

Book of Order W-5.5004 - Christian Giving

Giving has always been a mark of Christian commitment and discipleship. The way in which a believer uses God's gifts of material goods, personal abilities, and time should reflect a faithful response to God's self-giving in Jesus Christ and Christ's call to minister to share with others in the world. Tithing is a primary expression of the Christian discipline of stewardship.

Book of Order W-2.5003

Offering of material goods in worship is a corporate act of self dedication in response to God. It expresses thanksgiving to God, the giver of life and all goods, the redeemer from sin and evil. It is an affirmation by Christ's disciples of

- (1) their commitment to be stewards in all creation
- (2) their responsibility to share the Word with and to care for all people
- (3) their desire to share God's gift with those to whom believers are bound in the church universal
- (4) Their common bond in the body of Christ.

All that we have comes from God and belongs to God. We respond to God's love by offering our whole lives to God. Our gifts of time, talent and treasure, as well as monetary gifts are offered to God not out of obligation but as our response and giving back to God what God has so generously shared and given us. Understanding, naming and appreciating the gifts and talents God has blessed us with helps us understand and find ways to share those gifts with God and others.

A biblical understanding of stewardship is at the forefront of our church life. We can find examples of stewardship in the Old Testament beginning with creation. God creates the earth and entrusts it and all that is in it into our care. Also, tithing began in Old Testament times when the Israelites were instructed to give God tithes of their land and crops. In the New Testament in Matthew's gospel Jesus tells us where your treasure is your heart will be also. Faith and money are two sides of the same coin. And where one is you will also find the other.

I believe stewardship involves the entire congregation. If children see their parents and other members giving then children will be more inclined to give both at a young age and as they grow into adulthood. Even the youngest child can learn about stewardship by taking care of their things both at home and at church. Donating toys to shelters. Care for the earth by picking up trash at church, home and in their neighborhood.

Stewardship can and in my opinion should be woven into the fabric of our

Christian Education programs and throughout all of church life.

The following are examples of stewardship initiatives we could offer in our congregation.

Noisy Offering

A noisy offering is an offering of loose “noisy” change usually thrown into a bucket or container that echoes the sound of the change being dropped into the bucket.

Children collect their change for a set period of time (1week or 1 month) and bring to worship with them on the designated Sunday. This offering is brought forward by the children at the appropriate time in worship and dumped into the noisy offering bucket. I would recommend we collect our noisy offering as the children are coming forward for the, “Time for Children”.

Involving the children in the decision making regarding the noisy offering and where the money goes can be especially meaningful and help encourage ownership and participation in the offering. Children can brainstorm suggestions of how and/or where the money should be donated. Heifer International, a local animal shelter, homeless shelter are just a few suggestions that could be shared as starting points. A vote could be taken to determine the organization that the majority of the children would be interested in collecting the offering for. This would also be a great opportunity to introduce the concept of tithing. Maybe some or 10% of the offering collected is given toward the church budget and the rest gets donated to their chosen organization.

In addition to email, Facebook posts, and listing on church calendar, text messages sent to parents on the Friday or Saturday prior to can be effective reminders about the Noisy Offering.

To kick off the Noisy Offering, we could offer a class that introduces this concept to the children and their parents. The children could decorate coin boxes to be used each week/month to collect their offering. I would also provide a giving calendar to help families think of different people/organizations to pray for while contributing to their coin boxes. And the best part of this is you have a captive audience with the children’s parents and can engage in conversations regarding stewardship.

Y Worship Class

This class is geared toward children and youth. Each participant is given an envelope containing a different amount of Monopoly money. They count their

money and give their total in secret to the “recorder” (one of the older youth). Teachers set up 4 baskets on the tables in different locations and explained each one. The first basket is designated to help clean up after a tornado blew through the city. The second one is to purchase new I Pads for Sunday School. The third basket is to help balance the church budget. The final basket is to give to Heifer International. The only instructions given are as follows. The income in each envelope is their monthly income. They need to decide where and how much to spend or not. Participants record for themselves the amount they put in each basket. After all have given or not given ask for a volunteer to record the amount of money in each basket. Reveal the results and invite each participant to explain what they donated to or didn't and why. Use this time as a teaching opportunity to explain the various line items that comprise the church budget and the importance of mission and giving. Also use this time to talk about the percentage of income they gave and how that relates to their monthly income. Something to keep in mind is that most children and youth do not have a lot of money so it is helpful to discuss alternatives to giving money when it comes to stewardship. Children and Youth can share their time and talents helping at church and with other community organizations and Presbyterian related mission opportunities.

Gratitude and Generosity Jeopardy

Children in elementary school and youth love to play games. Actually, I do too. This jeopardy game was created to be used with children and youth ages 2nd grade and up. Participants split into teams and try to score the most points. Involve the youth by inviting them to be team captains and ask one of them to keep score. As the questions are answered teachers explain and elaborate on the answers.

Definitions

100 - Something that is given to God as part of our worship service?

What is the Offering?

200 - To pay a tenth of, especially in a church.

What is Tithing?

300 - The word we use to describe being thankful or to appreciate.

What is Gratitude?

400 - Being kind, understanding, not selfish...willing to share time, talents and treasure with others.

What is Generosity?

500 - Protecting and being responsible for something, taking care of something.

What is Stewardship?

Tithing

100 - A Playstation 4 costs about \$400.00. How much would a tithe be?

What is \$40.00?

200 - Green Bay Packer tickets cost 80.00. How much would a tithe be?

What is \$8.00?

300 - An iPad costs \$725.00. How much would a tithe be?

What is \$72.50?

400 - A trip to Disneyworld costs \$3,500.00. How much would a tithe be?

What is \$350.00

500 - A new car costs \$26,000. How much would a tithe be?

What is \$2,600?

Stewardship True/False

100 - The Bible talks about tithing.

What is True?

200 - The word Stewardship is found in the Bible

What is True?

300 - You can only tithe money

What is false? You can tithe land too.

400 - We should buy the things we want and need first before tithing

What is False? We give to God what is God's first because everything we have came from God!

500 - We give to the church because the Pastors make us.

What is False? We give back to God what God has given to us.

Where Do Our Tithes Go?

100 - This organization build houses for people.

What is Habitat for Humanity?

200 - These people knit baby blankets, prayer shawls and stuffed animals for those that have new babies or are sick.

What is the FPC church Neenah, Knitting circle or the Blessed Be Knitters?

300 - This organization gives animals to people who need them.

What is Heifer?

400 - This place makes and serves meals to those that are hungry

What is Community Table?

500 - The location of the place gives out baby clothes, diapers and wipes to babies is located where.

What is the church basement (old Head Start Room)?