



# Make It Simple

*A Resource for Stewardship Education and Annual Response*

## **Implementing a Response Method**

The MAKE IT SIMPLE materials provide three response methods for implementation in your congregation: Commitment Sunday, Congregational Meal, and Small Group Gatherings. These response methods are supported by worship themes, Bible studies, videos, congregational events, and additional resources.

### **Key Steps**

- Recruit Response Method Team members.
- Communicate theme and process to congregational leaders.
- Focus on Mission and Discipleship not Fund-raising.
- Select Response Method.
- Communicate often and in a variety of formats with congregation.
- Follow timeline.
- Celebrate results.
- Thank everyone—leaders, team members, congregational participants.

### **Overview**

1. The MAKE IT SIMPLE Stewardship Response Method Team varies in size from congregation to congregation. The team may be comprised of a few people (with multiple responsibilities) or several people (each having a single area of focus).
2. The Stewardship Response Method Team selects a response method for the congregation. The options are: Commitment Sunday, Congregational Meal/Event, or Small Group Gatherings.
3. Each response method includes four themed sessions, with support activities and resources for each session.
4. Every member/household of the congregation is encouraged to participate in MAKE IT SIMPLE and is invited to respond using a MAKE IT SIMPLE Commitment Card. (See RESPONSE METHODS for a downloadable Commitment Card.)
5. Every member/household is encouraged to use a MAKE IT SIMPLE Covenant Card. (See RESPONSE METHODS for a downloadable Covenant Card.)

## **Responsibilities of Stewardship Response Method Team**

### **Team Leader (Chair)**

This individual oversees the implementation of the MAKE IT SIMPLE response method in the congregation, and guides and supports other team members in their work.

### **Communications Coordinator**

This team member oversees communication and publicity for the MAKE IT SIMPLE response program in the congregation. (See Publicity section later in this document.)

This person should:

- Prepare and send letters to be sent at appropriate points along the program timeline. (Initial announcement, invitation to participate, thank you, and follow-up.)
- Coordinate the use of additional communication opportunities to encourage congregational members to participate in the MAKE IT SIMPLE stewardship response program.
- Provide information for congregational leaders concerning their roles and participation in the program (Pastor, congregation council, stewardship committee, worship leaders, Sunday school leaders, etc.)

### **Support Activities Coordinator**

This person promotes and coordinates the use of MAKE IT SIMPLE support activities such as congregational learning events, videos, children's resources, and sermons. This leader:

- With other team members, selects the support activities that you will be using during this stewardship emphasis.
- Promotes and coordinates support activities.
- Recruits and equips others to lead the support activities you have chosen.

### **Worship Coordinator**

This individual provides congregational worship leaders with themed Sunday worship resources, including sermon preparation materials for the person preaching each particular week. This team member also coordinates themed worship experience, including hymns, lessons, prayers, and videos.

## Using Commitment and Covenant Cards

### Commitment Cards

Commitment cards—sometimes referred to as pledge or estimate of giving cards—are a tool by which congregation members can indicate to the church leaders what their intended giving to the ministry of the congregation will be for the coming year. These cards also provide the opportunity for households to consider prayerfully their financial stewardship and to engage in conversation about the use of the blessings they have received from God.

Some of your congregation members may respond to the use of commitment cards by saying “I don’t pledge; my stewardship is between me and God.” While it is true that our stewardship is known to God, we all pledge every day in this culture—we use credit cards; write checks; sign contracts with cable television companies, Internet providers and cellular phone companies; and have mortgages and car payments. All of these financial transactions are forms of pledging. By not using commitment cards, some people may actually be saying that they will pledge everywhere in their lives except in their stewardship practices.

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**SIMPLY PUT:** While privacy may be a sensitive issue in the rest of society, openness and transparency are more characteristic of a community of Christ’s followers.

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Gently encourage people to consider all of the other ways that they pledge and invite them to use this opportunity to participate in MAKE IT SIMPLE and to engage in prayerful discernment of their stewardship practices.

It is important for you to consider providing envelopes in which congregation members place their commitment card before bringing the cards forward and placing them in a basket or on the altar. Envelopes provide a sense of privacy that may ease any anxiety people may experience concerning their commitment being known by others.

You may choose not to open the envelopes and tabulate the totals. If you choose this option, ask people to address their envelope to themselves, and inform them that in six months you will mail it back to them as a reminder of their intended commitment.

On the other hand, you may choose to open and tabulate the total of commitments to the congregation. It is important that this be framed in relation to totals from previous years—celebrating any increase of numbers of households participating, percentage increases, or total dollar amount.

One important note: Do not make connections between the commitments and the church's budget needs! The focus of any stewardship appeal is about our stewardship of the blessings that God has poured out upon us. It is not about meeting the budget—that falls in the realm of fund-raising language and can be detrimental to the stewardship culture you are building in the congregation.

## **Covenant Cards**

In MAKE IT SIMPLE, members of your congregation have the opportunity to express their commitments in another way. Covenant Cards are included as a part of all three response methods. The cards help members formalize and put into a written form their intentions to begin or continue simplifying their lives.

Like the Commitment Cards, the Covenant Cards are based on the idea that first steps, however small, turn into longer, lasting journeys. Just as Commitment Cards help members assess their financial response to God's goodness in their lives, so the Covenant Cards help members of your congregation to assess the present state of their lifestyles and to promise significant changes they will undertake.

## **Communicating Effectively**

In today's world you cannot assume that others hear the message you are sending. Congregation members are inundated with thousands of messages each and every day. (To see how widespread this phenomenon is, enter INFORMATION OVERLOAD into your search engine!)

For that reason it may be difficult to attract and hold people's attention long enough for your message to be heard. So it will take creativity, tenacity, and the use of a variety of methods to help people hear the details of MAKE IT SIMPLE so that they can participate.

## **Important principles**

Three things you can trust to be true about all communication:

- Communication is most effective when it happens face-to-face.
- Communication is never a one-way street.
- People pay attention to what they perceive as valuable.

## **TRY THIS**

**HINT 1:** In all of the communications you arrange and send out, always include a place where you invite recipients to return their thoughts to you, perhaps a return e-address.

**HINT 2:** Add a feedback responses card to any of your written communications.

**HINT 3:** Use what you have learned from feedback to further shape or improve MAKE IT SIMPLE.]

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## **Letters**

Personalized letters to every household provide the opportunity for every member to be informed and invited. MAKE IT SIMPLE resources include Sample Letters for all three response methods. The letters:

- Announce the MAKE IT SIMPLE emphasis.
- Invite members to participate.
- Thank people for their participation.
- Follow-up with members who could not participate in the congregational activities.

Standardized letters can be personalized with a hand-written message added to each one. The messages can be written and signed by your pastor or other leaders, or perhaps a variety of people within the congregation.

## **Newsletters and worship bulletin announcements**

Weekly worship opportunities and regularly mailed newsletters are also good places for communication about MAKE IT SIMPLE emphases. Use the information found in the letters and temple talks for the response method you choose to construct newsletter articles and worship bulletin announcements. Newsletter and direct mail guarantee that every household receives the basic information and invitation to participate in MAKE IT SIMPLE.

Short written announcements in worship bulletins give folks another reminder (that they can take home and reread later) of the plans and details of MAKE IT SIMPLE.

## **Temple talks**

Temple talks in worship provide the opportunity to speak directly to the members of the congregation in a focused and personal manner. Several temple talk *outlines* are provided for each of the response methods. They can help you:

- Announce the MAKE IT SIMPLE emphases.
- Describe planned activities and invite worshipers to participate
- Instruct worshipers regarding stewardship helps.
- Provide directions about the completion of commitment and covenant cards.

Adapt the temple talk outlines to your own context and take advantage of the unique testimonies and hopes of those who make these presentations. Include your hopes and dreams for this opportunity for growth in faith and discipleship. Share personal goals for more simple living through this experience.

## **Use of visual media and technology**

If your congregation uses projection equipment in worship, use that technology to communicate information concerning MAKE IT SIMPLE. Incorporate into worship all or part of the video segments from this resource. You might also view them during other gatherings like confirmation classes, adult forums, small group Bible studies, women's or men's group meetings. Consider placing one of the videos on your congregational Web site as a "teaser" to help folks think and talk about the biblical themes of MAKE IT SIMPLE.

## **Other communication ideas**

Employ other forms of communication to bring MAKE IT SIMPLE emphases to the forefront of members' attention and to gather their thoughts. They might include:

- Announcements before and after worship on the projection screen.
- Home-grown dramas with discussion time.
- A short-term blog.
- Congregational e-mail messages.
- Interactive bulletin boards.
- Signs or posters in unique locations that include response cards.
- Children's art gallery (with the "artists" in attendance).
- Simple sculptures (with take-home handouts).



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## **Recruiting Volunteers**

The \*recruiting of MAKE IT SIMPLE Team members is one of the important tasks in making this annual stewardship response a success in your congregation. You will likely recruit active congregational members who are faithful, growing disciples, and who have a sense of God's abundant blessings and a generous spirit. As a team, spend time in prayerful discernment prior to inviting individuals to fulfill specific roles. Consider their gifts and passions for the work they are being asked to take on.

It is essential that you understand the role and expectations for each position on the MAKE IT SIMPLE Leadership Team. Do not under-sell the request to serve in a particular role. Make sure that you are clear about what the expectations are, how much time volunteers will need to commit to this work, and what the hopes and vision are for this project in the lives of the members of the congregation.

As you go about the recruitment of team members, prayer will be a vital tool in your discernment and recruiting, as well as for those that you approach in their consideration of the gifts that they can bring to this work.

God has abundantly blessed your congregation with gifted people who will share in this work with joy and enthusiasm. All who share in this work and participate in this stewardship response will be challenged and blessed in their growth as disciples of Jesus.

\* Yes, "recruit" is an awkward word, if only because of the cultural baggage the word brings with it. Then again, "volunteer" is also awkward. Sometimes our words don't serve us as well as we'd like. For fun, try to describe what you read here without the use of either word! HINT: Beware of euphemisms that may not carry meaning very well.