

The Celebrate Generosity Stewardship Program

*By
Eugene Grimm*



“Grow a buck”

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Theme Scripture: 1 Cor. 16:1-4

Now concerning the contribution for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as you may prosper, so that contributions need not be made when I come. And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.

Celebrate Generosity is a four-week program designed to help members discover the joys of giving through growth in giving. The primary reason for an annual financial response program is spiritual growth. Congregations conduct stewardship programs for a variety of reasons. For many, the bottom line in a stewardship program is more money. For others, the primary reason is to share the vision for mission of the congregational leadership. While these are usually outcomes of conducting a program, they are secondary. The best reason for a financial stewardship program is spiritual growth. People find that as they discover the joy of giving, they also grow spiritually.

Goals:

Celebrate Generosity is designed to help people grow spiritually through:

- Growth in giving, including the prayerful deliberate growth toward or beyond a tithe.
- Growth in their understanding of stewardship.
- Growth in joyful celebration of the mission and ministry of their congregation.
- Discovery of a simple yet deliberate way to grow that nearly everyone can adopt.
- Measuring the increase accurately.

Our God is a God of abundance. There are sufficient resources to accomplish all the mission and ministry our Lord calls us to do. Recall the words of St. Paul, “... *God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work*” (2 Cor. 9:8).

Christian stewardship involves vision. Members find greater joy in giving through a church when they know where it’s going and how it serves others. Congregational prosperity is the manifestation of big, exciting, service-oriented goals. While it is not possible to share your entire vision in a short financial response program (full disclosure of mission and ministry belongs in your year-round stewardship education and mission interpretation) you can provide snippets about your vision. These can be addressed by the pastor in sermons or by those sharing stewardship talks.

Share your vision, never your fears. In Luke 12:32, we see both an admonition not to fear and a promise of the Kingdom. “*Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure, to give you the kingdom.*” Whining never inspires anyone to give joyfully. Yes, members may sometimes dig a little deeper for a short time, but without a vision, it will wane. Worse yet, it creates a sense of desperation or doom about the ministry of the congregation. Whining attempts to use guilt. Guilt doesn’t work; people don’t give from a sense of guilt. People do give from a sense of joy and excitement. Share the vision. Share the joy.

Christian discipleship involves growth—and discipleship includes stewardship. We encourage our members to grow in every area of their lives. We ask people to pray more, read scripture more, and grow in grace and knowledge of the truth. Growth in giving by celebrating and practicing generosity is one way this is enabled.

For many years, churches have encouraged members to grow in their giving by one percent of their income. Part of that challenge was also for the congregation to increase its mission support outside the congregation by one percent. Indeed, this worked very well for some members. Others, however, may have accepted the challenge for a year or so, but then discontinued their growth.

Growing by one percent of one’s income is still a good idea, but ***Celebrate Generosity*** offers an additional invitation. ***Celebrate Generosity*** invites our members to grow by one dollar each week. Thus, if your current offering is \$50.00, this challenge encourages you to give \$51 next week, \$52 the following week, and so on until you reach a tithe or whatever goal you feel God is calling you to give. A tithe is not a ceiling. One does not have to stop growing at ten percent of income.

Most of us don’t miss a buck! A buck is a Diet Coke, a small bottle of water, or a cup of coffee, We drop a buck with little consideration almost every day...and never miss it. The “Grow a Buck” Challenge is a challenge to ***Celebrate Generosity***. Growing a buck not only allows most members to reach a tithe much more quickly than by using the one percent of income per year, it has had a strong track record in helping congregations eradicate income deficits.

In order to maximize your results, it is important to have a special catered ***Celebrate Generosity*** Luncheon on ***Celebrate Generosity*** Sunday. It is a given that many congregations experience declines in attendance on a stewardship Sunday. One way to avoid this is to hold a special catered luncheon. When people commit to participate in a catered lunch, they most likely will be present unless special circumstances such as illness arise. (See Appendix C for further instructions on the ***Celebrate Generosity*** Luncheon.)

The ***Celebrate Generosity Luncheon*** is a good time to announce the results of your program. By following the simple guidelines in Appendix B, you will be able to announce your projected increase by the end of the luncheon.

Note to congregational leaders:

Please remember as your congregational members celebrate God's abundance through their giving, it is crucial that your congregation set an example. Leaders lead! Therefore we invite you to increase your congregation's support to the larger mission of the Body of Christ. We urge you to lead by setting a larger goal for Mission Support (Benevolence) beyond the congregation, both to your Church body, and for increased mission and service to your local community. ***An action possibility:*** Increase your congregation's Mission Support by whatever percentage your members increase their giving. Thus, if congregational giving grows by twenty percent, we invite you to increase your Mission Support by twenty percent. Be sure the whole congregation is aware of this.

Job Descriptions:

Pastor

Stewardship is directly related to pastoral leadership. When pastors take an active role in the stewardship ministry, better giving is almost always the result. The pastor should therefore be present and involved with all the meetings of the *Celebrate Generosity* Leadership Team. The pastor is to preach all four Sundays on the theme of the day. These should not be “*honorable mention*” sermons, but *full* stewardship sermons.

General Chair

The general chairperson is the guardian of the timeline. S/he will contact every person involved in the program to be certain that everything is happening on schedule.

The Prayer Chair

A stewardship program without prayer is like a Christian Church without Jesus Christ. The prayer chair performs the vital task of inviting the congregation to pray about its mission and ministry. About six weeks before *Celebrate Generosity* Sunday, the prayer chair sends a letter to the congregation informing them of the program and asking them to keep the stewardship ministry in their prayers. The letter asks for volunteers from the congregation to remember the *Celebrate Generosity* program in daily prayer. The prayer chair then begins actively recruiting members to pray by phoning members and asking them to pray regularly for the program. Ask regular prayer groups in your congregation to pray for the *Celebrate Generosity*. Include a note and insert in each weekly bulletin to assist people in signing up. Send notes to those who are home bound, inviting their participation. It may be a cliché, but it’s true—prayer changes things! The prayer chair should also arrange for opening and closing prayer at all Leadership Team meetings.

Person for Stewardship Talk #1, 2, 3, and 4

This Talk is shared during Week One—Giving is an Act of Worship. Do not stress the need of the church for money. Discuss instead that an important part of our faith is the need to give and the joy of giving. See further guidelines in the Timeline.

The Financial Secretary

The financial secretary (or the person who records the giving in the congregation) does the final tally on *Celebrate Generosity* Sunday. Since most congregations regard this information as confidential, anyone assisting should also be involved in the financial ministry of the congregation. Instructions for this tally are in Appendix B.

Sermon/Worship Themes

Week One—Giving is an Act of Worship.

Key verse: “*On the first day of the week, each of you is to set something aside and store it up, as you may prosper, so that offerings need not be made when I come*” (1 Cor. 16:2).

On the first day of the week...giving is an act of worship. On the first day of the week, celebrate the generosity of God by being generous. On the first day of the week, when you celebrate the Christian Sabbath, give

- For the sake of others:
- For the sake of Christ’s church:
 - The Body of Christ,
 - For ministry beyond the doors.
- For the your own sake:
 - The giver needs to give.
- In order to demonstrate our trust:
 - The first day of the week has often been called the Christian Sabbath.
 - Sabbath means that we trust God to provide.
 - Example: Collection of manna in the wilderness is an example of trust. They trusted God and collected only enough for the day. Those who over-gathered found theirs spoiled.

Other Lessons to consider using: (Remember: the lectionary was made for us, not us for the lectionary.) Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 2 Cor 8:7; Romans 12:2

Be sure to emphasize the role of prayer in decisions about giving.

We also refer the user to **Dr. Mark Allen Powell’s** book, ***Giving to God: The Bible’s Good News about a Generous Life*** (Eerdmans’s Publishing House, 2006). Part One discusses Belonging to God. The three topics are 1) An Act of Worship, 2) An Expression of Faith, and 3) A Spiritual Discipline. This book is a wonderful source to help you prepare for this first weekend.

Part Two: Our Duty and Delight. The four topics covered in Part Two include:

Faithful Living.

Faithful Giving

Support and Sacrifice

How Much?

Week Two—Giving is Systematic

Key verse: “*On the first day of the week, each of you is to set something aside and store it up, as you may prosper, so that offerings need not be made when I come*” (1 Cor. 16:2).

“

In St Paul’s day, most people were paid on a day-by-day basis. Since Sunday worship had already begun by the time of Paul’s writing, on the first day of the week is one way of saying, when the Body comes together, give.

- Give regularly...give systematically
 - Today, Paul might write, give as you receive your income.
- Giving regularly is good for us.
- Giving regularly is good for your church.

Note:

For Lutherans, we highly recommend “Simply Giving” an automatic withdrawal program produced by Thrivent Financial Services, If your congregation has not considered using it, we encourage you to check it out at www.thrivent.com/. For other denominations, check with your church body to see if an automatic withdrawal program is available.

Be sure to emphasize the role of prayer in decisions about giving.

Other Lessons to consider using:

1 John 4:1-19

Week Three—Giving is in Proportion to Income.

“On the first day of the week, each of you is to set something aside and store it up, as you may prosper, so that offerings need not be made when I come” (1 Cor. 16:2).

Give according to your blessings. Give as God has given to you. Give trusting God to provide. Paul doesn’t list what proportion should be given, but the proportion most commonly discussed throughout scripture is the tithe. A tithe is ten percent of one’s income.

Tithing is a blessing. It is rare to find the person who claims **not** to believe in tithing, who tithes. Scripture tells us nowhere that we are second-class Christians if we don’t tithe. Those who tithe, however, constantly witness to the blessing they receive. Some of us are so blessed that a tithe would be hard to consider sacrificial.

Giving in proportion to income also suggests that giving should be a priority in our life. The real joy of giving begins when we make giving a priority. If I really believe that the Church is the Body of Christ, then giving to my church will rank higher than giving to charitable organizations. The Church of Jesus Christ is not just a charity.

Be sure to emphasize the role of prayer in decisions about giving.

Other Lessons to consider using:

Exodus 36:1-7—The people of Israel gave so much for the Tabernacle, Moses had to tell them to stop giving

Deut. 14:22-29—Set apart your tithe; celebrate.

I Timothy 6:17-19—Vs. 17, God's abundance is "for your enjoyment."

Week Four—Plan Your Giving in Advance

"On the first day of the week, each of you is to set something aside and store it up, as you may prosper, so that contributions need not be made when I come" (1 Cor. 16:2).

Paul knew that if people waited to the last minute to set aside an offering for the saints of Judea, the gift would be much smaller than if they gathered the gift over a period of time. If they waited until he arrived, many would likely not be able to give at all. By giving weekly (systematically), in proportion to income, everyone would be able to give something and most would be able to give more.

It's true. No scripture says, "Thou shalt surely fill out a commitment card annually." However, just as the Corinthians were able to give more by giving in advance of Paul's coming, we're able to give more when we plan for it. While prayer is the primary way to plan our giving, a commitment card is another way. It helps us be intentional about our giving rather than merely giving whatever is left over. Giving becomes a conscious decision rather than an occasional reflex to the passing of an offering plate.

Studies have shown that members that fill out an estimate of giving card, give twice as much as those who don't. People who fill out an estimate of giving based on a percentage of income, give three times as much as those who don't. Intentional giving helps us grow in our giving. And the more we grow, the more we discover the joy.

Again, be sure to emphasize the role of prayer in decisions about giving.

Timeline

About seven weeks before *Celebrate Generosity Sunday*, organize your Leadership Team and determine who will fill each slot. Committee personnel are as follows (Write the name of each person on the line):

_____	Pastor
_____	General Chairperson
_____	Prayer Chair
_____	Person to arrange for the caterer and make contacts with the restaurant for the Sunday evening before Celebrate Generosity Sunday.
_____	Person to arrange the dinner the week before Celebrate Generosity Sunday
_____	Person to share Stewardship Talk #1
_____	Person to share Stewardship Talk #2
_____	Person to share Stewardship Talk #3
_____	Person to share Stewardship Talk #4
_____	Financial Secretary (the one who records weekly giving records) to prepare for final tally. See Appendix B for further instructions.

Seven weeks before *Celebrate Generosity Sunday*, the Prayer Chair sends a letter to the members announcing the ***Celebrate Generosity Stewardship Program*** and invites members to join her/him daily in asking that God lead in members' decisions during the coming few weeks. Include an "It's Coming" type letter that explains the direction of our program and the desire that people will not only celebrate generosity, but will experience a significant growth spiritually.

Seven weeks prior to the *Celebrate Generosity Sunday*, the Prayer Chair recruits a team to commit to daily prayer. These should be faithful members of the congregation that have set examples in both their leadership and giving.

Three Sundays before *Celebrate Generosity Sunday*

The theme of the worship service and the sermon is "Giving is an Act of Worship." Copy the bulletin insert in Appendix D for the Church bulletin.

The first stewardship talk is shared. Perhaps the best time to share the talk is in the early part of the service, immediately after the pastor shares his/her greeting and announcements. It introduces the program to the members and invites them to prayerfully consider God's call to giving. Do not stress the need of the church for money. Discuss instead that an important part of our faith is the call to give and the joy of giving. The outline of the talk should be:

- A brief introduction to the *Celebrate Generosity* program. Include the fact that there will be a special catered *Celebrate Generosity* Luncheon following services. We will received reservations beginning next Sunday.
- A personal witness about the importance of giving in his/her own life.
- Remind members of the letter from the prayer chair inviting them to pray for *Celebrate Generosity* and for God’s guidance in their own giving.
- Point out that giving is an act of worship and an important part of our whole Christian life.
- The talk may include something like the following:
 - Why do you suppose we put the offering where we do in our worship service?
 - Have you noticed? It's not a commercial; it's not an intermission. It's part of our worship.
 - We tend to have a reason behind almost everything we do in worship.
 - We start our service with confession and forgiveness and the hymn of praise.
 - We continue with the reading of the word, the preaching of the word and the confession of faith in the word (the Creed).
 - After all that comes the offering. The offering is an act of worship; it's a response to all that's gone before it. It's our chance to personally thank God for all our blessings. The offering is both a congregational act of worship and an individual act of worship. Of course, we participate all the way through the service so all of it is personal. Maybe the thing that makes the offering at bit more personal to me is that it's the chance to put my money where my mouth is.
 - 2 Cor. 8:24 reminds us that love and giving go together. Paul says it flatly. “Giving is proof of the genuineness of our love.” He’s kind of saying, “You say you love Jesus—prove it. Prove it by your giving.”
 - God has richly blessed us with "stuff". In our country, we have so much stuff we sometimes even build bigger houses so we can put our stuff in them. Now, I'm not trying to be critical; or suggest that everyone should become monks. We all have a lot of stuff. There's nothing wrong with having stuff, as long as we remember to celebrate it as the gift of God...and use it to his glory. The offering is a chance to *Celebrate Generosity*.
 - Most of us don’t miss a buck! A buck is a Diet Coke, a small bottle of water, or a cup of coffee. We drop a buck without consideration almost every day...and never miss it. The “Grow a Buck” Challenge is a challenge to *Celebrate Generosity*.
 - Share a personal witness about:
 - Your discovery of a new way to give and how fast it helps you reach a tithe,
 - Or, You give as a personal response to what God has already given you in Christ as well as in things.
 - We give because we love Jesus.

On Monday, a letter from the General Chairperson is mailed. This letter is “built-in redundancy” and shares much the same information as the stewardship talk the day before. Not all members, indeed, not even all active members, will hear the talk, so it’s important to share the information in more ways than one.

Two Sundays before *Celebrate Generosity* Sunday

The theme of the worship service and the sermon is “Giving is Systematic.” Include the bulletin insert, “Am I tithing yet?” (See Appendix D.)

The second stewardship talk is shared. Do not stress the need of the church for money. Discuss instead that an important part of our faith is the need to give and the joy of giving—see talk # One.

The outline of the talk includes:

- Our lesson text says, “On the first day of the week, each of you is to set something aside and store it up....” In Paul’s day, most people were day laborers, so it was natural that giving systematically meant giving weekly. We’re aware that in today’s world, people receive their income in many ways.
- This morning, I’d like to talk not just about systematic giving, but systematic growing. Have you every considered a buck? If you handed a beggar a dollar (a buck), would you consider it an act of generosity, or just a way to get on with what you were doing? The beggar might see it as generous, but would it be real generosity? How many dollars do you normally have in your purse or wallet? Are you prepared to meet up with a beggar?
- When I consider a buck (a dollar), I think of the number of things I buy each week for a dollar that I hardly ever consider. If I buy a cup of coffee, or a Diet Coke, I may drop a buck or more and think nothing of it. In the summer I don’t think twice about going to Starbucks for a Venti Caramel Frappuccino, and it’s in the range of five dollars.
- What we’re asking our members to do during the coming year is prayerfully consider growing by a buck a week...that’s one dollar every week. That means if you’re currently giving \$50.00, then next week you’d give \$51.00, the following week \$52.00, and so on until you reach a tithe, or for as long as you feel the Lord is calling you to grow.
- Scripture invites us to give systematically. One reality of our modern church is that many members often give only when they attend church rather than as they receive their income. It doesn’t concern us whether you write a check (or give through automatic withdrawal) every week, every two weeks, or once a month. What we’d like to ask you to do is break it down to weekly giving. If you give every two weeks, then we’re inviting you to grow by two dollars.
- Ask members to note the “Am I Tithing Yet?” bulletin insert.
- Share a personal witness.
- Ask ushers to pass out *Celebrate Generosity* Luncheon reservation slips. While they’re passing them out, say, “Our *Celebrate Generosity* stewardship speaker last week mentioned there would be a special catered luncheon on *Celebrate Generosity* Sunday. Because this luncheon will be catered, we need to inform the caterer (name the caterer even if another church) of a precise count. For this reason we’re asking that everyone fill out one of the slips that are being passed out. If families are not sitting together (for example, one of you is in the choir) then each of you should feel free to fill one out. We’ll remove duplications. In a moment, the ushers will pick up the cards. If your circumstances change this week, you may still

change your reservation next Sunday, but we're asking you to go ahead and fill one out this morning. Please note that **we're going to try to contact every member for whom we do not have a card, so please, help us cut down on our work.** Fill one out and pass it to the center isle."

On Monday, a letter is mailed from the congregational president (or board chair), inviting members to grow a buck. Again, this is "built-in redundancy" from the talk on Sunday. The writer might want to go into the origin of the word "buck", as it may not be understood by some younger members. In the early settlement of our country, a deer skin (buckskin) was worth about a dollar. People often did not convert their hides to cash until they got to a market that made it worthy to do so. When a merchant had something that cost a dollar, the patron might just hand over a buckskin...hence the term buck for a dollar.

It's also good at this point to share a prayer update. Send a E-mail to the congregation saying, "We have _____ members who have agreed to serve on our prayer committee so far. We hope that this week, you'll join them. Wouldn't it be great if half or more of our congregation participate in prayer daily for our *Celebrate Generosity* program and especially that our church's vision may attract many others to the exciting ministry we have here at _____.

One Sunday before Celebrate Generosity Sunday

The theme of the worship service and sermon is "Giving is Proportionate to Income." Include the bulletin insert from Appendix D, "Celebrate Generosity by Growing One Percent of Income."

A third stewardship talk is shared. Do not stress the need of the church for money. Discuss instead that an important part of our faith is the need to give and the joy of giving.

An outline for the talk includes:

- On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as you may prosper. "As you may prosper" is often said, "in proportion to what one has earned."
- What portion should we give? Well, the Bible has a great suggestion. Scripture calls us to give a tithe (ten percent) of our income. In fact, in most scripture passages one reads about first fruits giving, it also talks about the tithe.
- I believe in the ministry of this church, as do we all. I/we plan to take a step up in my/our giving this year. I'd like to invite you, during this coming week, to pray with me about this, and make your commitment to grow.
- However, you choose to grow, whether you grow a buck a week, or a percent of income, or by a flat dollar amount, seek the Lord's guidance. If it's God's will, you'll find a way.
- We've been talking about the "buck a week" growth for the past couple of weeks. Let me say a few words about growing one percent.
- Our invitation is to prayerfully consider growing by a buck a week, or one percent of your annual income per year.

- Take a look at the bulletin insert for this week, *Celebrate Generosity* by Growing a Percent of Income.
- Invite members to note the \$1000 a week income line. (This is a nice round number.) Ask them to note that if their income is \$1000 per week, and they're giving \$100 per week, they're giving ten percent (a tithe). Their giving \$50.00 per week, they're giving five percent. If they're giving \$10.00 per week, they're giving one percent. What we'd like to invite our members to do this week is prayerfully consider growing by "a buck a week" or by one percent of their annual income.
- Share a personal witness.
- Ask ushers to pass out *Celebrate Generosity* Luncheon reservation slips. While they're passing them out, say, "You've no doubt heard there will be a special catered luncheon on *Celebrate Generosity* Sunday. Because this luncheon *will be* catered, we need to inform the caterer (name the caterer even if another church) of a precise count. For this reason we're asking that everyone fill out one of the slips that are being passed out. If families are not sitting together (for example, one of you is in the choir) then each of you should feel free to fill one out. We'll remove duplications. In a moment, the ushers will pick up the cards. If your circumstances change this week, you may still change your reservation next Sunday, but we're asking you to go ahead and fill one out this morning. **Please note that we're going to try to contact every member for whom we do not have a card**, so please, help us cut down on our work. Fill one out and pass it to the center isle."

On Monday, the pastor sends another letter inviting the members as they have prospered by growing a buck or by a percentage of income. Leaders lead. The pastor is urged to set the example in giving, and to share his/her witness to that growth. A "Won't you join me in growing a buck?" will be much more effective than a "Won't you grow?" The former is a witness; the latter can sound a bit like begging.

Celebrate Generosity Sunday is just that. It's a *celebration* of God's generosity, and of the generosity of God's people. This should be a festive and inspirational service. Commitment cards are received at the close of the worship service. (See "Suggestions for Receiving Estimates of Giving—Appendix A.") A walk to the altar is recommended. However, if the church's altar requires steps that are difficult for some, a plate at the foot of the stairs is acceptable. If there is a luncheon, people are invited to go directly there after the walk to the altar. A final hymn may be placed just before the commitment time and benediction. The catered celebration luncheon avoids putting a burden on the church's cooks, and allows for reservations to be received the two weeks **before *Celebrate Generosity Sunday***. This almost guarantees a strong attendance on *Celebrate Generosity Sunday*, especially if church leaders follow-up with a drop-by visit to those who have not made reservations to ask if they can attend.

On Monday, a follow-up letter is mailed to all who did not make an estimate of giving (or did not indicate they declined to do so). The letter should include a personalized commitment card. Personalizing the card greatly increases the return rate.

On Monday, the following week, a personalized thank you letter is mailed. The two most important words in our stewardship vocabulary are “thank you.” With the thank you letter, share what members indicated they would give. This letter should come from the financial secretary and pastor. It is good to include a mailing label that can be placed inside the offering envelope box lid. It will read,

“My estimate of giving for the coming year includes:
_____ growing by a buck a week until I reach \$ _____
_____ growing by one percent of income by giving \$ _____ a week/month/year
_____ growing by giving \$ _____

If someone other than the financial secretary sends this letter, include a P.S. “The financial secretary has appended to my thank you letter a mailing label that contains the amount we understand that you are planning to give. Please stick this inside the lid of your offering box as a constant reminder. If we have made an error, please inform the financial secretary.

Appendix A

Suggestions for Receiving the Estimates of Giving

I'd like to invite the ushers to start passing out the commitment cards while I speak. After you receive yours, would you please hold it for a moment while I say a few words about them? First of all, if you're a visitor this morning, I'd like to invite you not to feel uncomfortable. This is something we're doing as a part of our *Celebrate Generosity Stewardship Program*. I would invite you to think about how you plan your giving, however. That's a question that all Christians should prayerfully consider at least once a year. (Invite them to stay for it.)

Also, if you're a member, I don't want you to be uncomfortable. We're well aware there are faithful members throughout the church who are uncomfortable with estimates. If you're one of these, please follow your conscience.

Personally, I find the estimate of giving very helpful. It helps remind me to be intentional about my giving. It reminds me that before filling it out, I should pray, asking God to guide my giving. I think each year I should ask God to guide my giving...and my growth in giving. Take a look at the commitment card if you will. "Because God is a God who gives abundantly, and because I want to be a faithful steward, I will take a step up in my giving." Notice if you will, that there are three ways to grow. The first is the dollar a week growth we've been talking about for the past few weeks. (Read)

I plan to grow toward or beyond a tithe by growing \$1.00 every week until I reach \$ _____ per week. My starting point will be \$ _____ for next week's offering. Each week, I will add \$1.00 to the previous week's giving

You'll see there are three options. Please mark one or more that applies

- _____ **for the next year.**
- _____ **until I reach \$ _____ per week.**
- _____ **until I reach a tithe of my income or beyond.**
- _____ **until I move beyond a tithe to _____ percent of my income.**

The second option is to grow by one percent of income:

I plan to grow toward or beyond a tithe by growing one percent of my income per year. My first step, beginning next Sunday, will be \$ _____ per week/month.

The third is to grow by whatever amount you have prayerfully decided.

I plan to grow toward or beyond a tithe by giving \$ _____ per week / month / year (circle one)

At the bottom, we simply ask you to print your name. Folks, our church is not a contract with God, or a contract with _____ Church. This is an estimate of giving based on what you know right now about your income. If your circumstances change, then we assume so will your giving.

In a moment, after a word of prayer and the benediction, I'm going to ask you to bring your cards forward and place them on the altar. In the Old Testament, the altar was a place of sacrifice. Since the New Testament, we no longer sacrifice on the altar because Christ was our sacrifice once and for all time. Even so, I'd like to invite you to place your card, which represents your sacrificial giving on the altar. (If the altar is up too many steps for older members, it may be necessary to revise a bit and place a small table at the bottom of the steps.)

Prayer:

- Ask God to bless each gift and each giver.
- Offer thanks for the joy of giving.
- If the luncheon is held at the church (highly recommended), you may include a table prayer so people may start through the line when they arrive in the fellowship area.

Benediction

You may come forward as your ready. (Invite everyone to the luncheon.) We invite you then to go straight to the fellowship area and start through the line. The tally will be done during the luncheon, and we'll make every attempt to announce the results before you all leave..

EXPLANATION OF WORKSHEET

How successful was your program? Did it work? Determining the success of a stewardship program goes a bit beyond whether it felt good (or succeeded in offending no one). The *Gospel* of stewardship never offends people of God. Whether to repeat a program a second and third year will in part be determined by the more empirical results. Certainly you want to know the subjective side—did our people grow spiritually as a result of using the program? How did we grow? Just as certainly, you want to know the more objective results—did this program result in increased giving by our members, and by how much?

It is also much easier to *Celebrate Generosity* if one can announce at the *Celebrate Generosity Luncheon* what financial results are anticipated.

1. Approximately two weeks before *Celebrate Generosity* Sunday, the Financial Secretary should have prepared the preliminary data necessary on the above sheet. Be sure to tally the total giving on the last sheet. If you prefer to use a computer spreadsheet, bring the total down on columns two and three.
2. First, fill in the family names in alphabetical order. Next, complete columns three and four using actual giving records (not pledges) for the past twelve months. *It is important that the information be used for the last twelve months, rather than simply going back to last year's giving records. This system will be more up to date. It is also important that the figures used reflect the actual giving to ongoing ministry concerns of the congregation, and that it EXCLUDES SPECIAL PASS-THROUGH receipts (extra budgetary giving that comes in and turns right around such as Disaster Relief or World Hunger.)*
3. On *Celebrate Generosity* Sunday, the Financial Secretary, and assistants (persons privy to giving records) should tally column 4 (members' estimates of giving per week next year. When people agree to grow by a buck a week, take the average for the time they agree to grow. That will be the average growth per week. For example, if members agree to grow for the next year (fifty-two weeks), you would calculate that they intend to grow by an average of \$26.50 per week. See Chart on page 26.
4. After recording all incoming estimates of giving, go back through the list to those lines with no figure in column four. Place in column 5 the figures in column 3 (**ONLY** for those who have a blank line in column 4.) It is easier if one person reads the commitment card, and enters the growth amount into a calculator. Another adds the number to the fourth column. After entering all new estimates of giving, the person who has entered the numbers on the tally sheet then reads the numbers in column three where no estimate of giving was made. Numbers can be physically added to column five after people have responded to the follow-up letter.
5. Total Columns 4 and 5 individually, and then add them together.
6. Subtract the total of column 3 from the combined columns 4 and 5.
7. Divide the difference by the total of column 3 for the percentage of increase anticipated in the coming year.
8. Fill in the final report on the next page and report to the Luncheon.

9. Be sure to calculate the **loose offering** and **other income** you received last year for inclusion in the final tally on lines three and four on the next page.
10. Fill out the ***Celebrate Generosity Results*** sheet on the following page and announce the results to those attending the ***Celebrate Generosity Luncheon***.

Celebrate Generosity Results

- _____ Number of giving units (couples or single persons) filling out estimates of giving for the next 12 months.
- _____ Number of giving units, filling out cards, who increased their commitment over the last twelve months.
- _____ Percentage of members giving who increased their commitment over last year's giving.
-
1. \$ _____ Total weekly commitment from those filling out cards today. (Column 4)
2. \$ _____ Based on giving records of the past 12 months, this amount can be anticipated from those not present or filling out commitment cards. (Column 5).
3. \$ _____ Loose offering received last year.
4. \$ _____ Amount received annually from other sources: non-member giving; investments, rentals, etc.
5. \$ _____ Grand Total weekly income anticipated for the next 12 months. (Add 1, 2, 3, and 4 above)
6. \$ _____ Total annual income next 12 months (5 above times 52 weeks).

Announcement

We're pleased to announce the results of our ***Celebrate Generosity Stewardship Program***. Today a total of _____ giving units filled in Estimate of Giving cards. Of these, _____ have increased their estimate of giving over their last year's giving. This means, of those who estimated their giving, a total of _____ percent have indicated that they will grow in the coming year.

Total income of the congregation during the past 12 months was (5) \$ _____. Next year, our anticipated income is expected to be \$ _____, an increase of \$ _____. This is an overall increase of _____ percent.

Appendix C

The Celebrate Generosity Luncheon

Many congregations have a history of poorer attendance on a stewardship commitment Sunday, unless special measures are taken. Attendance will be greatly enhanced on ***Celebrate Generosity*** Sunday if you hold a catered ***Celebrate Generosity Luncheon***. When people indicate that they will attend a catered meal, they usually do, unless special circumstances arise. When more people attend on ***Celebrate Generosity*** Sunday, your increase in giving will be higher. Follow-up can result in a few more percentage points, but a large attendance is a key to success. If your church has multiple services, have a light brunch after the earlier services, and a light lunch after the last service. If you have a Saturday night worship service, a light dinner or even a dessert is advised. Often, a neighboring congregation will be able to cater your luncheon less expensively than a catering service.

A “catered” meal is important. A potluck dinner may well result in better food and a better selection, but no commitment to attend is necessary. For the two weeks prior to ***Celebrate Generosity*** Sunday, after the stewardship talk invite members and friends (regular visitors) to fill out a reservation slip. Pass these slips out, and receive them after people have had an opportunity to fill them out. Do not ask members to put them in the offering plate. Inform people that you will be contacting all members who do not fill out a card the week before ***Celebrate Generosity*** Sunday. Remind them to be sure to put their name on the card even if they cannot attend. Ask them to make your work easier. If they don’t put their name on the slip, you won’t know they’ve turned in a response and will have to contact them.

On the Sunday night before ***Celebrate Generosity*** Sunday, gather the leaders of the congregation for a leadership dinner. This is best held at a local restaurant. The church may cover the cost of the meal, or, if leaders have agreed, each may pay for their own. Ask them. Most leaders are glad to pay for their own dinner. Invite Church Council (Governing Board) members, ***Celebrate Generosity*** Committee members, Witness/Evangelism Committee members and others to attend. Retired members are often delighted to make visits.

Prepare the names of those who have not filled out reservations. An easy way to do this is to run a set of mailing labels. After you receive the reservations, place the number of people attending from each family on their label. For those that are unable to attend, place a “no” on their label. Peel off all non-resident members and homebound members. Place those that are left on ***Celebrate Generosity*** Luncheon reservation slips. At the leadership dinner, pass the slips out to leaders asking them to make a personal drop-by visit, asking if they are able to attend. Place the number on the slip, and call it in to the church office or chairperson by Thursday evening.

Sample reservation slips:

<p><i>Celebrate Generosity Luncheon Reservation</i></p> <p>I/we plan to attend our <i>Celebrate Generosity</i> Luncheon on Sunday, (date)</p> <p>Number attending from our family _____</p> <p>Will attend the luncheon following: _____ Saturday night service _____ Sunday 8:00 a.m. service _____ Sunday 9:15 a.m. service _____ Sunday 11:00 a.m. service</p> <p>Name _____</p>
--

<p>Commitment to Prayer</p> <p>_____ Yes, because I believe that prayer is a key to anything our church does, I will join the prayer team. I will pray daily for our Celebrate Generosity Stewardship Program. I will ask God to grant that our congregation will:</p> <p>Grow spiritually, and,</p> <p>Grow in income so that _____ Church may accomplish all the mission our Lord is calling us to do.</p> <p>Name _____</p>

Appendix D

Celebrate Generosity

Estimate of Giving Card

Because God gives abundantly, and because I want to be a faithful steward, I/we will take a step up in my/our giving.

- I/we plan to grow toward or beyond a tithe by growing \$1.00 every week until I /we reach \$ _____ per week. The starting point will be \$ _____ for next week's offering. Each week, I will add \$1.00 to the previous week's giving
- _____ for the next year,
 _____ until I reach \$ _____ per week,
 _____ until I reach a tithe of my income
 _____ until I move beyond a tithe to _____ percent of my income.

I plan to grow toward or beyond a tithe by growing one percent of my income per year. Beginning next Sunday, I/we will give \$ _____ per week/month.

I plan to grow toward or beyond a tithe by giving \$ _____ per week / month / year (circle one)

Name (please print) _____

Why Estimate Giving

On the first *SUNDAY OF THE PROGRAM*, use the following bulletin insert on the following page.

WHY ESTIMATE GIVING?

Estimate of Giving, Plan for Giving, Faith Commitment, Promise, Covenant or whatever you call it—it is important in the life of our church today. The rapid change taking place in the world and the needs of the world make it very important that I develop a plan for proportionate giving to and through my church, write down my weekly intention, and put my name to it....

Because I desire to make plans at least **once each year to grow** in my giving and manage to the best of my ability the dollar resources with which God has blessed me.

Because God gives me the grace to give, and that **grace moves me to make a firm commitment** to my church -- contributing a portion of my time, talents and financial blessings for our Lord's mission and ministry.

Because in estimating my giving I make an effort to show just how much God is the God of my life, and in growing in my commitment each year I give external evidence of my internal priorities. **I put God first. I risk in faith. I trust in God to provide.**

Because **God has asked for my commitment** -- not just that I give -- but that I be committed to justice and mercy and faith in all the world. As a Christian, my estimate of giving is **foundational to all ministry** and helps my church plan for and provide such programs of ministry.

Because **God is important in my life** and my personal support of our Lord's ministry is a way to make a difference in the world.

Because **Christians lead by example.** Jesus set the example for me to follow in stewardship. If Christ was not afraid to be nailed to the cross for me, I certainly am not afraid to affix my name to an estimate of giving for his work. It is an outward expression of my love for him.

Because I know that the **discipline of making an estimate and sticking to it** is in direct response to a loving God who gave his life for me at Calvary

Because the **programs for ministry** that my congregation and my church at large provide for me and my family **are important** in our life, and **anything so important takes planning and commitment.**

Because I do not believe that our **church's leadership can make meaningful decisions concerning ministry without first knowing what can be expected** in support of those ministries.

Because my estimate is **free and open.** It is **neither legal nor legally binding.** My congregation believes that it expresses my hopes and cares for the programs of ministry that proclaim Christ's love for the world.

Because it enables me to be **truly intentional** about my own personal stewardship. I can **prayerfully consider** what God is calling me to give to the ministry of Christ's Church and make a conscientious decision about my response.

And, because growing in my giving enables me to experience even more spiritual growth and joy in giving.

(This document and variations has been used in the ELCA for years.
Source Unknown)

Am I Tithing Yet?

By Pr. Woody Chamberlain

A member asked, “I give \$50 a week. That’s \$15 a week more than last year, “Am I tithing yet?” And the answer had to be, “I don’t know.” But you can decide for yourself since “tithing” is based on the Biblical principle of giving 10% of our income.

The New Testament book of Hebrews reminds us of Abraham’s gifts, “...Abraham gave one-tenth of all he had...” (Hebrews 7:2, The Good News Bible.)

Compare the following chart with your weekly paycheck or your IRS return.

IF YOUR WEEKLY OFFERING IS:	YOUR INCOME WOULD BE:	
	WEEK	YEAR
\$2	\$20	\$1,040
5	50	2,600
10	100	5,200
15	150	7,800
30	300	15,600
40	400	20,800
50	500	26,600
65	650	33,800
75	750	39,000
85	850	44,200
90	900	46,800
100	1,000	52,000
150	1,500	\$78,000

If you are not tithing, we invite you to grow toward a tithe. If you are tithing, we invite you *Celebrate Generosity* by growing beyond a tithe. Choose which growth step works for you, growing by 1% of your income each year, or growing by \$1.00 each week.

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40	400	20,800
50	500	26,600
65	650	33,800
75	750	39,000
85	850	44,200
90	900	46,800
100	1,000	52,000
150	1,500	\$78,000

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Celebrate Generosity by Growing a Percent of Income

Weekly Income	Weekly Giving: Beyond a Tithe				Tithe	Upper Range Giving					Lower Range Giving			
	Annual Income	15%	12%	11%	10%	9%	8%	7%	6%	5%	4%	3%	2%	1%
\$3,000	\$156,000	\$450	\$360	\$330	\$300	\$270	\$240	\$210	\$180	\$150	\$120	\$90	\$60	\$30
\$2,900	\$150,800	\$435	\$348	\$319	\$290	\$261	\$232	\$203	\$174	\$145	\$116	\$87	\$58	\$29
\$2,800	\$145,600	\$420	\$336	\$308	\$280	\$252	\$224	\$196	\$168	\$140	\$112	\$84	\$56	\$28
\$2,700	\$140,400	\$405	\$324	\$297	\$270	\$243	\$216	\$189	\$162	\$135	\$108	\$81	\$54	\$27
\$2,600	\$135,200	\$390	\$312	\$286	\$260	\$234	\$208	\$182	\$156	\$130	\$104	\$78	\$52	\$26
\$2,500	\$130,000	\$375	\$300	\$275	\$250	\$225	\$200	\$175	\$150	\$125	\$100	\$75	\$50	\$25
\$2,300	\$119,600	\$345	\$276	\$253	\$230	\$207	\$184	\$161	\$138	\$115	\$92	\$69	\$46	\$23
\$2,200	\$114,400	\$330	\$264	\$242	\$220	\$198	\$176	\$154	\$132	\$110	\$88	\$66	\$44	\$22
\$2,100	\$109,200	\$315	\$252	\$231	\$210	\$189	\$168	\$147	\$126	\$105	\$84	\$63	\$42	\$21
\$2,000	\$104,000	\$300	\$240	\$220	\$200	\$180	\$160	\$140	\$120	\$100	\$80	\$60	\$40	\$20
\$1,900	\$98,800	\$285	\$228	\$209	\$190	\$171	\$152	\$133	\$114	\$95	\$76	\$57	\$38	\$19
\$1,800	\$93,600	\$270	\$216	\$198	\$180	\$162	\$144	\$126	\$108	\$90	\$72	\$54	\$36	\$18
\$1,700	\$88,400	\$255	\$204	\$187	\$170	\$153	\$136	\$119	\$102	\$85	\$68	\$51	\$34	\$17
\$1,600	\$83,200	\$240	\$192	\$176	\$160	\$144	\$128	\$112	\$96	\$80	\$64	\$48	\$32	\$16
\$1,500	\$78,000	\$225	\$180	\$165	\$150	\$135	\$120	\$105	\$90	\$75	\$60	\$45	\$30	\$15
\$1,400	\$72,800	\$210	\$168	\$154	\$140	\$126	\$112	\$98	\$84	\$70	\$56	\$42	\$28	\$14
\$1,300	\$67,600	\$195	\$156	\$143	\$130	\$117	\$104	\$91	\$78	\$65	\$52	\$39	\$26	\$13
\$1,200	\$62,400	\$180	\$144	\$132	\$120	\$108	\$96	\$84	\$72	\$60	\$48	\$36	\$24	\$12
\$1,100	\$57,200	\$165	\$132	\$121	\$110	\$99	\$88	\$77	\$66	\$55	\$44	\$33	\$22	\$11
\$1,000	\$52,000	\$150	\$120	\$110	\$100	\$90	\$80	\$70	\$60	\$50	\$40	\$30	\$20	\$10
\$900	\$46,800	\$135	\$108	\$99	\$90	\$81	\$72	\$63	\$54	\$45	\$36	\$27	\$18	\$9
\$800	\$41,600	\$120	\$96	\$88	\$80	\$72	\$64	\$56	\$48	\$40	\$32	\$24	\$16	\$8
\$700	\$36,400	\$105	\$84	\$77	\$70	\$63	\$56	\$49	\$42	\$35	\$28	\$21	\$14	\$7
\$600	\$31,200	\$90	\$72	\$66	\$60	\$54	\$48	\$42	\$36	\$30	\$24	\$18	\$12	\$6
\$500	\$26,000	\$75	\$60	\$55	\$50	\$45	\$40	\$35	\$30	\$25	\$20	\$15	\$10	\$5
\$400	\$20,800	\$60	\$48	\$44	\$40	\$36	\$32	\$28	\$24	\$20	\$16	\$12	\$8	\$4
\$300	\$15,600	\$45	\$36	\$33	\$30	\$27	\$24	\$21	\$18	\$15	\$12	\$9	\$6	\$3
\$200	\$10,400	\$30	\$24	\$22	\$20	\$18	\$16	\$14	\$12	\$10	\$8	\$6	\$4	\$2
\$100	\$5,200	\$15	\$12	\$11	\$10	\$9	\$8	\$7	\$6	\$5	\$4	\$3	\$2	\$1

Calculate Average Growth in Giving Per Week Based on One Dollar per Week Growth

Grow a Buck for Weeks	Accumulated Giving for Weeks	Average Growth in Giving Per Week; Add this number to their previous Giving		Grow a Buck for Weeks	Accumulated Giving for Weeks	Average Growth in Giving Per Week; Add this giving to their previous Giving
1	1	\$0.02		26	351	\$6.75
2	3	\$0.06		27	378	\$7.27
3	6	\$0.12		28	406	\$7.81
4	10	\$0.19		29	435	\$8.37
5	15	\$0.29		30	465	\$8.94
6	21	\$0.40		31	496	\$9.54
7	28	\$0.54		32	528	\$10.15
8	36	\$0.69		33	561	\$10.79
9	45	\$0.87		34	595	\$11.44
10	55	\$1.06		35	630	\$12.12
11	66	\$1.27		36	666	\$12.81
12	78	\$1.50		37	703	\$13.52
13	91	\$1.75		38	741	\$14.25
14	105	\$2.02		39	780	\$15.00
15	120	\$2.31		40	820	\$15.77
16	136	\$2.62		41	861	\$16.56
17	153	\$2.94		42	903	\$17.37
18	171	\$3.29		43	946	\$18.19
19	190	\$3.65		44	990	\$19.04
20	210	\$4.04		45	1035	\$19.90
21	231	\$4.44		46	1081	\$20.79
22	253	\$4.87		47	1128	\$21.69
23	276	\$5.31		48	1176	\$22.62
24	300	\$5.77		49	1225	\$23.56
25	325	\$6.25		50	1275	\$24.52
				51	1326	\$25.50
				52	1378	\$26.50