

50 WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR ANNUAL STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

Excerpted from an article from the Lewis Center for Church Leadership written in part by Dr. Lovett H. Weems

ENGAGE YOUR LEADERS AND MEMBERS

1. Choose a time of year when the congregation can focus its attention on stewardship and when there is a high probability of connecting with the most people. The annual financial campaign should be on the calendar a year in advance and planned with as much attention to detail as Easter Sunday and Christmas Eve.
2. Pick a new theme every year for your stewardship campaign. If you cannot take the time to be creative and innovative, why should your members take the time to reflect on their giving?
3. Be strategic in building a leadership team. Involve a large group of people to build their sense of ownership in the outcome. Include persons from different age groups and different ministry areas. A faithful giver (preferably someone who tithes) should head your annual stewardship campaign.
4. Be sure that the generous givers of the congregation are well represented on the stewardship team and other groups related to the church's funding just as you would be sure to include those most active in other ministry areas as you plan for those ministries.
5. Do not hesitate to ask church leaders to make their pledges first as a sign of their commitment and as an encouragement to the larger congregation.
6. Orchestrate a comprehensive communication strategy to focus attention on stewardship during your campaign. Use every available means – sermons, music, testimony, newsletter articles, study programs, bulletin boards, banners, etc.

PLAN CAREFULLY

7. Prepare the annual budget with great care, being sensitive to giving trends. Set ambitious but realistic goals. In communicating about the budget, remember that it's about ministry and mission, not dollars.
8. Define your purpose and set goals. Set priorities and sequence activities in appropriate ways. Be efficient and realistic in making assignments. Be logical about how you allocate your time and efforts in relations to expected outcomes.
9. Establish a realistic timeline. In larger churches, planning and implementing the annual commitment campaign can take six months or more. Use benchmark dates to keep on track.
10. Avoid the temptation to rush to the final steps without spending adequate time and attention on the foundational steps that normally determine success or failure.
11. Know that developing a congregation of faithful givers does not happen only through a stewardship drive. Develop a year-round approach to stewardship education.
12. Appreciate that fund raising is incremental. The most important determinant of how much you can raise this year is what you raised last year.

*Additional installations of "50 Ways" will be forthcoming in 2007 issues of THE LINK.
We wish you a Thanksgiving season filled with God's abundant love and grace.*
