

The Giving Tree Stewardship Program

Overview

This four-week Stewardship program uses a tree to visualize how the body of Christ, the church works together to share the goods new of Jesus Christ. Using leaves to write words or sentences to share how each one of us experiences God's grace and love through each other and the church. Such as a seed that is planted in fertile soil will grow abundantly so will the church if each member shares the resources they have been given. Each week is focused on a specific question which the worship service will reflect. There is a suggested scripture reading for each week along with a message to share with the congregation.

A letter with an estimate of giving card is recommended to be sent out the Monday after the second Sunday.

Ezekiel 17:5-6

He also took some of the seed of the land and planted it in fertile soil He placed it beside abundant waters: he set it like a willow. Then it sprouted and became a low, spreading vine with its branches turned toward him, but its roots remained under it. So it became a vine and yielded shoots and sent out branches.

Week One

Theme – We all have a place

Scripture – 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Question – Where do you see God or the face of Christ in the ministry of this congregation?

Introduce the Stewardship Program and Tree

Trunk of the tree is The Church or the Body of Christ, God's people

Branches are what God is calling us to do

Outreach/Mission

Programs/Ministries

Social Events

Leaves are what we can each do to transform lives

What will be needed

Leaves*

Pencils

Volunteer to help folks hang the leaves on the tree

Someone to explain the program

*Use colored construction paper. Ask someone with a Cricket machine and access to a leaf template to cut out enough leaves for each person attending worship each week. Using a hole punch, punch a hole in the leaf and use string so the leaf can be hung on the tree. Below is a picture of a tree with the leaves at the end of the four weeks.



Message for bulletin

This year's Stewardship focus is entitled "The Giving Tree". For the next four weeks we will reflect how each of us at (insert your church name) are faithfully a part of and participate in the Giving Tree.

This week's focus is how each of us makes up the church, Apostle Paul's illustration, the Body of Christ. The focus for Paul and for us, as the church, is that Christ is center and foundational to the very life and purpose of the church. God is faithful in each of us to invite us to be a part of and participate in the Body of Christ: to be, together, the presence of Christ's compassion and love in the world.

Like the body, each person within the church has a variety of gifts and talents that God has blessed each of us with. No one person, including you, is less valuable in the church. No single person more valuable either but we, like the body, are equal and necessary in our diverse talents which, when brought together brings and enlivens Christ's church here in (insert your church or town)

As we continue and dedicate our talents and gifts, the strength and vitality of Christ's presence through the church will transform lives within the church and throughout the community with Christ's hope, love and acceptance.

Stewardship Presentation Week 1

“At the end it’s not about what you have or even what you’ve accomplished. It’s about who you’ve lifted up, who you’ve made better. It’s about what you’ve given back.” Denzel Washington

First, I would like to thank (insert person(s) name) for creating the tree you see next to me.

As we look at the tree imagine the trunk as the Body of Christ or the church – all of us forming the church, the branches representing what God is calling us to do as a community, and the leaves we will add represent what we can do individually to transform people’s lives. The leaves are the fruit of our labor through the many ways we can be involved with the church. We can give financially, we can give of our time, and we can pray. All these things are important. Together, with God, we can make a difference in this church, in our community and the world.

At this time of year, the church council and stewardship ministry team begin to design the budget. Looking back, they can estimate what expenses will be and what programs have made an impact (transformed people’s lives). It is important for the church council and stewardship committee to understand pledges so they can realistically form the budget. As we all personally know how budgets work in our home lives, life happens. There is always something that is going to happen to shake up the well planned out budget.

It would be a tremendous help to receive pledge cards from everyone who is able so a realistic budget can be developed. No one holds you to the pledge as I said, life happens, we understand.

Together our giving can transform people’s lives. Remember a \$5 per week individual increase does not sound like a lot, however, if every giving unit gave this amount, it would be approximately insert (\$/)/week or (insert\$)/year!

We ask that over the next four weeks to listen and open your hearts to the Stewardship moments. On Pledge Sunday we will have a brunch after worship hosted by the Stewardship committee. This brunch will symbolize our strength together and our time to celebrate all we have in our lives.

Over the next four weeks we will be adding leaves to the tree. During worship services you will be asked a question, which will also be in the bulletin. You will write or draw however you wish to respond on the leaves which will be handed out with the bulletins. During the service you will be asked to hang the leaf on the tree. You do not need to include your name.

Today's question is – Where do you see God or the face of Christ in the ministry of this congregation?

Here are the ways I see the face of Christ in the ministry of this congregation – handing our food when the foot pantry was closed – offering space for AA and Alnon to use – responding to UCC's mission- offering gifts at Christmas with the gift tags – writing to the two children the church sponsor's – these are just a few ways I see the face of Christ in this space.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this, please see me or a member of the Stewardship ministry team.

The Giving Tree Stewardship Program

Ezekiel 17:5-6

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Week Two

Theme – Love Transforms

Scripture – Luke 19:1-10

Question – What is one way (or more) you have helped to transform someone’s life?

During fellowship time or in the narthex for folks to look at before or after service, display the many ways your congregation has made an impact in the community transforming lives. This may include hosting AA meetings, social events, choirs, food pantry, UCC 5 for 5 offerings, OCWM etc.

What will be needed

Leaves

Pencils

Presentation listing all of the ways the congregation transforms people’s lives

Someone to write and present a short message

Volunteer to help folks hang the leaves on the tree

Message for bulletin

Today’s Stewardship theme, “Love Transforms”, reminds us of the many times a simple act of kindness, the going-out-of-the-way gesture of welcome, hospitality, and acceptance, turns the hurting, lonely heart, into a joyfully filled soul.

Such gestures don’t require much from us, just a bit of time and energy that, when we honestly reflect, is the very gift God has given us to share abundantly.

Christ-centered love is not something we share when someone asks for it, but is a movement into the lives of others. Jesus goes into the home of Zacchaeus, the space where he lives, to share that transformational love of acceptance. But this moving towards the one in need of Christ’s love, is common throughout the Gospels.

The Samaritan crosses the road to the one wounded, to share transformational love of healing.

Jesus is at the well with the woman, to share the transformational love of wholeness.

This week, we are asked to reflect on how each of us individually, and as a congregation, have been called into someone's life to offer the transformational love of Christ. How have we noticed the need for hope, compassion, healing, forgiveness and acceptance; and, like Jesus, (since being like Jesus is being Christ-like), entered the life of one in need?

The church's, the body of Christ, primary work is to transform lives in Christ's love. As we graciously offer not only our lives, but our gifts, to the church's ministry, the lives of many can, and will, be transformed in Christ's love.

Stewardship Presentation Week 2

First, I would like to read a few responses from last week's question - Where do you see the face of Christ in the ministry of this congregation?

I would like to thank –
Insert person name – tree
Insert person name – cutting out leaves
Insert person name – pledge cards
Ushers – handing out leaves

Celebrate Life. Care for others and share whatever you have with those less fortunate than you. Broaden your vision, for the whole world belongs to you. The source for the quote is anonymous.

We will bring this tree to life with the many gifts of each of you, represented by the leaves you will use shortly.

As we look at the tree imagine the trunk as the Body of Christ or the church – all of us forming the church, the branches representing what God is calling us to do as a community, and the leaves we will add represent what we can do individually to transform people's lives. The leaves are the fruit of our labor through the many ways we can be involved with the church. We can give financially, we can give of our time, and we can pray. All these things are important. Together, with God, we can transform lives in this church, in our community and the world.

As we celebrate this congregation, we remember the many ways this congregation has transformed the lives of people through-out the generations. Starting as a mission church itself and then gradually giving back to the community. Here are just a few ways this church has touched the lives of others:

Examples – Change to what your churches programs/missions

Feeding our Starving Children
CROP Walk
Providing school supplies
Hosting Meals on Wheels
Sponsored children
Giving to the 5 for 5 UCC programs
Cookie Walk/Christmas Brunch
Grilled Cheese
Basement Sale
Host to Cub Scouts

Host to AA and Alanon
Host to Blackhawks
Host to quilt group
Thanksgiving baskets
Giving tree
Mitten tree
Preschool Classes
Host to Dart Ball
CWA
Food Pantry at the Christian Ministry Center

I realize I have left off events this church has hosted and/or organized for the community.
(Insert your churches name) has transformed people's lives in their outreach and hospitality.

By living out our faith we leave behind a legacy. Even though we are small in numbers we can make an impact. It will take the congregation to combine their resources to make the largest impact. Remember a small weekly or monthly increase in your pledge adds up quickly. Together, as the body of Christ, we can do God's work.

Question – What is one way (or more) you have helped to transform someone's life?

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Week Three

Theme – Starting again for the first time

Scripture – Haggai 2:1-9

Question – How will you put your faith into action?

Discuss the budget, what is needed to transform lives

Simple examples of how the budget would be impacted if each unit giving unit gave X more a week

List the many ways folks can give of their time and talent

Sunday or adult studies

Help with social or fundraising events

Participate in outreach/mission work

Hospitality

Lay reader

Choir

Etc.

Have a presentation during fellowship time or in the narthex for folks to see the many ways they can volunteer

What will be needed

Leaves

Pencils

Presentation listing all of the ways the congregation may volunteer

Someone to write and present a short message

Volunteer to help folks hang the leaves on the tree

Message for bulletin

Starting Again for the First Time seems to be a bit of a head scratcher. The intent is to have us take a brief pause to assess not only where we have been, which is our legacy, but to look at the potential and opportunities that lie ahead.

Our legacy is the foundation of who the church is. Through the past and present ministries and programs, the church celebrates the grace of God and the ministry of Jesus Christ. There is much that has made the congregation a living presence of God's love in the world.

Yet, each day and moment, the church is called to be a part of the renewal of God's presence, to pursue the new vision in an ever-changing world. Renewal reflects our being the people of the Resurrection, that we are a people of legacy, as well as a future.

Our Stewardship is a response not only to our legacy, but to the vision and hope of the future of the church. It is the living belief that we have so much more to offer to God, and the world, in the name of Jesus Christ.

Stewardship Presentation

Week 3

Read two or three from last week – last week’s question was What is one way (or more) you have helped to transform someone’s life?

The past 2 weeks you have answered questions on how this church and you as an individual have been the fruit of the tree. When we combine the talents, God has given each of us we can be powerful. Powerful, not in the way of getting our way or forcing something onto others, but in a way to communicate to the wider community the love of Jesus Christ.

Through our resources, the budget, programs are developed to spread the good news of the Risen Christ and staff are available to lead the congregation into the programs to reach people. God is calling each and every one of us to do what we can so others can see the face of Christ.

There are many ways you can share your talents with this congregation and the community around us. Here are just a few examples:

Examples - Change to fit the volunteer opportunities at your church

Help with the nursery

Teach Sunday School or an Adult Study

Participate in fundraisers

Usher

Join a choir

Host Coffee Hour

Be a lay reader

Visit a shut-in

Organize an event

Pray

And of course, by giving financially

The trunk of the tree is a symbol of the Body of Christ or the Church, all of us forming the church, the branches represent what God is calling us to do as a community, and representing what God is calling us to as a community are the leaves we are adding each week. The leaves are the fruit of our labor – how will you use your talent to show others the peace and grace of God.

Please answer this question - How will you put your faith into action?

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Week Four

Theme – God creating a new us

Scripture – Isaiah 65:17-25

Question – How has the generosity of others transformed your life?

Have folks bring their pledge cards forward this Sunday

Bless the pledges

Have a celebration breakfast/fellowship time after service(s)

What will be needed

Leaves

Pencils

Pledge cards

Someone to write and present a short message

Volunteer to help folks hang the leaves on the tree

Volunteers to prepare and service a special breakfast or fellowship time

Message for bulletin

“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth...” (Genesis 1:1)

“I am about to do a new thing; not it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” (Isaiah 43:19)

The past three weeks we have been asked, challenged, even to reflect deeply on our faith journey as individuals and a faith community. We celebrated our ministries, outreach, the lives we have touched and who we are.

Yet God who created the heavens and the earth continues to create, through us. As Isaiah states, through us, in our commitment to offering our gifts and lives, we participate with God to create a “new thing”. Such a vision is one of hope and faith. We have hope of what we can do together to be a transformed and transforming

church in the name of Jesus Christ. We have faith in the Spirit of God to lead us and empower us to use our gifts and lives to “create” new ministries that are relevant in the lives of today’s society.

And ultimately, God has hope and faith in us to be the people that fulfill, each and every day, the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ; to proclaim God’s Reign through not just words but by reaching out to the needs of the world, our community, and to those who hunger for Christ’s love, acceptance, healing and hope.

The commitment of our lives and gifts as disciples, stewards of Christ can transform and create a “new thing” in people’s lives.

Stewardship Presentation Week 4

In a few moments you will be invited forward to place your pledge cards in the basket on the communion table. The Stewardship Ministry Team appreciates your response to this call.

I am thankful for being blessed with my wonderful family, my health, a job I find exciting and challenging, my friends and my home. I am fortunate to have the ability to make decisions about meals, what events I would like to attend and where to go on vacation.

Many people do not have the same luxuries as I or many of you have. This church, (Insert your churches name), has been very generous for others in need. The Stewardship Ministry Team hopes you will continue with your generosity.

We never know how our actions may transform someone's life.

Example of a story – change to your story

When my daughter, Amber, was about 3 years old Karen, the director of the children's choir, approached me to invite Amber to rehearsal. Karen did not know that I was struggling with being a very young mother and wife along with being in a church that I did not grow up in. See, I grew up in a Catholic church and this was a UCC church. Things were very different, and I did not feel like a fit in. With this simple invitation Karen changed my life because when I took Amber to rehearsals, I was able to talk with other mothers, making connections and relationships. Of course, this took off and soon I was helping with Sunday School. Karen helped me find my way in the church.

I am sure she does not know the impact she had on me. That day Karen put her faith into action, changing my faith journey. With our combined resources this church, the body of Christ, can put our faith into action transforming people here and around the world.

Please write your answer to today's question on the leave found in the bulletin's –

How has the generosity of others transformed your life?

The Stewardship Ministry Team would like to thank you for your prayerful consideration of your pledge. Please join us downstairs after worship for a pancake breakfast.