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### *Stewardship Stories*

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Telling and sharing stories is one way we all grow and strengthen “stewardship” in our lives. Stories help us remember, know and practice how Christian stewards live their lives for God’s purposes, at church AND out there in the world.

Following are a few questions that may help you invite people to share their stories. With permission, use the stories they share with you in temple talks, newsletter articles, sermons and other imaginative ways in your congregation.

- “Tell about a time, when you were young, that you learned about “generosity” in an important way: . . .”
- “Tell a story about how you take care of something (or someone) that other folks might not think is important: . . .”
- “Write a little bit about a time when you learned, perhaps the hard way, what happens when you waste something: . . .”
- “Tell some parts of a story that illustrate how you learned that nothing really ‘belongs’ to you: . . .”
- “Write about a time when someone else learned about being a steward from your example: . . .”

- “Tell about an ‘invisible steward’ you have noticed out in the world, someone who’s doing God’s will but is hardly noticed by others.”
- “Recall a moment or experience in this congregation when you realized how ‘stewardship’ really made sense for the way you could live your life: . . .”

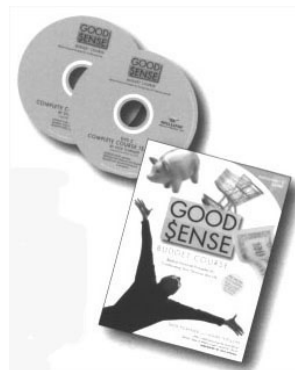
Your imagination will bring other questions to mind that invite people to share their stewardship stories so that together you can learn about the ways God’s Spirit strengthens the daily lives of Christians.

Try asking one of these questions at a coffee hour, or on a home visit with a shut-in, or even with a visitor to your congregation. Listen and get permission to share the story with others.

This and other resources are a part of the ELCA “*Stewardship Assessment Tool*” a resource available through your Stewardship Specialist.

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### NEW “GOOD SENSE”



Small Group Version now available. For use in small groups, Sunday study groups.

The Region 1 web has a link to this Willow Creek resource.

## Who Is Your Competition?

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Your competition is the culture!" emphasized Nathan Dungan. "It is not the church down the street."

The culture pushes spending. The culture pushes an i-pod based self-worth. We are into consumption big time as a culture. The relentless push to consumption is focused primarily on children who are targets for 'brand imprinting for future actualization' another way to say, "If we get them hooked now, they'll be consumer addicts for life!"

As a parent I resonated strongly to Nathan's message. With children just barely into the teens and younger I struggle to find some balance between needs and wants, 'got'ta have' versus 'got enough,' 'must be hip' versus 'it's got enough zip.'

Nathan Dungan, author of *"Prodigal Sons & Material Girls: How Not to Be Your Child's ATM,"* brought his message of '**Share-Save-Spend**' just in time for the 2005 holiday season when Americans spend more than at any other time of the year. The Christmas season is a time of certain anxiousness as the list of wanted gifts is balanced against the deeper Christian message of God's saving love and peace.

Nathan challenged parents and congregation leaders to recognize and accept our role in living and teaching a different approach to stuff, consumption, money and the 'security' of things.

To every trend there is a counter-trend and this counter-trend, Nathan invited those who attended his seminar to understand, is first and foremost a spiritual counter-trend that is centered in 'SHARING' as a primary value in human community. It is no accident therefore that Nathan's mantra goes, "SHARE – Save –

Spend." Did you notice the emphasis on the SHARE?

Nathan's advice is not simply a 'shut the world out!' message, which is not a Christian message at its core. Rather, Nathan advocates for a competent, skilled and value-based response to the push of the culture. Three thousand advertising messages a day invite our young people to spend – spend – spend. The Christian message comes back: "Share – Share – Share."

Through <http://www.sharesavespend.com/> Nathan offers a variety of resources including a weekly e-newsletter to stimulate creative conversation about the 'counter-trend' that is building among people of faith as well as society in general. This is one arena in which the church can become a strong leader and ally with others helping to shape a new world for the families of tomorrow.

Every counter-trend starts somewhere. You can be part of shaping a faith and values based alternative for families of tomorrow so they grow beyond the struggle and heartache of those caught in the grip of today's consumerism. Your competition is not the other church. It's the new i-pod that is all the rage this year!

