



Loving Our Neighbours

Loving our Neighbors: Season of Gratitude
Stewardship Campaign 2019
October 6–November 3

WHAT IS STEWARDSHIP?

Stewardship is an integral aspect of the United Church of Canada and of our Gower Street United Church. Historically, Stewardship had been viewed through many different lenses and meant different things in the life of our church. Most recently, Gower's Constitution has been reviewed and revised to ensure it is in keeping with ongoing changes in the United Church of Canada.

The Stewardship Committee has been part of this process. These revisions speak to the overall mandate of the Committee to keep you, the Congregation, informed of all aspects of Stewardship and to explore methods to raise awareness and help realize the full potential of Stewardship here at Gower. Special gifts and the process to make bequests or gifts are part of this mandate. While some of these revisions have been successful, others remain more challenging and there's lots of work to do.

As a Committee we have generally accepted that Stewardship is ...

Everything we think, say and do after we say "I Believe."

More formally, the six Best Practices for Congregational Stewardship outlined by the United Church of Canada have been adopted as working guidelines by the Stewardship Committee.

A 5 week Stewardship Campaign starts the first Sunday in October during which you will be given a brief overview of these Best Practices. Overriding each and every one of them are the three pillars of individual gifts of time, talent and treasure.

The intent is that you will better understand how we are meeting our Stewardship mandate and how each of you, as a member of this congregation, are impacted by Stewardship.

To contact the Stewardship Committee email JoAnna Bennett (Chair) at joannamabennett@gmail.com or call the office 709-753-7286.

The Stewardship Committee, Gower Street United Church

BEST PRACTICES - OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT

Operational Management is being addressed up front since it highlights how the church is able to carry out its' wide range of services and programs from a sound financial basis. This includes a whole range of practices from fund raising to weekly offerings. From our review it's a good news report with a high pass rate indicating that Gower is making good progress on this Practice.

To give you a better idea of how that is working let's highlight some of the things that Gower is doing, has done, and can make some improvements on:

Review the Church Mission every three years; Vision 2025 was part of this process and further to the recommendations in this Vision the Board has established priorities each year to promote implementation. Example include Gower's Vision Statement and Affirming Status.

Narrative Budget: A Narrative Budget was developed and circulated with the 2018 Annual Budget. While feedback was minimal, the Stewardship Committee is currently planning how to present different aspects of a Narrative Budget in the future.

Multiple Opportunities for financial generosity: givings can be by regular Sunday offerings, PAR, special offerings, fundraising events all of which are available options at Gower. The extremely successful Organ Restoration Campaign ensured our Pipe Organ was restored ahead of schedule and now we are on to the Warm and Dry campaign.

Donor Appreciation: Donations of all kinds are noted regularly in the Sunday Bulletin. As well, formal thank you letters go out from the office especially to thank donors who make significant contributions. The Annual Report also includes ranges of offerings throughout the year.

Annual Giving Program: This is not a regular feature at Gower at this time. Our challenge to you is to review your personal givings and determine what they are and what they could be! Why is this important? Research has shown that when the congregation is informed of where and how their givings are used by their Church combined with acknowledgment of their

givings, overall there is a noted increase in givings. Our goal is to support those parts of this Operational Management Best Practice that are working well and to work diligently on those that need further effort.

BEST PRACTICES - STEWARDSHIP FORMATION CREATE A CULTURE OF GRATITUDE AND GENEROSITY

The primary purpose of stewardship formation is to foster an individual identity and a community identity as stewards and disciples instead of just being consumers. A second purpose of stewardship formation is for greater generosity.

Congregations with a higher per capita giving are more likely to offer opportunities for young people in youth conformation, Sunday School and children's time in worship. They also foster more adult stewardship discussions in membership classes, Bible study and other small groups. These Churches could include gift-planning education, advice on how to arrange major gifts as well as end-of-life gifts. They could also provide personal-finance training and budget counseling for individuals and families.

Congregations that offer personal-finance training experienced per capita giving 46% higher than those churches that don't. Churches with high per capita giving were twice as likely as other United Churches to offer gift-planning and personal-finance training. Their per capita giving was more than double that of the rest of the United Church.

Here at Gower, it is time to think about our church when

planning your finances. End-of-life donations can be planned well ahead of time. The United Church of Canada's regional financial development staff can assist congregations with gift planning programs. Their contact information is at www.united-church.ca/getinvolved/donate/howto/planned/planners.

BEST PRACTICES: STEWARDSHIP INTEGRATION IN WORSHIP

Congregations that see and hear about Stewardship every Sunday are noted to be more effective in achieving their Stewardship mandate than those that make it a special event over the course of the church year. How are we doing with this here at Gower? Let's take a look at this based on the criteria outlined in our Best Practice.

Plan worship with stewardship worship resources: This is acknowledged as an area that we can improve on since Minutes for Mission, M&S bulletins covers and stewardship information are not regular Sunday Service items and occur on a more haphazard basic. On line resources are accessible through the United Church web site. This sharing of information throughout October is part of a planned improvement with plans for more throughout the coming year.

Preach stewardship regularly: This is Rev. Pamela's area of expertise that refers to any biblical text used during the service having stewardship implications. The subject of money and possessions was Jesus' second most talked about topic for preaching and teaching and we hear this regularly. The lectionary-based stewardship Sermon Starters are available as a resource to develop Sunday Services as well.

Nurture young stewards through children's messages: This is well done here at Gower with the Children's Circle song and story every Sunday. The Children's Choir is another way children and youth participate through music and song. We get a pass on this and look forward to more with Rebecca's involvement with our youth.

Celebrate the offering as an act of worship: Regular offerings are celebrated each week through the collection plate offerings and PAR. In memoriam givings are profiled in the Sunday bulletin as they occur. Special givings initiatives are highlighted for congregational "asks" such as the Warm & Dry Campaign, Dinner Theatre Fundraisers and our beloved Organ Restoration Fund to mention just a few. Overall, while there is room to improve, we are doing well with these activities.

These are some of the ways **Stewardship Every Sunday** becomes more of our norm. It's good to report what we are doing to make this practice happen while acknowledging the work that remains to become better.

BEST PRACTICES - STEWARDSHIP LEADERSHIP & SPIRITUAL- NURTURE OPPORTUNITIES

Leadership Development and Support refers to involving clergy and lay members in the wider church roles. Those churches that engage in this form of wider participation experience greater per capita givings than churches that do not.

How does Gower engage in this higher level form of stewardship? One example of this includes the Remits Group Discussions that many of you participated in. These discussions led to a better understanding of the restructuring changes that have been implemented for the United Church of Canada. As well, members of our congregation represent Gower on the new Regional Councils and Communities of Faith activities.

Gower is also an active member of the United Church Community of Faith (UCCF) group which meets monthly. This group has members from all United Churches in the St. John's and surrounding areas. Its purpose is to have discussions and share resources for the Mission and Ministry of local congregations. Some recent activities have included a Welcome Back picnic at Pippy Park in September and a joint worship service in October.

This week Rev Roger Janes, Stewardship and Gifts Officer, is guest preacher here at Gower. He will share his passion and extensive knowledge of stewardship with us as part of the service and will also facilitate a workshop luncheon following the service. This is another initiative on our journey of exploration to become better informed about what stewardship means to us as individuals and the greater church community.

Spiritual-Nurture Opportunities coordinate an individual's personal understanding of stewardship with spiritual growth. With this comes an increased generosity of givings of all types including financial. Opportunities to support this here at Gower include the Book Club, Bible Study, Lenten Communion, Hope for a Winter's Night service focusing on mental health awareness and special services offered by the UCW and Men's Club both at Gower and in the community. It is recognized

that when people participate in this type of spiritual growth they tend to be more generous with their lives including their money.

These Best Practices indicate that stewardship occurs at the individual, church and greater community levels. This is different for each of you here today, however what we hope to do through this discussion is to increase your level of understanding of stewardship so you can make it a part of your community of faith life. The rewards for doing so are shared both personally and for our Gower faith community.

BEST PRACTICES - ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIAL JUSTICE CONCERNS

Recent studies by the United Church of Canada indicate that Involvement in community social outreach correlates positively with financial generosity. So how do we do this here at Gower? And how well do we engage in social justice concerns?

One example that comes to mind is our recent Affirm Designation. We are the second Affirm United Church in the province. This is a major public positive move to welcome persons of the LGBTQ community in all aspects of our community of faith. As an Affirm United congregation we have made a commitment to continued education and church policy around issues of inclusion.

Just this past winter we had the pleasure of having the Stella's Circle Inclusion Choir share in worship. We collected over 700 dollars during this service for Choir Meals. During Lent we collected "Move out" Packages for Emmanuel House. As a congregation we continue to support Bridges to Hope by having a congregational member sit on their board as well as collect items for the food bank.

During Advent we continue to collect items for the Just Us Women's Centre, Emmanuel House, and Naomi Centre and the UCW provide a meal to the participants of the Pottle Centre. Gower has a history of involvement with community outreach through the Seniors' Socials Ministry. Volunteers from our congregation and in particular the Men's Club provide transportation to and from the socials.

Each year Gower hosts the Stella's Circle Alternative Service in our sanctuary and a turkey supper in the lecture hall. Rev. Pamela writes the liturgy for this service and also presides during this worship. This event provides a moving experience of worship and a lovely meal for participants of the organization.

Our church is a vendor for Olive Oil, soap, dates and Za'atar, all products of Palestine. These items are all Fair trade products and proceeds benefit farmers and children living in occupied Palestine as they create awareness for peace. The Gower Young People's Choir continue to perform during Advent at a Retirement Home in the city.

The Gower Community Band hosts a Pops Concert two times a year to help make beautiful music accessible to all in our community. The Gower Senior Choir have been invited to perform in other worship venues in the city.

Each week, worship continues to be planned and written with social justice beneath its layers. Inclusive language is always used and special Sunday's such as Climate Change Sunday and Hope for a Winter's Night (mental health awareness gathering) continue to engage and push congregational members to move beyond the walls of the sanctuary with mission and their role in social justice issues of our time.

In our journey as a faith community we must always be discerning who and how we are to be in our neighborhood, community and world. This is our mission and our call, a part of serving others, loving our neighbor and following the social gospel of Jesus Christ.