



How Do You Get Clear about Financial Stewardship?

by Margaret Marcuson

What do you think about financial stewardship? While there are a host of resources for churches on developing their giving, it's important to clarify your own thinking. The clearer you are yourself, the easier it will be for you to offer others a challenge to give.



Here are some questions to ask yourself. Don't ask them of others until you've done some thinking for yourself:

- 1. Why do you give?** For most of us, there is a variety of reasons: our values, our upbringing, our position of leadership, a sense of obligation, love. See if you can untangle some of these threads for yourself.
- 2. Why do you give the amount you give?** Do you tithe? Why? Do you and your spouse or partner agree on these matters, and how do you make the decisions you do?
- 3. Why do you give where you give?** Do you give most of your tithe or other charitable giving to the church, or do you divide it up? Why? How do you respond to those phone calls? Do you give to everyone who comes along, or not? Why?
- 4. What did you learn about giving from your family of origin?** I can remember getting a dollar allowance and being expected to give a dime. As a young adult, the first time I chose not to tithe it made me very anxious--I was breaking the family rules. Over time, I had to figure out what I myself thought about those rules.

As you clarify your own thinking, consider how you want to share it with the congregation. It can help others if you acknowledge the complexity of these matters, and that you struggle, too. Stand side-by-side with people rather than pointing a finger at them.

Asking these questions will help you get some distance from the understandable anxiety about next year's budget. Some churches are in the middle of budgeting now, others go through the process in the fall. But there's no bad time to ask yourself questions that will lead to greater clarity about stewardship. Step back

from your own anxiety about staffing, your salary and the rocky economy. Figure out what you think. Then, think about what you want to say to the church about what you think.

Finally, consider how you can frame your thoughts on financial stewardship in a way that will help others with their thinking, rather than trying to cajole or coax them into thinking and behaving in the way you would like. Growing mature givers (including ourselves) takes time.

Questions? Contact your United Methodist Foundation of Louisiana at (225) 346-1535 or at www.umf.org.

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