulate the church's leaders, as well as the entire congregation. The church would "feel good" about the materials and the program.

Educational The stewardship materials needed to stimulate growth in understanding what it means to be a Christian steward. It was considered particularly helpful if the materials could be used in small groups.

Motivational The stewardship materials needed to be capable of motivating people – not only to increase their financial contributions to the church, but to consider the life-style implications in their use of time and abilities.

Secondly, we asked, "What are the characteristics we want to see in the materials'?" These are the characteristics we wanted:

- colourful in appearance;
- stimulating in content;
- understandable – both by the leaders and by the entire congregation;
- creative – in their potential for use by the congregation;
- adaptable – able to be used in a variety of ways and settings;
- inexpensive – within the capabilities of the church's budget.

Through the years, we found that using the *Stewardship Theme Materials* produced annually by the **Ecumenical Stewardship Centre (ESC)** met the purposes and had the characteristics we were looking for. The materials were well received by our leaders.

If you are interested in looking over the various stewardship theme materials of the Ecumenical Stewardship Centre, visit their web store at www.stewardshipresources.org.

Ronald E. Vallet is an American Baptist Church pastor and noted author in the study of Christian stewardship. Ron's books include Stepping Stones of the Steward, Stewards of the Gospel, The Steward Living in Covenant, and Congregations at the Crossroads. This article first appeared in the Journal of Stewardship, a publication of the Ecumenical Stewardship Centre (ESC). For stewardship resources, please visit the ESC website at www.stewardshipresources.org.

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