



December 2011

Partners

A Resource for Church Leaders from Diaconal Ministries Canada

The hard work of stewardship

By Martin Spoelstra

I was recently at a Classis meeting where our treasurer reported once again that there was a drop in the membership of our Classis that amounts to 7% in six years. Sadly, this is nothing new. The membership of the Christian Reformed Church in Canada has decreased by 15% in the last 25 years.

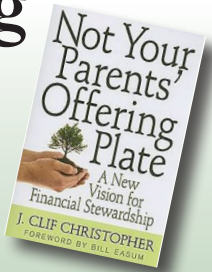
The churches that survive this onslaught will not be able to just sit around and complain that people are not coming. This is where stewardship plays a vital role, continually reminding the leadership in our churches that financial resources will flow freely when the

members recognize the passion and the power of the Gospel to transform lives. They want to be involved and part of something that changes lives.

The best way to meet your financial obligations, to encourage stewardship, to engage the hearts and the pocketbooks of your congregants is to actively promote and participate in the Great Command and the Great Commission. This happens when you disciple new and mature believers who are being transformed themselves by the Great Command (Matthew 22:38, 39) and practicing the mission of God in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19, 20).

When your church is passionate →

Inspiring giving



Deacons, what would happen if, instead of giving a financial report, we inspired our churches to believe in, and support, the mission of the church?

J. Clif Christopher, in his book, *Not Your Parents' Offering Plate*, writes that churches need to stop thinking traditionally about meeting budgets, and start trying to understand why people give.

Consider reading through this practical book in your diaconate and learn simple strategies to inspire faithful stewardship in your church.

Diaconal Ministries Canada



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DMC RESOURCE: Devotions for Deacons Meetings

DMC has recently written a series of devotionals for your deacons' meetings, taken from the charge to the deacons to "Live as Examples of Jesus." Themes include stewardship, mercy, compassion and justice in diaconal ministry. They are available for download FREE on-line. Check out our website at www.diaconalministries.com.

Stewardship resources:

www.diaconalministries.com/deacons/documents/StewardshipResources2011.pdf

The Impact of Stewardship...

...on two churches

ST. ALBERT CRC in Alberta

As church leaders and Council members, one new way we are working with stewardship is to see ourselves as “stewards of the people gifts present in the congregation.”

How, then, can we best “use” these gifts in service to the Lord here in our community?

This has led us to consider how to “inventory” the gifts to find out “what we have.” [We] will take a shot at putting together a tool to help us plug people in to ministry in ways that fit for them and for the task. We are also reflecting on how to discover the needs in our community. We are likely heading toward conducting a Community Opportunity Scan (more information on the COS at www.diaconalministries.com).

—Pastor John Luth

BRIGHTON CRC in Ontario

Brighton CRC has been using the Financial Peace University material during the past five years, to inspire faithful stewardship among church members.

Through this course, people have come to know Christ as Saviour and Master of all financial resources, and, last year, the church used the program as an outreach tool.

The class facilitator, Pastor David Deur, reported that through the course “lights come on in peoples’ heads.” One 22-year old was so excited to be able to follow the various steps outlined by the course as he journeyed towards financial peace.

As was expected, participants learned to better manage the financial resources God has given them. What was less expected was that the course impacted the way married couples learned to communicate with each other, particularly as they talked about money.

In one case, this class even saved a couple’s marriage.

...on a person

John lost his farm in the 1980s during the interest rate spike, and was \$60,000 in debt. Everything was repossessed except the clothes on his back and some household possessions.

He found a job as the superintendent of an apartment building, so his family of 8 moved into an apartment there. He worked during the day as a painter, and took a number of night time custodial jobs. They were able to pay off ALL the debt in just over 1 year!

John is now 79. He said that he has always given from the little he has, and God has blessed that. Last year he made a vow that he would give God \$100,000 if God would make it possible! He had always wanted to be able to support ministry more, and so he “cried out to God.”

God answered John’s prayer mightily by increasing his stock portfolio from \$200,000 to \$320,000 in 12 months. He has already given over \$60,000, and he is very excited about it.

From Christian Stewardship Services’ publication “Advancing Stewardship.” Reprinted with permission.

Hard work of stewardship...



→ about these two scriptures you will find that meeting your budget will be an act of rejoicing rather than lament. Why? Because when people believe in the mission and vision of a church by witnessing the evidence of this mission and vision accomplished, they give.

We are running out of time. The church is shrinking and we are losing members from the CRC to other churches that have figured out ways to engage the mission of God. People are desperate to give when they see the transformation that only Jesus

Christ can accomplish.

Remember, you are not in the business of balancing budgets or managing money. You are in the business of changing lives for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ—that is it. If that is not the central focus of what you do, if that is not on the agenda every time you meet, if that does not permeate the discussions around the financial impact your church can have, then move over and let someone else take over.

When people see others coming to your church and falling on their knees, when they see families uniting their lives with you, when they

hear testimonies of how a marriage was rejuvenated or an alcoholic rehabilitated, when they witness a group of young people singing of their love for Christ, when they know deep in their own soul that they have moved closer to the cross through worship experiences—then they give.

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