



**PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR HEART IS:
NEW IDEAS IN STEWARDSHIP
STUDY GUIDE**

Central East Regional Group of the UUA

www.cerguua.org

Based on the book *Not Your Parents' Offering Plate* by J. Clif Christopher

Purpose

This study guide is intended for use with the book [*Not Your Parent's Offering Plate*](#) and the [video of the panel discussion](#) recorded during the CERG Stewardship Conference at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Akron on January 29, 2011. The guide focuses on four major areas related to stewardship: the role of lay and ministerial leadership, the giving process, the ask, and the money culture. Each topic is geared to a specific group within the congregation. Study groups may be formed by suggested category or a diverse group within the congregation may want to discuss each of the topics in turn.

Structure and Membership of Study Group

Ideally, the study group should consist of eight to twelve members. It is important to assign a facilitator, recorder and timekeeper. The role of the facilitator is to ask pertinent questions, ensure that all members of the group are participating equally, and offer clarification and summary statements to keep the group focused and to produce a clear outcome or plan for further action. The recorder should take note of important ideas and decisions and summarize the conversation subsequently in writing. The group may also want to note ideas and decisions on flip chart paper during the course of the discussion. The timekeeper ensures that the group pays attention to task and covers all areas of the topic in the agreed upon allotted time. Sessions should run from one to two hours depending on the size of the group and the relevance of the topic to the congregation.

Agenda and "Ground Rules"

Consistent with our Unitarian Universalist beliefs, it is suggested that each session begin with a chalice lighting and opening words. It is important to establish a set of understandings that will govern the way in which members of the group interact. For example, all opinions are valued; there are no "stupid" questions; members will listen intently without interruption. These covenants should be agreed to at the beginning of the session and those who violate them during the session should be gently reminded and brought back into covenant by the facilitator or any member of the group.

Group Topics and Suggested Questions

For each of the following groups, the main ideas from the Christopher book are highlighted and suggested questions for discussion are included.

Group One: The Role of Lay and Ministerial Leadership

Geared especially to ministers and other key congregational leaders.

- It is the people leading that church and those programs that make the difference. When they have confidence in those people to perform, gifts follow. When they do not, those gifts go to people in whom they have confidence.....in fast-growing denominational churches as well as nondenominational churches, the senior pastor ALWAYS has an excellent grasp of what is happening with his donor base.
- No one has more ability to raise funds on behalf of the church than the lead pastor. Yet, very few of our pastors accept the responsibility to raise funds for the organization they lead....More and more donors are expecting the pastors of churches to represent their organization to them just like the heads of other nonprofits represent their respective organizations. When pastors do not do it, the church loses out.
- The Minister needs to model openness regarding the discussion of money in the congregation and needs to be out front in the giving effort.

Questions for Discussion

- Who leads the congregation in communicating the importance of giving and how is that done?
- How active is the minister in engaging in fundraising?
- Who in your congregation is privy to information about giving? How is that information used with integrity?

Group Two: The Giving Process

Geared especially to those who design the overall stewardship drive process.

- We need to end this practice of believing that it is best if we treat members equally. Those who are giving exemplary leadership need to be getting thank-you communications. Those who have been giving for a while but have never moved up to the tithe need help to get there. Those who have never given just need to be affirmed if they will do something-anything. Let's take another lesson from the nonprofits and target-market in our approach.
- One size does not fit all: Congregations need to send different messages about giving to different segments of the membership.
- Nothing helps your members (donors) better understand what their gifts are going toward than testimonials from people who have been touched by your ministry.

Questions for Discussion

- How do you correspond with members of the congregation?
- How do you incorporate testimonials or otherwise tell the stories of the congregation?
- How do you honor different levels of giving?

Group Three: The Ask

Geared especially to those involved in asking others directly for money.

- We must learn to answer the question our donors are asking us, ‘Why should I give to YOU?’ .Number one is a belief in the mission. Number two is a regard for staff leadership, and number three is fiscal responsibility.
- The rule in fund raising is that people give to people and not to programs...only then do lives get changed.
- When I look at churches that have outstanding financial stewardship, I almost always see a culture that espouses high expectations for its membership in all areas of discipleship and stewardship.

Questions for Discussion

- What methods does your congregation use in asking for money?
- How comfortable is the congregation in talking about money?
- How do you tailor “the ask” to different segments of the congregation?

Group Four: The Money Culture

Geared especially to finance committee members and other “money people”.

- The annual giving campaign should be a year round effort and discussions about money in the congregation should be on-going.
- We need to cease sending out line-item budgets and prepare...missional budgets.
- Why would individuals who seemingly love their church more than any other charity fail to remember the church in their will or with a planned gift? The answer is simple. We do not ASK for it.

Questions for Discussion

- How is your budget communicated to the congregation as part of the stewardship drive?
- How do you demonstrate to the congregation your year round commitment to good stewardship?
- Does the congregation have an endowment policy and gift acceptance policy in place?