

# EFFECTIVE CONGREGATIONAL STEWARDSHIP PRACTICES

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## Five Common Characteristics of Effective Stewardship Congregations

- View stewardship as rooted in their faith principles and beliefs. The focus is on a message that inspires generosity rather than the more secular notions of fund-raising.
- Aware of the theological, ethical and cultural issues that can make the value, possession, and uses of money more complicated and challenging for people.
- Demonstrate the role and importance of pastoral leadership in fostering genuine stewardship. This involves empowering, inspiring and equipping congregants with the knowledge and resources to be intentional about giving as a reflection of their individual ministries.
- Individuals express gratitude for all the benefits and meaning they experience through their faith community involvement and are bold in calling one another to give back out of gratitude.
- View stewardship as a commitment to service in the wider world.

## Factors that Predict Generosity

Studies of giving and serving among youth and adults consistently identify several themes. *How can your congregation create or encourage opportunities for young people to have more experiences that shape their generosity with time and money?*

List at least one opportunity idea for each of the following four points:

- Experiencing the generosity of others and receiving care from parents and other significant adults.
- Spending time in settings (home, church, school) where caring and generosity are invited and respected.
- Being guided by religious beliefs (or other “frameworks or consciousness”) that encourage care, compassion, and generosity.
- Interacting with mentors and role models who both practice and teach generosity.

## **Best Practices of Stewardship Congregations:**

- Make a commitment to stewardship in ways that will transform individual givers and enhance congregational life and health. Individuals experiencing personal transformation influence congregations as transformational forces in peoples' lives.
- Define a clear and engaging sense of mission and vision for the congregation, inspiring members and attracting newcomers. The mission and vision statements are reviewed every one to three years and commitment is renewed.
- Develop case statements and print materials that effectively convey the congregation's story, express its mission and vision, and explain how contributions will be appropriated and used.
- Conduct a year-round stewardship programs that involve person-to-person conversations about the appropriate levels of annual contributions.
- Offer personal financial stewardship education, with small group dialogues about money that open individuals to deeper and greater self-understanding.
- Provide multiple opportunities and venues for generosity to be expressed, through financial contributions, "stretch giving," planned giving, and volunteer service.
- Recognize, thank, and celebrate contributions in a wide variety of ways including personal contacts, dinners, letters, thank-you cards ... [Letters of appreciation are sent to those who contribute.]
- Tell the story of how contributions are transforming the world. Financial accountability with reporting at regular intervals to members about how the money is being used.
- Professional staff and lay leaders are well informed on matters of stewardship and actively engaged as stewardship leaders and educators. This may require additional professional and lay leadership education and study.
- Explicit messages about money, giving, and religious values are regularly communicated in the contexts of worship, membership development, and religious education for all ages.
- Demonstrate a commitment to fair compensation and appropriate staffing levels.

## **Promoting Effective Stewardship Practices**

Effective stewardship practices can be transformative for Unitarian Universalist congregations as well as individuals. Therefore, information about matters of stewardship, money, and giving must also be available for individual Unitarian

Universalists of all ages. Our challenge as Unitarian Universalists is to envision the beliefs, practices, and manifestations of stewardship that deeply engage and connect us at all levels: individual, congregation, district, and association.

Stewardship at its best transforms individuals, groups, and congregations by opening us to new levels of generosity and prosperity. This process, in turn, promotes spiritual growth and maturity on the part of people and organizations.

A variety of programs and resources are available to equip and empower congregation leaders in fund-raising, financial management, and matters of congregational stewardship, the most recently published books include:

***Beyond Fundraising: A Complete Guide to Congregational Stewardship***, by Wayne B. Clark, 2007, UUA.

This book outlines the “Forward Through the Ages” (FORTH) program of year-round congregational stewardship.

***The Abundance of Our Faith***, edited by Terry Sweetser and Susan Milnor

This book offers inspirational sermons and reflection questions for small group stewardship conversations and worship planning.

For more resources and information about congregational stewardship, visit the UUA website: [www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org) and Google search “Giving and Generosity” and “Congregational Stewardship Services.”