

The Joy of Year-round Stewardship

Stew-ard-ship (stoo'erd.ship) - using the gifts God provides, to do the work God is calling us to do

Christian stewardship is not a program. Nor is stewardship just a fall campaign to underwrite the church's budget. It's certainly not the appeal to give more because the church needs it. Even though stewardship is most often equated with money, fundamentally it has more to do with our relationship with God! Faith and money are inextricably connected!

Concern about stewardship may arise over money, but its Christian grounding expands it into all aspects of our lives as we seek to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

- Stewardship is putting faith into action.
- Stewardship is the demonstration of our love.
- Stewardship is the responsible, loving, accountable management of life.
- Stewardship is how we invest and expend our time, talent, and treasure.
- Stewardship is **everything** we do, after we say, "I believe."

At the beginning of a new year, it is timely to plan and initiate a multi-faceted stewardship program that will span the coming months. Such a plan begins in prayer, is designed in prayer, and is sustained in prayer. Every effort in stewardship is a point where we would do well to engage the apostle Paul's bidding to pray without ceasing! A good strategy that is faithfully implemented will bring a congregation to an even stronger starting point next year, and the next.

Part of the ministry of the New Mexico Conference Methodist Foundation is to provide assistance to congregations that want to develop year-round stewardship programs and experience the benefits of the growth not just of income, but also of individual disciples.

The First Steps

The process begins with a congregational decision that "this is something we need." Whether it is an *ad hoc* group or an officially elected stewardship ministry team, a diversely talented group is prayerfully identified and enlisted.

A representative of the Foundation meets twice with the pastor and this stewardship team to provide information, materials, and supportive guidance. In the interval between those sessions the team views and discusses a video presentation by church researcher George Barna.

The Foundation provides extensive materials that are necessary for full participation by each member of the group. Depending on the circumstances, there may be a modest cost for the series. The Foundation remains engaged as needed through the course of implementation of the plans.

Full participation by the pastor and team is essential. In preparation or through the course of the planning process, the pastor or others may be requested to gather some materials, statistics, and financial data that will assist in the process.

The master was full of praise. "Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount; I will put you in charge of much more. Let's celebrate together!"
Matthew 25:21

The Challenge - A Call to Action

Stewardship begins when God is put first. Stewardship is both our gift from God and our response to God.

When people of the church become excited about the mission and ministry of the church, they want to be involved. Stewardship teaches that all we have and all we are is a gift from God.

We are stewards of God's gifts during our lifetime. The gifts we have been given - time, talent, and money - are to be used for God's purpose. One role of the church is to guide individuals to discern the mission for our lives and the use of all our resources in accomplishing God's purpose for our lives.

Please contact the Foundation (800-678-8786 or 505-255-8786) to discuss the possibilities!

Give to others and God will give to you. You will receive a full measure, a generous helping, poured into your hands — all that you can hold. The measure you use for others, is the measure that God will use for you." Luke 6:38

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A Note from the Executive Director, Sanford Coon

The Grace of New Beginnings

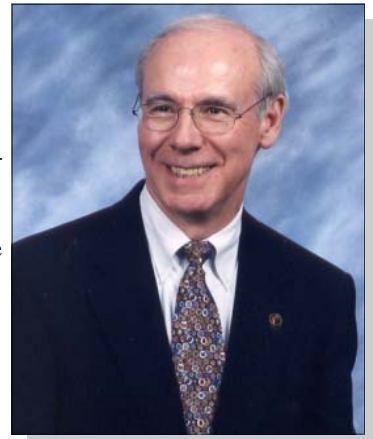
It happened again this week. I had just completed the first session with a committee enlisted by the pastor of a small-to-medium sized congregation in our conference to focus on developing stewardship in the church family. The quiet comment came from a gentleman who has been a member of the church for scores of years. His words were almost an aside as we made our way together toward the door, "When the pastor first asked if I'd serve on this committee, I thought 'Oh my, here we go again.' But this was different. Thank you."

For the preceding two hours we had focused on beginning what I call a Comprehensive Stewardship Program. It's a year-round program, but that doesn't mean that we talk about money every Sunday. Instead, we focus on deepening the understanding of the amazing relationship of faith and money.

It's not a short process or a quick fix. It's not something that brings a person from the outside to generate miraculous salvation from financial problems. It's not a program that will be implemented to ease the work of the Finance Committee. It is an effort to provide guidance to a specially enlisted team that is willing to delve into their faith a little deeper, to freshly consider God's calling to them and to their congregation, and then to serve as the leaven in the church by tailoring a program that, with God's help, will enable the congregation to grow spiritually and financially.

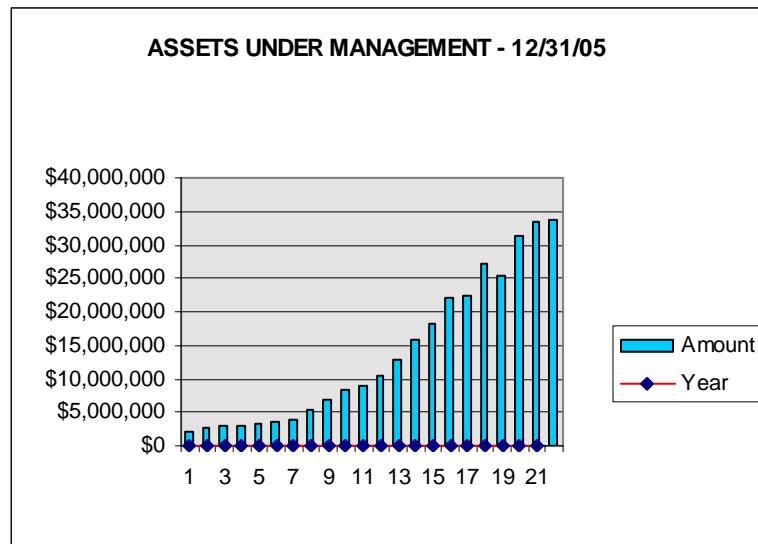
There is always risk involved when we open our hearts and minds to God's guidance. We can't declare ahead of time where God will lead us! "We've always done it that way," "It'll never work here," "It's not in the budget," "Pastor X suggested that years ago, but he left," and similar excuses lose all their weight when divine guidance replaces them with fresh calling to faithfulness and expanding ministry.

The early months of the calendar year are an appropriate time to begin the process. We invite you to contact the Foundation office for further information. Be prepared for some amazing discoveries.



Growth of the New Mexico Conference Methodist Foundation, Inc.

1984 - 2005



1984	\$2,231,504
1985	\$2,579,415
1986	\$2,870,533
1987	\$2,930,491
1988	\$3,147,168
1989	\$3,677,872
1990	\$3,777,323
1991	\$5,430,245
1992	\$6,982,838
1993	\$8,473,748
1994	\$9,066,429
1995	\$10,552,671
1996	\$12,824,165
1997	\$15,872,893
1998	\$18,350,116
1999	\$22,094,570
2000	\$22,396,962
2001	\$27,194,525
2002	\$25,360,197
2003	\$31,458,026
2004	\$33,520,267
2005	\$33,819,171

10 Questions to Ponder -

You are invited to use the following questions as a personal and/or family study guide.

1. Do you believe your money and possessions belong to you or to God? Cite specific examples.
2. When was a time that you felt overwhelmed with thankfulness because you were able to afford so much?
3. What does your spending tell you about what motivates you? Are you indecisive or compulsive? Do you over-control, or do you lack self-control? Do you ever buy out of envy or from a need to be accepted?
4. How does your spending reflect the importance of health, family, faith, concern for others, and self?
5. Do you limit your spending by any other standard than your income? Are self-denial and delayed gratification good words or bad words for you?
6. If you currently have children at home, how does your spending teach them about self-control, setting priorities, thankfulness, honesty, openness, and values?
7. When you make a purchase, do you think of the "whole" cost of the item? For instance, when a car is purchased, the "whole" cost will include taxes, insurance, fuel, and maintenance.
8. How does your concern for the earth and future generations affect your spending? Do you consider yourself to be primarily a consumer or a caretaker?
9. Does the responsibility for teaching spending habits lie primarily with the home, the school, or the church? What is the role of each?
10. What do you remember from your family of origin about the place of money in your life? What values from your family of origin do you maintain? Which ones have you intentionally changed? What about values to which you have just "drifted" without much thought?

Off to a Great Start!

St. Luke's UMC, Odessa, Texas

St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Odessa, Texas has invited Executive Director, Sanford Coon, to conduct training for the church's Finance Committee.

According to the church's bookkeeper, Bob Standifer, St. Luke's has some specific goals in mind:

-learn more about how they can better plan and manage the finances of the church;

-learn more about how to encourage the congregation to be good stewards; and

-learn more about being responsible planners and managers of the resources of the church in relation to the mission of their local church.

St. Luke's UMC, Odessa, Texas is off to a great start!

Success in Bloomfield!

First UMC, Bloomfield, New Mexico

"Start now! Get something started! A congregation must start, now!" Those are words of encouragement from the Reverend Kathy Potter.

Kathy's First UMC Bloomfield started about three years ago by inviting Foundation Executive Director, Sanford Coon, to lead the church's Finance Committee in training. That training led to the establishment of an *ad hoc* Stewardship Committee.

The church committee met with Sanford every month for six months. Together, they planned a campaign that could be a model for any church.

After one year, the Bloomfield congregation was ready to launch "Commitment to Ministry Sunday." The church was surprised by the pledged amount. The church continues to prosper! Pledge percentages are UP! Giving is more consistent.

According to Reverend Potter, the church continues to "talk and talk and talk and pray and pray and pray. Every month, the church newsletter communicates what is happening for the ministries of the church because the congregation wants to be good stewards of resources with the gifts that God has given us."

Reverend Potter encourages churches to "Start! Let God take it from there. You will be surprised at what happens. You will, indeed, be blessed."

Do you want to know more about how to take the same "great start" step that St. Luke's UMC in Odessa, Texas is taking?

Do you want to know more about how to have a Successful stewardship program like the one in Bloomfield, New Mexico?

*Contact the Foundation office to schedule a workshop.
800-678-8786 or 505-255-8786*



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ABOUT YOUR FOUNDATION

Board Highlight

Barbara Bauernfeind

Barbara Bauernfeind joined the New Mexico Conference Methodist Foundation Board of Directors in 2005. She is an attorney with the firm of Craig, Terrill, Hale & Brantham, L.L.P. and practices in both Lubbock and Odessa as well as other sites in West Texas. She brings the outstanding qualifications of 23 years of legal practice and service to several non-profit agencies.

Barbara is committed to serving God through her church and through ministries beyond her local congregation. For 13 years she served in various capacities with the board of the Methodist Children's Home in Waco, Texas, including the position of board chairman.

As a longtime active lay person in The United Methodist Church, and now a pastor's wife, Barbara appreciates the perspectives of both the laity and the clergy in the local church. She avidly supports the creative engagement of the two in serving God, loving others, and reaching out with the Gospel message through diverse ministries to the people of God.

When asked about her vision for the future of the Foundation, Barbara responded, "Through the Foundation, we have a mission of developing and enhancing the financial resources needed to support a great variety of ministries within the Conference. We also have the opportunity to offer to the clergy and laity various educational events and resources to support and facilitate ministry in the local churches."

Barbara enjoys reading and attending Bible studies. She is also a sports fan and enjoys "cheering on" the Texas Longhorns! Barbara is married to the Reverend Paul E. Bauernfeind, Pastor of Asbury United Methodist Church in Odessa, Texas.

