

StewardCAST

A monthly e-newsletter of LCMS Stewardship Ministry

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Your Stewardship Matters

THE AMOUNT
IS NOT WHAT
MAKES
THE GIFT
IMPORTANT.



When a congregation does an annual stewardship emphasis that uses commitment cards, there are usually a variety of responses. There are many who willingly and prayerfully look at how the Lord has blessed them and how He is calling them to respond in the coming year. There are others who grudgingly fill out the card and drop it in the box out of a sense of duty and find little joy in the process. And there are still others who feel,

because of their circumstances in life, that their faithful stewardship does not matter. These are the people who are the subject of this month's *StewardCAST* newsletter.

The faith of the widow's mite

Understand that this sentiment is not of God. There are no insignificant or unimportant stewards. The account in the Gospels of the widow's mite is the first and clearest example. Mark and Luke both

record this gift of small face value and great faith. While the larger sums given by the far more wealthy faithful look more impressive at first glance, Jesus says otherwise. The amount is not what makes the gift important. The faith worked by the Holy Spirit in the life of the child of God is! The work of the Holy Spirit is never insignificant or unimportant.

What the Spirit is working in the service and generosity of God's people is sanctified life. Stewardship is never about man's decision alone. It is the Holy Spirit Who leads them in the process, the same Spirit Who has called, gathered, enlightened, sanctified, and Who keeps the children of God in the faith. The Spirit leads the one who trusts in Jesus for life and salvation to give freely of himself because he knows that the Lord is the One who has provided and always will provide for him. While the average steward may not put all that he has to live on in the offering plate, whenever he is led to return some portion to the Lord, he is doing what he was created and redeemed for. Bearing God's image in creation and baptized into Christ, the steward is an instrument of the Spirit, used for the sake of the kingdom of God. There is nothing insignificant or unimportant about that!

When the faithful child of God responds to the call to make his annual commitment, the Holy Spirit is building the body of Christ in

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 LCMS Stewardship Ministry
 1333 S. Kirkwood Road
 St. Louis, MO 63122
 888-THE LCMS (843-5267)
infocenter@lcms.org
lcms.org/stewardship

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STAFF

- Rev. Heath Curtis
*Coordinator (contracted),
 LCMS Stewardship Ministry*
- Rev. Dr. Nathan Meador
*Assistant Coordinator (contracted),
 LCMS Stewardship Ministry, and
 Pastor, St. John Lutheran Church,
 Plymouth, Wis.*
- Robbie Clasen
*Administrative Assistant,
 LCMS Stewardship Ministry*

CONTRIBUTOR

- Lisa Moeller
Designer

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that place. The Spirit takes the gifts of many individuals who have been called to faith in Jesus Christ and assembles them into a force to be reckoned with! The seemingly insignificant and unimportant gifts of the widows living off of pensions, the single parents struggling to make ends meet, the unemployed dads looking for work and supporting their families, the recently confirmed youth working their first jobs and a glorious mosaic of so many others are used by the Spirit to accomplish the work of the Gospel in the local congregation and, through its partners in mission, across the Synod and the world.

The whole requires every part

There are no truly insignificant parts of the human body. We may not fully understand the need for tonsils, the appendix or even the little toe, but they are integral parts of the body. When they are not functioning fully it can be detrimental to the body. This is proven when infection hits these parts and debilitates the whole body. In the same way, the Lord uses every gift that He has entrusted to His stewards and knits them together into a beautiful tapestry of Gospel ministry. Many of those little, seemingly insignificant gifts are woven together to support Word and Sacrament ministry, the work of teaching the faith to a new generation through day schools and other faith-forming education, mercy work and mission. Individually, they might not have much impact. But brought together by the Spirit, these gifts do amazing things that lead people to Jesus.

Steward leaders are in place to guard against any indication that one gift is more important than another. They must guard against the favoritism of which the apostle James writes in the second chapter of his book in the Bible. At the same time there is a need to guard against the silent acquiescence that allows people to feign poverty of generosity. The antidote to this is to boldly and faithfully teach about stewardship year-round. The call to repentance as stewards is one that needs to be sounded frequently. Just as there are no insignificant or unimportant gifts, there is also no insignificant poor stewardship. Poor stewardship is so much more than just being miserly. It is idolatry! God’s Word and Sacraments are the guardrails for steward leaders. They call to repentance and freely offer even more gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation to the steward of the Gospel!

Stewardship matters. This is true for both individuals and congregations. God is at work in and through this faithful response to what God has done in the person and work of Jesus. It matters to the individual. It matters in the congregation. It matters for the one who hears of Jesus through the work of the congregation in that place and around the world in mission. Every gift used for the sake of the Gospel matters because the Gospel always matters!

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