

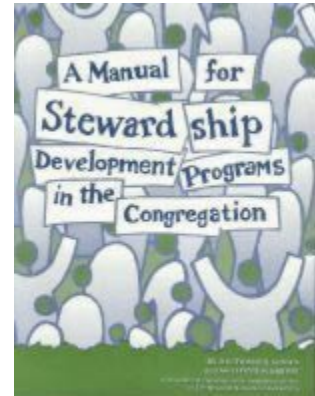
# Episcopal Diocese of West Texas

## Seven Truths about Financial Development Programs by The Rev. J. Hugh Magers

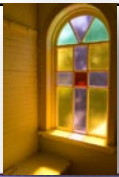
### Preface to Second Edition of

*A Manual for Stewardship Development Programs in the Congregation*

I have been actively involved in stewardship ministries in the Episcopal Church during more than 30 years as a parish priest, a diocesan ecclesiocrat, and a national officer for both stewardship and evangelism. During that time, I have become ever more convinced of the validity of the following **seven truths concerning financial development programs** in the church, in particular, and stewardship development programs, in general.



1. **The first place to look for money is in the heart, not the wallet.** In my experience, about 75% of the annual income of the typical congregation comes from 12 to 15% of the members. These folks also do most of the ministry of the church. They usually can talk about the ways that they have known God in their lives. The amount of giving is not connected to the amount of money that they have. There are rich and poor, stingy people. Generous people come in all economic categories. The key to stimulating the primary givers is to keep a steady supply of stories of lives saved and changed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That means that the Gospel is being preached, taught, lived, and that peoples' lives are being changed.
2. **Most people find it hard to talk about God and money.** God and money are both wonderful and powerful. Most people are so afraid of them that they can't talk about them. So we need to create arenas where it is safe to do so. I have found that small groups and studying the Bible can, with prayer and over time, talk about God and money. I have also found that unless this conversation takes place, there will be no basic change in giving patterns.
3. **Though it stirs folks up, we still have to talk about the tithe.** God has every right to require the tithe. I see no mention in Ho Scripture G d asking us what we think about it. The irony is that most folk who submit themselves to that discipline find it to be a rewarding and uplifting practice. I have a friend who says: "God and I can do together more with 90% of my money than I can do on my own with 100%." I personally don't believe that God blesses those who tithe in special ways. But while I don't believe it, my experience confirms it. The word "tithe" occurs 67 times in the Scriptures. Indeed, about one-third of Jesus' parables deal with money. In fact, Jesus makes reference to the tithe in Matthew 23:23 in a most powerful way. If someone wants to fight the tithe, they have to fight the Bible.
4. **We aren't saved because we give money to God.** Salvation is a gift from God's grace that comes through faith (itself a gift from God). We enter life in grace through our Baptisms and our claiming of Jesus as Savior and our submission to his Lordship. We grow in grace through steady participation in worship and ministry. Giving will not affect your salvation. Salvation will definitely affect your giving.
5. **Everyone is already doing the very best they can.** Everyone is already giving everything they can, given their spiritual health. In fact, your giving rate is a pretty



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good indicator of your spiritual health. Whatever you give, give it with joy. The difference between what you give and what God wants you to give is made up by Jesus in the same way that Jesus bridges our sinfulness and God's holiness.

6. **Yes, we really do need to sign pledge cards.** At one level, a pledge card is merely an act of kindness to the vestry and treasurer since it enables them to plan a budget. But at a deeper level, people who pledge feel like they belong to the Church. So pledging is an identity or community statement. At the deepest level, a pledge card is the only document that most of us sign every year saying that we claim Jesus as Savior and submit our lives to his Lordship.
7. **If you are not smiling when you sign your pledge card, you have filled in the wrong amount.** You have pledged too much or too little. Give a happy amount!
8. **How we bring these truths into the culture and common practice in our congregations will vary.** Some will be more successful than others. A Manual for Stewardship Development Programs in the Congregation can be of invaluable assistance. Much of the content of this manual is material that has accumulated over 15+ years of practical experience throughout the Church. I am delighted that The Episcopal Network for Stewardship, Inc. (TENS), together with our publishing partner, Morehouse Publishing, is taking a leadership role in continuing to make this material available. TENS emerged out of an enthusiasm for wanting to continue a consistent, quality ministry with those called to lead stewardship programs in their parish and diocese to become an important resource for the Church. TENS is a membership organization and everyone's participation is encouraged. I am pleased to commend A Manual for Stewardship Development Programs in the Congregation (and the accompanying five workbooks) to your attention and use.

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*Hugh Magers, a retired priest from the Diocese of West Texas, is formerly the director of Stewardship at the Episcopal Church Center. Now he serves on the Board of Directors of The Episcopal Network for Stewardship, and as a consultant to dioceses and parishes on stewardship, evangelism and Hispanic Ministry Development.*