

PLANTING SEEDS OF RENEWAL

A Stewardship Program

GENERAL OVERVIEW

A four-week program identifying the disciple's generosity with planting and growing seeds. The act of stewardship is visualized as a garden where good soil, rain, sunshine, and fertilizer grow seeds of love, kindness, compassion, and goodness. The program also emphasizes renewal of the faithful who place their trust in God's natural order. The program relies on worship to develop the theme. This includes building a special display in the worship area, a weekly focus, a series of interviews with members/friends from the congregation, and a mass mailing to the congregation.

The program is designed to allow for adaptation by a congregation; therefore, suggestions and examples are included.

THEMATIC SCRIPTURE: based on II Corinthians 9:10 NLT

God provides seed, increases resources, and produces a great harvest of generosity.

WEEK BY WEEK OVERVIEW

Week One

Focus: Good Soil

Meditative Thoughts: God provides the foundation; faithful are *rooted* in God; careful *seeding* by Christ's followers impacts the quality and far-reaching effects of mission and service

Scriptures: Matthew 13:1-9, parable explained Matthew 13:18-23

Panelists: gardeners/farmers

Symbols: plant pots, potting soil

Week Two

Focus: Rain

Meditative Thoughts: God's miracle lies in the seed—takes some rain to spark growth; faithful respond to God's call to harvest; faithful are blessed by God so as to *shower* others with blessings

Scriptures: Psalm 65:9-13, Psalm 72:1-7, Ezekiel 24:25-31, Zechariah 10:1-2,12

Panelists: caregivers

Symbol: watering can

Week Three

Focus: Sunshine

Meditative Thoughts: God's miracle of growth depends on light; Jesus brought light to the world; Christ's followers spread his light; Christ's followers are gifted to spread light in different ways

Scriptures: Romans 12:6-10, I Corinthians 12:4-7,24B-28

Panelists: artists, skilled

Symbol: sun

Week Four Stewardship Recognition Sunday

Focus: Fertilizer

Meditative Thoughts: invest in God's Word; Christ's disciples add their commitment to serve; trust Christ's promise to guide, equip, strengthen

Scriptures: II Corinthians 8:7-17, II Corinthians 9:6-10

Panelists: investors, business men and women

Symbol: bag of fertilizer

PANEL INTERVIEWS

Each Sunday a designated leader interviews a panel of three to four members/friends from the congregation fitting a specific category of interest. The interview questions are given ahead of the Sunday to the panelists so they can prepare responses that are specific but brief. The purpose of the interviews is to relate personal testimony to growing in faith, to remaining faithful.

The panelists and the questions provided are suggestions. Panel selections depend on interests, skills, careers, experiences representative in the congregation which can speak to growing as faithful disciples.

Panel One: Gardeners/farmers

Questions:

~~Do you see yourself as a gardener? How long has it been a hobby, interest, livelihood?

~~What prompted you to garden? What type of gardening do you do?

~~How have you prepared as a gardener and/or what preparation is important to successful gardening?

~~What are the rewards of gardening? How does gardening impact your faith in God?

Panel Two: Caregivers

Questions:

~~Do you see yourself as a caregiver?

~~What experiences have you had as a caregiver? Professional? Volunteer?

~~What are the challenges facing the caregiver? What are the rewards?

~~How does your faith help in caregiving? How can caregiving grow faith?

Panel Three: Artists, skilled

Questions:

~~What is your area of expertise or talent?

~~How did you come to discover your talent...to pursue your skill?

~~What challenges have you faced in your area of art/skill? What rewards?

~~How does your faith inspire you? How does your talent/skill share your faith in God?

Panel Four: investors/business men women

Questions:

~~What core values have you formed as an investor/business person?

~~What would you teach younger investors/business people?

~~How does believing everything belongs to God influence your work in investing/business?

~~What role does your faith play in your work? How do you show your faith in the work you do?

Panelists' Insights: Listen for images and associations relating faithfulness to the theme of seeding and growing. Note specific references made by the panelists. These can be published or shared as a recap at the close of the program. These images adapted from a prayer by Abby Kyle serve as examples.

Holy Spirit, make my heart into your garden.

Dig deeply, dig boldly, and dig freely.

Plant your calling, your purpose, your plan.

Water my willingness, my usefulness, my gifts of time and talent.

Cultivate love, joy, peace, kindness.

Root out weeds of selfishness, temptation, fear, distractions.

Prune my words to speak the message you would have me say, my desires to want what you want, my priorities to model the example of Jesus.

Grow my life to bear the good fruit of generosity, compassion, patience, self-control,
Amen.

WORSHIP AREA DISPLAY

Designate a prominent space in the worship area as a “garden”. Each Sunday add to the garden to suggest growth and display the symbols.

Display Suggestions: Erect a trellis or structure upon which a *vine* grows from a large planter. Each Sunday during the program add visible symbols to the vine. Also invite worshippers to “plant” their seeds in and around the planter.

First Sunday: Affix a “vine” as if growing up the trellis/structure from the planter. Vine can be made from construction paper or using silk/plastic greenery, etc. Display symbol: potting soil either as dirt spread on a tarp or brown material or bags of soil, etc. Have “seeds” available for planting. (see Seeds of Faith under Stewardship Letter)

Second Sunday: Affix paper “rain drops” on trellis/structure. Display symbol: paper water pools on soil or watering cans, etc. Have “seeds” available for planting.

Third Sunday: Affix a large paper “sun” high on the trellis/structure. Add *buds* to the vine. Have “seeds” available for planting.

Fourth Sunday: During the offertory, invite congregation to affix *blooms* to the vine. (see Commitment Cards under Stewardship Letter) Have volunteers at the “garden” to assist placing the blooms and to collect blooms from those unable to come forward.

STEWARDSHIP LETTER

The week before the program opens it is advised to begin publicity through newsletter, Facebook, web site, etc. highlighting the theme and opportunities for participation.

The week before a mass mailing is also suggested explaining details of the program and covering both those receiving electronic communication and those who do not. Key points in the letter explain the “seed” enclosed as well as the Estimate of Giving Card and the “blossom”.

Letter Enclosures:

Seed of Faith—a facsimile of a seed on which worshippers can write their names and add a way to be faithful. Worshippers are invited to bring the seed to worship and “plant” the seed in the garden display as a gesture of faithfulness. Seeds of Faith are also available in church on Sundays. Seeds can be mailed to the church for “planting” or attached to an email.

Estimate of Giving Card—is a visible sign of support for the church and its ministries. An estimate is not a binding contract, but it is a pledge between giver and God to be faithful in supporting the work of the Lord. Estimates also are very helpful for the planning of a church budget for the next year. The cards are turned in on Stewardship Sunday as a way of dedicating support.

Commitment Card—a facsimile of a blossom with space to volunteer time and talents/skills/abilities to serve the church in a new year. These blossoms are added to the vine in the worship display on Stewardship Sunday and the offerings of service dedicated.

NOTE: Have extra copies of the Estimate of Giving Cards and the Commitment Card available on Stewardship Sunday. Envelopes provided for the Estimate of Giving Card keeps the pledge confidential. Encourage all ages to make an offering of time and talent.

SAMPLE STEWARDSHIP LETTER

Dear Faithful in Christ:

It's Stewardship Time of Year! This year's theme is based on II Corinthians 9:10.

***For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then the bread to eat.
In the same way, God will provide and increase your resources
and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. NLT***

In the next four Sundays, we ponder the question: "What is needed to grow God's seeds into renewal?" The topics will focus symbolically on: Good Soil, Rain, Sun, and Fertilizer. Please plan to participate either in-person worship or by live streaming.

Opening Sunday, [Date] worshippers are invited to bring the enclosed "seed" and plant in the Garden of Faith. Seeds can be planted any of the first three Sundays. On the fourth Sunday, [Date] we see how seeds can grow with faith in God and celebrate renewing our faith for the year ahead. Seeds can also be mailed to the church office or attached to an email for planting.

As a faith community we commit to nurture and grow disciples, develop programs for outreach, share the Good News. These goals cannot be accomplished without first the individual commitments of the faithful. Prayerfully consider increasing giving for [Year] and serving in additional or new ways. Your contribution and service will assure the funds and volunteers for the church continue another year.

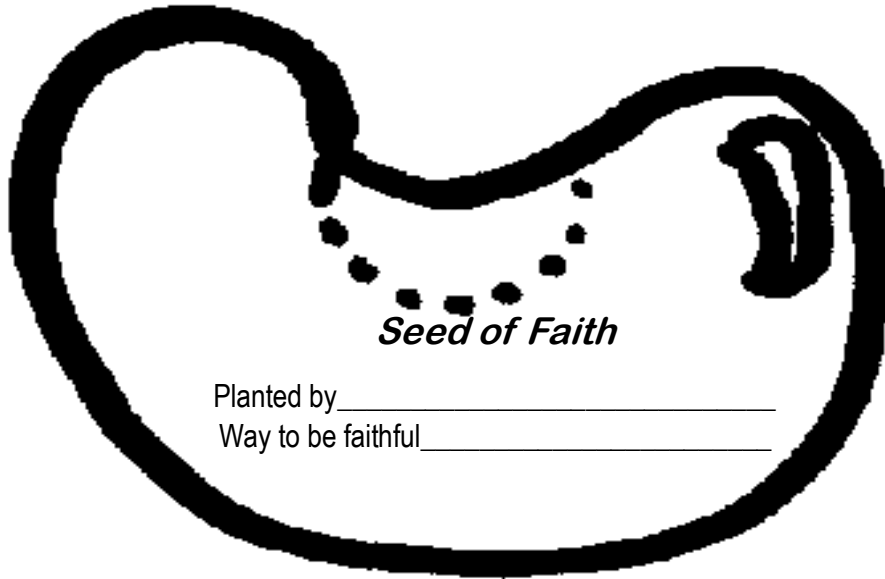
With this letter find an Estimate of Giving Card and Commitment Card [Year]. These are tangible ways to express your commitment to God's church for another year. Please pray about your giving and serving. Bring these cards completed to Stewardship Sunday, [Date] for dedication or mail to the church office. Envelopes will be available to confidentially make commitment.

You are a blessing!

Stewardship Ministry Team


STEWARDSHIP LETTER – SAMPLE ENCLOSURES

SEED OF FAITH – make multiple copies on brown or tan paper, cut out, enclose in letter



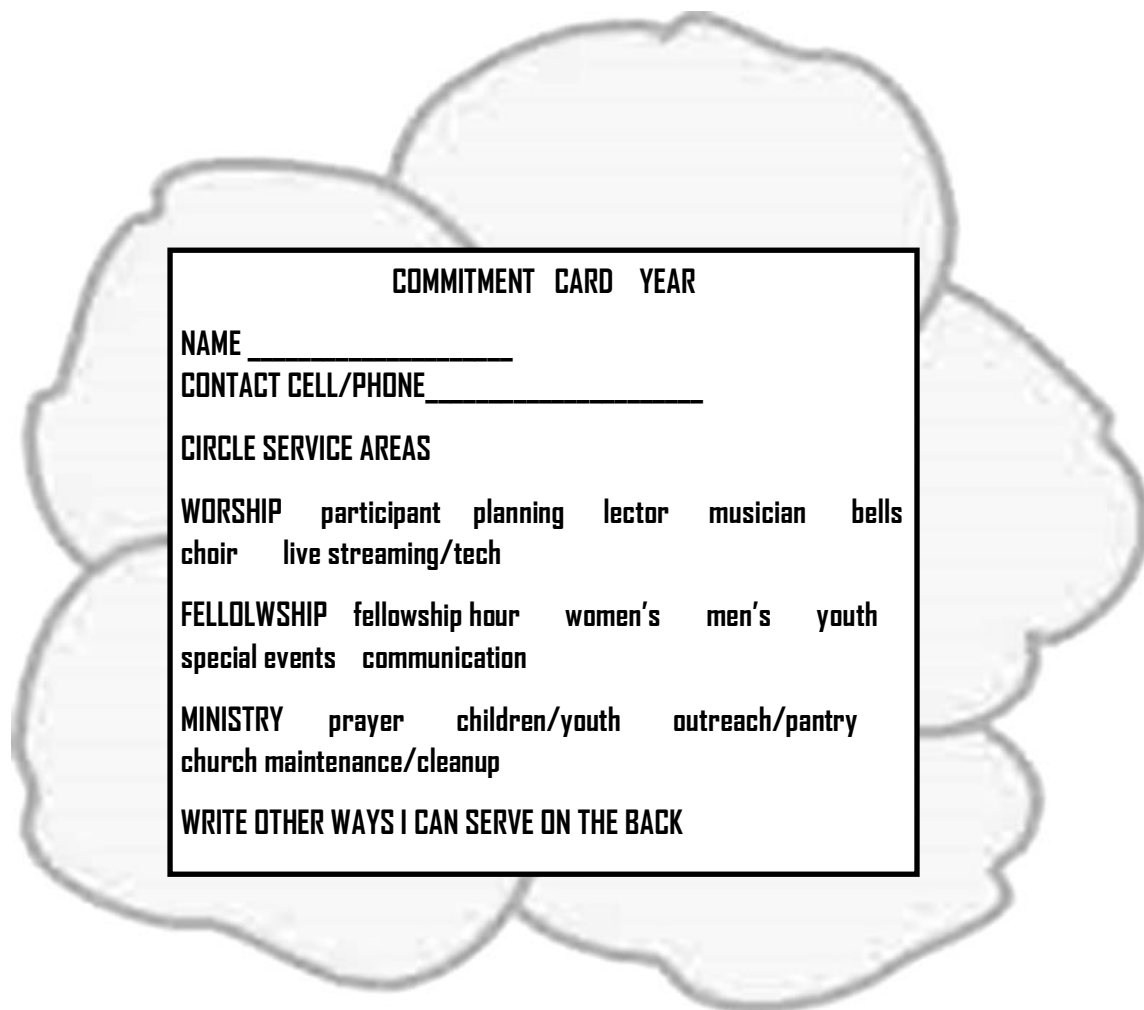
ESTIMATE OF GIVING CARD

Design a card requesting the information needed to help with annual budgeting. Include options for electronic giving if applicable. Make multiple copies, enclose in letter.

	ESTIMATE OF GIVING CARD	YEAR
	NAME(S) _____	
	AMOUNT OF SUPPORT _____	weekly monthly
	SIGNATURE(S) _____	

COMMITMENT CARD

Make multiple copies on colored paper, cut out, insert in letter.
Commitment Card can be designed as a card separate from the blossom.
Real or artificial flowers can be available for affixing to the worship area display vine symbolic of growing in faith through a new year.



COMMITMENT CARD YEAR					
NAME	_____				
CONTACT CELL/PHONE	_____				
CIRCLE SERVICE AREAS					
WORSHIP	participant	planning	lector	musician	bells
	choir	live streaming/tech			
FELLOLWSHIP	fellowship hour	women's	men's	youth	
	special events	communication			
MINISTRY	prayer	children/youth	outreach/pantry		
	church maintenance/cleanup				
WRITE OTHER WAYS I CAN SERVE ON THE BACK					