



# Annual Enlistment Programs

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OF CHRIST

MASSACHUSETTS  
CONFERENCE

*Nurturing local church vitality and the covenant among our churches*

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## Section A

### **10 Key Elements Of A Successful Annual Enlistment Program**

1. Pastoral support and preaching on stewardship
2. Faith sharing by the members of the congregation
3. All members of the congregation are in some way personally invited to pledge to the ministries and mission of the church
4. The ministries and mission of the church are held up, celebrated and enumerated
5. There is a consistent theme around a clearly articulated theology of stewardship
6. The most generous givers are involved in the program
7. The stewardship message is communicated in numerous ways
8. Givers are thanked at every opportunity
9. A Plan for follow-up is established from the start
10. Giving charts are used to provide guidance to your givers

## Section B

# LETTERS FROM THE HEART

*(Personal Hand-written Inspirational Letters)*



## **An Annual Stewardship Commitment Program** Developed by the *Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ*

The *Letters from the Heart* program has been designed by the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ as a stewardship campaign centered on the exchange of personal hand-written inspirational letters between members of the congregation.

It is generally agreed that the most effective stewardship campaigns involve personal visits—face-to-face, eye-to-eye, heart-to-heart. However, many would also acknowledge that, in our harried, often “stretched-to-the-limit” schedules that we set for ourselves, finding the time to sit comfortably with one another to talk about our giving to the church can be like running an obstacle course.

The *Letters from the Heart* program has been developed to offer an alternative to the personal visitation style campaign for occasional use during times when the church is unusually “stretched” or for those times when a “lighter touch” seems warranted. As in any good stewardship program, it is important to focus on giving as an expression of our faith, a sacramental act of gratitude and praise to God for the blessings in our lives. Education and personal witnessing around faith and giving should be an integral part of this (and any) stewardship program, and it is recommended that this campaign include “stewardship moments” in worship, newsletter articles, bulletin inserts, sermons and/or guest speakers, as well as celebratory gatherings.

The following pages include a listing of basic tasks with a planning schedule, suggestions for effective letter-writing and some sample letters, as well as introductory inspirational comments about faithful stewardship.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Andrew Gustafson, Associate Conference Minister for Stewardship and Financial Development, at 508-875-5233, ext. 231, or email at [gustafsona@macucc.org](mailto:gustafsona@macucc.org).

# LETTERS FROM THE HEART

## Stewardship: Caring for the Household of God

The word for “steward” in the original Greek language of the New Testament is “oikonomos” which derives from the work “oikos”, meaning “household” or “family”, and “oikonomia” meaning “management”; hence: management of the household or family. In New Testament times, the steward was the guardian, caretaker or manager of the economic household of a wealthy landlord or master.

A modern reflection of that meaning can be found in the job description of a ship’s steward or an airline stewardess (now called flight attendant), both caretakers of the “household” or “family” which they oversee—attending to the needs of those placed in their care.

Through the scriptures, and through our own relationship with Christ, we are called to be stewards of God’s “household”, God’s “family” in the broadest sense: to be guardians of creation, faithful managers of our blessings and caretakers of our brothers and sisters everywhere.

Stewardship is about the way we live our lives, everything we do and how we do it. Stewardship is not just about money *and* it is very much about money. We cannot be faithful stewards of everything else in God’s household without also faithfully managing and sharing the financial resources God has given us. For our money and our wealth are blessings from God as surely as all other good things in our lives: our families and friends, our health, our time, intellect, education, talents, the natural resources and beauty of the world around us. And so, how we earn, spend, save and share our money speaks volumes about what we believe. For, as Jesus said, *“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”*.

Faithful giving, sharing generously from the blessings we have received invites us into a celebration of God’s grace in our lives, into a partnership with God in the joy God takes in the healing of creation—the household of God.

*Carol Darnley,  
Stewardship Associate*



# LETTERS FROM THE HEART

## Suggested Planning Calendar

*This plan includes a Dedication Service and the following 4 written communications: an introductory letter from the Pastor (week -3); a personal, hand-written “heart” letter from a church member (week -2); a “reminder” invitation (week -1); and a thank you note. It is recommended that additional inspirational activities be planned as well, such as: witnessing, sermons, guest speakers, skits, newsletter articles, bulletin inserts and celebratory gatherings/dinners.*

### **Preliminary: General:**

- Choose Theme/Logo.
- Decide and plan additional inspirational activities.

### **Preparing Materials:**

- Create or order materials needed (e.g. stationery, pledge cards, stamps, bulletin inserts)—denominational Theme Materials may be very appropriate.
- Determine and prepare enclosures to be mailed with the letter (e.g. “Giving Charts”, narrative budget, information sheet)—no more than 2 enclosures, and keep them simple.
- Develop sample letters for various categories/types—both handwritten and “form”.

### **Organizing Lists:**

- Determine categories of givers (e.g. top 25%, etc—*don't forget children & youth*) and special types within categories (e.g. long-distance, shut-ins, difficult circumstances, etc.). Also, decide who will get hand-written, and who may get word-processed letters.
- Prepare “lists” of givers—labeled 3 x 5 cards work well—coded by category/type.

### **Recruiting Writers:**

- Identify potential letter writers and number of writers needed (preferably no more than 12 letters for each writer).
- Recruit letter writers (in person, whenever possible).
- Prepare packets for writers (include instructions, sample letters, enclosures, stationery, envelopes, stamps and pledge cards with return, self-addressed, stamped envelopes).

- Week -4:**
1. Hold training sessions for letter writers, as needed; remind writers that letters are due by Sunday of next week, in stamped, hand-addressed envelopes, ready to mail.
  2. Distribute packets to writers; let writers choose from “lists” or index cards; (*Be sure to keep a record of who is writing to whom*).
  3. Schedule group letter writing sessions for week -3, as needed.
  4. Prepare an introductory letter for mailing in week -3, or for newsletter, if timing works.

- Week -3:**
1. Hold group letter-writing sessions (for those who prefer to work in a group).
  2. Mail introductory letter by Tuesday.

- Week -2:**
1. Mail hand-written and form letters by Tuesday.
  2. Plan “Dedication” Service.
  3. Prepare “reminder” invitations to join in Dedication Service for mailing in week -1.

- Week -1:**
1. Mail “reminder” invitation by Tuesday.
  2. Prepare and distribute thank you note packets to letter writers for mailing as pledges are received (*include thank you notes, envelopes, and stamps*).

- Follow-up:**
1. Record pledges as they are received and notify writers weekly—for sending thank you notes.
  2. Letter writers send personalized thank you notes—preferably hand-written, hand-addressed.
  3. Make follow-up contact/telephone calls as needed.

# LETTERS FROM THE HEART

## Hints for Effective Letter-Writing

(Note: Hand-written, hand-addressed, personalized letters should be sent to at least the top 50% of your church's givers. Type-written or "form" letters may be sent to others if necessary.)

### **Recruiting the Writers:**

The selection of the letter writers is critical to the effectiveness of this campaign. The following guidelines are strongly recommended:

The writers should be among the top givers themselves. (*"People give to people who give."*)

Writers should be from varied income levels. (People in low-income levels won't respond well to requests from people in high-income levels.)

Writers should be individuals who relate well to others.

The invitation to writers should be made in person—preferably in their home--by or with the Pastor.

### **Basic principles of letter-writing:**

1. Letters should be hand-written and hand-addressed (at least to top 50% of givers).
2. Letters should be *personal*—share history, make a "heart" connection, show appreciation for the gifts they've already brought to the church, acknowledge any special circumstances if appropriate.
3. *Begin with prayer!*
4. Use positive language—talk about what we *can* do, not what we *can't* do .
5. Use a strong or exciting opening sentence to get their attention.
6. Witness about your own giving—amount or percent, struggles, doubts and rewards regarding decision.
7. Invite the recipient to "join you" in increasing their pledge or giving a certain percentage.
8. Ask the recipient to give—either a specific amount, range or percentage.
9. Remind the recipient about the importance of *prayerful consideration*.
10. Invite the recipient to the special Dedication Service (except those you know can't attend).
11. Include instructions for filling out and returning the pledge card.
12. Add a "P.S."—people will read it first.
13. Include the pledge card, a return, self-addressed, stamped envelope and no more than 2 enclosures.

# LETTERS FROM THE HEART

## Sample Letter (Group "A")

Month, day, year

Dear Betty,

*I am writing to you today because I feel so blessed to be part of this Church and to have people like you as part of my Church family.*

*I know that our Church is also important in your life. The gift of your beautiful voice and your comedic antics in choir are such a blessing to all of us and a witness to your caring. I know that, after you read the enclosed information sheet, you will be as moved as I am to continue to support the wonderful ministries of our Church.*

*Actually, I'm writing to ask you to join me by increasing your financial commitment to help us come closer to realizing some of the exciting dreams we began last year. I'm hoping that, after looking at the enclosed "Step Chart", you'll be willing to "jump up" one step in your pledge amount. My own decision is to increase my giving by 1% of my income—up to 8% now, and my goal is to reach a tithe in the next few years. And the best thing is, I feel SO GOOD about my decision!*

*I know that you will give serious and prayerful consideration to this request and that whatever you decide will be right for you and will be very much appreciated. When you have decided, please fill out the enclosed commitment card and bring it to the Dedication Service on (date) (or if you prefer to mail it, please keep the smaller section for your records, and send the larger section to the church by (date)).*

*Please call me if you have any questions or would like to talk about your decision. May God bless you for all that you are and all that you do.*

*In Christ's Love,  
Carol D.*

*P.S. I really hope you can join us for the Dedication Service on (date)!*

# LETTERS FROM THE HEART

## Sample Letter (Group "B")

Month, day, year

*Dear Bruce and Adrian,*

*I am writing to you today because I love this Church and feel blessed to have the opportunity to know wonderful people like you.*

*Our Church is a significant part of the lives of so many people, and our ministries play such an important role in our community and our world. I know this is as important to you and your family as it is to so many others.*

*I'm writing to ask you to join me in making a significant financial commitment to our Church for next year. We have so many exciting dreams, but fulfilling them depends on the support of our whole Church family. I'm hoping that, after looking at the enclosed "Step Chart", you'll be willing to "jump up" one step in your pledge amount. My own decision is to increase my giving by 1% of my income, up to 8% now—and my goal is to reach a tithe in the next couple of years. And the best thing is, I feel SO GOOD about my decision!*

*I hope that you will give serious and prayerful consideration to this request. When you have made your decision, please fill out the enclosed commitment card and bring it to the Dedication Service on (date) (or if you prefer to mail it, please keep the smaller section for your records, and send the larger section to the church by (date)).*

*Please call me if you have any questions or would like to talk this over. May God bless you and your family.*

*In Christ's Love,  
Carol D.*

*P.S. I really hope you can be with us for the Dedication Service on (date)!*

## Section C

### ASKING FOR SUPPORT Annual Stewardship Commitment Programs

Generous giving in the church does not happen automatically when a person joins a congregation. Part of the mission of the church is to form its members to be givers in life, as well as in the congregation. Members need to explore the “why” of mission as well as be told the story of mission locally, nationally, and globally.

Without developing a process that asks specifically for money, little can be expected. If the congregation has developed a creative and challenging program for mission, and the members have participated in this development, then the next step is a carefully crafted plan for asking for money.

An annual stewardship commitment campaign is not a substitute for all of the stewardship education and mission interpretation that should go on year-round. It can, however, serve as vital part of a congregation's stewardship programming. The methods for challenging persons to make a decision about their giving for the coming year are not difficult to master and do.

*The secret is to follow through on whatever plan is selected.*

Four methods detailed in *Inspiring Generosity*, the United Church of Christ's basic stewardship resource, have proven very successful in many congregations. They are:

- ❖ **Personal Visits**
- ❖ **Consecrating Stewards**
- ❖ **Invited to Give, Thanks!**
- ❖ **Faith-Promise**

*Inspiring Generosity* is available from United Church of Christ Resources, 800.537.3394.

Four methods offered on the UCC Web site at <http://www.ucc.org/steward/methods/index.html> have been used less widely in recent years, but may present some helpful ideas and direction to those looking for help with an annual campaign. They are:

- ❖ **Sunday Worship**
- ❖ **Small Groups**
- ❖ **Personal Delivery**
- ❖ **Congregational Dinner**

United Church of Christ annual *Stewardship Theme Materials* can enhance any of these programs. Materials include: full-color poster, four motivational bulletin inserts (including giving chart), worship folder, letterhead and envelope, note card, and commitment cards. Samples are sent to congregations by early summer each year. Order these materials from United Church of Christ Resources, 800.537.3394.

These programs, and others offered through the Ecumenical Stewardship Center, are briefly described on the following pages. Web sites for other denominational resources, including programs in Spanish, are also provided.

Contact: Doris Powell, Stewardship and Church Finances Ministry Team, UCC, 1-866-822-8224 ext 3853 or [powelld@ucc.org](mailto:powelld@ucc.org)

## ANNUAL COMMITMENT PROGRAMS

*from Inspiring Generosity*

### CONSECRATING STEWARDS

An 8-week program involving the leading of a Guest Steward, 3 Witnessing Stewards, a series of letters, and a special Consecration Sunday with a celebration meal.

- ❖ *Guest Steward is invited from outside the congregation to inspire leadership and preach*
- ❖ *Witnessing Stewards tell why giving is important to them on three different Sundays*
- ❖ *Letters explain program, invite participation, and include stewardship materials*
- ❖ *Pledges are consecrated in worship followed by a celebration meal*
- ❖ *A budget is not prepared in advance; focus is on giving as response to God*

Requires recruiting and preparing leaders and planning for a meal.

Requires alternative approach (phone, mail, visit) for those not attending.

### INVITED TO GIVE, THANKS!

A program to help people connect their giving, from a sense of joy, to mission using a 4-week pattern of focus for Sunday worship: Invitation, Mission, Dedication, and Thanksgiving.

- ❖ *Each week a liturgist speaks 2-4 minutes about that Sunday's focus*
- ❖ *4-6 Mission Interpreters speak about the mission of the congregation and wider church in lieu of a sermon on "Mission" Sunday*
- ❖ *Pledges are dedicated in worship the third week on "Dedication" Sunday*
- ❖ *A thanksgiving meal after worship the fourth week, on "Thanksgiving" Sunday, celebrates what our gifts will do*

Requires recruiting and preparing leaders and planning for a meal.

Requires alternative approach (phone, mail, visit) for those not attending.

### PERSONAL VISITS (Every Member Visitation)

Carefully chosen, trained, commissioned visitors each call on 4-5 households over 2 weeks to share information and personal enthusiasm, listen, answer questions, invite pledges.

- ❖ *Tell of the church's ministries using brochures, narrative budget, other resources*
- ❖ *Listen to what members say about the church*
- ❖ *Share their financial commitment and guidelines for giving material*
- ❖ *Invite a pledge and inform of process*

Requires scripting, recruiting and training leaders.

Requires alternative approach (phone, mail) for those not receiving visitors.

### FAITH PROMISE

An opportunity for "pledging" where the commitment is personal and known only to the pledger and God. Emphasis is on faith, not budget, and focus is on making an intentional decision. The commitment card is torn into separate sections and placed in separate plates so the church knows who has pledged (without amounts) and amounts pledged (without names).

- ❖ *Several members offer their giving witness during worship*
- ❖ *Minister explains and invites faith promises; cards are distributed*
- ❖ *Time is taken for prayer and decision, then sections of the card are offered and dedicated*
- ❖ *Mailings and the sermon the previous Sunday prepare for the Faith Promise Sunday*

Requires alternative approach (phone, mail, visit) for those not attending.

## **MORE ANNUAL COMMITMENT PROGRAMS**

from the UCC website: <http://www.ucc.org/steward/methods/index.html>

### **SUNDAY WORSHIP**

One or more worship services focus on the theme of financial commitment to inspire, educate and challenge. Pledges are dedicated during a festive follow-up service.

- ❖ *Select a theme to inspire artwork, music selection, sermon, liturgy*
- ❖ *Minister may preach or lay members may speak about giving, or make use of drama*

Puts giving in context of worship; requires comparatively little time or training.

Requires alternative approach (phone, mail, visit) for those not attending.

### **PERSONAL DELIVERY** (Pony Express, Family Album)

A packet of interpretive materials and pledge cards is moved from one house to another on a series of routes of 10-12 households over a two-week period, monitored by route coordinators.

- ❖ *Includes information and motivational materials to respond to the call for generosity*
- ❖ *May include photo album of church's ministry*
- ❖ *Pledge cards*
- ❖ *Instructions for moving the packet along the route*

Requires separate mailings or other approach for persons geographically distant.

### **SMALL GROUPS** (Cottage Meetings, Home Gatherings)

Gatherings of 10-12 in homes for 30 minutes of fellowship and an hour of discussion.

- ❖ *Fellowship + refreshments*
- ❖ *Scripture reading focused on stewardship + discussion*
- ❖ *Invitation to make a pledge on Consecration Sunday + explain process*

Small group is conducive to discussion and stewardship teaching in a friendly setting.

Requires scripting, recruiting and training leaders, securing hosts, signing up members.

Requires alternative approach (phone, mail, visit) for those not attending.

### **CONGREGATIONAL DINNER**

Similar to the Consecration Day approach except a dinner is the occasion for an outstanding presentation involving leaders of the church.

- ❖ *Dinner can be a potluck, catered, or prepared by a committee*
- ❖ *Program highlights the work of the church, offers financial presentation, invites support*
- ❖ *Can include skits, personal testimony, sharing around tables, take home materials*

Pledges are returned later or brought for dedication in a Sunday worship service.

Requires alternative approach (phone, mail, visit) for those not attending.

## MORE ANNUAL COMMITMENT PROGRAMS

### THE EPISTLE PROGRAM

A multi-week program, centered on the idea of epistles (letters), which also features testimonials in worship, preparing a narrative budget, and a service of dedication.

- ❖ *The pastor preaches from the epistles*
- ❖ *Members receive a series of letters*
- ❖ *Some letters are personalized based on stage of life, circumstance and giving pattern*
- ❖ *A packet of epistles and pledge cards is moved from one house to another on a route of 10-12 households*
- ❖ *Use of a narrative budget is recommended*

Requires separate mailings or other approach for persons geographically distant.

Developed by the Rev. Andrew Bierkan and adapted for use by the Rev. Anne Kear.  
Available from the Stewardship and Church Finances Ministry Team,  
United Church of Christ. Call 866.822.8224 ext 3853.

### TIME AND TALENT

Inviting members to commit time and talent in service of the congregation's life and mission is another vital part of stewardship programming. Consecrating both financial pledges and time and talent survey forms during worship reinforces the teaching that stewardship is a way of life.

A useful format is a checklist including a variety of talents and interests, including service on boards and committees and to the wider church, organized by program areas which utilize them. *It is essential to follow through, calling on those who have expressed a willingness to serve.* With excellent follow-through, a time and talent survey can be a powerful tool to honor and increase active involvement.

To find samples for designing your survey form:

- ❖ <http://www.ucc.org/steward/res.htm> (Select: Time and Talent)
- ❖ <http://synodresourcecenter.org/stew> (Select: Time and Talent Survey) *This is a Lutheran Web site.*

For church management software:

- ❖ <http://www.capterra.com/church-management-software>
- ❖ [http://christianity-links.com/Software\\_Church\\_Management.html](http://christianity-links.com/Software_Church_Management.html)
- ❖ [www.christianitytoday.com/cbg/features/management/.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/cbg/features/management/.html)

## OTHER ANNUAL COMMITMENT PROGRAMS

from the Ecumenical Stewardship Center: <http://www.stewardshipresources.org/>

### GIVING MAGAZINE

*Giving* is an annual journal filled with stewardship articles, including a pull-out annual stewardship campaign with a different theme each year.

#### **2006 Common Hope – Common Trust**

#### **2005 Generations of Generosity**

Inspires support through sharing stories of generations and generosity in small groups and at a congregational dinner. Includes ideas for a “storyteller budget.”

#### **2004 Go and See**

*Connects people’s gifts with the church’s ministry through celebrating a mission festival*

#### **2003 Let God Lead**

*Recognizes people follow different paths in seeking God’s guidance for decisions about giving. Includes a discernment guide.*

#### **2002 Remember**

*A year-round emphasis with monthly celebrations for the consecration of members on their membership or baptism anniversary*

#### **2001 Dessert First**

*A special emphasis on youth participation with the focus on giving first to God. Includes creating a devotional of giving stories.*

#### **2000 Share the Gift**

*A method for moving among homes to share food, service, or other tokens of fellowship*

### **FAITHFUL, HOPEFUL, LOVING** (1 Cor. 13:13)

*from Stewardship in the Small Membership Congregation, by Clark Hargus*

A 3-week program engaging in Bible study and reflection, in Sunday school and worship, to challenge people to be faithful, hopeful, and loving. Designed especially for small churches with average worship attendance of 75 or fewer.

- ❖ *The pastor is the primary coordinator of a small, enthusiastic working group*
- ❖ *Each Sunday focuses on one theme: faithful, hopeful, or loving*
- ❖ *Response Sheets are completed and collected in both Sunday school and worship*
- ❖ *A festive fellowship meal is held within a week to report on the Response Sheet input and receive commitment forms.*

Requires alternative approach (phone, mail, visit) for those not attending.

Order from the Ecumenical Stewardship Center: [www.stewardshipresources.org](http://www.stewardshipresources.org).

## ANNUAL COMMITMENT PROGRAMS

### SOURCES

#### **United Church of Christ Resources 1-800-537-3394**

*Inspiring Generosity*  
Annual Stewardship Theme Materials

<http://www.ucc.org/steward/methods/index.html>

Four additional annual commitment methods

#### **Ecumenical Stewardship Center 1-800-835-5671**

<http://www.stewardshipresources.org>

*Giving Magazine*  
“Faithful, Hopeful, Loving”

(included in *Stewardship for the Small Membership Congregation* by Clark Hargus)

**CSS Publishing** <http://stewardshipresources.com>

Pony Express, We Are Family (relay); Claim the Vision (small group)

#### **Other Denominational Resources:**

<http://www.churchfinancecouncil.org/> (Christian Church DOC)

<http://tens.org/pledges/commit.html> (Episcopal)

<http://www.elca.org/dcm/stewardship/financial.html> (Lutheran)

<http://www.elca.org/dcm/stewardship/spanish.html> (Spanish)

<http://www.pcusa.org/stewardship/> (Presbyterian)

#### **Center for Christian Stewardship** (The United Methodist Church)

Survey of resources with descriptions and Web links:

<http://www.gbod.org/stewardship/> (Access Local Church Resources/Annual Stewardship)

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## Section D

# Inviting Gifts Congregational Dinner

This page is from the United Church of Christ website  
<http://www.ucc.org/steward/methods/method4.htm>

A congregational dinner can be an excellent occasion for seeking financial gifts for the work of the church. The fellowship of a shared meal provides a setting in which we can express gratitude for the abundance we enjoy. A well-planned dinner brings together the majority of the congregation for a meal and includes many members in the planning and preparation. The occasion allows those who are known and respected in your church to be a positive influence on others. The program you plan for your dinner can highlight the value of the church's total ministry and can give the members a chance to focus on the life and work and dreams of the congregation.

Attendance at the dinner is crucial if it is to be successful. Experience shows that 50-75% of the congregation can be expected to attend. By beginning your planning early, organizing enough help to get the job done, and following the plan suggested here or a variation of it, your congregational dinner can be a success.

### The steering committee

Whatever the size of your congregation, a steering committee of at least five people, in addition to your pastor, is needed to organize the work required.

Your pastor can be very helpful in selecting and recruiting people who represent a cross-section of the membership. Ideally, they should not have other major leadership roles at this time, but should be strong supporters of the church's ministry.

The work of the steering committee sets the stage for the success of the total project. This committee needs to begin work three to six months ahead of the event.

The responsibilities of the committee are to:

- ❖ State the goals of the appeal
- ❖ State the objectives of the dinner's program
- ❖ Decide upon the dinner's theme
- ❖ Strive to include all members and friends of the congregation in the event
- ❖ Make basic decisions upon which the work of the subcommittees is based
- ❖ Communicate regularly with the pastor and appropriate leaders about the progress of the work.

In deciding upon the theme for the congregational dinner, the steering committee may wish to use the Annual Stewardship Theme material.

The committee needs to think of ways to encourage as many folks as possible to come to the dinner. Offering child care at the event or in members' homes, providing transportation for people with special needs, and stating a closing time are some ways to encourage attendance.

Each member of the steering committee heads a subcommittee. The subcommittees are:

- ❖ Arrangements
- ❖ Invitation and Hosting
- ❖ Program
- ❖ Financial Presentation
- ❖ Related Activities

The size of a subcommittee depends on the amount of work assigned and on the size of the congregation. Try to involve 25% of the church families in some aspect of the work of the subcommittees.

This steering committee/subcommittee plan should work well in congregations with 100 members or more. The larger the church, the larger the subcommittees will need to be. In smaller congregations, the approach will be more informal, and the five-member committee could probably carry out the five areas of work.

## **Subcommittees**

### ***Arrangements***

Where to gather? When to meet? What to eat? Who will do the work? The arrangements committee will make all of the physical arrangements concerning the meal, using the guidelines and theme set by the steering committee.

Choose a place, which has a pleasant, roomy feel to it. The dinner could be held at a school or community hall, catered by a community organization or enterprising individuals. Adequate parking and accessibility for people with handicaps are factors to keep in mind.

If the dinner is to be held at the church, a good time to gather people for a meal and presentation may be Sunday, after worship. People are already at the church, nighttime driving is avoided, and weeknight conflicts are not a factor. Others find, however, that evening dinners give a stronger emphasis to the event, and people come to the meal with more attentiveness.

Determine how the meal will be provided and financed, whether church funds will pay for it or special donations will be solicited. A "planned potluck" meal has the advantage of being relatively inexpensive, and attendance is encouraged by assigning dishes to be brought by those attending. The church provides a featured main dish and beverages; vegetable, salads, desserts, etc., are assigned as hosts contact people.

Provide for set-up and clean up. People who have no other responsibility could be asked to help with these tasks.

Reservations, tickets, and nametags are also the responsibility of the arrangements committee. Additional members may be needed to handle this as people arrive at the dinner.

### ***Invitation and hosting***

This committee has two important tasks very early in the process.

First, care must be taken to choose outgoing, dependable people to be hosts. Hosts should be recruited early in the preparations. Since many good plans break down in the host-recruitment process, the subcommittee leader must closely monitor this process.

Second, there are the logistics of dividing names of members, including young people and active friends of the church, into groups to be assigned to hosts. Young people in your congregation may participate more freely in the dinner if they have their own tables and hosts. Consider including two or three outgoing teenagers as hosts. Six households, in addition to person's own, are enough contacts for most people to handle responsibly. Each list should include some active members and some inactive ones. This plan should ensure that about the right number of people will be together at one table, assuming there would be one, two, or three people from a given family and assuming 60% positive response.

### ***Recruiting hosts***

Hosts should be recruited five weeks before the dinner. A clear statement of the expectations of a host is the best tool to use in recruiting them. A brief meeting to instruct them will provide clarity and build enthusiasm.

Hosts' responsibilities are:

- ❖ To invite people, in writing and by telephone, to attend the dinner.
- ❖ To follow up with those who were uncertain and to confirm date, time, and place with others.
- ❖ To report on number of people planning to attend the dinner.
- ❖ To be present one-half hour before the dinner to greet those they invited and direct them to tables.
- ❖ To deliver materials relating to the financial presentation to those who were unable to attend, extending personal greetings to them.

- ❖ To report to the pastor any concerns or negative attitudes expressed by members.

Hosts are best recruited face-to-face, with written confirmation following. The host's assigned list can be enclosed in the confirmation letter, which states again, in writing, the responsibilities of the hosts. The letter should also thank them for agreeing to serve, and point out that their enthusiasm and faithfulness to the task are crucial to the success of the event. Include the date of the meeting for hosts and the name of a person they can contact if they have questions.

### ***Inviting guests***

Experience shows that, in addition to general information from the pulpit, in bulletins, and in newsletters, two personal contacts will help ensure good attendance. A written note of invitation from the host can be followed by a telephone call, or two telephone calls can be made. A personal note of confirmation, which serves as a reminder, can follow an initial telephone call.

The initial invitation should coincide with the early publicity, about a month before the dinner.

It is unreasonable to expect all persons invited to the dinner meeting to respond positively. Therefore, it is important to be diplomatic, to listen carefully, and to record concerns or negative attitudes for the information of the pastor and others concerned with church members. Hosts need to be prepared to listen and should understand that information gathering is an important aspect of their role.

The door must be left open for anyone who is apathetic to feel welcome to participate in worship and church activities, regardless of their response to this event. In some cases a follow-up-call may be needed.

It is important that all church members have an opportunity to be guests, especially those folks who are always in the kitchen for social events.

### ***Program***

The program committee will plan the program that highlights the life and work of the church and invites people to support that life and work as fully as possible. This time will include the financial presentation and allow time for questions. The Subcommittee for Financial Presentation handles that presentation.

The full program could take from one to two hours, depending on how much the committee wishes to include. Sharing information in a relaxed atmosphere of good humor and invitation can add up to a satisfying event.

Involvement of those present is important. Choose at least one of the following ways, or devise your own:

- ❖ Have people at tables try a "Money is?" activity by asking everyone to place some money out on the table where all can look at it. Then, as a group, complete the sentences:

"What I like about money is?"

"The trouble with money is?"

"If I had enough money, I would?"

Ask groups to share their sentences and make observations about the ideas expressed. People can then reclaim their money. The purpose of laying it out was to focus the discussion on real money.

- ❖ Recruit some people to prepare simple skits using material from, Connections Magazine, Sunday Bulletin Service, UCC Calendar of Prayer, and Keeping You Posted.
- ❖ Ask some older members to recall stories of their church experience in youth and childhood. Ask some younger members to imagine what their church will be like in twenty-five years!
- ❖ Ask a church-school leader if classes could make a mural of congregational and mission activities that they would share and tell about.

The program should include a simple statement by the pastor or layperson about giving. This presentation should be a heartfelt, personal reflection on the value of giving. Some mention can be made of the way the individual, and their family, come to decide on how much to give.

This statement leads naturally to the presentation that has been developed by the financial presentation committee. Following that presentation, a hymn could complete the program.

## ***Financial presentation***

This committee has important background work to do in presenting the financial needs of the church in light of its understanding of mission, estimating the giving potential of the membership, and presenting this material in a clear, informative manner. The presentation should be simple and straightforward; it should be positive and free of judgments or apologies.

Ideally, the presenter is a person who is liked and respected within the congregation, can speak well, and is knowledgeable about the congregation's finances.

This is not the time to vote on the details of a budget. It is a time to focus on the fact that the life of the church depends on money!

The financial presentation consists mainly of a review of materials, which have been selected and prepared for each household. The materials are then taken home and used as families and individuals make a decision about their pledge in the next week or two. Indicate the day on which pledge cards will be returned to the church.

Some materials to include are:

- ❖ Our Churches Wider Mission information (Annual Report of the UCC)
- ❖ Pamphlet, "What the Scriptures Say About Giving"
- ❖ Pledge card, to be returned on the designated Sunday
- ❖ Bulletin inserts from the Annual Stewardship Theme Materials

All of the above materials are available from the Stewardship and Church Finances Ministry through United Church of Christ Resources.

An effective presentation answers the following questions:

- ❖ What has the generosity of the members helped to make happen last year?
- ❖ What can it help to accomplish next year?
- ❖ What might we need to do these things in God's name?

It is important to elicit reactions from people to the presentation without subjecting folks to a lengthy discussion. Here are two suggestions for getting a broad response in a short time:

- ❖ Ask people in small groups to talk about the presentation for a few minutes. Instructions are: "For the next five minutes, think about what you learned that interested you most." Take just a couple of minutes after that to hear one-sentence responses from a few volunteers.
- ❖ A second way is to have blank cards or papers on the tables and ask for written comments questions, and suggestions to the Stewardship Committee. These should be signed if the person wishes the committee to respond.

Thank people for their attendance and attentiveness, thank participants and workers and move on to a closing hymn.

Unless otherwise provided for, one or two members from this committee should record pledges and contact people who have not been heard from within two weeks of the Sunday designated for collection of pledge cards.

## **Related activities**

Related activities include publicizing the dinner, planning for an appropriate gathering of pledge cards, and reporting on the event afterwards with a display of photographs, if possible.

For promotion of a special event, a few enthusiastic words of support coming from the pastor in a service of worship are important. A simple message in the bulletin and newsletter, along with an illustration if possible add impetus. Beyond that, creativity can be used in announcements, very short skirts, and posters.

Promotion can be enhanced by using a visual representation of the theme chosen by the Steering Committee on any printed materials, especially posters. Do not be afraid to repeat your message in many different ways. This subcommittee can, with the cooperation of the pastor, plan some ways to get the message into Sunday worship

services. This will be a way to reach all the members, not only those who couldn't attend the dinner. Weekly presentations of two or three minutes can be affective. Bulletin inserts from the Annual Stewardship Theme materials are helpful here, as are Mission Moments from Connections Magazine or the UCC Calendar of Prayer.

## **Evaluations**

Shortly after the Sunday designated for the returning of pledge cards, the steering committee should meet with the pastor in order to evaluate the success of the event.

Questions to be raised at this meeting should include:

1. Was attendance at the dinner as high as was expected?
2. What different arrangements could be made at a future dinner to encourage better attendance?
3. Were members interested in and engaged by the program?
4. Did the financial presentation invite the members to increase their financial gifts?

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## Section E

### Inviting Gifts Personal Delivery

This page is from the United Church of Christ website  
<http://www.ucc.org/steward/methods/method3.htm>

Personal Delivery is a way of inviting financial gifts for your church's ministry that involves many members of your congregation. There are many programs on the market, most notably "Pony Express", which use this methodology, some of which have been utilized by United Church of Christ congregations.

Essentially, Personal Delivery is a means of moving interpretive materials and pledge cards from one household to another so that each member is included. You will find in these pages detailed instructions on how to carry out Personal Delivery but you are invited and encouraged to be creative in your own ideas!

The goal of Personal Delivery is to enable the ministry and mission of the church in and through the local congregation. Personal Delivery is not an end in itself; it is only a vehicle that you may use and it depends heavily on the effectiveness of a year-round stewardship emphasis in your congregation.

#### Organizing the work

Organizing a Personal Delivery appeal is a relatively simple process. First, you will need a planning committee willing to put in the necessary time and effort. Second, you will need to divide the church's members and friends into a number of delivery routes, each containing about ten households. Third, you will need to recruit a coordinator for each route.

The route coordinator is responsible for picking up a packet of individually addressed envelopes of interpretive materials from the church, taking it to the first household on the routing list, and monitoring its progress around the route. Care should be taken to instruct each household to pass the packet to the next name on the list so that the entire process can be completed within two weeks.

After the packet is returned to the route coordinator by the last household on the routing list, the coordinator checks to see that all the names have been checked off and follows up by taking envelopes to homes at which there was no one present at the time of the first delivery. When the route is completed, the route coordinator is responsible for returning the packet to the proper person or persons who will tabulate the results.

The members of each household are to take their own envelope of interpretive materials out of the packet. After reviewing the materials, they can complete their pledge cards and either seal them in an envelope to go back into the packet or return them to the church at a later time. Next, they personally take the packet to the next household on the routing list. Persons who are physically unable to deliver the packet to the next household on the list may telephone that household or the route coordinator and ask that the packet be picked up for delivery.

It is important to send a letter to the members of the congregation explaining the Personal Delivery process. That letter should be mailed to each member prior to the distribution of the packet. (See page 4 for a sample letter.) After all pledge cards have been turned in they may be presented at a special Sunday worship or at a congregational meal or meeting.

#### Contents of the envelope

You will need to prepare an envelope for each household. Consider using the No. 10 envelope from the Annual Stewardship Theme materials, (sample are mailed each year with the Desk Calendar and Plan Book). Each Personal Delivery envelope contains instructions (see page 3), interpretive materials, and pledge card(s). Care should be taken in creating and selecting materials to be included in the envelopes. These materials provide information and motivation for members of your congregation and help them to understand the Christian call to generosity.

The following materials may be included in the envelope:

- ❖ Instructions on how to use the information in the envelope.
- ❖ Invitations to any special events your church may be planning in relation to your appeal.
- ❖ Local church informational pieces, including a brief description of the congregation's ministry and mission.
- ❖ Conference-prepared informational pieces.
- ❖ Informational pieces published by the Stewardship and Church Finances Ministry for the United Church of Christ, especially those that have to do with Basic Support of Our Church's Wider Mission.
- ❖ A pamphlet on giving, perhaps, *What the Scriptures Say About Giving*, or, *How Much Shall I Give?* Available through United Church of Christ Resources.
- ❖ Pledge cards.
- ❖ Envelopes for filled-in pledge cards.

### **Packet for envelopes**

Once the envelopes are prepared, you will need some kind of packet in which to carry them along their routes. You can make your own packet out of cloth, large manila envelopes, shopping bags or cardboard boxes. In any case the packets ought to be attractively decorated, and should include the following (or similar) instructions and the routing list on the front:

Please open this packet and remove the envelope addressed to you. Follow the instructions that you will find inside your envelope. Then personally take the packet, within forty-eight hours, to the next name on the list below. Call ahead and make an appointment to deliver the packet. If you are unable to make contact with the next person listed, write "not home" after the name on the list and contact the net household. Be sure to deliver this packet personally. Do not leave the packet unattended if there is no one at home. The last person on the list should return the packet to the route coordinator. The route coordinator's name and telephone number appear below, if you have any questions.

### **Instructions for each envelope**

The following instructions should be in each envelope. Consider using the letterhead provided in the Annual Stewardship Theme materials:

After reviewing the materials included in this envelope, think carefully about the amount you wish to give for our church's work next year. When you have made a decision, fill out your pledge card. Please place your pledge card in and envelope, write your name on the outside of the envelope, seal it, and place it back in the packet. (Note: Explain the procedure if pledge cards are to be brought to worship.) If for some reason you do not wish to make a pledge at this time, please indicate this on the commitment card. Deliver the packet to the next household on the routing list according to the instructions on the outside of this packet. Be sure to deliver this packet personally. Do not leave it unattended if there is no one at home.

Thank you.

### **Additional thoughts**

- ❖ Personal Delivery can be a fresh and exciting way to ask for and receive pledges from your members. However, much depends upon the broader context in which these materials are received. The packets ought to be supplemented by other means of interpreting what your church is about. You can include "Mission Moments" during worship services and other group meetings in your congregation. Articles can be written for your local church newsletter and announcements can be prepared for your church bulletin. Bulletin board displays can be made and banners displayed. Ask your pastor to preach a sermon or a series of sermons on stewardship and mission.
- ❖ Some of your members may live out of town and you will want to include them in your appeal. Envelopes similar to those prepared for the packets can be mailed with a special letter of challenge from your official Board or stewardship and mission committee.

## Sample letter

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

A Personal Delivery packet will be delivered to you by a member of this congregation during the weeks of \_\_\_\_\_.

Please remove from the envelope addressed to you from the packet. Included in the envelope will be detailed information on the ministry of our congregation, a pledge card, and invitations to special events related to our annual appeal.

As soon as you have removed your envelope and responded, please deliver the packet to the next household on the routing list attached to the front of the packet. Be sure to deliver the packet personally.

Review the materials in your envelope carefully before you make your pledge to the mission of our church for the coming year. Your decision can be guided by the interpretive materials and in light of your total income. Your investment of dollars in our church's ministry is an important statement of your faith and will help to determine the amount and kind of work our church will be able to do.

If you have any questions, please call the route coordinator whose name and phone number will be listed on the outside of the packet you receive.

Please help us to make Personal Delivery a successful financial enlistment in our congregation this year.

Sincerely,

(Signed)  
Chairperson of Planning Committee

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## Section F

# Inviting Gifts Small Groups

This page is from the United Church of Christ website  
<http://www.ucc.org/steward/methods/method2.htm>

Understanding stewardship from a faith perspective is learning process. An important of that process is to have the benefit of interpretation, to ask questions, to respond to questions, and to share with others through discussion. Given that opportunity, understanding will come.

Small groups offer an excellent setting for the learning process. Unlike large meetings, which inhibit verbal participation, small gatherings are far less threatening. Limiting the size of the group is conducive to spontaneous exchange, and meeting in homes provides a friendly, comfortable atmosphere. Holding the session to an a half, thirty minutes for fellowship and one well-structured hour for discussion, helps to keep the interest level high.

Small groups are not a fast, easy fix for anemic giving, nor are they a substitute for all of the stewardship education and mission interpretation that should go on year-round. They can, however, serve as vital part of a congregation's stewardship programming. Their purpose should not be to receive pledges. Small groups offer an opportunity to invite growth in faith, even before financial commitments are made.

Productive small-group encounters require work. Planning should begin many weeks in advance. Small-group leaders must be recruited and trained, host homes secured, and invitations extended and, telephone follow-up provided for. All of this requires a dedicated planning committee of people who have the passion and the time to give.

### Planning the meeting

#### *Timing and Number of Meeting*

The best time to hold small-group meetings is during the week immediately preceding "Dedication Sunday," the day on which pledges are received. Recognizing that our members have busy schedules, meetings can be held every evening from Sunday through Friday (Saturday meetings may not be well attended) starting at 7:30 p.m. and ending promptly at 9:00 p.m.

The number of meetings to be scheduled will depend on the size of your membership; ten to twelve people per meeting is an ideal number. Thus, in a large congregation it may be necessary to hold more than one meeting on a given evening.

#### *Meeting format*

In order to work well, the small-group meeting format should consist of two separate parts. The first is devoted to thirty minutes of fellowship. Friendly conversation over dessert serves as a good icebreaker and helps to set minds at ease. This is followed by a one-hour period of discussion structured around a stewardship emphasis.

This is the agenda that you can follow with the approximate time allotted for each item:Fellowship (30 minutes)

Opening and discussion (60 minutes)

1. Welcome and explanation of meeting's purpose (8-10 minutes)
2. Opening prayer (2 minutes)
3. Scripture reading (3 minutes)
4. Discussion of 3-5 questions that grow out of scripture (25-30 minutes)
5. Summary of discussion (3-4 minutes)
6. Pledging concerns (8 minutes)
  - A. Pledge invitation with remarks on decision and response
  - B. Pledge card distribution and explanation
7. Closing prayer (2 minutes)
8. Expression of thanks to hosts (2 minutes)
9. Adjournment (1 minute)

Once the agenda is set, writing a script for the meeting is an important step. This is not a difficult task, but it does require careful planning so that the opening and discussion time is held to one hour. A script serves two purposes. It is used in the training of small-group meeting leaders, and they will also use it in conducting the meeting.

### ***Meeting Emphasis***

The heart of the small-group meeting lies in the 25-30 minutes devoted to discussion and sharing. It is during this period that some aspect of stewardship and the implications it has in our lives is considered. The discussion can be structured around any one of a variety of stewardship emphases. Logically, the choice would depend on the present level of understanding and practice of stewardship by your members.

You may choose to focus on the meaning of Christian stewardship, emphasizing the role of your members as stewards in their use of God's gifts. Another alternative is to consider the mission of the whole church and its outreach.

Developing the emphasis begins by selecting a scripture with an appropriate stewardship text, and there are many such passages from which to choose. See pages 10 and 11 for a listing of suggested scripture. After selecting the scripture ask yourselves the following questions:

- ❖ What does it say to us?
- ❖ How does it apply to us?
- ❖ What meaning does it hold in our lives?

Next, ask for interpretation by the pastor, which will add to your understanding.

### **Sample Bible study**

Suppose, for example, that you select 1 Timothy 6:6-10; 17-19. That text might say:

Real life does not consist of an abundance of things. When we have many things, we are in danger of not finding real meaning in life. More things won't bring joy and happiness. Wealth costs us our sense of values, our clearness of eye to see what matters most. Our trust is not to be placed in money, but in God who gives us all we need. God calls us to be rich in good works, to share readily with others that which has been given to us.

The next step is to develop discussion questions to help members relate this scripture to their lives. Such questions might ask:

- ❖ What would it be like to pray the Lord's Prayer knowing that cupboard, purse and bank account are empty?
- ❖ Are our riches lasting? How do we deal with transient prosperity?
- ❖ Do I feel accountable to God for the use of my treasure? Do I really believe that I have a responsibility for my less fortunate neighbor?

These are not easy questions to answer nor is there one "right" answer. Under the meeting leader's guidance, they are intended to provoke both thought and discussion. It might be pertinent to draw out one or more of the following thoughts about this particular scripture:

- ❖ God already knows our needs and has provided for them through gifts of abilities, skills, and courage. As we have reached this point in our lives with God's help, we need to continue to seek God's help concerning our treasure.
- ❖ God teaches us not to store up riches for ourselves on earth, rather that we are to store up riches for ourselves in heaven. Our hearts will always be where our riches are (Matt. 6:19-21). Should we not use our riches for compassionate deeds in Christ's name?
- ❖ We look at our lives and find each day filled with unimportant happenings. We wonder if God doesn't expect something more of us. What really daring things have we done? Where are the deeds of self-sacrifice, the moments of real compassion? Our consciences, when they are able to break through the triviality, remind us that real Christian discipleship calls for a bolder commitment.

Here are some additional questions that you could use:

- ❖ Since we tend to give only what is easiest to give or to do what we like, what is meant by Christian stewardship?
- ❖ What guides us as a family in our giving of money, and how do we determine what our stewardship shall be?
- ❖ What is the priority that I attach to the church in my life? What is the priority that I give to the church in terms of my family resources?
- ❖ How does stewardship put our faith into action?
- ❖ With all of the suffering in our own neighborhoods, why do we send help so far away?
- ❖ If our income is limited or already budgeted, how can we still grow in our stewardship?

At the end of the 25-30 minutes, the meeting leader will briefly summarize the discussion.

### **Pledge invitation, decision, response**

The invitation to make a pledge follows the discussion period. It may take many forms, again depending on the understanding and practice of your members. Ask members to re-examine their current level of giving in relation to their present circumstances. Invite them to make a commitment that bears witness to their faith and to their personal growth as stewards.

Ask them to be mindful of the thoughts expressed during the meeting as they consider their pledge. Suggest that they make their decisions only after further discussion with family members in the privacy of their homes, and only after they have asked for God's guidance through prayer.

Inform them that everyone will recommit themselves as stewards when the gifts are dedicated during the coming Sunday morning worship. Pledge cards are then distributed, their use is explained, and questions are answered. Follow-up of members whose cards are not received on "Dedication Sunday" is made that same day and throughout the week. Two or three names are assigned to each caller who will personally visit members' homes to secure their financial commitments.

### **Meeting leaders**

The number of meeting leaders required will depend on the number of meetings to be scheduled, whether some or all will be led by a single leader or by co-leaders, and whether some leaders will conduct more than one meeting. The selection of leaders should be made from among those church members who, 1) take a real interest in the life and work of the church, 2) are themselves good financial supporters, 3) have the respect of their peers, and 4) are willing to give the time necessary. Members of the planning committee should be considered. Past experience in conducting meetings is obviously a plus. Recruitment should begin about four weeks in advance of the small-group meetings.

Training is a must for all meeting leaders. Devote about two to three hours of the Saturday morning immediately prior to the small-group meetings for training. For twenty-five to thirty minutes, leaders work in clusters of four or five to consider the discussion questions and their own answers. A sharing of their answers with the entire group follows this. The script for the meeting is discussed and tips for the meeting (see pages 8-10) are offered.

At the close of the training session each leader is given a packet that contains a script and pledges cards. Leaders are assigned their meeting dates and the host home (or homes) where they will meet. A list of the names of members scheduled to attend each leader's small-group meeting is also provided.

### **Host homes**

Small-group meetings lend themselves to members' homes as well as to the church facility. A home setting is preferred because it offers a change in environment that is both comfortable and inviting.

Resistance to attending another meeting is lessened if its time and place are convenient. Scheduling meetings throughout the week, as discussed earlier, can accommodate convenient meeting times. Try to select host homes that are as easy to travel to as possible.

Responsibilities of hosts should be limited to opening their homes and providing refreshments. Hosts should not be expected to assume the added responsibility of being meeting leaders. Exceptions to this should be rare.

## **Meeting invitations**

Assuring good attendance at small-group meetings requires at least two invitations. The first should be extended by telephone shortly after host homes have been selected. Giving members an early choice of which meeting to attend based on evening and location will help to assure a better attendance. It is important to get a member's promise to attend at this time. (Some juggling later on may be necessary to reasonably balance the number of members in each host home.)

The second invitation should be by letter. That mailing will do five things:

- ❖ Serve as a reminder
- ❖ Alert any members who inadvertently did not receive a telephone invitation
- ❖ Serve as a formal announcement of the small-group meetings
- ❖ Offer an opportunity to set forth the reasons for the meetings
- ❖ Promote attendance

It is recommended that you mail the invitation letter two weeks before the first scheduled meeting. See page 11 for a sample letter of invitation.

Follow-up is important. Meeting leaders should make note of anyone who does not attend his or her scheduled meeting. These persons should be called again to secure a promise to come to one of the remaining meetings.

## **Supportive strategies**

Interpretation through discussion during the small-group meetings will serve to sharpen stewardship understanding. But continued interpretation throughout the year is needed if that understanding is to grow.

Consider the following strategies:

- ❖ Mission Moments, which interpret the work of the whole church, offer an excellent opportunity for telling the story. Topics are virtually unlimited. There is mission outreach ranging from Our Church's Wider Mission to locally supported agencies. The work of our national ministries, conferences, and associations invite description. Special offerings need special interpretation. Connections Magazine and the UCC Calendar of Prayer contain a wealth of mission moments.
- ❖ The monthly newsletter of the church is another excellent way to tell the stewardship story. One or more items each month will keep the subject of stewardship alive throughout the year. In addition, the coming of, Stewardship Week, the week during which small-group meetings are held, can be announced in the newsletter.
- ❖ Our Church's Wider Mission Speakers may include missionaries, United Church of Christ executives, members of UCC boards of directors who live nearby, and representatives of special ministries.
- ❖ Personal witnessing by laypersons is especially effective in promoting stewardship understanding. Listening to others in the congregation explain why they give or what it is that motivates them to give can be a moving experience. Personal witness can have a very positive influence on your members.

- ❖ A stewardship sermon delivered immediately prior to the small-group meetings is vital. It serves as the keynote address to the launch of Stewardship Week, the week during which small-group meetings are held. The sermon establishes a theological perspective for the members.

## Putting it all together

Experience suggests that ample time be allotted for planning and committee members be assigned to sub-committees with specific responsibilities.

A plan that works well is as follows:

Before first small-group meeting	Task	Sub-committee size
3 months	Begin development of stewardship emphasis. Develop agenda. Write script.	3-4
4-5 weeks	Select host homes and secure host commitments Announce Stewardship Week in newsletter Select and recruit meeting leaders	2-3 1 3-4
3-4 weeks	Invite members and secure attendance commitments by telephone	1 per 15-20 calls
2 weeks	Prepare and mail letter of invitation Recruit follow-up callers*	1 2-3
1 day	Train meeting leaders	2-3

\*Number of callers will depend on anticipated number of outstanding pledges, based on 2-3 calls per caller.

Week of small-group meeting	Task	Sub-committee size
Beginning of stewardship week	Stewardship sermon and personal witness	1
Dedication Sunday through the following week	Follow-up by callers	2-3

No matter what size of your planning committee, sub-committee responsibilities may have to overlap. The group assigned to develop the meeting content might, for example, also train the meeting leaders. Those responsible for securing host homes could, with additional support, make the telephone invitations.

Preparing for small-group meetings is not difficult or complicated. It does, however, require careful planning, good organization and close coordination. Dividing the whole job into smaller tasks and sharing the work among all of the committee members makes the effort much easier.

## Sample script

### *Welcome and explanation of meeting's purpose*

Welcome and thank you for coming tonight. This gathering is one of many that will be held this week. For very good reason, it precedes our pledges to be received next Sunday. In the past, our appeal has been tied largely to financial

needs. Those needs are no less important now, for they enable us to operate on a day-to-day basis, pay salaries, carry out our programming, and the like.

There is another, far more important reason why we should give. We are called to be managers of all that we are given by God. A biblical understanding of stewardship acknowledges that God created us, and that all we are and all that we have are God's gifts to us. God entrusts these gifts to us for our use. We in turn are to use the gifts, skills, and abilities that God has given us in a spirit of generosity.

Perhaps we have not always thought seriously about God's invitation to us be generous stewards. So our purpose tonight is not to discuss financial needs or specific budget items. Rather we come together so that we can begin to better understand this act we call "stewardship." None of us have all the answers, but each of us has our own perceptions, our own thoughts. By sharing those views, we can grow together in our understanding and be challenged to become more responsible stewards.

### ***Opening prayer***

Join with me now in prayer as we seek God's presence and guidance:

Most Gracious God, we acknowledge that each of us and all that we have come from you. We realize that your gifts to us are for our use but not for our keeping. We ask that you be with us this evening as we ponder what stewardship means for each of us as we seek to manage the resources you have entrusted to us. Help us in our efforts to become the better stewards that you would have us be. We pray this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ who gave up all for each of us. Amen.

### ***Scripture reading***

I will begin with a scripture reading. Hear these words from 2 Cor. 9:6-15. (Read the scripture to the group.)

### ***Discussion and sharing***

As we prepare to make our pledge to the church for the coming year, I ask you this:

- ❖ What are the reasons you give to the church? (Discussion)
- ❖ In our scripture, we heard that each one should give as he or she has decided, not with regret or out of a sense of duty, for God loves the one who gives gladly. What does that say to you? (Discussion)
- ❖ In Psalm 24:1, we read that the world and all that is in it belong to God; the earth and all who dwell on it are God's. How would you interpret that statement? (Discussion)
- ❖ How will we, as Christians who have a personal relationship with God, determine how much we will give of our resources? What will guide us? (Discussion)

### ***Summary of discussion***

(Note that what follows is only a sample summary of one particular discussion. Your summary comments will, of course, reflect the content of your discussion.)

We discovered that the scriptures offer some answers. Accounting to 2 Corinthians 9:6-15, it is not important how much we have to give. God accepts our gifts on the basis of what we have, not on what we don't have. In 1 Corinthians 16:2 is the direction that we are to give a worthy portion of what we do have. It seems that our decisions will depend largely upon the priority that each of us places on God and on the church in our lives.

### ***Pledge concerns***

Our lives are ever changing. So, too, are the circumstances that affect our financial resources. Incomes and family situations may change. We may experience good fortune or bad. It is important that at least once a year each of us reexamine our giving in relation to our circumstances.

Our generosity is an expression of our faith. As we grow in our faith, so too should we grow as givers. The challenge that confronts each of us is that we make a financial commitment that bears witness to the depth of our faith and to our growth as stewards.

As you leave, carry with you the thoughts that have been expressed here tonight. Reflect on them. Discuss them with your family. Then after prayerful consideration, make your decision about your pledge for the coming year. Do not be motivated by guilt or duty, but rather by a sense of joy.

During this coming Sunday morning worship, each of us will offer ourselves anew when we dedicate our pledges to God's work.

Now I'm going to give each of you a pledge card. (Explain how to complete the card and answer any questions.)

### ***Closing prayer***

Let us draw this evening to a close by again asking for the Lord's guidance.

Dear God, send us on our way with your Holy Spirit to guide us. As each of us considers our financial commitment, let your wisdom and understanding be our guide. Lead us upon the path that you would have us go. In your name we pray. Amen.

### ***Expression of thanks to host***

Thank you to (names of hosts) for opening your home to us this evening, and my thanks to each of you coming together for this special time of sharing.

### ***Adjournment***

Good night and a safe journey home.

### ***Suggested Scripture\****

Genesis 12:1-3—"*by you all the families of the earth will bless themselves*"(vs.3)

Deuteronomy 6:4-25—"*take heed lest you forget the Lord?*"(vs. 12)

1 Chronicles 29:1-19—"*For all things come from thee?*"(vs. 14)

Psalms 24:1-10—"*The earth is the Lord's and the fullness there of?*"(vs. 1)

Isaiah 1:10-17—"*seek justice, correct oppression?*"(vs. 17)

Isaiah 42:1-9—"*I have given you as a light to the nations?*"(vs.6)

Malachi 3:6-10—"*Bring the full tithes into the storehouse?*"(vs. 10)

Matthew 6:19-21—"*For where your treasure is?*"(vs. 21)

Matthew 25:14-30—"*you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much?*" (vs. 21, 23)

Mark 12:41-44—"*she out of her poverty has put in everything she had?*"(vs.44)

Luke 12:13-21—"*beware of all covetousness?*"(vs. 15)

Luke 16:10-13—"*You cannot serve God and mammon.*"(vs. 13)

I Corinthians 16:1-2—"*Now concerning the contribution?*"(vs. 1)

II Corinthians 8:1-15—"*have overflowed in a wealth of liberality on their part.*"(vs.2)

II Corinthians 9:6-15—"*who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully?*"(vs.6)

Ephesians 3:1-21—"*the stewardship of God's grace?*"(vs.2)

I Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19—"*take hold of the life which is life indeed.*"(vs. 19)

\* All scriptures are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

### **Tips for leaders**

- ❖ Know your audience. Be sure they know each other. Be sure they know you.
- ❖ Encourage personal witness.
- ❖ Keep discussion on track and end promptly.
- ❖ Tailor meeting to one hour's length.
- ❖ Use your own words, as you feel comfortable.
- ❖ Remember that silence is golden; allow time for response to be formulated.
- ❖ Remember that silence is deafening, questions for getting discussion started:

"How would you answer that question?"

"How do you feel about that answer?"

"Could you add to it?"

"I feel that \_\_\_\_. Would you agree?"

"What are your thoughts or feelings?"

"Would you elaborate?"

### **Sample letter of invitation**

Dear (name),

Thank you for accepting our invitation to attend a small-group meeting on (date) at the home of (name and address). We can promise you an enjoyable evening filled with lively conversation and good fellowship.

There is a serious side of course. Stewardship Week is a time when we give thoughtful consideration to our financial commitment to the work of the church for the coming year. It calls us to once again examine our role as stewards in the use of God's gifts.

The purpose then of coming together is to further our understanding of stewardship and how it gives witness to our faith. That brief time of sharing will help each of us to prepare for making our individual pledge decisions. Pledges will be received and dedicated during Sunday morning worship on (date).

If for some reason you find that you will be unable to be present on the evening scheduled, please call (name, phone number) in advance. That will enable us to alert your host and to arrange for your attendance at one of the many other meetings to be held throughout that week.

Sincerely,

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## Section G

### Inviting Gifts Sunday Worship

This page is from the United Church of Christ website  
<http://www.ucc.org/steward/methods/method1.htm>

*"Hearts open slowly, so slowly,  
Unfold like the flowers; sing the songs of the dove;  
Hearts open surely, so surely,  
Milk and honey will flow for the hungry to love."*

Some of our congregations sing those words every Sunday morning during worship. The words are important because they speak of the slow, sure growth of hearts that are opened to receive God's love and of the blessings that flow when hearts are opened by God's love.

Hearts open slowly, to be sure, but they open surely as they are exposed to God's love, God's word, God's living presence within the Christian community. The same may be said of our development as givers. We open gradually to the idea and habit of giving. But we open surely as we are exposed to the biblical teachings on stewardship, to other Christians who give, and to the understanding of our need to give in response to the lavishness of God's giving to us.

All of that exposure cannot be condensed into one hour of worship. Such exposure requires an ongoing process of Bible study, prayers, and conversation to help open the hearts. It also requires planning, explanation, and discussion of proposed budgets in order to understand just where the "milk and honey will flow." The hope is that these processes of exposure and education are going on within the life of your congregation or soon will begin. Within that setting, you can begin to discuss Sunday worship as an occasion for seeking financial commitments.

By weaving the theme of financial commitment through the entire fabric of the worship service, the call to financial commitment will be strengthened. With financial commitment as the theme for the whole worship service the worship service will embody the message that stewardship is part of our whole life as Christians.

The Sunday worship service will not be the time during which members of the congregation actually decide upon their financial commitment. People need time, in privacy, to prayerfully and seriously consider what their financial commitment to their church will be.

The service in which financial commitments are sought will bring the financial aspect of our faith into the spotlight. It will inspire, educate, and challenge worshipers. It will emphasize the closeness of the stewardship to the heart of the gospel. Therefore, it will take place before commitment cards are filled out or other expressions of commitment are made. Further on in these pages you will find some ideas for another worship service for receiving and dedicating pledges.

As you begin to plan these two services of worship, it is helpful to remind yourself that many of the people who support your church financially are generous people and they want to give. In the worship services you design, you will be providing people with the opportunity to participate in the work of God through the church of Jesus Christ in a particularly significant way.

Before actually beginning to plan the services, it would be good to first reflect upon the mood of the congregation with regard to money and giving, so that the tone and content of worship might express and respond to that general mood. You might ask yourself questions such as these:

- ❖ Is this a time of general well being for most of the congregation? Is there a sense that life is good and will continue to be good, and that any misfortunes that come along can be easily overcome? If so, your worship service might center on praise and an overflow of gratitude to the Creator.
- ❖ Is your congregation feeling at odds with the general culture? Is this a time when your congregation feels a call to be prophetic? If this is the case, your service of worship might be an expression of the struggle of being rich toward God while living in a consumer society.

- ❖ Is your congregation, as a whole, facing hard times? Has unemployment, a natural disaster, or poverty affected the congregation in a dramatic way? In this situation your worship service might allow for an outpouring of pain so that healing may take place.

These questions are offered as a sampling of those you might ask regarding your congregations. In assessing the mood of the congregation, you may find one general attitude with several others represented. Concern for the situations of all the members should be part of the planning for the worship service.

## **Planning the Worship Service**

Now that you are ready to begin planning this service, you will want to choose a theme for the service and create an environment conducive to the seeking of pledges. The scripture passages and sermon will be particularly important as you plan the service. Hymns, special music, and the children's story will help to enhance the worship theme. Suggestions for all of these follow, but please do not feel limited by these ideas. The extent to which stewardship is an ongoing concern in your congregation, the mood of the congregation, and your own creativity will help you plan a service that will challenge and inspire your congregation.

## **Worship theme and environment**

Choosing a theme to use and develop throughout the worship service not only provides a sense of unity but also can inspire imaginative artwork and symbols with which to enhance the worship service. You can choose your own theme, or a theme can be taken from the Annual Stewardship Theme materials, which are available to local United Church of Christ churches each year from the Stewardship and Church Finances Ministry. The colorful posters from these materials can brighten the church sanctuary. Biblical themes, such as "The Earth if the Lords," "Rich Toward God," or "Where Your Treasure Is," and themes taken from favorite hymns, such as "We Give Thee But Thine Own" or "Be Thou My Vision," can be a rich source of ideas in creating the physical environment for worship. Banners can be made and hung in the sanctuary, green plants and potted trees can be used with a theme such as "The Earth is the Lord's" or a chest filled with treasured items can illustrate the theme, "Where Your Treasure Is."

Thanksgiving and harvest themes are appropriately used when the church's financial enlistment takes place in the autumn: cornucopias filled with the fruits of the earth-or with representations of other gifts from God-might decorate the worship area; baskets and bushels of locally harvested produce might be arranged at the entrance to the sanctuary, as well as on the altar. Themes generated by the planners of the financial enlistment working in conjunction with the worship planners can be particularly captivating. UCC congregations have used such themes as "Give Until It Feels Good," "Giving: A Chain Reaction," and "God Does It All For You" with great delight and success.

## **Elements of the Worship Service**

As in any service of worship, the scripture and sermon are the essential elements of a worship service in which financial commitment is sought. There are, of course, so many passages of scripture that could be used in such a service that the few I will suggest here in no way are thought to be an exhaustive list. But here are some possibilities:

- ❖ Luke 19:1-10: the story of the call of Zacchaeus, the rich tax collector who dares to go out on a limb seeking a glimpse of Jesus. Salvation moves Zacchaeus to give. It probably makes him happier and does more good for his community than anything he could ever have imagined.
- ❖ Job 31:34-28 and Mark 10:17-27: Job speaks of idolatry, the worship of a false God. The rich young man was also struggling with idolatry. He had wealth, and because wealth buys power and security, it obscures the truth that we are all ultimately depended upon God.
- ❖ Luke 16:1-13: the perplexing passage about the steward who falsifies the records of debts owed his master so that the people who had owed the money would be grateful and afford the steward refuge when he loses his job. Jesus' affirmation of the stewards' actions underscore the truth that generosity calls forth generosity. God so loved us-and loves us-that every day we receive an outpouring of life and wonders that we in no way deserve. And since we are created in the image of God, it is in our very nature to give. In giving we discover the true joys and riches of the realm of God.
- ❖ Mark 12:38-44: the familiar story of the poor widow who put a penny into the treasury and was commended by Jesus as having given more than anyone else. This is a passage that can lead us into reflection upon the

spiritual health of those who give. How do we balance on the line between self-serving and self-negating? How do we give totally of ourselves as the widow did? Can we invest ourselves, tap into the core of our resources? Instead of giving out of what is extra or left over or unimportant in our lives, can we give out of that which is vital and dear to us? Only when we are empty before God, when we stand poor, without claim, and childlike before God are we able to receive everything, as a gift.

- ❖ By juxtaposing Matthew 28:11-20 with Acts 4:32-35, you can reflect upon the differences between the guards at Jesus' tomb who took money and hid the truth, and the early Christians who received the truth and gave away their money.
- ❖ Or you might want to pursue the teaching in Luke 12:29-34, and consider the change that takes place in person's life when the focus of life shifts from narrow concern with one's own personal well being to the wider scope of seeking God's reign on earth.

You might want to vary the style of reading scripture for this service, perhaps using a form of dramatic reading in which several people read the words of different characters and of the narration in a specific scripture passage. Or you might want to add the reading of some "contemporary epistles" to your worship service. In one UCC congregation the treasurer asked each of the ten top givers to write a letter to the congregation stating briefly, "Why I give to the church." These anonymous "epistles" were read during the service or worship.

### **Alternatives to the regular sermon**

Lay people speaking to lay people about giving to the church are effective and powerful. Some UCC churches have had three lay people speak on the importance of tithing as a spiritual gift. In other congregations, laypersons have spoken on what the church means to them and why it is important in their lives.

### **Other elements of the Worship Service**

In addition to the scripture and sermon, careful thought should be given to the other elements that make up your service and worship. The call to worship, prayers, creed, confession, children's story, special music, hymns, and commission (prior to the benediction) can be chosen or created so that each enhances the worship theme and helps the worshipers to move toward making their personal financial commitments.

See the following pages for examples or prayers that you might want to use or that might spark your creative imagination.

### **Hymns/Special Music**

Hymns and special music should be chosen for their appropriateness in a service of worship where financial commitments are sought.

The New Century Hymnal (Pilgrim Press, 1994) has inclusive language versions of many appropriate hymns including "Be Thou My Vision," "Now Thank We All Our God," "For the Beauty Of The Earth," and other standard hymns suitable for this type of worship service.

In Ever flowing Streams (Pilgrim Press, 1981) you can find "When Did We See You?" (Based on Matthew 25:35-40), "Drops of Water" (its message is to seek first God's reign; they hymn uses the imagery of drops of water forming the ocean), "Give Thanks to God The Source of Life," and an inclusive language rendering of "Christian Rise and Act Your Creed."

In Songs of Zion (Abingdon, 1981), you can find "What Shall I Render," based on Psalm 116:12, a marvelous call to total giving, and "Lord Don't Move This Mountain," an excellent choice for use in a worship service with a congregation going through hard times. The anthem "Neighbors" by Austin C. Lovelace (HW Gray) is based on a melody from Ghana that is quite compelling. Its lyrics are a straightforward petition: "Jesus, fill us with your love, show us how to serve the neighbors we have from you."

### **Children's story**

Messages on stewardship for children can be found in seemingly unlikely places. There is, for example, a section in the children's book Charlotte's Web, by E.E. White, in which a minister is being asked whether the accomplishments of

Wilbur the pig are a miracle. The minister admits that they may be, but then goes on to say that people so often forgot that the real miracles surround them daily: spider webs, sunsets, all the miracles God has created. This passage could be read aloud to emphasize the beauty and wonder of creation, of God's gifts to us.

Part of the story of Horton Hears a Hoo, by Dr. Seuss, might be retold: the tiniest of the almost invisible Hoos lends his voice to the shouting of his community, and they are thereby at last able to make themselves heard so they will not be destroyed. This incident communicates the importance of giving of oneself, even if the actual amount given is not that much in itself.

To help illustrate and understand the idea of sharing, children can play "Give Away." Each child selects two cookies from a plate and then is asked to give one away to someone seated in the pews. When the children return after having given away a cookie, they discuss how it felt to give.

## **The service of dedication**

Now that you have invited the members of your church to prayerfully and seriously consider what their financial commitments will be, you will need to plan a service on another occasion for dedicating these commitments. This is a time to be festive, to celebrate the power and possibility that come with being a congregation within the church of Jesus Christ. If a pledge cards has been used, members might be called to come forward and place their cards on the altar, or in the cornucopia, or in the treasure chest. If the cards are to be collected, you might have those who do the collecting be representative of all the different boards and fellowship groupings within your church.

The Lord's Supper is often fitting at the end of such a service, drawing attention to the unity ofThe gathered body of Christians and the connection of this particular congregation with Christians in all times, places, and circumstances.

## **Evaluation**

How can you evaluate the effectiveness of your Sunday worship as the occasion for securing pledges? The initial evaluation will be subjective: Did the worship go well? Did it feel right to those who planned it? The second evaluation will be the increased generosity of the members of your congregation. So there is the standard for evaluation: is giving higher this year? Are more people giving? Are more people talking about giving? Are there signs that hearts and hands are surely opening?

## **Calls to worship/prayers**

### **Option 1**

**Leader: And God created the heavens and the earth,**

**People: And gave them to us use and enjoy.**

**Leader: And God breathed life into each of us, and set us upon the earth.**

**People: And God sent Jesus Christ to save us from the pull of death.**

**Leader: Everything that fills our souls with gladness and light is a gift from the Creator.**

**People: We have been entrusted with unfathomable riches.**

**All: For all of this God is to be praised.**

### **Option 2**

**Leader: Praise God!**

**People: Praise God, O my soul!**

**Leader: Put not your trust in princes, in whom there is no help.**

**People: Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob and Rebekah,**

**Leader: Whose hope is in God who made heaven and earth.**

**People: Who keeps faith forever;**

**Leader: Who executes justice for the oppressed;**

**People: Who gives food to the hungry.**

**Leader: The Lord will reign for ever.**

**People: Praise God! (Psalm 46)**

### **Option 3**

**Leader:** Blessed are those who consider the poor!

**People:** The Lord delivers them in the day of trouble.

**Leader:** The Lord sustains them on their sickbed.

**People:** They are called blessed in the Lord. (Psalm 41)

### **Option 4**

**Leader:** Hear this, all peoples!

**People:** Give ear, all inhabitants of the world!

**Leader:** Why should we fear in times of trouble?

**People:** Not one of us can ransom our life,

**Leader:** Yet God will pay the price for us.

**People:** God will ransom our soul from the power of darkness. (Psalm 48)

### **Option 5**

**Leader:** Let us come into God's presence with thanksgiving.

**People:** Let us make a joyful noise with songs of praise.

**Leader:** For our God is great God,

**People:** In whose hands are the depths of the earth and the heights of the mountains.

**Leader:** O come let us worship and bow down,

**People:** Let us kneel before our Maker. (Psalm 98)

## **Confessions**

A. O most gracious God, we confess that we spend much of our lives on that which does not satisfy. We do not always count our time and resources as precious gifts, but squander them in meaningless activities and seemingly urgent needs. Look kindly upon us, for the temptation to waste is overwhelming in our world. Enable us to understand what is important, and to use the gifts of life responsibly, for we want to be your people in word and in deed. Amen.

B. Eternal God, creator of the whole human family, you set us in a world richly endowed with material and spiritual wealth. Forgive us for wasting your treasures and always wanting more than we have. Have mercy upon us who never share as fully as you give. Heal our deafness to your call in our neighbors' cry for help. By a clear vision of the community you intend for humankind, stir up in us the will to use money and skill for the advance of your realm of mercy, love, and peace, through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

## **Offering prayers/prayers of dedication**

### **Option 1**

**Pastor:** The Creator of all life and love has endowed our earth with bountiful blessings.

**People:** God has created humanity to share in the wonder and joy of these blessings.

**Pastor:** All thanks to be God, giver and receiver of all that is good.

**People:** We return to God portions of what God has given us: our time, the fruits of our labors, our commitment.

**Pastor:** May the giving from the fullness of our lives be acceptable in God's sight.

**People:** May the gifts we bring prove God's rule is at hand both now and to come.

**Pastor:** God calls us to participate in the construction of a new reality. We now dedicate these, our offerings, toward the enrichment of our life as a covenant community, and toward the ministry God has give us.

**People:** We dedicate our labors, our time and our commitment to God, who calls us into discipleship and who surrounds us and sustains us with everlasting love.

**All:** Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

**Option 2**

O Giver of Life, behind this offering lies the busy world of our working: the office, the production line, the home, the classroom, the laboratory. Save us from creating a world where wealth accumulates and people decay. Accept this offering and our lives, limited as they may be, as willing instruments for good in your world. Amen.

**Option 3**

We give in response to love and gifts and blessings given. May our offerings today reflect God's generosity. Amen

**Option 4**

**Dedication:** As Christ has transformed our lives, may these gifts be transformed into the hands, mind, heart, and will of God in our midst. We pray in the spirit of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Option 5**

Dear God you have taught us the miracle of paradox-  
that in dying we live,  
that in despairing we hope,  
and that in giving we receive.  
Bless these offerings that give us so much.  
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**Invocations**

- A. Praise the Lord, O my soul!  
We will praise God as long as we live;  
We will sing praises to God while we have being. Amen.  
(adapted from Psalm 146:2)
- B. We will give thanks for your steadfast love, O God.  
For your wonderful works we will offer thanksgiving.  
We call upon the Lord our hope in times of trouble, our delight in all our days. Amen.

**Commissions**

(to be followed by a Benediction)

- A. Let us go forth now, fed by the word of God, and knowing that we do not live by bread Alone, but by everything that comes from the mouth of God.
- B. Let us depart singing our praises to God who has dealt with us bountifully, who bestows on us grace upon grace.
- C. Go into the world. You are the Body of Christ, God grant you the eyes if Christ to perceive human need, Christ's hands to heal, and Christ's heart to love, through the Dynamic energy of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## Notes

1. Susan Savell, "Hearts Open Slowly," *Everflowing Streams*, (Duck & Bausch, editors), Pilgrim Press, 1981.
2. Walter Brueggemann's speech at the UCC Consultation on Stewardship, Camp LaForet, Black Forest, Colorado, October, 1980.
3. Ruth Duck, *Bread for the Journey*, Pilgrim Press, 1981.
4. Michael Bausch, *Bread for the Journey*, Pilgrim Press, 1981.
5. Sharon & Thomas Neuffer-Emswiler, *Woman & Worship*, Harper & Row, 1974.
6. Ruth Duck, *Bread for the Journey*, Pilgrim Press, 1981.

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## Two charts to help people think about their giving

- 1. A Percentage Calculator** chart helps people to think about their giving as a percentage of income. This is essential if people want to begin or continue the journey toward tithing. This is also necessary to encourage people to take a step up in their giving each year or every two years. This chart also provides an opportunity for people to see what other giving levels might mean for them and to consider higher giving levels as they work on their giving for the coming year. A Percentage Calculator is published each year with the annual UCC Stewardship Theme Materials and is available from United Church of Christ Resources.
- 2. A Giving Chart** – here is text for a chart that shows the giving levels in a congregation:

You have already been encouraged to calculate and to know what percentage of your income you give to the work of the church. You have been asked to think about how you feel about your giving, based on that percentage. In addition, you have been asked to consider giving a higher percentage.

Many people in many of our churches have also been helped to think of their giving by finding where they are on a chart of giving for their own congregation.

As you review the chart below, it doesn't necessarily matter where on the chart you find yourself. What matters is, based on your percentage or where you are on the chart, how you feel about yourself or your household as a giver-in response to God's gift to you.

Our church has \_\_\_\_\_ household units in its membership.  
Based on office records: \_\_\_\_\_ give more than \$100.00 each week.

\_\_\_\_\_ give from \$75.01 - \$100.00 each week.

\_\_\_\_\_ give from \$50.01 - \$75.00 each week.

\_\_\_\_\_ give from \$40.01 - \$50.00 each week.

\_\_\_\_\_ give from \$30.01 - \$40.00 each week.

\_\_\_\_\_ give from \$20.01 - \$30.00 each week.

\_\_\_\_\_ give from \$10.01 - \$20.00 each week.

\_\_\_\_\_ give from \$5.01 - \$10.00 each week.

\_\_\_\_\_ give up to \$5.00 each week.

\_\_\_\_\_ give nothing to the church.

**ASKING FOR SUPPORT**

