Leadership Event

“God’s Enough”
Leader’s Guide and Participant Handouts

Description
This two-hour event invites leaders to study and communicate two key elements of God’s economic design—simplicity and generosity. During this learning event, congregational leaders gather for a series of faith-based conversations about wealth, possessions, and their vocation to live for others in response to the one who gave himself for the world. The event enables these leaders to interpret the stewardship principles outlined in MAKE IT SIMPLE.

Background
It seems as though everyone’s talking about the global and national economy. This event presents elements of God’s economic plan—trusting abundance, confessing greed, noticing our neighbors, and remembering that we were created in God’s image, a generous image. By studying God’s words and ways, you can get a better picture of God’s economic and lifestyle goals for you: to live simply and generously. Beneath the activities and conversations of this event, you’ll find a question that may be on your mind as you begin this event: How is it good to be the church in times of economic and environmental change?

Some people will seek out the church in difficult times, looking for a place of comfort. They’ll find a sustainable Gospel message that God’s promises don’t go away with hard times. Others will seek out the church, looking for help. As a leader, you pray that you can provide it for them. Sometimes the help you will provide is food, shelter, and clothing. Sometimes you will offer a clearer understanding of the meaning of a life grounded in Christian faith.
Beyond spiritual and material comfort, when people seek out the message of Christ in good and bad times, they will also find a solid-but-challenging message. This message is that as part of God’s people, they are to live God’s idea of enough. They are to give out of their poverty and trust God’s abundance. They are to look beyond your own fears and needs. They are to tune their eyes and ears to birds, lilies, Jesus, one another. To faith.

Here’s a chance to pay attention to God’s voice, calling you, individually and together, to lead this congregation toward the joy of simple choices, the peace of generous giving, and the strength of faith shared in a community.

**Audience**
Church leaders like yourself, in whatever shape you find yourself, and however sure you are about the life directions you hope to journey with others.

**Outcomes**
At the conclusion of this event, participants will be able to:
- Express enthusiasm for a way of life that does not focus on fear or desperation, but on God’s models of living and giving.
- Discover alternatives to shameful feelings about going through hard times.
- Find within each other a sense that God is with them, that they can be proactive in the world, proclaiming the freedom that dependence on God offers.
- Seek new and renewed relationships within the congregation.
- Describe and practice a fresh way to present stewardship in these times.
- Explore helpful faith ideas for simple living and giving.

**Schedule**
- Welcome and Introduction (5 minutes)
- God Gives Us More Than Enough (25 minutes)
- We Get Confused About Enough (25 minutes)
- Enough is a “We” Issue (25 minutes)
- Congregational Assessment (30 minutes)
- Sending Out (10 minutes)

**TOTAL** (120 minutes)
Materials
☐ Chalkboard or whiteboard, or easel with chart paper and markers
☐ MAKE IT SIMPLE DVD-ROM (You will be using the DVD both to refer to sections of the resource and to view selected video segments. If your computer has the capabilities of playing DVD-ROM’s, you should also obtain an LCD projector and screen for projecting the video segments and the directions for the Bible conversations. If you will NOT be using a computer, you will need to obtain a DVD player and monitor for viewing the video segments. If you choose that option, you will not be viewing the Bible conversations in the large group.)
☐ Laptop computer (optional)
☐ LCD projector and screen (optional)
☐ DVD player and monitor (optional)
☐ Bibles, one per participant
☐ Writing paper and pens
☐ Variety of communication media from your congregation (e.g., newsletters, mailings, annual report, newspaper ads, download of pages from Web site, etc.)
☐ Handout, “Congregational Assessment Sheet,” one per participant (See the end of this document to obtain the original for photocopying.)
☐ Handout, “Themes Overview,” one per participant (See the end of this document to obtain the original for photocopying.)

Preparation
The event requires minimal preparation. These steps, however, are necessary for your efficient facilitation of the event:
☐ Read through this entire event design, so that you are familiar with its scope and sequence of activities.
☐ Browse through this resource so that you are familiar with its themes and elements. (For a deeper treatment of the subjects of simple living and generosity, see the section, “Background Reading,” in the MORE ESSENTIALS portion of MAKE IT SIMPLE.)
☐ Invite congregational leaders to attend the event and tell them why you think their presence will enhance the learning and outcomes. Think about “leaders” who aren’t elected or appointed, such as youth, young adults or former leaders.
☐ Choose from the activity options listed, and adapt this design to your own situation.
☐ Assemble a variety of examples of communication tools that come from your congregation. See the Congregational Assessment section of this event design for further details.
☐ Make copies of the handouts in this learning event design for all participants.
Event Plan

Welcome and Introduction (5 minutes)
Greet participants as they arrive, offering them refreshments and asking them to complete nametags (optional). Distribute copies of the handout, “Themes Overview,” one per participant. When all participants have arrived, begin with a word of prayer.

God Gives Us More Than Enough (25 minutes)

Jesus has come that we may have abundant life. His feeding narratives attest that the generosity of God is assured whenever Jesus rules in the earth and we count on that generosity. (From Mandate to Difference: An Introduction to the Contemporary Church, by Walter Brueggemann)

Begin by briefly sharing your own version of these introductory comments:

God provides. Not only does God take care of our needs, God provides for us in great abundance. In his Small Catechism, Martin Luther describes effusively God’s desire to give us what we need for daily living. In his explanation of the First Article of the Apostles’ Creed, Luther writes: “God daily and abundantly provides shoes and clothing, food and drink, house and farm, spouse and children, fields, livestock, and all property—along with all the necessities and nourishment for this body and life.”

This life of abundance—including spiritual and emotional depth as well as material provision—is not a peripheral by-product of the Christian life. Rather, abundance flows from the very center of our faith in the one who was crucified and raised.
Look it up
Distribute Bibles to participants and divide the larger group into groups of three. Refer participants to the handout, “Themes Overview,” and the section, “God Gives Us More Than Enough.” Ask the members of each group to read these Bible passages and to think about their reactions to what this passage says about God’s abundance:

- John 10:10
- 2 Corinthians 8:9
- Matthew 6:25-33

Talk about it
With these passages as background, spend some time talking about the textual basis for the MAKE IT SIMPLE theme, “Following Jesus.” You can find the directions for a Bible Conversation based on Matthew 6:25-33 in the “Following Jesus” segment within the Bible Conversations included in the SERMONS/BIBLE portion of this resource.

View it
After a few minutes of conversation, prepare participants to view the video segment, “More Than Enough,” that features Kari Olsen, a woman who has had both legs amputated, yet thinks of her life as abundantly blessed.

To project the video segment for the entire group, follow these directions:
1. If you are using a DVD player and monitor, insert DVD II into the player, and select “More Than Enough” from the menu that appears.
2. If you are using this (or another) computer as the DVD player, connect this computer to an LCD projector. Insert DVD II into the DVD slot in your computer, and select “More Than Enough” from the menu that appears.
3. If you are using this DVD, connect this computer to an LCD projector, and find “More Than Enough” in the VIDEOS section of this resource.

As time permits, you can use some of the follow-up questions included in the Video User’s Guide for “More Than Enough.” (You can find the User’s Guide in the VIDEOS section of this resource.)
Pray it
Direct participants to a time of shared prayer about what they have experienced. Provide a few moments of silence. Then begin the prayer time with these introductory petitions:

Abundant God, we come to you filled with your grace and love in our lives. All around us we see evidence of your good gifts. Hear us as we pray . . . . (Participants insert petitions here.)

When the petitions seem to be complete, finish the prayer with these words, “Abundant God, our thanks to you, that goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives, that we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Amen”

We Get Confused About Enough  
(25 minutes)

Our [insatiable] hunger for more is a true sign that we do not trust the goodness of God to supply all of our needs; we do not trust that the generous rule of Jesus who has ascended to power is in effect. (From Mandate to Difference: An Introduction to the Contemporary Church by Walter Brueggemann)

Start this part of the event by briefly sharing your thoughts about the following matters, adapting these ideas into your own words:

How can “God provides” be on our lips and “too much is never enough” seem like the operational principle of our lives? Christians are always sinners and saints at the same time. We remain sinners in our continued yearning to see ourselves as gods, as the center of our own universe, with limitless appetites and a sense of entitlement that our appetites be satisfied. This idolatry of the self promises us great things, but ultimately leaves us empty and craving for more.

Yet, in Christ, we are also saints, loved and claimed by the one who died and rose for us. As we celebrate the new life that Christ offers us, we discover a possibility for richness in meaning that our self-idolatry cannot produce.
Christ invites us to struggle with our sinful inclinations and assures us that we do not struggle alone. We need conversations that name sin, greed, and even confusion as obstacles that diminish our ability to experience most fully the life for which God created us.

Look it up
Refer participants to their Bibles, the handout, “Themes Overview” and to the three Bible references listed there under the theme, “We Get Confused About Enough.” Ask participants to regroup into a different threesome and read these passages that are focused on the concept of “enough”:

- Romans 7:15
- Matthew 6:19-21
- Mark 4:37-41

Talk about it
With these passages as background, spend some time talking about the textual basis for the MAKE IT SIMPLE theme, “Facing the Truth.” You can find the directions for a Bible Conversation based on Mark 4:37-41 in the “Facing the Truth” segment within the Bible Conversations included in the SERMONS/BIBLE portion of this resource.

View it
After a few minutes of conversation, prepare participants to view the video segment, “What’s Enough,” that tells the tale of a fictional schoolboy who misunderstands the meaning of enough.

To project the video segment for the entire group, follow these directions:
1. If you are using a DVD player and monitor insert DVD II into the player, and select “What’s Enough” from the menu that appears.
2. If you are using this (or another) computer as the DVD player, connect this computer to an LCD projector. Insert DVD II into the DVD slot in your computer, and select “What’s Enough” from the menu that appears.
3. If you are using this DVD, connect this computer to an LCD projector and view “What’s Enough” at the VIDEOS portion of this resource.

As time permits, you can use some of the follow-up questions included in the Video User’s Guide for “What’s Enough.” You can find the User’s Guide in the VIDEOS section of this resource.
Pray it
Provide a time of shared prayer about what participants have experienced. After a few moments of silence, begin the prayer time with these introductory petitions:

Creator God, you made and shaped our world in the beginning. You make and shape us today. Yet we find it difficult to acknowledge that what you have given us is enough. Hear us as we pray . . . (Participants insert petitions here.)

When the petitions seem to be complete, finish the prayer with these words, “Create in us a clean heart, O God, and renew in us a right spirit. Amen”

Enough is a “We” Issue

But we are Jesus’ people and therefore we are pledged and empowered to act differently, differently in the neighborhood, differently in the economy, and as citizens of the last superpower, different in the world. (From Mandate to Difference: An Introduction to the Contemporary Church by Walter Brueggemann)

Begin this part of the event by sharing your thoughts about the following matters:

We do not struggle against these challenges alone, since we are members of Christ and the community of his people. Given our heightened awareness that materialism has failed to keep its promise to provide meaning in life, it’s time for people of faith to explore issues that increasingly trouble them. How do we understand material wealth—as a gift from a gracious God to be received with gratitude and shared generously, or as an entitlement to be used for our own gratification? How can we connect our lavish consumption of goods to the larger issues of pollution and the growing divide between the haves and the have-nots? How do we bolster our resolve to withstand the barrage of messages designed to play on our insecurities and make us yearn for more?
How do we help one another appreciate the fact that we all wrestle with these same questions to one degree or another? How do we confess that, like the Prodigal Son who “when he came to himself” was welcomed home by the father (Luke 15:11-32), it is never too late for us to turn away from our culture’s false answer to what makes life satisfying?

Look it up
Refer participants to their Bibles, the handout, “Themes Overview” and to the Bible passages for the theme, “Enough is a ‘We’ Issue.” This time the theme bends toward the biblical examples of intertwined sufficiency and community. Invite participants to form another set of new threesomes, and to read these passages:

- Philippians 4:11b-13
- 2 Corinthians 9:8
- John 13:34-35

Talk about it
With these passages as background, spend some time talking about the textual basis for the MAKE IT SIMPLE theme, “Acting Together.” You can find the directions for a Bible Conversation based on John 13:34-35 or Philippians 4:11-13b in the “Acting Together” segment within the Bible Conversations included in the SERMONS/BIBLE portion of this resource.

View it
After a few minutes of conversation, prepare participants to view the video segment, “Step Out in Faith,” that recounts the story of a church in Eveleth, Minnesota, that persevered in spite of economic difficulty.

To project the video segment for the entire group, follow these directions:
1. If you are using a DVD player and monitor insert DVD II into the player, and select “Step Out in Faith” from the menu that appears.
2. If you are using this (or another) computer as the DVD player, connect this computer to an LCD projector. Insert DVD II into the DVD slot in your computer, and select “Step Out in Faith” from the menu that appears.
3. If you are using this DVD, connect this computer to an LCD projector, connect this computer to an LCD projector and view “Step Out in Faith” at the VIDEOS portion of this resource.

As time permits, you can use some of the follow-up questions included in the Video User’s Guide for “Step Out in Faith.” You can find the User’s Guide in the VIDEOS section of this resource.
Pray it
Provide a time of shared prayer about what participants have experienced. After a few moments of silence begin the prayer time with these introductory petitions:

Uniting God, you join us together in this congregation, you bring us together for purpose and meaning. You keep us from isolated wandering through life. Hear us as we pray . . . . (Participants insert petitions here.)

When the petitions seem to be complete, finish the prayer with these words, “God of community, enable us to find “enough” in partnership with each other, and to share it with your grace. Amen!”

Congregational Assessment (30 minutes)
Now that you have explored God’s view of a more sustainable “enough,” take time to explore the Gospel message your church is sending. How is it the simple message of living in God’s plan of abundance and generosity? This is NOT an exercise that lists what’s wrong with your congregation or that creates a new To-Do list. This activity offers a chance for leaders to observe and discern what message your congregation is sending. Ideally the exercise will lead to more conversations.

Divide the larger group into three smaller groups that will carry out these assignments:
• One group will assay the inside of the church.
• Another group will look at the outside of the church.
• The last group will survey communication tools for your congregation (newsletter, bulletin boards, Web site, etc.).

Distribute copies of the handout, “Congregational Assessment,” one per participant, as a guide for this assessment. (See the original for photocopying at the end of this document.)

Some questions to consider as you survey your congregation’s messages to its members and to your community:
• How simple is our ministry?
• What is simple, sustainable, life-growing here?
• What items or ideas might need to be recycled?
• What is “hazardous waste,” both in actuality and as a metaphor?
• What climate has changed in the way we think and act toward each other?
• How well do we know our gathered assets?
• How is this congregation’s teamwork developing as this nation shifts from a “me” to a “we” economy?
• How does this congregation proclaim and exemplify a “we” Gospel?
Give groups fifteen minutes to complete their assessment. When time has elapsed, bring the group back together and spend about fifteen minutes for groups to report back. Use the handout or the questions above as a guide for the reporting.

**Sending Out**  
*(10 minutes)*

**Flyover prayer**
For a deeply moving kind of prayer, ask participants to close their eyes and to imagine themselves high above your town—or the country—and able to look down with both a wide and focused eye on the conditions and people they see below them. Direct participants’ prayer thoughts with prompts such as the following. Provide time between the prompts for participants’ imagined “flying” and their very real praying. Prompts might include these:
- Look for the places where you see great need.
- Concentrate on the small-but-significant generosities you see below you, and thank God for these people.
- Find the places where you might become more actively involved in bringing God’s will to bear on the world.
- Look through apparent poverty or apparent wealth to see people’s need for life’s deeper values, greater joys, and more important tasks.

You can also specify the focus of this kind of prayer by referring to specific locales—in your community, the nation, or the world—or to specific kinds of people.

After a few minutes of praying, dismiss participants with your thanks for their attention and energy, as well as their commitment to living simply and generously.

**Options**
1. You can shorten this event slightly by eliminating the same activity element from each of the four theme explorations.
2. The event can be enriched if one or more of the theme explorations takes place in another, connected venue. In this way, participants have to walk to another location, perhaps fulfilling a “walk-and-talk” assignment as they walk.
3. You might show all four of the video segments first, then proceed with the exploration of the four MAKE IT SIMPLE themes using the other repeated activities.
4. If additional time is available, you can extend the discussion and sharing times following the Bible conversations or videos.
5. To make this event specific to your context, insert questions or other activities that bring each of the themes directly into focus from the point of view of your congregation’s current situation. Allow for extra time for this additional feature.
God’s Enough

Leaders’ Event

Handout: “Congregational Assessment Sheet”

Directions: Use this “assessment” as a tool to assay the state of your congregation’s present capabilities and opportunities. From your assigned point-of-view, look for evidence that helps you answer the following questions. You may wish to take notes for later sharing.

1. Places and ways in which we work simply and effectively:

______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________

2. Examples of programs, events, people that help this congregation sustain its mission over time:

______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________

3. Where might we be wasting time, money, things, people, or our energy?

______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________

4. What important assets—useful gifts—are available to us, but aren’t used to their full potential yet?

______________________________________________________________________
5. In what ways do we encourage members to be satisfied with their lifestyles?

6. In what ways do we encourage members to be generous, both here and in their daily lives of ministry?

7. Where are the places where this congregation really pulls together as a unified and purposeful group of God’s people?

8. What is it about this place that seems attractive and life-giving for people around us?
God’s Enough

Leaders’ Event
Handout: “Themes Overview”

God Gives Us More than Enough
Jesus has come that we may have abundant life. His feeding narratives attest that the generosity of God is assured whenever Jesus rules in the earth and we count on that generosity.*
Matthew 7:7-11
Philippians 4:19-20
John 10:10
2 Corinthians 8:9
Matthew 6:25-33

We Get Confused about Enough
Our [insatiable] hunger for more is a true sign that we do not trust the goodness of God to supply all of our needs; we do not trust that the generous rule of Jesus who has ascended to power is in effect.*
Romans 7:15
Matthew 6:19-21
Mark 4:37-41

Enough is a “We” Issue.
But we are Jesus’ people and therefore we are pledged and empowered to act differently, differently in the neighborhood, differently in the economy, and as citizens of the last superpower, different in the world.*
Philippians 4:11b-13
2 Corinthians 9:8
John 13:34-35

*From Walter Brueggemann, Mandate to Difference: An Introduction to the Contemporary Church