

Weaving Stewardship into Worship Throughout the Church Year

Stewardship Kaleidoscope
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Presbyterian Foundation



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Weaving Stewardship into Worship Throughout the Church Year

- Does it feel like stewardship season is always a challenge to plan for? Why is talking about money in the church so difficult?
- In this workshop, participants will explore faithful and practical ways to incorporate stewardship and giving into a congregation's worship life through every church season.
- This will include sermon ideas, stewardship resources, reimagining the offering time, involving lay leadership, and helping every worshiper cultivate their own spiritual practice of generosity.



Why is talking about money so difficult?

Stewardship, pledges, tithes, oh my!



The excuses we give (Part 1)

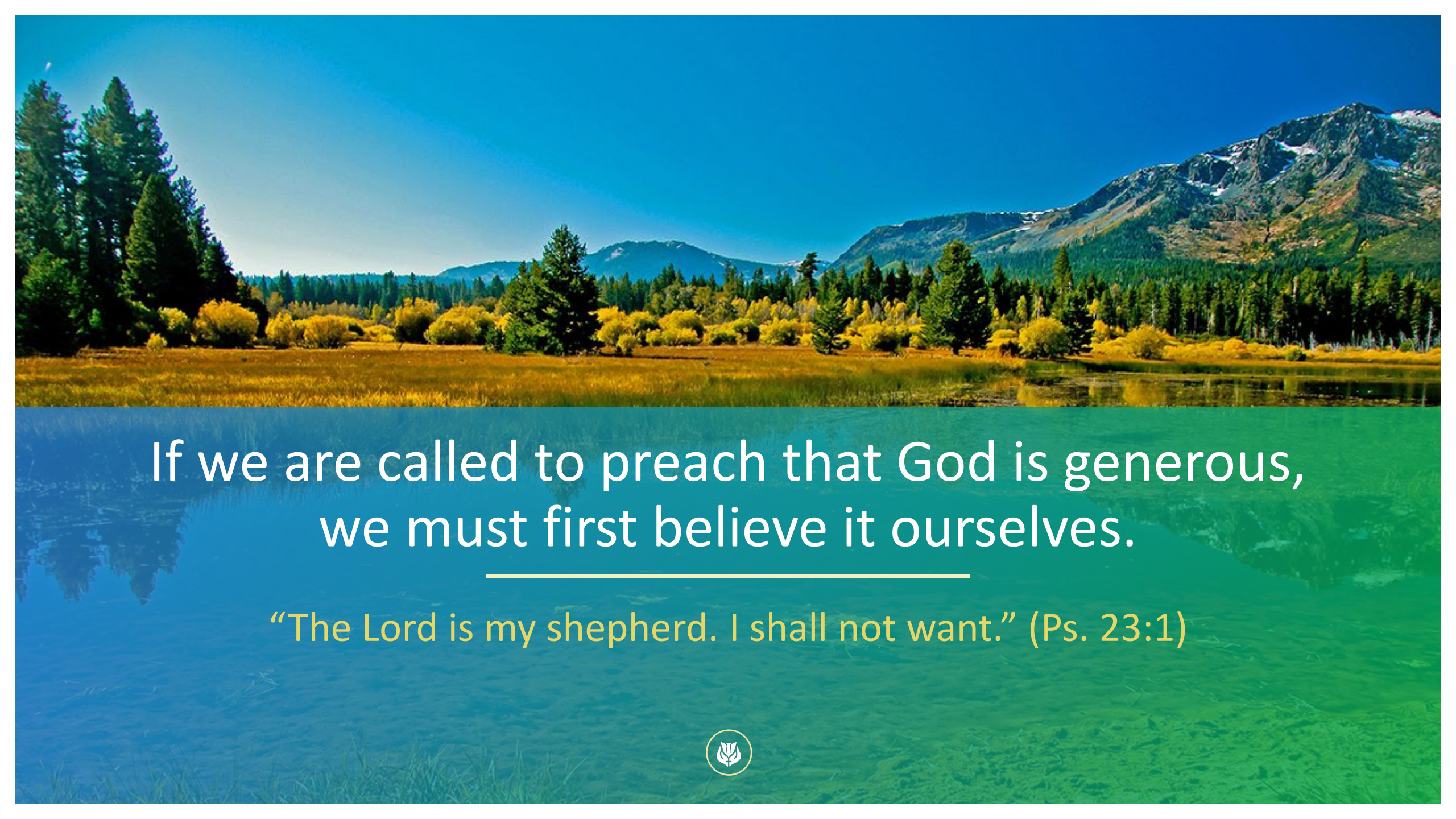
- I was called to preach the good news of Jesus Christ, not talk about money!
- I'm not an expert. I only remember talking about stewardship in seminary a couple of times.
- Jesus told us when we give, the left hand should not know what the right hand is doing (Matthew 6), which surely means we shouldn't talk publicly about our giving.



The excuses we give (Part 2)

- My salary is the biggest part of the budget, so it feels like I'm just being greedy by asking the church to pay me more.
- My own finances are a mess, to say the least. Who am I to tell others how to use their money?
- I don't make enough money to tithe and pay my bills, not to mention my seminary debt. I feel ashamed to ask others to give when I can't even give as much as I should.
- Our church has a hard time meeting the budget. It seems like everywhere the institutional church is struggling. If I give more to the church, what will happen to my family if the church can't afford to pay my salary anymore?



A scenic landscape featuring a calm lake in the foreground, a dense forest of evergreen and yellow-tinged trees in the middle ground, and majestic mountains with patches of snow in the background under a clear blue sky.

If we are called to preach that God is generous,
we must first believe it ourselves.

“The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want.” (Ps. 23:1)



Generosity is a spiritual practice. It is a road, a journey.
We may not be as generous as we want to be,
but God's not finished with us yet.

That's an authentic message that will preach – both to ourselves and our congregation!



Stewardship Messaging

Which one best describes your context?

Stewardship as transaction

- It's that time of year again
- We have fewer members, an aging building, underpaid staff
- We need you to help us pay the bills
- If we don't meet our budget, we will lose things we value
- **Creates fear, guilt, shame**

Stewardship as transformation

- We are celebrating that God is so generous to us
- Giving allows us to experience the generous heart of God
- Giving generously shapes us more and more into the image of Jesus Christ
- **Creates joy, excitement, growth in discipleship**



Research on Congregational Giving

“Significantly, revenue growth was more prevalent among congregations that **regularly*** discussed the theological importance of giving, whether through biblical passages, sermons, or personal testimonies.”

--National Study of Congregations' Economic Practices (NSCEP)

**At least once a month*



Research on Congregational Giving

“A first place to **start** would be not to talk so much about what to give or how much to give with people in the pews but have broader conversations about the meaning of money -- how it makes us feel, our experiences with it, our barriers to giving, **getting people to tell their stories**, testimonies in worship services.”

--David King, NSCEP co-author



A scenic landscape featuring a calm lake in the foreground, a dense forest of evergreen and deciduous trees in the middle ground, and majestic mountains with patches of snow in the background under a clear blue sky.

If generosity is a spiritual practice,
we need to practice it regularly*

**More than one month out of the year*



Reflections

- What resonates with you?
- What questions do you have?



Topics we'll explore next (see handout)

- Sermon and scripture ideas
- Worship theme suggestions
- Suggestions for creating liturgy
- Reimagining the offering time
- Involving lay leadership
- Helping worshippers cultivate their own practice of generosity
- Additional stewardship resources
- Time for Q&A



Sermon and scripture ideas

- The Old Testament offers countless stories about the generosity of God
- The central message of the Gospels is that God ***gave*** God's only son to save us (John 3:16)
- Jesus told more parables about money than any other topic
- The lectionary can be your friend!



Worship theme suggestions

- Advent/Christmas
 - Patience and waiting vs. consumerism
 - Giving away what is valuable to us
- Lent
 - Give up something that stands between us and God
 - Generous giving is a sacrificial act
- Eastertide
 - Gift of Jesus, eternal life, salvation from sin
 - Spiritual gifts
- Ordinary Time
 - Stewardship includes taking rest, caring for our bodies, sharing our collective stories



Suggestions for creating liturgy

- If we are called to **preach/pray/write** that God is generous, we must first believe it ourselves
- Start by rewriting a psalm for your context today
- Write responses to the chosen text(s) for the day
 - What would I pray in response?
 - What am I giving thanks for?
 - What praises would I offer?



Reimagining the offering time

Our reluctance in asking people to give can easily be spotted when the invitation is little more than, “God loves a cheerful giver. Will the ushers please come forward?”

- Make the offering time **joyful**
- Share stories of the church’s mission and ministry changing lives in the name of Christ
- Have worshippers give testimonies about what giving to the church means to them



Involving lay leadership

- Invite church leaders to share testimonies regularly in worship
- Church leaders can lead the effort in inviting other members to share their stories, creating a regular schedule
- Invite elders and deacons to assist in crafting worship liturgy



Helping worshippers cultivate their own practice of generosity

- Educate: Offer a Generosity 101 class that helps individuals to reflect on their experiences with money, a theology of giving, barriers to generosity, and questions about tithing
- Focus on the many ways we can respond generously to God:
 - time, skills, testimonies, spiritual gifts, social capital/influence
- Write down these gifts on commitment cards or stand-alone paper and put in offering plate
- Create space in worship to celebrate the ways God is generous:
 - prayer stations, celebration board with sticky notes, liturgical dance, learning a new hymn



Additional stewardship resources

- Sign up for our free monthly **Stewardship Newsletter** with articles on year-round stewardship, lectionary previews, ideas, best practices, and more
- [PresbyterianFoundation.org](https://www.PresbyterianFoundation.org)
- [StewardshipNavigator.com](https://www.StewardshipNavigator.com)
- Contact us for help or more information



Questions? Comments?

What ideas are working well in your congregation?
What would you like to try out this coming year?



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