



NEW CONSECRATION SUNDAY STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

By Herb Miller

*Growing in Faithful Stewardship
by Moving Steps toward Tithing and Beyond*

This annual financial campaign emphasizes faith development as God's stewards through proportional giving, growing one step closer to tithing and beyond. The program takes place over a period of at least six weeks from an initial meeting of the steering committee to the date of ***New Consecration Sunday***.

Program book (\$24 @ amazon.com – Cokesbury may match this price)

includes:

- A CD with reproducible items, a Power Point and audio introduction to the program for use with church stewardship leaders
- Guest Leader's Guide
- One copy of the Estimate of Giving card
- A *Team Member Manual* (\$8.75 each) is needed **for each member** of the Stewardship Team

The program focuses on the need of the giver to give to a generous and loving God, and it invites everyone to consider taking a step-up in their personal stewardship. The emphasis is *not* on paying of the bills of the church, but celebrating God's abundant love for us and all of God's creation.

The campaign uses a **Guest Leader** who conducts an initial planning meeting with the Stewardship Team, provides several sample resources for use in implementing the program, educates and inspires church leaders at a special Leadership Event, preaches and conducts the Commitment Service during *New Consecration Sunday* worship services, and presents the results at the Celebration Meal.

Members of the congregation are recruited to share their testimonies about the importance of giving through the church and how it impacts their life of faith. During the Commitment Service, friends and members are asked to consider **what God is calling them to give in thanksgiving for the blessings they have received.**

The congregation is responsible for:

- **5 mailings** – two letters to the total congregation, one letter to leaders in the church, one follow-up to those who couldn't attend & a thank-you/confirmation letter
- **3 laity announcements and testimonies** for the three weeks prior to *New Consecration Sunday*
- **Making phone calls** to invite those who haven't made a reservation for the Celebration Meal to attend Consecration Sunday and the Celebration Meal
- A **stewardship sermon** by the pastor prior to *New Consecration Sunday*
- **Preparing a step-chart** that outlines the number of giving units at each level of giving during the previous 12 months.
- Planning a meal or special refreshments for the **Leadership Event**, a time in which church leaders are thanked for their commitment to the church. In addition, they are asked to volunteer to make phone calls to those who haven't made a reservation for the Celebration Meal on *New Consecration Sunday*.
- **Providing a meal on *New Consecration Sunday (NCS)***
- **Follow-up**, thank you's and confirmation

Churches using NCS for the first time may apply for a mini-grant from the United Methodist Foundation to assist with program expenses. The Foundation will provide a match of \$125 toward the \$250 honorarium for the Guest Leader.

Other Costs:

- One copy of *Program with Guest Leader Guide & CD-ROM Book*, copies of *Team Member Manual* for each committee member and \$10.50/packet of 100 Estimate of Giving Cards from www.cokesbury.com
- Honorarium for Guest Leader (Recommended \$250) plus travel at IRS rate
- Mailing costs, Leadership Event and Catered Celebration Meal

New Consecration Sunday Program Results 2006-2010

The United Methodist Foundation has trained more than 60 clergy and lay leaders to provide stewardship consultations in local churches as Guest Leaders using Herb Miller's *New Consecration Sunday* program. Following the training the Foundation matches Guest Leaders at the request of local churches.

Almost 100 churches have used these trained stewardship leaders during the past three years, with almost all reporting both financial success and a positive response to the program's central message: "***What percentage of your income is God calling you to give to God's work through this congregation?***" The Foundation offers a mini-grant to assist with the program expenses for churches using *New Consecration Sunday* for the first time.

During 2008, trained Guest Leaders conducted the *New Consecration Sunday* program at more than 30 churches. Even in these trying economic times, churches reported positive data – all but one church projected additional revenue for 2009, with more than 1/3 of those completing the Estimate of Giving cards stepping-up giving from 2008 levels; new or first-time givers were reported; several churches had members who reported that their gift represents a tithe of their income.

Aldersgate United Methodist Church in Rockford used the *New Consecration Sunday* program for the first time in 2007. *Cynthia Zolk* served as their Guest Leader, and the church's stewardship chair recalled that she was organized and delegated assignments to the stewardship team. Cynthia also took time to help the group understand that stewardship is so much more than raising money: God created everything and entrusts it to our care. The church reported a 30% increase over the prior year's giving. "More important than the number for many of us was the return to a more spiritually meaningful stewardship campaign. It has been many years since we invoked the connection of our gifts to our God. I don't recall the 'tithe' being discussed in stewardship campaigns before. We are spiritually better off for embarking on this campaign and financially... we'll (also) be fine." *Andy Gloor, Stewardship Chair*

Jennifer Wilson, pastor of Grace United Methodist Church in LaSalle called the Foundation office the day after their Consecration Sunday. She was still excited about the four-week stewardship emphasis. After an initial meeting with the church stewardship team, Guest Leader *Mary Zajac* had a conversation with Jen, sharing her personal stewardship journey. "She brought a sense of reality as she shared about her and her husband's personal decision to become tithers. They made a plan together to move toward tithing **over a three year period**. Working toward becoming a tithing family is an act of grace." Jen took courage and Mary's counsel and preached on her understanding and experience as God's steward. "It opened the door," she reflected, as church friends and members shared their stories with one another. Commitment Sunday was a numeric success with the church full and more than 100 at the Celebration meal. And the numbers speak for themselves – increases in each of the three years the program was used, with a 19.7% in 2008.

It was challenging to conduct the New Consecration Sunday stewardship program with a three-point charge, and amidst the struggling economy. Beth Eden, Evans and Harlem UMCs in Rockford worked through the logistics, celebrated Consecration Sunday one two dates – to give the pastors and Guest Leaders the opportunity to attend the services and Celebration Meals. This first-time effort showed pledges at Beth Eden up and estimated 20%. Some leaders were skeptical. Yet the actual receipts for the first four months of 2010 proved that these faith-filled people have indeed stepped way up!