

ONE FAITH - ONE FAMILY - ONE ENVELOPE

by Rev. Thomas Soltis, SELC Stewardship Director

Multiple Funds

Some congregations provide multiple envelopes for various needs. One congregation actually placed one extra envelope per month in the monthly newsletter to support seminaries, Armed Services Commission, Lutheran Haven, World Relief, etc. In addition various funds were formed to support organ upkeep, the Altar Guild, soup kitchen, youth, Sunday School, etc. Multiple fund solicitations can sometimes become a hassle for givers to decide whether to or how much. In addition some important causes might be shortchanged. The practice may also detract from the principles of Biblical giving by focusing on “needs” rather than a motivating love for Christ and proportionate (percentage of income) giving from personal financial resources.



After a 65 year history of a multiple fund envelope system, St. Luke Lutheran Church, Cabot, PA, Rev. Barry Keurulainen, Pastor, decided to engage a one envelope system based on a unified budget. All funds supported in the past were placed into the church budget to be funded via one envelope. After studying the Scriptures regarding Biblical giving, the congregation’s stewardship committee proposed the change which took effect July 1, 2014. It was generally well received.

Questions

Q. Can I still give to the food pantry or other special causes I support?

A. With a one envelope system, you will still be supporting the pantry and other personal choices. They will be budgeted line items in the budget.

Q. What would be the advantage in changing to a one envelope unified budget system?

A. Biblical giving is simplified. In January, simply project a percentage of your anticipated annual income to be contributed (hopefully a 10% tithe). Then divide by 52 weeks and regularly

place the amount in the weekly envelope, knowing that your church, other important causes and your personal choices will be supported.

Biblical Giving

- > **Love Motivated** - 2 Cor. 8:8
- > **Proportionate** (% of Income) - 1 Cor. 16:2
- > **Tithe** (10% of income) - Matt. 23:23
- > **Regular** (Every Sunday) - 1 Cor. 16:2
- > **Cheerful** (Exuberant) - 2 Cor. 9:7
- > **First-fruit** (Funding God First) - Prov. 3:9
- > **Willing** - 2 Cor. 8:12
- > **Thankful** - 2 Cor. 9:12
- > **Generous** - 2 Cor. 8:2; 2 Cor. 9:11

Financial Reporting

Some congregations print a brief report in the Sunday bulletin comparing receipts to the budget. Again, the practice encourages “need” as a motivator when love for Christ should be the only motivator. Needs are simply indicators of where to express one’s love for Christ. Bulletin financial reports, if negative, could produce depressed, defeatist, perhaps even conflicting feelings among members. If the reports prove positive, members could be tempted to reduce their giving. Some congregations also publish the amounts of special gifts in remembrance of departed loved ones, wedding anniversaries, birthdays, etc. The names of donors and special occasions should be printed. But not the amounts. (Matt. 6:3) Years ago some congregations printed an annual “scandal sheet” listing names and amounts. Thankfully, this has generally been replaced by a “contribution analysis report”, consisting of two columns - one listing the number of members and the other weekly amounts contributed in \$10 increments. Not knowing who gave what personally, nurtures a sense of equality and oneness among parishioners and prevents bad feelings regarding importance.

Wrong Motives for Giving

- > **Pride:** Giving for self recognition
- > **Embarrass Poorer Givers into Giving More**
- > **Selfishness:** Giving to earn forgiveness or favors
- > **Greed:** Giving to get material gain

RELATED RESOURCES

www.selc.lcms.org - Stewardship

Personal: “*Haphazard vs. Biblical Giving*”
Cong. Helps: “*Reporting Contributions*”