

Showers of Blessing Stewardship Thrust - Main Page

The blueprint for a good stewardship emphasis in any congregation is to be found in an ambitious, resourceful, cooperative, willingness on the part of members of its Stewardship Board. At Grace Lutheran Church 2000 the chemistry was there in abundance. The board chair, Dagny Johnson, was prepared to lead in a well organized manner and without flaw. This was the year for a different approach to stewardship.

The Board used the first several months evaluating our Stewardship programs for the previous two years. While underscoring the good points and discovering and critiquing the poor we were continually wrestling with the question: "What to do to motivate members about their response to God's blessings." If God showers his children with blessing after blessing you would think every member would "return" joyfully to God. Jesus had triggered this thought (Luke 17:18), "Was no one found to return and give praise ... The key to receiving a better return is to be found, of course, in a better proclamation of God's abundant blessings. With each Board member contributing ideas, Stewardship 2000 evolved.

It was not long before our pastors, sensing the enthusiasm with which the Stewardship Board went about their business, offered their ideas in the program. Pastor Marilee Bergerson introduced the concept of the Blessing Bowl. By jotting down blessing experiences and placing them in the Bowl members could be reminded every week of the extent to which God blesses his children. The number of blessings notes began to grow, [EXHIBIT A 1

Soon a large clear glass bowl, filled with hundreds of "blessings," was placed in the sanctuary and members were invited to seek a blessing as

they left the worship service. In the May issue of the parish paper, "Acts of Grace," [EXHIBIT B]. Our Stewardship Board advisor, Pastor Deanna Wildermuth, inserted an article, based on the familiar passage in 2 Cor. 9:8, "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." In her article Pastor Wildermuth described how members would be blessed as they responded to ways to share with each other, [EXHIBIT C].

As time went on the focus clearly remained on the concept of "blessing." The passage found in Ezekiel 34:26 provided just the proper spring board, "I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be **Showers of Blessing!**" This became the theme for Stewardship 2000 - Showers of Blessing. We set about keeping this theme on the minds and hearts of people as we moved toward October, Stewardship Month. A brief "Showers of Blessing" message from the Board of Stewardship, [EXHIBIT D], was included in each Sunday bulletin in the 4 Sundays prior beginning September 16 and 17 prior to Stewardship Sunday, October 22.

Our organist traced down the hymn we seemed to remember but could not find in any of our hymn books, James McGranahan's "There Shall Be Showers of Blessing." [EXHIBIT E] This hymn was printed; inserted in the Sunday bulletin for each of the three Sundays in October prior to Stewardship Sunday, October 22; and sung at each worship service. The hymn swelled the minds and hearts of all worshipers at all services throughout the entire month. The congregation sang "There Shall Be Showers of Blessing" with more intensity the last Sunday than the first. It became an easy matter for us to begin to count our blessings.

A litany for Stewardship month based on Psalm 103 and Ezekiel 34 [EXHIBIT F] was also inserted in the bulletin and read at all three Sunday services. We found repetition makes for enthusiasm and

enthusiasm brings commitment.

The three Sundays prior to Stewardship Sunday featured temple talks presented by board members emphasizing three very personable and understandable themes:

1. Events in the 90 year history of the congregation.
2. Blessings suggested by the variety of cards people carry in their bill folds.
3. The recognition of the talents various age groups bring to the congregation.

Thus the temple talks, brief articles in the bulletin, the hymn Showers of Blessing and a litany for Stewardship Month became the norm for the month of October. Familiarity with the theme and ease of participation helped people to become comfortable with the sometimes troublesome word, **Stewardship**.

On Stewardship Sunday everyone in church literally witnessed white fluffy clouds appearing in one section of the sanctuary with large rain drops about to fall on members below! Our interim pastor, Kent Johnson, had convinced the Board this could be done and "raindrops falling" certainly would complete the picture. Thanks to the creative minds and artistic skills of certain gifted members fluffy white clouds, 15 of them, were created out of quilt batting. 40 plus "raindrops" cut out of blue paper with suggested blessings like family, Bible Camp, kindness, Jesus, time, talent, laughter, shelter, children, youth, adults, hospitals, teachers, radio, TV, salvation, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and many more printed in large bold type were suspended from the clouds. [EXHIBIT G]

To float the clouds securely overhead the janitors strung two virtually invisible cables across the sanctuary 15 feet high. With clouds and raindrops fluttering softly before them, the congregation caught the spirit immediately as they sang the theme hymn.

Out of gratitude for the blessings God had showered upon them, members were asked to fill out their Faith Promise cards, [EXHIBIT H], bring them forward in a procession to the Blessing Bowl which was symbolically placed under the clouds. The Stewardship Sunday Bulletin Cover [EXHIBIT I] featured white clouds with forty plus "rain drops" falling. In letters mailed to the membership [EXHIBIT J] everyone had been invited to the brunch served throughout the morning and sponsored by the Stewardship Board. A spirit of thankfulness and praise was expressed by the impromptu singing on the part of a pastor-trio (below) combination as the final blueprint for a stewardship emphasis had pressed its image upon the Grace Lutheran Congregation.

