

PILLAR TWO

Providing an Annual Stewardship Program for Mission and Ministry

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“You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.” (2 Cor. 9:11)

Annual stewardship programs help congregations encourage stewarding disciples to commit to use all of the resources God entrusts to them for His purposes. A commitment process helps members grow in their ability to manage time, talents, abilities and finances for God’s purposes.

For example, a study of churches in the U.S. revealed that they ask for money in three different ways. Churches that take *offerings* and have no financial stewardship process have members who give an average of 1.5 percent of their income to support their church. Churches that ask members to make a *pledge* have members who give an average of 2.9 percent of their income to their church. Churches that ask members to give a *percentage* of their income receive an average of 4.6 percent.*

The suggested annual stewardship program with a commitment process is *Consecrated Stewards*. Find out more at www.lcef.org.

Consecrated Stewards — An Overview

Consecrated Stewards is based on the need of the giver to give, not the need of the church to receive.

It is not tied to the church budget and can be used at any time of the year. Budget-based emphases never raise more than what is needed to meet the budget. Stewardship emphases raise people to a new level of commitment and annual giving. Congregations often experience intentions of giving that exceed previous envelope giving by 15–35 percent.

Consecrated Stewards is a stewardship education and commitment emphasis. It recognizes that churches that fail to talk about Christian stewardship on a regular basis often wind up talking about money all year long.

Consecrated Stewards is based on the biblical principles of percentage-based, grace-motivated, sacrificial giving. It urges people to take a step forward in their stewardship life without pressure or legalism. It does not use gimmicks or fundraising techniques. The idea is to lay out what the Bible says about supporting God’s work in the Church and to allow that Word of God to work upon the people. It emphasizes equal sacrifice, not equal amounts.

Consecrated Stewards ties the commitment process to the Sunday morning act of worship. It reaches the maximum number of people in the setting where Word and Sacrament ministry takes place. It does not have members asking other members one-on-one for a financial commitment.

Consecrated Stewards requires minimal organization:

- › Four weeks of preparation and four weeks of emphasis
- › A working committee of eight
- › Usually only four committee meetings, plus attention to ongoing stewardship

Consecrated Stewards utilizes a trained facilitator to keep the process on track, maintain biblical focus and avoid expensive shortcuts.

Stewardship Under the Cross, by Heath R. Curtis, is the narrative of one small, rural parish’s use of a modified version of this program.

**New Consecration Sunday Stewardship Program* by Herb Miller (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002).

