



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

You're receiving this email because you or your congregation indicated you are a stewardship leader in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). If you'd prefer to unsubscribe from this newsletter, please [let us know](#).

Dear friend in Christ,

Dr. Murray Bowen was a psychiatrist that developed family systems theory back in the latter half of the 1900s. At the heart of his theory is the idea that anxiety is an ever-present part of our relationships and that this anxiety can many times generate emotional – as opposed to calm, thoughtful – responses. Bowen believed that to really understand the dynamics of our emotions and behavior, it is essential to look not just at one person but at the whole system of relationships that a person belongs to. It turns out that any one person is part of a multi-generation, complex web of family members who each process anxiety differently, eventually affecting every person in that system.

Might these insights help us to better understand the call the church has to help people deal with the anxiety they have around money? How much of that anxiety is a phenomenon of a single person in a distinct point in time, as opposed to the result of complex family relationships and family narratives that span multiple generations (or our entire [culture](#))? When we are anxious about having enough and fixated on our own well-being, how does that play out in terms of our emotions, behaviors and relationships? (Some statistics suggest that financial distress is the number one cause of divorce.) So do we as the church love the world enough to spread the alternative wisdom of Jesus Christ about money, meaning and values, and to bless our relationships and world for generations to come?

This issue of stewardNet focuses on how the church can be an agent of salvation by helping people with their money challenges. One of Jesus' favorite topics was money, not because he had an operating budget or a building campaign, but most likely because he understood how anxiety over having enough can take us to places other than thanks, gratitude and trusting in God that we have everything we need.

We are a church that is energized by lively engagement in our faith and life. Thank you for **leading** in God's work with a generous heart!

In Christ's service,

Steve Oelschlager
Stewardship Program Coordinator
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

P.S. Help us grow our network! Be sure to encourage others who would benefit to subscribe to stewardNet by visiting www.ELCA.org/growingstewards.

Money sanity solutions

Linking money and meaning

According to research cited by Nathan Dungan of Share Save Spend, money is not just the top stressor in people's lives; it is a major component of many other sources of anxiety, including work, job stability and the economy. Too many times our way of handling this stress follows the typical fight or flight extremes like heated "discussions" or total silence. These patterns in turn are influenced by the larger money narratives that emerge over generations inside our families and across our culture. In this [presentation](#) at Luther Seminary's Rethinking Stewardship conference, Dungan asks how we can regain the sane middle. He asks provocative questions about how we can lean into these conversations and how our families and congregations can be instruments of learning, healing and change. What if we understood stewardship not as how we fund the church, but as one of the most important pastoral care and congregational ministry concerns?



Dungan's company has created a tool for congregations to help engage people in these money conversations. Money Sanity U is an online video library that offers unique insights, reliable examples and actionable ideas — all designed to help individuals and families build healthy money habits. A 10 percent discount is available through July 31, 2015, to ELCA congregations that want to share Money Sanity U in their community. Learn more by visiting the [demo site](#) or via [email](#).

Ministry and personal finances

Talking about money at Jacob's Well

Jacob's Well is an 8-year-old, self-sustaining ELCA congregation in the Twin Cities. It was developed specifically to reach out to those not normally attracted to being part of a congregation or organized religion. One might think that this setting could be the least friendly to having conversations about money, but their pastor, Greg Meyer, says that money is one of the top-three topics that people want to discuss, along with relationships and pluralism. People know that money is a huge hurting place, says Meyer, which is why Jacob's Well has a known community goal that everyone has a budget they can live on and why the congregation regularly offers conversations about handling money through small groups, workshops and even nine financial coaches who are trained through a program with [Thrivent](#). Meyer thinks that for many people, the first step toward a more generous life is throwing them a lifeline to help them avoid drowning in debt and over spending. Watch this [video](#) for more reflections and ideas from Greg Meyer and Jacob's Well. See this [article](#) for other practical ideas.



Financial Peace University

"Living like no one else so you can live like no one else"

Author, radio host and personal finance guru Dave Ramsey is the creator of the course Financial Peace University. The program (available as a DVD-based series or online experience) has nine sessions with practical advice about budgeting, paying off debt, not using credit cards, saving for retirement, and changing how we relate to money. The last session is all about biblical, financial stewardship and how generous giving can revolutionize our attitudes, relationships and life.

Ron Walrath is a passionate steward leader in the ELCA South Carolina Synod who has experience helping people, from seminarians to members of congregations, explore these topics using Financial Peace University. [Watch](#) Walrath describe some of the amazing results he has seen, including increased capacities to give leading to real increases in giving. In the video he also talks about why facilitating courses like Financial Peace University make so much sense for the church as it tries to help people change their hearts and lives to be better stewards and followers of Jesus.

Other workshop materials to consider are available from [Thrivent](#), [Good \\$ense](#) and [Crown Financial](#).

Kids and money

What is your plan for teaching?

In the video mentioned above, Nathan Dungan points out that most people do not learn about money or money values through school. So how is it that kids learn these things? As we prepare our kids to be adults, is osmosis a good teaching strategy, or are there more proactive ways to engage your kids in talking about, practicing and learning how to handle money?



[FamZoo](#) is a website that helps parents teach kids about income and expenses, budgeting, working and generosity. Kids can have their own debit card that is connected to allowances and chores. Budgets can be easily set up for spending, saving and giving. [Watch](#) FamZoo founder Bill Dwight talk about some of these ideas and how they inspired him to move beyond passively being the bank of Mom and Dad. Congregations can advertise the discount code ELCA2015 to pass on one month of free service for families to get started with FamZoo.

Check out the recent [book](#) "The Opposite of Spoiled: Raising Kids Who Are Grounded, Generous, and Smart About Money" for more ideas on this topic.

Rich Melheim on raising a grateful child

Giving Magazine for 2015

From an article in the latest Giving Magazine: "How do you become a dancer? You dance. How do you become a singer? You sing. You want to become a painter? You paint. How do you become a giver? You give.

"How do you grow a grateful child? How do you shape an identity of faith, stewardship and gratitude?"

"Practice, practice, practice. Model, model, model. Live it, live it, live it. Find a way to start today. You will reap what you sow. You will see what you seed. Guaranteed."

Download the full 2015 issue of Giving Magazine [here](#).



Creation care: Energy Stewards Initiative

Sign up your congregation or camp now

ELCA congregations and camps can apply now (application deadline is May 15, 2015, with the program to begin in June) for the Energy Stewards Initiative, a one- to two-year national program beginning this June through Lutherans Restoring Creation. The program helps congregations track and reduce energy use on an online platform, lower their carbon footprint with the help of an action plan, and free up funds for other ministries. For \$10 a month (scholarships available), the program offers bi-monthly webinars featuring energy experts and making available the shared wisdom of program leaders and other participants. Learn more and apply [online](#). Lutherans Restoring Creation is a grassroots movement devoted to promoting care for creation throughout the ELCA.



Your offering at work

Connecting to mission interpretation

Not only is it good for people to understand how they spend their money, it is also beneficial for them to know what happens with the money they give away. Over the years the publication Stories of Faith in Action has included such an explanation called "[your offering at work](#)," showing how funds given to congregations that are passed on to synods and the churchwide organization make additional ministries happen beyond the local congregation. Another related and helpful resource is "[where your ELCA offering goes](#)." Please be aware that the numbers shown have changed over time.



Sayings, quotes, thoughts

Oscar Wilde

"Nowadays people know the price of everything and the value of nothing."

Biblical foundations

Psalm 23

"The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff – they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long."

Upcoming events for stewardship leaders (watch the [calendar file](#) for details)

Aug. 27-30, 2015

New York City

Mission Interpreter Coordinator Conference

December 2015

Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

Ecumenical Stewardship Center Leadership Seminar

Feb. 21-24, 2016

Chicago

Association of Lutheran Development Executives Annual Conference

Feb. 27, 2016

Stewardship webcast with ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton

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