

THREE KINDS OF CONGREGATIONS

Adapted from Herb Miller's *The Parish Paper* May 2002

“Offering Congregations. Churches that appeal for offerings but have no annual stewardship campaign have the lowest per capita giving levels (their members contribute an average of 1.5% of their income.)

Pledging Congregations. People whose churches conduct annual campaigns that ask them to write their intentions on paper gave an average of twice as much as people in “offering” churches (on average 2.9% of their income).

Percentage-giving congregations. People whose churches ask them to base their financial commitments on a percentage of their incomes give an average of three times as much as “offering” churches. (4.6% of their income). (*Money Matters* Westminster John Knox Press.)

Money-Talk Principles

1. Avoid substituting secular fund-raising methods for Christian stewardship procedures.
2. Talk about the need of the giver to give for the giver's spiritual benefit, not the church's need to receive.
3. Instead of talking about how much money your congregation needs to balance its budget, ask, “What is God calling you to give as a percentage of your income?”
4. Teach and preach tithing and percentage giving, not as an outdated legalism but as an appropriate faith commitment for which God's grace empowers us.
5. Conduct a stewardship program every year.
6. Complete the annual stewardship campaign before you create the church budget.
7. Talk about time & talent stewardship during a different month than when you schedule the annual financial campaign.
8. Focus equal energy on all members/attendees, not just on households with poor giving records.
9. Stifle the temptation to invent your own stewardship campaign.
10. Assume that people can enjoy, rather than feel negative about, the annual stewardship program.

The Bottom Line

In financial stewardship, as in so many other aspects of ministry, churches tend to reap what they sow. What is your congregation sowing?"