



## Stewardship Sunday, January 20, 2013

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These worship resources are designed to assist you in planning worship for Stewardship Sunday. This is a Sunday on which we are encouraged to focus particularly on how we faithfully manage the financial resources God has entrusted to us. The resources are prepared in anticipation of Stewardship Sunday on the third Sunday in January, but they can also be used at any time of the church year.

### Theme: Tithe if you love Jesus – anyone can honk

If you could summarize your understanding of financial stewardship in a catchy slogan for a bumper sticker what would it be? It obviously wouldn't say everything about the breadth and depth of how our relationship with God is impacted by our use of the material resources in our care.

Without getting too hung up on whether "tithe" in the sample slogan above is a legalistic percentage, this is an informal way of repeating one of the four core biblical principles of stewardship which guides the ministry of Mennonite Foundation of Canada. *God invites us to share: giving is an act of worship that proves that our words of faith are true.*

Making stewardship the focus of worship is an exercise in affirming our identity as followers of Jesus. It reminds us that we are more than what we earn or what we own – our wealth is not the source of our meaning. By inviting generosity in worship, we exercise our spiritual memory that all that we are and have comes from God.

Thanks to John H. Neufeld, for providing much of the inspiration for these resources from his sermon/article "Affluence, Attitudes, and Action" in *From Grateful to Generous: Stewardship Sermons* by John H. Neufeld ([www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1840](http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1840)).

### Texts

1 Chronicles 29:10b-13, Deuteronomy 8:11-20, 1 Timothy 6:17-19

### Song Suggestions

- HWB #50 – *Praise the Lord, sing hallelujah*
- HWB #76 – *Je louerai l' Eternal*  
(*Praise, I will praise you, Lord*)
- HWB #393 – *A charge to keep I have*
- HWB #474 – *I hunger and I thirst*

Bryan Moyer Suderman CD *My Money talks*, particularly track 1, *Generous God*, and track 10, *There's enough for all* (2007 SmallTall Music, [www.smalltallmusic.com](http://www.smalltallmusic.com))

- STJ #29 – *You are all we have*
- STJ #59 – *Confitemini Domino*  
(*Come and fill our hearts*)
- STJ #60 – *Lord of all good*
- STJ #86 – *Taste and see*

### SUGGESTED ORDER OF WORSHIP

#### WE GATHER

#### Call to Worship

Read 1 Chronicles 29:10b-13 from an alternative translation to your congregation's (NIV, *The Message*, CEV)

#### Confession/reconciling

Gracious God, we know that all things come from you, that in you we live and move and have our being, but we are so forgetful.

When things go well, and our needs are met, like the Israelites of old we so frequently resort to thinking, "My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth."

Forgive us for living with this lie, and help us this day to remember your generosity, and our dependence on you.

#### Words of Assurance

I am the Lord your God, compassionate and full of mercy. I know your weakness.

Receive and learn from my generosity by living into my plans for you.



## HEARING GOD'S WORD

### Children's time

The story, "Enough for All," complements today's theme well. [www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1841](http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1841)

### Sermon Starters

- John H. Neufeld calls the Deuteronomy and 1 Timothy passages bothersome, because they make us feel uneasy. He says, "These passages challenge us to rethink our priorities and our commitments. They challenge us to ask honestly whether we are on the road to being generous. They do not allow us to remain neutral about our affluence."

While they do not condemn wealth, Neufeld argues that these texts remind us that wealth carries with it inherent dangers for believers when affluence shapes our attitudes and becomes our source of meaning and worth. Paul suggests an antidote, he says, of taking away power from money by "hanging loose from it, doing good with it, by being generous." Does this resonate with your reading of these texts?

- Do an interview with someone in the congregation who may have been through a difficult time and is now in a more settled space. What does it mean for them to remember God in both of those contexts?
- At Trinity Wall Street Episcopal Church, congregational members were invited to write letters about why they choose to give (pledge) to the church with the understanding that they would be made public. [www.trinitywallstreet.org/congregation/stewardship/](http://www.trinitywallstreet.org/congregation/stewardship/) What generosity projects like this might your congregation want to undertake?
- Douglas Mennonite Church in Winnipeg has decided to tithe a portion of the cost of its current building renovations to ministry projects of the wider Mennonite church in Canada as a concrete demonstration of "first fruits" giving. Why is it important to serve the wider church community in this way?

## WE RESPOND

Choose a hymn of response from the song suggestions listed, invite one or more personal stories that reflect the sermon theme, and take the offering.

### Offering Prayer

Generous God, you have given us so much: salvation, life, creation, material comforts, family and faith relationships, curiosity and a chance to learn, natural and spiritual gifts. You have blessed us with these many gifts for the common good. Accept our gifts now and use them for that common good so the world will see and know that your kingdom comes, on earth as in heaven. Amen.

### Offering

Prepare and hand out pledge or commitment cards that congregational members can use for the offering, which include the thought from John H. Neufeld: "Incredible good will be done everywhere if we risk being generous with the bounty God has poured into our lives."

## BLESSING AND SENDING

God, the source of all generosity,  
continues to feed us and provide for our needs.  
God, who has called us together  
as his body on earth  
provides the courage to confront  
and the love we need for sharing God's generosity.  
God sends us now to serve  
with generous and joy-filled living. Amen.