

Other Stewardship Programs to Consider

Small Group Meetings: *Claim the Vision* — CSS Publishing Company (1-800-537-1030 or <http://stewardshipresources.com>).

Mail Communication: *The Personal Note Commitment Program* — Morehouse Publishing (1-800-877-0012 or www.morehousegroup.com).

Telephone Appeal: *Called to Serve* — LeWay Resources, Inc. (1-800-72-LEWAY or www.leway.net).

Personal Delivery: *Pony Express* — CSS Publishing Company (1-800-537-1030 or <http://stewardshipresources.com>).

Forty-Day Bible Study: *Irresistible Invitation* — Cokesbury (1-800-672-1789 or www.cokesbury.com).

For additional suggestions, visit <http://gbod.org/stewardship/article.asp?id=11559>.

A Newsletter from the
Southeast District
Stewardship Team

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The United Methodist Church

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*The purpose of the
Southeast District
Stewardship Team
is to cultivate
extravagant generosity
within the people and
congregations of the
district through
practical emphasis on
prayers, presence, gifts,
service, and witness.*

Thanks to You...

A Newsletter from the Southeast District Stewardship Team
Volume 1, Issue 2 September 1, 2009

Asking Makes a Difference

The Benefits of Annual Stewardship Education

Thank you. It's a simple expression. We all need to hear it from time to time. This quarterly newsletter is called *Thanks to You* because we want you to know how much we appreciate your support of the Iowa Conference connection.

As members of The United Methodist Church, we promise to give of our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service, and our witness to God through the ministries of our congregation. Regular attention to stewardship education reminds each person in the congregation of the

meaning of their membership vows and provides opportunities to communicate the ways in which contributions to the church are serving God and the needs of others.

Research from Denny Buwalda and Wayne Barrett from the West Michigan United Methodist Foundation Office suggests that contributions to the ministry of the church will double, or even triple, if we take the time to ask.

+ When no specific contribution is requested of church members, the average annual gift from a household is \$400, or about 1.5% of house-

hold income.

+ When church members are asked to identify a specific dollar amount, the average annual gift per household is \$800, or about 2.9% of household income.

+ When church members are asked to commit a percentage of their household income, the average annual gift per household is \$1,200, or 4.6% of household income.

Read on. We want you to know how churches in our district have benefited from annual stewardship education events in their congregations. The results may surprise you!

Courage to Care

First United Methodist Church in Fairfield is an active congregation of disciples. They praise God in work trips to Cedar Rapids, Oakville, and Mississippi, as well as in their singing and praying in the sanctuary.

However, in 2007 we encountered a major challenge in our financial life. The Stewardship and Finance Committee prayerfully and thoughtfully examined the situation before the church. The conclusion was that it was time to work at stewardship education in a new way.

After reviewing several options, the committee selected a program called *Courage to Care* from LeWay Resources. This program guided us step by step through the process of organizing, informing the congregation, and carrying out the nuts and bolts of a church member visitation campaign.

In spite of some initial questions about a visitation-

based program, the campaign went well and brought positive results. Compared to the previous year, the number of households who made estimates of giving for the next year increased. And the total amount of estimated gifts also grew.

More importantly, church members responded with deep appreciation for the visits they received. The planning committee was pleased that church members accepted stewardship visitors. But they hadn't anticipated that they would actually enjoy them! One individual so appreciated the contact that she volunteered to make regular visits on behalf of the church in the future!

Did it take a lot of work to implement the visitation program? Yes.

Was it worth the effort? Yes, well worth the work!

Stewardship is part of discipleship. Just as disciples need continuing education in order to grow in their faith, they need it in the area of stewardship, as well. Our



experience in Fairfield is that a stewardship campaign such as *Courage to Care* is an excellent vehicle for that continuing education!

Author Mike Metz serves as one of the pastors for First United Methodist Church in Fairfield. For more information about Courage to Care call LeWay Resources, Inc. at 1-800-72-LEWAY or email www.leway.net.

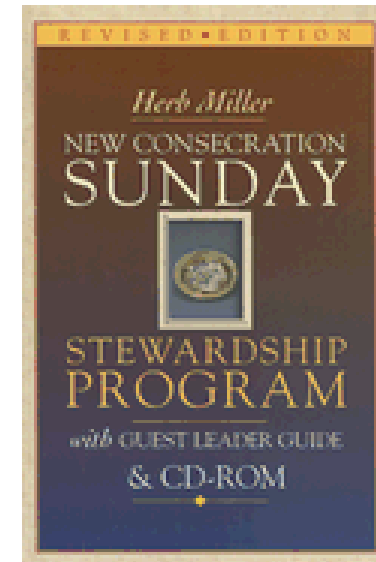
New Consecration Sunday

The *Consecration Sunday Stewardship Program*, written by Herb Miller, has been used by the Sigourney United Methodist Church for at least the last twelve years. The program was revised and updated in 2007 and is now called the *New Consecration Sunday Stewardship Program*.

We have found it to be effective in teaching our congregation the principles of percentage giving and tithing. A key component of the program is to encourage members to take a step forward in their giving based on their household income – toward the tithe, to the tithe, or beyond the tithe.

The program helps people shift their thinking about their giving habits. Instead of giving to raise the budget, members are asked to consider the question, What percentage of my income is God asking me to give? To reinforce this concept the church budget is established only after the results of the campaign are known.

On Consecration Sunday members fill out estimate of giving cards. They identify how they will be giving in the coming twelve months. Following worship a catered meal is served to all participants free of charge while the estimated giving figures are calculated. A formula makes allowances



for those not in attendance so that anticipated donations for the year can be announced to everyone before the close of the event.

In the last five years our congregation's operating budget has increased

respectively by 7.66%, 13.32%, 5.67%, 7.83%, and 9.11%. This has been an annual time of rejoicing for us.

We plan to use this program again this fall. We have found the program very easy to follow and implement. Lay persons give brief presentations for each of three preceding Sundays. And an outside speaker provides the message on the day of the event. Our congregation looks forward to Consecration Sunday each fall.

The only caution I have to offer is that it is very important to follow the program exactly as written. There is a temptation to modify it and/or leave out some portions, either of which is a mistake that will diminish the results.

Author John J. Hembry serves as the pastor of the Sigourney United Methodist Church. For more information about The New Consecration Sunday call Cokesbury at 1-800-672-1789 or email www.cokesbury.com.