



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 friends,

When you reflect on your stewardship ministry, do you ever think about the idea of engagement? Many times we focus on diving into the Bible to define stewardship. We might say that stewardship begins with the belief, assertion or realization that everything belongs to God. We might go from there to build a whole theological framework for understanding and presenting what we mean by stewardship, so that people can make the connection between their offerings and the work of the church. So what does the idea of engagement have to do with anything?

What if we were dentists, and we thought it would be beneficial for our patients to floss more? What is the difference between laying out the facts and science that support flossing for better oral health, and developing strategies to get people to care and actually floss their teeth? How would we even get people to be interested in what we had to say? This is what engagement is all about. For most of us it is not too difficult to identify areas where we understand rationally what behaviors are beneficial, but the challenge comes with putting those ideals into practice. As church leaders, how do we help people to close that gap between what they want to do, and what they do?

In this issue of stewardNet we focus on engagement, including how we communicate as a church. It turns out that this topic has much broader implications than just stewardship. For example, how do we compete in a world where more sophisticated approaches are being used to engage people, people who we want to care about lifestyles of faith, discipleship and generosity? If we don't have ways of even being on the radar, so to speak, our beliefs – the good news of Jesus Christ – will not even get a chance, and our congregations will be dismissed by default as irrelevant.

Fortunately, we are a church that is energized by lively engagement in our faith and life. Thank you for doing 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.

Make your neighborhood your cathedral

Insights from Keith Anderson

One way to be engaging is for the church to be in more places where faith and life intersect. "We're going to be where people already are, trying to be the church where they are." Watch ELCA pastor and thought leader Keith Anderson talk about ways the church can better situate itself in places where people make meaning in their lives, from "God on Tap" conversations to virtual places that exist through social media.



Keith has lots of great ideas worthy of consideration. In this [article](#) he talks about how to make emails that people really want to read.

In a different [piece](#) he suggests we as the church need to get over Sunday morning being congested with other priorities. He asks how we can enable people to participate and volunteer remotely, via phone, smartphone or laptop, when they can grab a few spare moments between activities or when the kids are down.

Faith formation in the 21st century

Growing vibrant faith

John Roberto is another thought leader who is tuned into how our world is changing, including technologically, and how that affects the church. Our networked world has created new possibilities for engagement and lifelong learning. In this [video](#), John talks about how to think about engaging not just those lifelong stalwarts of our church – the people who regularly show up – but three other segments of people who are more disconnected from lives of faith and organized religion, including the "nones."



See this [PDF](#) presentation for more of John's ideas including: online learning platforms; imagining Sunday worship all week; online courses for every adult anytime, anywhere, any interest; a spiritual resource center; and personalized faith formation. More ideas, resources and links can be found through his [website](#).

"Just one more"

Rescuing food and souls

St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, an ELCA congregation in Wauwatosa, Wis., is engaging people in lives of service that make a big difference in satisfying hunger. Through their ministry called "Just One More," over 100 volunteers regularly participate to rescue food that would have been thrown away, and turn it into over 1,500 meals per week, serving more than 76,000 meals in 2013. Watch this [video](#), or read more in this [article](#) from the Lutheran.

How might creative ministries like Just One More engage people in lives of purpose and meaning? How might it create the kind of opportunities for conversation that John Roberto talks about, where people disconnected from the church sense an authenticity and spirituality that they don't normally associate with organized religion?

Church communications

Media from Luther into the future

Have you ever thought of social media in the context of the Reformation? As described in this [article](#) from the Economist, printed brochures and woodcut graphics were the social media tools of Luther's time, and they played an integral role in how the Reformation unfolded. As you think about engaging people, have you considered the primordial function that communications play today? What are the channels that people prefer for how they stay connected and is the church present in those places?

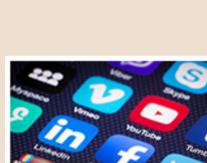


Here are a few resources that might be helpful to you. Brady Shearer is an entrepreneur who focuses on helping congregations be more proficient with their communications. He offers lots of practical advice around email, video, social media and more through his [website](#) Pro Church Tools. [Buffer](#) is another site with useful information, including this post on why graphics are so important in our communications today.

Stewardship experiments

Email, videos and smartphones

Part of keeping people engaged is offering invitations and reminders to consider anew what they are already in favor of or believe in. It's difficult to find people that are philosophically opposed to generosity, so how might we gently inspire them to keep those motives on the front burner? Here are a few experiments from around the ELCA to consider.



Journey is a monthly e-newsletter on faith, discipleship and generosity. It connects members with videos, articles, websites and more that are intended to provide food for thought and triggers for generous and purposeful living. Here is a [sample issue](#).

Personal testimonials can be powerful stories, but something that Lutherans are not always comfortable sharing. What about making [video testimonials](#) using an iPad and iMovie? How about including kids and making it an intergenerational exercise in faith formation?

[Smartphone apps](#) can easily be made by anyone using sites like como.com for about \$500. Use [RSS feeds](#) from the ELCA for daily devotions (content coming soon on everyday generosity and care for creation) to keep your app stocked with fresh ideas without having to do the work yourself.

Making commitments

Congregational response methods

Some of the ways we close the gap between our actual and ideal behavior are setting goals and building positive habits. This would include spiritual practices like making commitments. Yes, making a commitment to grow in our generosity is a spiritual practice that can use our treasures to lead our hearts to where we want them to go. When we connect this kind of practice with the transforming work of our church, we are able to make more ministry possible. Typically congregations ask their members to make this kind of commitment during an annual response campaign. Research indicates that congregations that ask their members to make a financial commitment have a significantly higher level of giving than those congregations that do not. Based on data reported from ELCA congregations, more than 60 percent ask their members to make a financial commitment.



If you are looking for materials for your response program, you may want to check out [resources](#) from our ELCA partner, the Ecumenical Stewardship Center. Two ready-to-use programs by the ELCA can be downloaded through the Internet, including [Rediscover Macedonia](#), and [Make It Simple](#).

Online giving

Automating our commitments

Online giving is a tool that can help us grow into habits and commitments because it takes the repeated effort of deciding and behaving, and replaces that with a single decision that then automates the future. Part of the challenge of our day is that many people do not carry either cash or checkbooks, which adds even more pre-planning to giving an offering at church. For these reasons, the ELCA is trying to encourage more congregations that are not already offering online giving options to take the plunge and get going. Funds have been set aside to cover the monthly fees for up to 100 congregations on a first-come, first-served basis to start offering online giving through Vanco, the long-time partner with Thrivent in the Simply Giving Program. There are no setup fees or long-term contracts to take advantage of this offer, which runs from July 15 through Sept. 30, 2014. For more information including links to register, see this [website](#).



Sayings, quotes, thoughts

Dale Carnegie

If you are not in the process of becoming the person you want to be, you are automatically engaged in becoming the person you don't want to be.



Biblical foundations

1 Timothy 6:18-19

They [the rich] are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

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

Aug. 19, 2-3 p.m. (Central)
Webinar on Annual Response Methods.

Aug. 20, 3:30-4:30 p.m. (Central)
Webinar on Online Giving Initiative
Learn more about the ELCA initiative to help congregations get started with online giving. Watch the [website](#) for links to RSVP.

Dec. 2-4, 2014
Ecumenical Stewardship Center Leadership Seminar in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.
Annual gathering of denominational and congregational stewardship leaders to discuss strategic perspectives on current stewardship topics.

April 2015
North American Conference on Christian Philanthropy
Ecumenical gathering to equip rostered and lay leaders in a variety of stewardship topics/skills.

[Full calendar](#) | Subscribe to [Our Calendar File](#)

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