Competencies of a Well-Formed Stewardship Leader

A Guide for Roster Candidates

Stewardship of Life Institute

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## Competencies of a Well-Formed Stewardship Leader

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Introduction

Competencies in a well-formed stewardship leader

By invitation of the Blue Ribbon Committee in its Report on Mission Funding (amended and approved at the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in August 2007), the Stewardship of Life Institute was engaged to address specific recommendations related to seminary education, internship and First Call Theological Education in the ELCA. This document has resulted from the efforts of a work group appointed by the SOLI board and has been reviewed and favorably received by the ELCA seminaries and by the Mission Funding Interpretation Team, a committee of stewardship leaders convened by Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson. The following competencies are offered to the church for guidance and advice in forming and supporting effective, healthy, missional rostered leaders. It aims to give them clear perspectives around personal habits and confident leadership skills in stewardship.

This list assumes that every leader in the ELCA grounds stewardship leadership behaviors in beliefs about his/her relationship with God. The core perspectives column reflects beliefs; the core practices column reflects the leader’s personal behaviors; and the core leadership skills column reflects the behaviors the leader uses to lead others.

We offer these competencies as a way of thinking about what attributes or assets a well-formed stewardship leader would possess. This list is meant to be a guide rather than a rule. We offer it to all those who work with leadership formation in this church, in particular to seminaries and those who work with roster candidates. However, we believe it can help calibrate stewardship health for all of us who lead, no matter where we are in years of service to the church.

How to Use this Guide

This guide is designed to help roster candidates in their internship year to think theologically and practically about issues of stewardship in their personal lives and in the future ministry settings.

The guide identifies six essential competencies that rostered leaders should possess in order to guide their faith communities in matters of stewardship in members’ lives and faith community.

Each of the six competencies is identified as a simple declarative statement and is supported in three aspects: Core perspectives, core practices and core leadership skills.

Each statement, core perspective, core practice and core leadership skill is followed by an assortment of discussion questions, suggested readings, suggested DVDs and action steps.

Working with his or her supervisor, the roster candidates should consider each section carefully and thoughtfully over the course of the internship experience.
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Trusts in God’s Abundance

**PERSPECTIVE/BELIEF**

As caretakers of all that we have and are, we are called and freed to participate in and with God’s generosity for the sake of the health of the whole.

- Make and keep a working inventory of all that God has given you in the following categories: Possessions/wealth, family/relationships, education, health, life opportunities, personal gifts, character, growing edges. Maintain the list, refining it, adding categories as needed.
- How is God’s abundance and generosity reflected in your inventory of gifts?
- What does it mean to be a “caretaker” of all these gifts? What are qualities of a good caretaker?
- Reflecting on your life, how has God called and freed you? In terms of want and need, to what has God called you? In terms of your wants and needs, what are specific ways you are held in bondage? From what has God freed you? Has that made a difference in your life? Why?
- What does it mean to participate in and with God’s generosity? List specific ways that you have done this? How could you do better in the future?
- Why is it important that all we do is “for the sake of the health of the whole”? The whole what?
- As you reflect on your calling, develop a “mission statement” arising from this belief.

**CORE PRACTICES**

In her or his personal life, the roster candidate embodies an attitude of abundance rather than scarcity.

- How would you define an “attitude of scarcity”? What are the characteristics of this attitude? If one is acting out of an attitude of scarcity what behaviors might they exhibit? What are some specific ways our consumer society promotes an attitude of scarcity? Why? Who benefits by this attitude?
- How would you define an “attitude of abundance”? What are its characteristics? What are behaviors that arise from someone acting out of this attitude? How does the Gospel call us to abundance? Why? Who benefits?

In her or his personal life, the roster candidate embodies generosity and sustainability in his or her stewardship practice.

- How would you define generosity? What term would you use to describe the opposite of generosity? One who embodies generosity? One who embodies the opposite? What is the relationship between a generous person and his or her worldly possessions? Of the person who is not generous? What motivates a person to be generous? One who is not?
- What do you think are the principal barriers to becoming a person of generosity? How can a person break down those barriers? How does the Gospel call us to become generous people? List several passages of Scripture where God calls us to be people of generosity.
- List five ways that you, personally, can embody generosity. How can you publicly model this for the people you will serve as a rostered leader?
Why is sustainability important, especially in today's world? Especially in our North American culture? Especially in your own life? In your own congregation?

What are the behaviors that typify unsustainability in a culture? In a person? What do you think are the underlying attitudes of those behaviors? The underlying assumptions?

What behaviors would typify sustainability in a culture? What are the underlying attitudes and assumptions of sustainability?

In what ways does the Gospel call us to live with sustainability? Can you think of passages of Scripture where God calls us to live with sustainability?

What are the connections between generosity and sustainability?

In her or his personal life, the roster candidate embodies ongoing assessment of the integrity of his or her choices, and attends to personal attitudes and practices.

How would you understand “integrity” in the choices you make? Why is it important? What is the opposite of “integrity” in this context? If you are not maintaining integrity in your choices, what consequences and problems arise? If you maintain integrity, what benefits accrue?

What, specifically, are the personal attitudes and practices that would go into good stewardship choices? Make a list of those you already do and a list of those you need to work on.

What would “ongoing assessment” look like? Why is it important? How would you go about doing this ongoing assessment?

**For Action:** Draft a “Statement of Integrity for Stewardship Choices” that describes the kind of choices you believe would embody trust in God’s abundance, generosity and sustainability. List the specific choices, attitudes and practices you believe you need to follow in order to live with integrity in this matter. Review the statement regularly (you decide what regularly means) and evaluate your integrity of choices.

**CORE LEADERSHIP SKILLS**

As a leader, the roster candidate can motivate a faith community’s stewardship journey through mission interpretation and gratitude for partnership.


How would you describe “mission interpretation”? How can it motivate a faith community in its stewardship journey? How can you inspire a faith community to understand their response to God’s abundance as a “stewardship journey”? What does mission interpretation mean in the specific context of your future rostered ministry?

Describe your own “stewardship journey”? What barriers have you needed to overcome, and how have you overcome them? What has helped you along the way? Have you interpreted your own mission? If so, how? If not, how would doing so assist you as a leader?

How do you understand “gratitude for partnership” in ministry? How has it inspired your own stewardship journey? How can you use it to motivate a faith community on their own stewardship journey?

**For Action:** Write an essay, “My Own Stewardship Journey.” Include in it how God has worked in your life, as well as your continuing work and growing edges. Reflect on how you interpret your own mission and what role, if any, gratitude for partnership has or can play.

As a leader, the roster candidate can reframe conversation to highlight assets (not just money).

Referring to your gift inventory from the first part of this section, what are the non-monetary assets that God has given you in your life? Are those assets more important, less important or of
equal importance to your monetary/material assets? Why? Which assets would Jesus say are more important? Why? What passages from Scripture support this idea?

-In what way do all church leaders have ongoing conversations with members of their faith community? In addition to personal, one-on-one interactions, what are specific ways this ongoing conversation takes place? Why are these conversations important? Why is it important that these conversations continue open-ended?

As a leader, the roster candidate can cast a vision for a vital future.

What does it mean to cast a vision? A church leader does this in many ways. Can you list the most important ones? How have church leaders in your life cast a vision for you? How did Jesus cast a vision for a vital future for disciples of his time? For disciples of all times and places? Can you think of passages of Scripture that show this?

-What is meant by “vital future”? What vision of a vital future brought you to where you are today? Did someone cast that vision for you? What was most important in that vision for you? Concretely, what would a “vital future” mean for the people of the faith community you are serving now? How can you cast a vision for a vital future?

A well-formed stewardship leader ...

Grounds in Biblical & Theological Principles

Stewardship is grounded in biblical and theological principles (Trinitarian orientation).

-The ELCA Constitution declares, “This church accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life” (2.03.).

-What does it mean that we view the Bible as the “inspired Word of God”? The “authoritative source and norm” of our ministries?

-Why is it important that we see Scripture as the “authoritative source and norm” of the church? What does this mean to you in your future ministry? How do you now use the Bible in your day-to-day decisions, as well as your planning and thinking? How will you use it in your ministry? How would you go about seeking the Bible’s guidance on stewardship belief and practice?

-It’s been said that Christ talked more about money and economics than he did about salvation. Would you agree? How can you use the Gospels to guide your practice and preaching about monetary stewardship? For stewardship of other areas, such as health, faith, gifts, etc.?

-How would you define “theological principles”? Of course, there are inappropriate theological principles about stewardship (such as the “prosperity gospel”) and appropriate theological principles (such as “proportional giving”). How would you determine which are appropriate and inappropriate? What role would the Bible play in your deliberations?

-What theologians inspire and inform your sense of calling and mission? What do they have to say about stewardship in its many forms?

-For Action: Research and compile a list of key Scripture passages that would inform your personal stewardship behaviors and proclamation. Research, also, the teachings of your favorite
theologians on issues of stewardship. Consider those teachings in light of the key Scripture passages. Finally, from the foregoing, formulate key Bible-based theological principles for your stewardship practices and proclamation.

**CORE PRACTICES**

In her or his personal life, the roster candidate embodies an ability to listen to and interpret all of Scripture with an ear for stewardship themes.


- **Do you read the Bible as a regular part of your spiritual life?** If so, how? Is there a method or system that guides your choice of passages? Is your practice adequate for studying a wide range of Holy Scripture? If not, why not? What would be a good method for your practice?

- **Looking at your key Bible-based theological principles for stewardship, how can you use them as a sort of “lens” through which you can interpret all of Scripture with an ear for stewardship themes?**

- **For Action:** Using some method or system, study Scripture daily and look for stewardship themes that emerge from the passages. For assistance, see “Stewardship Sermon Starters,” which are stewardship explorations of the weekly Sunday texts of the Revised Common Lectionary. They may be found at [www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Discipleship/Stewardship/stewardshipnow_sermonstarters.aspx](http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Discipleship/Stewardship/stewardshipnow_sermonstarters.aspx).

In her or his personal life, the roster candidate embodies an awareness of the history of stewardship in the life of the church.

- **Reading Suggestion:** *A Brief History of American Stewardship,* by The Rev. Dr. William O. Avery, stewardship professor at Gettysburg Seminary. It’s available at [www.stewardshipoflife.org](http://www.stewardshipoflife.org).

- **How did you, personally, become aware of stewardship issues?** How was it taught in your church when you were growing up? What is the stewardship history of the congregation where you belong now, or where you serve? Now, as a roster candidate, do you think stewardship was/is handled well at these sites? Why or why not?

- **Given your current knowledge and growing awareness of biblical and theological stewardship principles, how will you change your personal stewardship practices and public proclamation?**

**CORE LEADERSHIP SKILLS**

As a leader, the roster candidate can teach and preach Scripture from a holistic stewardship orientation.


- **Reading Suggestion:** Stewardship sermons archived at The Stewardship of Life Institute website, [www.stewardshipoflife.org](http://www.stewardshipoflife.org), and Luther Seminary’s Stewardship for the 21st Century, [www.luthersem.edu/stewardship/](http://www.luthersem.edu/stewardship/).


- **What is the difference between “stewardship” as it is commonly thought of, and “holistic stewardship”?** Why is it that most people don’t think of “holistic stewardship” when they hear
about “stewardship”? Healthy eating, regular exercise, responsible personal finance, healthy relationships and self-care are all concepts that many people have adopted in their lives without realizing they are part of “holistic stewardship.” Can you think of other concepts from your own life? Make and keep a list, periodically reflecting on it and adding as needed.

-Taking just one aspect of holistic stewardship, healthy eating, you see forces pushing against it in our North American culture. Readily available junk food and fast food, as well as incessant advertising for fatty snacks and sugary beverages, make it harder to eat healthfully. Going through your list above, consider the barriers to living with “holistic stewardship.”

-For Action: In the second half of internship, preach one sermon on stewardship, lead a Bible study on Stewardship, and write a newsletter article with a stewardship focus.

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Holds a Holistic Perspective

PERCEPTIVE/BELIEF

We are stewards of our whole lives, including our time, energy, wisdom, bodies, money and other resources.

-Review your inventory of gifts from the first section. If you are like most people, you think of yourself as the owner of these gifts. What difference does it make if you think of yourself as the steward of these gifts that are actually entrusted to you by God?
-If you are the steward of gifts, for what purpose has God given them to you? What does God expect us to do with our gifts? What is the highest and best use? What are other uses?

-For Action: Reflecting on God’s purposes for entrusting you with your many gifts, formulate a philosophy of holistic stewardship that can guide your daily life.

CORE PRACTICES

In her or his personal life, the roster candidate embodies a total response to the Gospel that does not compartmentalize faith, and this includes care of the earth, money, family, communal relationships and self-care.

-What does the term “compartmentalization” mean to you? What are the consequences of compartmentalization in faith and in life? What words would describe a life that is highly compartmentalized? Looking at the lives of famous (and infamous) people, can you think of a person for whom compartmentalization was a problem? How would his/her (or anyone’s) life be improved with less compartmentalization?
-Do you think compartmentalization of our lives is the norm or the exception in North American culture? Why? Does compartmentalization come naturally to human beings? If so, why? If not, why then do so many of us tend to lead compartmentalized lives?

-Think of a term that means the opposite of compartmentalization. Do you think the Gospel calls us to live less compartmentalized? How? Can you find specific Scripture passages to inspire or support this view?
-What do you think is meant by a “total response to the Gospel”? What would that look like in your life? In anyone’s life? How does one achieve a total response to the Gospel? Do you think a total response to the Gospel would negate compartmentalization? How?
-Does faith development and spiritual maturity play a role in de-compartmentalizing our lives? If so, what role? How can a wise church, or a wise pastor, help people to develop and mature spiritually? Why is it important that they try? Is there any other more important task?
**CORE LEADERSHIP SKILLS**

As a leader, the roster candidate can articulate his or her personal stewardship journey.

-What do you think is meant by a personal stewardship journey? How is it related to your own journey of faith? Make a list of all the “journeys” you have made or are making in response to the Gospel of Christ? Where does your personal stewardship journey fit in? Do we make multiple journeys all at once? How do we juggle it all?

-Is it possible to articulate something you yourself are unclear about? Why, then, is it important that you pay attention to your personal stewardship journey?

-If you were on a journey across country, how would you know which direction to take if you did not have an end destination? And if you had a destination, how would you know where you are at any given time? What signs would you watch for? How would you use maps, a compass, a GPS or other resources? Do you have a “destination” for your personal stewardship journey? If not, how do you know where you are headed? If you do have a destination, how do you know where you are on that journey? What are the signs and markers? What is your GPS (that is, God Positioning System)?

-What are all the ways you can articulate your journey besides talking or writing about it? If you are talking or writing about it, what are some creative ways or places to do it?

As a leader, the roster candidate can help others articulate their personal stewardship journeys.

-Do most people give any thought at all to their personal stewardship journeys? Why or why not? How important is awareness of a personal stewardship journey in the overall life of a follower of Christ? What are the principal barriers to awareness and introspection about our stewardship journey? How much of it is that people don’t see, and how much of it is that they won’t see? What’s the difference?

-If, from the preceding section you are more clear about your own personal stewardship journey, how can you now help the people you serve to understand their own? In addition to brilliant Bible studies, scintillating preaching and insightful conversation, what are specific ways you can go about inspiring people?

-For Action: Engage in intentional conversation with the supervisor about the “Wholeness Wheel” produced by ELCA Board of Pensions? (For information, go to the ELCA Board of Pensions website, www.elcabop.org/LiveWell/Wholenesswheel.aspx.)

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**Perceives Connectedness**

**PERSPECTIVE/BELIEF**

Stewardship is corporate; that is, it expresses a fundamental connectedness within the body of Christ (an inclusive ecclesiology, as in Paul’s collection for the church in Jerusalem).

-What is the difference between corporate and personal faith? Do you think most people think of their faith as strictly personal or strictly corporate? On a scale of 1 to 10, with one being strictly personal and 10 being strictly corporate, where do your own beliefs place you? Where do you think most of the people in your congregation are? Where do you think most of the Christians in North America? Why?
Consider the Lord’s Prayer both as given (Matthew 6:9-13) and as handed down to us today. What is the significance that Jesus instructs us to pray with pronouns in the first person plural — “Our Father,” not “My Father,” and “give us today our daily bread,” not “give me...”? Is our personal faith lived out most fully in the community of faithful people? What is the balance we draw between personal and corporate faith? Why is “corporate faith” so hard for many?

How would you describe the pervasive concept of “rugged individualism” in the American psyche? How is it expressed in popular media, advertising and politics? How can it present a barrier to thinking communally about problems and issues? Looking at the political controversies of the United States in the Obama age, how does “rugged individualism” contribute to resistance to thinking of the common good over personal good? How does this mindset translate into the stewardship lives of our church members?

What is the significance of Paul’s collection for the saints of Jerusalem (Romans 15:25-27, 1 Corinthians 16:1-3)? What can we learn from it? How can it inform our own sense of community when it comes to stewardship?

CORE PRACTICES

In her or his personal life, the roster candidate embodies a sense of responsibility to peers and the wider church regarding personal stewardship practices.

If one person throws an empty soda bottle from the window of a car, how much of a problem is that? If everyone threw all their empty soda bottles from the windows of their cars, what kind of a problem would that create? How does this hypothetical scenario illustrate the value of one’s own personal responsibility as a counterbalance to the personal irresponsibility of others? Roadside litter and non-recycling are subjects of this illustration. What are other important issues that this sort of thinking could apply to in our civic lives? In our religious lives?

As a leader in rostered ministry, how can you encourage, inspire and educate people to see the impact, both negative and positive, that their personal choices have on others? Can this awareness alone encourage people to do the right thing? What else might be needed?

What is your personal witness when it comes to stewardship practices? Do you tithe? Do you recycle? Do you use compact fluorescent bulbs in your home? Do you volunteer, for example, at soup kitchens, homeless shelters, food pantries or after-school programs for needy children? Why or why not? How could these practices serve as a good example for others?

How do your actions (or non-actions) affect the lives of those in your community of faith? In the wider church? In the world?

For Action: Make a list of the things you (or anybody) can do to practice good stewardship. Come up with a mission statement to guide those practices.

In her or his personal life, the roster candidate embodies accountability for decisions and a commitment to collaboration/collegiality around his or her stewardship practice.

What does it mean to have accountability for decisions? How is it different than “embodying” accountability? What more is required for you to go from having accountability to embodying it? Can you think of at least five concrete ways you can help transform yourself from merely having accountability to embodying accountability?

Describe accountability in your life as a roster candidate. How will that change in the context of actually being a rostered leader?

What does collaboration and collegiality mean in the context of your future rostered ministry? How can you commit to collaboration and collegiality? What are concrete ways that commitment can be expressed in your future ministry setting?
**CORE LEADERSHIP SKILLS**

As a leader, the roster candidate can encourage in others both accountability for and openness to the gifts of a greater whole (both church and culture).

- **What is the role of your personal witness in encouraging others? What are the positive aspects of leading by example? Why is personal example more effective when it is accompanied by solid teaching and preaching? And why is solid teaching and preaching more effective when backed up by personal leadership?**
- **What are the limits of leadership-by-example, even when backed up by preaching and teaching? What do you do when people simply refuse to “go there” when it comes to stewardship (or any issue)? In this case, what options are available to a rostered leader of the church?**
- **When it comes to accountability, what are the blocks our culture places on greater openness? Are there especially difficult blocks in your particular context of internship? Might there be particular opportunities? Why are people reluctant to divulge financial information and be held accountable for their financial giving?**
- **Does your current ministry setting have an openness to the gifts of the greater whole, both in church and in culture? Do members see themselves as an isolated community, or part of the ELCA? Do they see themselves in fellowship with the billions of other Christians in the world? Does your congregation foster connections with other churches, whether Lutheran or other denominations? If so, what? If not, why not? If your congregation sees itself in isolation, does our culture’s bias against bureaucracy and institutions play a role in fostering this attitude?**

**For Action:** Think of a half dozen ways leaders could encourage the people in your ministry setting to see themselves more clearly as part of a greater Lutheran and worldwide church. Talk over those ideas with your supervisor.

**For Action:** Consider this hypothetical situation: Despite personal leadership-by-example and preaching and teaching, the people you serve seem “stuck” in their attitudes about accountability and openness to the gifts of a greater whole. Come up with four solutions or responses and discuss them with your supervisor.

As a leader, the roster candidate can make use of current stewardship resources and conversation.

- **Does your current ministry setting make use of any stewardship resources to equip, inspire or educate its people? If so, examine them. How current are they? Do they seem well suited to your ministry setting? Are they used “properly” or to the best possible advantage? What advice might you give your supervisor or other ministry leaders on using them better?**
- **If your current ministry setting is not, can you find out why through conversation with church leaders? If they have had a bad experience with stewardship resources, can you think of ways to use them more effectively in the future?**

**For Action:** Explore the range of resources and materials available by searching church stewardship websites, your synod resource center or other churches. Recommend a program, plan or resource that you believe would fit your ministry setting. Talk it over with your supervisor.

**For Action:** Participate in the congregation’s budgeting process, with attention to the process for including the wider church in the budget.
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Engages and Critiques Culture

**PERSPECTIVE/BELIEF**

Stewardship is missiology. We give through the church, not to the church. Non-church agencies/initiatives can and do align with God’s purposes.

- What is missiology to you? What is it to your ministry context? In what specific ways is stewardship missiology? Do you think the people in your ministry context readily understand this? How could you teach them?
- With missiology in mind, what’s the distinction between giving through the church and giving to the church? Do you think the people in your ministry context readily understand this? How could you teach them?
- How do non-church agencies and initiatives align themselves with God’s purposes? What are the non-church agencies and initiatives that your ministry comes in contact with? How do they align themselves with God’s purposes? How can you underscore the common purposes of your ministry context and those non-church agencies?

**CORE PRACTICES**

In her or his personal life, the roster candidate embodies an ability to speak of economic systems and the realities of business with some sophistication.

- Did they teach you much about business and economic systems in seminary? If so, is it adequate? Where might a church leader turn to stay reasonably well informed about developments in business and economics? Considering your current ministry context, how much “sophistication” in business and economics do you need? How much do you envision you would need for your future rostered ministry?
- When you read the Bible, do you see the critique of worldly economics and business sense? For example, Matthew 6:19-32? How can the Bible complement your understanding of modern business and economics, in order that you can critique them from a faith perspective?
- **For Action**: If you do not already, become a regular consumer of business and economic information. For instance, regularly look over the business sections of a daily newspaper, newsweekly or news website, or watch business programming on television. Engage in conversation with business owners or leaders in your circle of friends or ministry setting.

In her or his personal life, the roster candidate embodies a reflective stance towards consumer culture.

- What is your place in our “Shop-till-you-drop” culture? Are you a shopper/dropper? Do you have a significant amount of credit card debt? Do you have more stuff than you are sometimes comfortable with? What would Jesus say about your consumption habits? Are you able to look at the consumer culture with enough distance to be reflective? If not, what can you do to gain perspective?
- **For Action**: Many today are caught in the traps of consumerism. From the list of “underlying assumptions” below, discuss how each contributes to consumer excesses and leads people down the wrong path. Formulate a “Christian” corollary that would rebut each one.
In her or his personal life, the roster candidate embodies a commitment to understanding the implications of our choices (both commission and omission) for the generations that follow us.

**Reading Suggestion:** Cry of Creation: A Call for Climate Justice. This provides a good look at the climate change issue from a faith perspective and shows how decisions of humanity may impact future generations. A collaboration of the National Council of Churches in Christ and the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, it can be found online at www.gwipl.org/documents/CryofCreation.pdf.

**Viewing Suggestion:** The 11th Hour. This DVD, narrated by Leonardo DiCaprio, outlines the many world problems coming to a crisis point — and how our choices today can affect tomorrow. The DVD contains a special section on how we can live more thoughtfully.

Why is it important that we act today with a thought for tomorrow? What’s at stake? If the “Rapture” enthusiasts are correct and Jesus’ second coming is immanent, isn’t it unimportant for us to worry about future generations? Martin Luther famously said that if he knew Jesus was coming tomorrow he would plant a tree. Why is this a more responsible attitude?

**For Action:** Lead Bible studies and other teaching sessions about problems affecting us today that have generational implications, including climate change (Cry of Creation contains some great material), world debt, pollution, overpopulation, militarization, nuclear proliferation, etc.

In her or his personal life, the roster candidate embodies a prophetic concern about present injustice as well as the long-term sustainability of our decisions and systems.

**Viewing Suggestion:** An Inconvenient Truth is Al Gore’s Oscar-winning documentary about climate change. Available on DVD, the program raises significant questions about current human behavior and the future of our planet.

**Reading Suggestion:** Check out the work of Bill McKibben, a longtime Christian environmental writer and prophetic voice in the green movement. His website, www.billmckibben.com, provides links to a number of articles that speak of complex issues in understandable language.

How do you define the terms “justice” and “injustice” in the context of environmental and economic issues? As followers of Jesus Christ, why should we care about justice issues? As followers of Jesus Christ, how should we respond?

What is the difference between ordinary concern and prophetic concern? Why is it desirable that the rostered leaders of our church have prophetic concern? How can we express our concern in our lives? In our churches? In our world?

**CORE LEADERSHIP SKILLS**

As a leader, the roster candidate can frame questions insightfully: How is God at work here? What is God providing for the work before us?

-Computer programmers have a saying: “Garbage in, garbage out.” If the program is junky, the results are junky, too. As it applies to this leadership skill, why is it important that we frame
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Embraces Financial Health as an Expression of Faith

**PERSPECTIVE/BELIEF**

Our relationship with money is an integral part of our relationship with God.

**Reading Suggestion:** 1 Timothy 6:6-11.

6 Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; 7 for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; 8 but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. 9 But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains. 11 But as for you, person of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness.

This powerful passage talks quite clearly about a Christian’s approach to money. It is appropriate for both personal reflection and teaching in a Bible study.

-What is the connection between our relationship with money and our relationship with God?

-Does our relationship with God touch upon all the other relationships in our life? Why or why not? If Jesus warns us in Matthew 6:24 that we cannot serve both God and money, how can our
relationship with money be an integral part of our relationship with God?

CORE PRACTICES

In her or his personal life, the roster candidate embodies transparency with self and others regarding her or his relationship with money.

- What does transparency mean to you? What would a rostered leader hope to achieve through transparency? Why would it be desirable? How would transparency assist the rostered leader in leading-by-example, preaching or teaching on economic issues?

- Candidates for public office release their tax returns to their constituents. Should a rostered leader have to divulge his or her tax forms? Given that a rostered leader’s salary and benefits are generally listed in the congregation’s annual budget, what more transparency would be needed? Besides disclosing dollar figures, what can a rostered leader do to become more transparent in her or his finances?

In her or his personal life, the roster candidate embodies a daily dying and rising to the power of money in his or her life, including an understanding of her or his family, church and community histories.

- The wording of this core practice echoes the section of the Small Catechism in which Martin Luther described the meaning of baptism in this way: “It signifies that the old person in us with all sins and evil desires is to be drowned and die through daily sorrow for sin and through repentance, and on the other hand that daily a new person is to come forth and rise up to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.”

- What does it mean to drown daily to sin and rise again? What gives us “sorrow for sin”? By whose power do we repent? By whose power do we drown to sin? By whose power do we rise up again? How, then, does a faithful Christian achieve all this?

- How would you describe the power of money in your life? In your family? In your faith community? In our culture? How does the power of money lead us to sin? What can we do about that?

- For Action: With your supervisor, complete a money autobiography within the first two months of internship. A number of denominations offer them, including the United Methodist Church, whose money autobiography is reproduced by permission and appended at the end of this guide.

- For Action: Establish a goal of at least one conversation a month in which the topic of one’s relationship with money as a spiritual issue is included in the course of conversation.

CORE LEADERSHIP SKILLS

As a leader, the roster candidate can foster a climate that supports others as they daily die and rise to the power of money in their lives (saving, spending and giving).

- Even though there are some truly poor and struggling people in North America, many of our neighbors who are middle class or wealthier struggle despite earning good incomes. For them it’s not a matter of earning enough for their needs, but allowing their wants to outstrip their available income. Do you agree with this analysis? Do you think most people who make a sufficient amount of money to meet their needs are satisfied, or do they desire more? What forces in our culture lead them to desire more and more? How would their lives be improved if they could be inspired to live within their means?

- Looking at the Bible, what Scripture passages support being satisfied with one’s income, so long as basic needs are met? (1 Timothy 6:6-11 can help here. Are there others?)
As a leader, the roster candidate can assess a congregation’s money/finance/stewardship culture (ethics, transparency, etc.)

- How can the awareness of your own attitudes and behaviors about money, finance, stewardship, etc., lead you better to assess your congregation’s attitudes and behaviors? Unless you yourself have done the work of self-assessment, how can you possibly hope to assess your congregation’s attitudes and behaviors about money?
- Looking at your own work in this booklet and other resources, can you describe how your own attitudes and behaviors about money were transformed? Would this process work for other people as well? Why or why not? How could you use your personal journey as a way to teach, preach or inspire others to take the journey as well?

As a leader, the roster candidate can comprehend how the basics of congregational finance (budgeting, balance sheets, risk management, etc.), impact the mission of a congregation.

- Reading Suggestion: Developing a Ministry Based Church Budget, a detailed guide from the Louisiana Baptist Convention: www.lbc.org/uploadedFiles/Ministries/Communications/Ministry_Areas/StewardshipCP/howto_church_budget.pdf.
- Does the congregation you serve have a mission statement? How is it made known, publicized or published? Do members of the congregation know what it is? If so, do they take it seriously? If not, why don’t they know it? If not, what do they think is the mission of the congregation?
- What’s the difference between mission and maintenance? When money becomes tight, which is more likely to be sacrificed: mission or maintenance? Why?
- What is the difference between the church’s operating expenses and its money for mission? If you look at the budget of a congregation, what criteria would you use to determine if an expense simply maintains the church or if it supports the mission of the church?
- For Action: Working with your finance officers and supervisor, learn how to read a congregational budget sheet. Demonstrate that ability and offer a plan or “go to” guide a congregation’s budgeting process.
Writing A Money Autobiography

by Dan R. Dick

Why Should I Write a Money Autobiography?

Writing a money autobiography is a challenging and illuminating process that can be crucial to our ability to grow as Christian disciples and live faithfully as Christian stewards. Although Christian stewardship always involves much more than money, our relationship to money and material possessions helps to define who we are, what we value, what we believe, and how we live. For much of our society, it is impossible to imagine a world without money.

All people of faith live in relationship to money and material wealth. As an issue of faith, Jesus speaks more about money than any other topic, save the kingdom of God. More than prayer, more than sin, more than salvation, more than forgiveness or love, Jesus teaches and preaches about our relationship with money. This emphasis indicates that a healthy understanding about our relationship to money and possessions is essential if we are to realize our full potential as children of God. Trustworthiness in our relationship to money is a first step toward faithfulness in all things.

What Is a Money Autobiography?

A money autobiography is a reflection process on the role and influence of money and material possessions in our lives. It challenges us to explore the past to see how our attitudes, assumptions, and values concerning money and wealth were formed. The money autobiography provides a lens through which we examine how we manage money and how money manages us. It allows us the opportunity to wrestle with our needs, wants, and desires and helps us understand the lifestyle choices we make. It can even help us set some priorities and goals for the future. What we pursue says a lot about who we are, and the way we order our priorities says a lot about what we believe.

A money autobiography can be any length. It may grow as the years progress. The questions provided here are intended to stimulate your thinking and provoke deep response. Feelings are as important as thoughts. Don't try to analyze your thinking; instead, capture the thoughts and feelings as they emerge. You will have time to reflect on your answers in more depth later. As you encounter the questions, pay attention to your first reactions and the feelings that emerge. Allow yourself to "re-experience" some of the significant money events of your past and present life.

How Do I Write a Money Autobiography?

The format of this money autobiography is designed for a month of reflection — four weeks each with a unique theme and daily questions for reflection. However, you may choose to reflect on these questions in a more condensed format. In either case, it is highly recommended that you create a money autobiography in which to record your thoughts, reflections, feelings, and observations. Many people return to their money autobiography months and years after the initial experience.
Week 1: Formative Questions

Day 1: What is your earliest memory of money?
Day 2: What is your happiest memory in connection with money?
Day 3: What is your unhappiest money memory?
Day 4: What attitudes did your parents and other family members have about money?
Day 5: Did you feel rich, poor, or neither growing up? Did you worry about money when you were a child? A teenager?
Day 6: Where did your money come from? (Did you work for it, receive an allowance, have your parents buy you things?)
Day 7: Who governed how you related to money; that is, how you spent money, saved money, gave money to charity or church?

Week 2: Values Questions

Day 1: In what ways are you a spender? A saver? In what ways are you generous? Stingy?
Day 2: Although money can't buy happiness, what are some of the things money can buy that bring happiness?
Day 3: What do you like best about money? What do you like least about money?
Day 4: What things in life are worth more than money? In what ways does your lifestyle reflect the relative importance of these things to money?
Day 5: How has your gender influenced your thinking about money? What differences do you observe in the way men and women relate to money?
Day 6: Which of the following words best communicate your attitudes and feelings about money? Why?

Money is . . .

Power security hope love
pleasure prestige dirty value
anxiety identity a tool freedom
protection evil comfort fun

Day 7: Reflect on times when you have given to meet the needs of another. How did you feel? Reflect on times when you were on the receiving end of a gift. How did you feel?

Week 3: Management Questions

Day 1: In what ways are you a good manager of money? In what ways are you a poor manager of money?
Day 2: How do you feel about talking about your finances with other people? Why do you feel this way?
Day 3: Do you use credit cards? Do you pay the monthly balances in full? How does buying on credit make you feel? Why?
Day 4: How much money do you wish you had in the bank/invested? How did you arrive at this figure? How close is this amount to what you actually have?
Day 5: How much money do you give to church and charity? Do you tithe? How do you decide how much to give? How do you decide where to give?
Day 6: Do you have a personal budget? Why? How do you make decisions about what to spend, what to save, and what to give?
Day 7: What are your greatest financial concerns? How have you made decisions concerning retirement, insurance, drafting a will, and so on? If you have not made these decisions, why not?
**Week 4: Lifestyle Questions**

**Day 1:** Does the fact that two-thirds of the earth’s population lives below the U.S. poverty line affect your attitude toward money? If so, how? If not, why not?

**Day 2:** How do you feel when people approach you for money on the street? How do you feel when you receive phone solicitations for charitable contributions?

**Day 3:** Which of the following words best describe you and why?

- affluent
- comfortable
- average
- poor
- struggling
- wealthy
- balanced
- working class
- impoverished

**Day 4:** What kind of legacy would you like to leave when you die? Of your worldly possessions, what would you leave to whom and why?

**Day 5:** One strong theme of both Jewish and Christian faith is that wealth is given for the common good of the whole community. What does this mean to you? Does anyone other than you have a legitimate claim to your money and possessions?

**Day 6:** In what ways does your relationship with money affect your faith? In what ways does your faith affect your relationship with money?

**Day 7:** In what ways do you feel your relationship with money is a spiritual issue? What does it mean to you to be a good steward?

**HOW DO I USE A MONEY AUTOBIOGRAPHY?**

Answering these questions for reflection is just one way to begin to reflect deeply on the place of money and material possessions in your life. The money autobiography is a tool for your benefit. No one else needs to see what you have written; however, many people have found that sharing the autobiography with a close friend, counselor, pastor, or teacher is particularly beneficial. Many of these questions are ideal for small-group discussions, Sunday school class discussions, or covenant group conversations. An objective set of eyes may see what we do not. Often, the next, deeper level of exploration comes through the incisive and insightful questions of another person. Your decision to share this information is left to your discretion.

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