



## CENTER FOR FAITH AND GIVING 2021 RESOURCE

### CREATED TO BE AT STEWARD

### AN INTRODUCTION

Last year (2020) was quite a year! A global pandemic, civil unrest, and a sense that the United States of America was a country deeply divided were constantly in front of us. We didn't worship together in many congregations for months – some have yet to return to their sanctuaries that they left *last* March. The Center for Faith and Giving in partnership with the Ecumenical Stewardship Center prepared complete resources for 2020 (Faithful Hopeful Loving) and released them in early January. By April, it was clear that some of what we created was not going to work in the new reality COVID-19 had brought to our doorsteps. Preaching resources, small group materials, planning calendars, and suggestions for event preparations were no longer relevant when we got to September and the time most congregations would attempt to begin annual campaigns for the support of regular operations.

Two weeks into 2021, not much has changed in the world around us. While there is great hope that before we get to the end of the third quarter we may be back to holding public gatherings without great restrictions, we simply don't know. And whenever our public life begins to return to that which is more familiar, many things will have changed. Some congregations will discover they have lost members, community influence, and financial resources. The people who once occupied our pews may decide they prefer to worship, at least part of the time, from home. Relationships, which depend on contact and interaction, will have changed, impacting youth groups, Sunday school classes, and social circles. All of this is to say that financial stewardship in this environment is going to continue to be a challenge.

To meet these changing circumstances, the Center for Faith and Giving determined that “business as usual” for resourcing stewardship was simply not going to work. We made these significant decisions. 1) The broader themes of stewardship need to be reintroduced to our congregations so that we can approach this important topic in its true nature as spiritual discipline and being about more than money. 2) The resources needed to develop in “real time” (as much as is practical) to reflect the dynamic nature of the circumstance in which we find ourselves. 3) These materials should be free to any church that wants them so that as many congregations as possible can benefit from these resources. 4) The resources needed to be created by people who are currently (or have recently served) in the parish so as to reflect the understanding of someone facing the same challenges as those using the materials. 5) Each installment (quarter) will be different, unique, and reflect the author's design and emphasis, rather than conform to a rigid format.

The overall design will build dynamically over the course of the year, by quarter. The first theme (January, February, March) will be on self-care. Reverend Linda Parker is the author this first unit. The second quarter (April, May, June) will focus on earth-care. Reverends Carol Devine and Scott Hardin-Nieri, of Disciples Green Chalice, are creating these resources which should come on-line in mid-March. Third quarter materials (July August September) will feature more traditional elements related to financial stewardship. Reverend Janet Long has been tapped to craft these ideas in the (hopefully) post-Covid fall and are planned for a mid-June release. In the fourth quarter, the focus turns to sharing the gospel and our own story as interwoven with God's story. The designer of these materials, available in September, is yet to be named.

Generally, each unit will contain reflections for the preaching minister, resources for a small group discussion, suggestions for interacting with children, and worship elements. Given the freedom we are giving our contributors, expect that these will differ each quarter. If one set of materials does not fully address your concerns, try the next unit which will likely take a different approach. These are not to simply be "out of the box" resources, but rather tools from which you can create something specific and useful for your context.

The biggest benefit we see from this process is that you will be invited to comment on, and contribute to, the resource as it builds through the course of the year. This will strengthen the effort and allow us to learn from each other.

We will be accepting donations throughout the year at [Give Online](#) so that resources like this will be available in the future! For a answers to frequently asked questions, follow this link: [FAQ](#)