

**Objective:** The intent of this class is to support congregational stewardship committees.

For those congregations without a Stewardship Committee, my goal is to help you move toward developing one to help your congregations' members grow in faith.

For those congregations that already have a Stewardship Committee, my goal is to help you understand that stewardship encompasses so much more than just the financial aspect. It's all about the "how to" of deepening and broadening your congregation's perspective on growing its faith in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, in a way which may not have been considered previously.

### **Class 3. February 3, 2022. Where Zion is now.**

We've reached the end of this classes journey. I've turned significantly older over the years and Zion's congregation has changed a lot. Even our pastor has moved on and retired – almost. Tonight, we'll look at what the Stewardship and Generosity Committee did this year, and later I'll review the why, tell you what seems to be working and what was a complete dud.

### **Class Content**

This brings us to 2022. Like many of you, Zion is finally back to in-person worship. In May, the committee went to work revising and then putting into motion the Sunday Themes and Emphases document we had developed in 2021 but never got to use. **(Attach document)** The document covers May 2022 to May 2023 and includes Zion's Seven Marks of Discipleship, the church year, feasts and celebrations, and other Zion projects and missions. It is most assuredly a document in transition.

Monthly Newsletter articles focused on the marks delineated in the Sunday Themes document. New this year, we started putting small articles with a prayer in the announcement pages in the Sunday bulletin to reinforce the Seven Marks theme. **(Include a newsletter article and an announcement page article.)**

In May 2022, I was privileged to attend a Zoom presentation by Pastor Mark Markwell titled "*One Size Fits Nobody.*" Pastor Markwell, from Immanuel Lutheran in Escanaba, shared with us the three-tier letter approach he used for the first time for his annual stewardship letter for 2022. That concept intrigued me. He was gracious enough to email the letters he used, and I brought them to my committee. We decided to try that approach but made changes to suit our congregation.

This year's Stewardship Drive was called **Faithful Blessings**. Starting on May 1, 2022, each worship attendee was provided a "Steps in Faith Through.." refrigerator **magnet (hold it up)** along with a listing of ways to grow in prayer. On the first Sunday of each mark's emphasis, the Steps in Faith Through that mark were dispensed. The newsletter articles written dealt with whichever mark was being focused on and a short blurb with a prayer was run in the Sunday announcement page for every Sunday that mark was highlighted. For the "Give" portion of the program (9.11.22-10.23.22) we did all the above plus there were three Temple Talks provided on Time, Talent, and Treasures. We also updated the

stewardship letter written by the pastor from one letter to three different letters. These three letters were based on giving levels. **(Attach Letters)** Zion had 60 Faithful Givers (attend worship and donate financially on a regular basis), 49 Mid-Level Givers (those donating but not included in faithful) and finally 38 non-givers, those that seldom if ever worship and don't financially support the church but remain members. The financial pledge drive, **Faithful Blessings Sunday** was held Oct 23<sup>rd</sup>. This year, we mailed a stewardship letter from the pastor to every member in the congregation except for the youth.

The results of pledge drive provided by the Financial Secretary have raised more questions than answers. We know that we received 61 pledges, 14 of those increased, 3 decreased, 5 were new, and 35 were unchanged from the previous year. We also know that we received a pledge from only one of the 38 non-givers which included 5 out-of-town/state members. It is not surprising that this was the only response from the non-givers as the remainder are inactive members. We question, should we be focusing on other marks with these non-giving members such as WORSHIP, ENCOURAGE, INVITE during our Year-Round Stewardship? Can we "bring them back" if we only reach out to them for financial support? One thing we all agree on is that we should not lose track of the constant seven marks encouragement provided throughout the year as being more positive than only having a "giving" drive near year-end.

Overall, through the years, we have learned that the congregation doesn't want to be inundated in paper, meaning we cannot handle all seven marks in one Sunday. They do, however, appear to be accepting of covering two marks per Sunday. We also know that they love congregation faith stories as they apply to the Seven Marks. The challenge is to keep the stories new and interesting, to keep them upbeat, and use humor when possible. The tough part is to find people willing to share their faith stories. We also know that they love looking at pictures of faith in action. Using our worship projection screen could greatly enhance this endeavor. Fortune Lake does a fantastic job with this, and we need to replicate that on the congregational level. All we need is someone who can take and provide the pictures and/or video to have this become reality. It is my hope that as we move forward, we will once again provide Temple Talks on all seven of the Marks of Discipleship throughout the year. We continue to learn and try new things and with God leading us and his love supporting us in our ministry we will continue to be effective.

As I said at the very beginning, when congregations hear the word stewardship, most everyone thinks it's all about money. At Zion we are trying to change that perception. Changing mind-sets, especially those long established, is not easy, but we feel slowly but surely, we are accomplishing our goal. New members to our congregation have remarked that what drew them to Zion was our logo containing the Seven Marks of Discipleship – Pray, Worship, Study, Invite, Encourage, Give, and Serve. They were intrigued and wanted to check us out see what we were about. For that, we are blessed.

I think our biggest goal is to keep our stewardship program interesting and informative; to yearly remind the congregation and frankly ourselves, that to continue to build our faith is

vital; that through our faithful walk with God we derive peace, joy, and contentment, even in the worst of times. I pray you have found my presentation thought provoking.

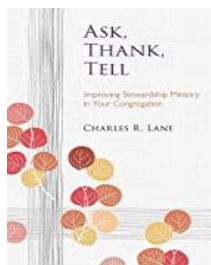
My closing thought. In the past, when the word Stewardship was used in the church setting, it meant one thing...money.

We have to change that mindset...Stewardship is really about growing in faith through worshipping, studying, praying, inviting, encouraging, serving, AND giving. Those seven marks of discipleship are so interwoven and connected that it's impossible to be focused on just one...on just giving money. When we grow in faith through prayer, worship, encouraging, studying, serving, and inviting...giving follows naturally. Stewardship isn't a Fall drive...it's an everyday kind of thing. It's simply growing in faith.

I've been on Zion's Stewardship and Generosity Committee since 2005 and have served continuously since then along with Pastor Keith Kolstad until his retirement in mid-2022. Over the last 17-years committee members have come and gone each bringing a new and varied perspective to this endeavor. The committee currently comprises Bonnie Schoen, John Radloff, Interim Pastor Doug Schoen, and me. If someone has questions, I'll do my best to answer them, otherwise presenting this class has been a challenge for me, but I have enjoyed getting to see and hear you. God bless you all.

If anyone is interested in obtaining a narrative from one or all of these classes simply email me, and I'll provide them.

Worthwhile, here are some books on Stewardship and Generosity, all of which I have read and can recommend. **Hold Then Up)**



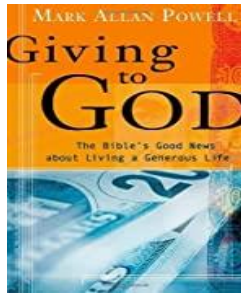
***Ask, Thank, Tell – Improving Stewardship Ministry in Your Congregation***  
by Charles R. Lane.

This book is an absolutely must read for any congregation undertaking a stewardship program. We found it very beneficial and continue to use it as a resource all these years later. Chick Lane is very insightful!



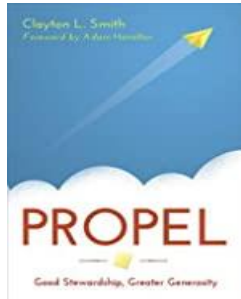
***Embracing Stewardship – How to put stewardship at the HEART of your congregation's LIFE*** by Charles R. Lane and Grace Buddy Pomroy

This book in conjunction with "Ask, Thank, Tell" was also truly enlightening, and having two different peoples perspectives was interesting.



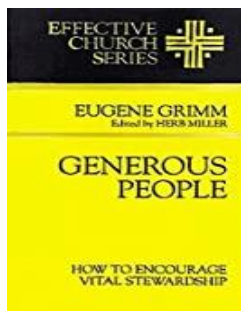
***Giving to God – The Bible's Good News about Living a Generous Life***  
by Mark Allan Powell

This book points out that giving is an act of worship, an expression of faith, a spiritual discipline. An easy read and certainly worth the time.



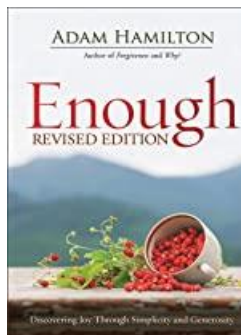
***Propel – Good Stewardship, Greater Generosity*** by Clayton L. Smith

This book covers a gamut of items regarding stewardship and generosity including an annual giving campaign, capital giving, memorial giving, and planned legacy giving. It too is a great read.



***Generous People – How to Encourage Vital Stewardship*** by Eugene Grimm

Of all the books I've read on stewardship, this was the one that I personally didn't find that beneficial. It includes a chapter on to pledge or not to pledge, variety, a checklist for vital stewardship, and documents to analyze the congregation's potential and a tally for appeal results.



***Enough – Discovering Joy Through Simplicity and Generosity*** by Adam Hamilton

This is a 109-page book and an easy read. It covers topic like faith in the midst of financial crisis, affluenza and credit-itis, as well as cultivating contentment and overcoming fear. It's a great little book.