



STEWARDSHIP *for the 21ST CENTURY*

Wednesday, November 23, 2011



Promoting your endowment

Greetings,

Many congregations have an endowment fund. Some of these have received many gifts. Others languish for lack of support. This week's email offers the story of one congregation that has energized its endowment through very creative means.

Blessings,

Chick Lane
Director of the Center for Stewardship Leaders
Luther Seminary

Promoting your endowment

Chick Lane

"We have agreed that an endowment fund is a good idea. Documents have been carefully drawn up and carefully filed away. The congregation has been made aware of the existence of the fund and has voted its approval. Now it is time for the gifts to come pouring in. Unfortunately, the last step in the process didn't happen. Some gifts indeed were given, but not enough for the endowment to grow quickly to the level that would lead to significant amounts of money being given away."

The above paragraph could easily be written of many congregations. It is actually a description of what happened in the early days of the endowment fund at St. Philip's Lutheran Church in Fridley, Minn.



Two members of St. Philip's recognized the problem and began to consider ways to raise the visibility of the fund. Greg Rosholt and Ralph Petersen talked and what began to emerge was the St. Philip's Legacy Circle, a beautiful legacy donor board.

A design was created that reflected existing features of the church and would provide a tangible element to represent the intangible concept of the endowment fund. It would also have space for the names of donors to the fund. The design has different kinds of wood formed in an ellipse affixed to an oak background.

Each piece of the twelve different kinds of wood is of a different size and different thickness, just like each gift to the endowment fund is different in size and purpose. Each gift is appreciated and together they make a significant piece. The ellipse is never ending, a symbol of eternity, since many of the gifts are held in perpetuity. Various other symbols of perpetual giving and Christian stewardship are also incorporated into the design.

Plaques are affixed inside the ellipse with the names of those who have either named the endowment fund in their estate plans, or have given a gift of \$1,000 or more to the fund. The Legacy Circle is prominently positioned in the St. Philip's building so that most people who attend worship or other events see the Legacy Circle on a regular basis. Now, the fund coexists with annual giving in a symbiotic relationship. Each has enhanced the other. In the three years since the Legacy Circle was created, current and deferred gifts to the endowment fund have tripled.

As I have worked with congregations, I have observed many with the problem that St. Philip's faced—a well-defined endowment fund that was under-utilized, perhaps because it was under-promoted. St. Philip's experience raises for each congregation the questions, "What have we done to promote our endowment fund?" and "What could we do to promote our endowment fund?" and "How does our endowment fund fit into our larger stewardship opportunities?"

Does this sound like it may work for your congregation? If you would like more information on the Legacy Circle concept, design and construction contact Ralph Petersen at rakkpete@msn.com.