

Worship Brainstorming Summary

“Treasure”

Tues., September 20, 2022 at LHUMC
October 9-30, 2022 (4 Sundays)

Members present: Diane Thompson, Pastor Mary Ivanov, Betty Kinney, Dave Booth, Jean Kelly, Sue Baranowski, Ed Baranowski, Karen Booth



2022 Theme: The Spiritual Journey Continues...

- Picking up the pieces
- Connecting the pieces
- Transformation
- Serving others (passionately)

Stewardship helps us recognize the relationship we have with God and our “stuff,” including the Good News (yes – evangelism aka the “E” word). How does our faith in Jesus show in our caring for God’s gifts as stewards?

2022 theme connection: The pieces of our lives will never fit together into the whole without generosity in its many forms.

Synopsis: Using a part of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6, we’ll explore the challenge of his words, *“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”* Does our treasure follow our hearts, or does our heart follow our treasure? We’d like to think that our hearts do the leading, but usually it’s the other way around. How do we invest our gifts in the things that last and matter?

NOTE: We used this resource in 2018. What’s different now?

- We’re further into the future as a merged congregation (six years instead of two).
- We’ve received a legacy gift from a community member/steward in 2019 that will bless us far into the future. We’ve always been stewards of God’s gifts, but this gift calls us to be faithful stewards on behalf of someone who was a faithful steward.
 - **Discussion points:** 1) It seems likely that the donor was practiced generosity consistently. 2) We are not expecting a church split, but what would happen to the funds?
- We’ve navigated through a global pandemic without major financial struggles. How is that possible? There has to be a high level of trust, commitment, connection, and community for faithful stewardship to continue. Generosity is a core value, and sharing financial information freely is helpful.

- **Discussion points:** 1) Our 2020 finance chair, Larry Swisher, responded by immediately suggesting that we hold off on expenses as much as possible. 2) We already had electronic giving in place. Many members did mail in their offering or drop it off in person, often to our mailbox. Thankfully, we never lost any of it. Suggestion: Could we have a locked box for dropping off offerings? Ed and Sue's last church did this. 3) Pastor Mary's weekly communications and members' calls kept our congregation informed. The building was closed, but the church remained open. 4) We've been very transparent about all of our finances and committed to creating a workable budget. 5) We are glad that financial literacy is now a high school requirement.
- We're in the middle of concerns around the economy. How do those concerns stand up against Biblical wisdom to trust in God rather than money? How do we fight the temptation to hoard rather than to cultivate generosity?
 - **Discussion point:** Last week alone, Pastor Mary handed out the equivalent of \$1,000 in discretionary funds to cover basic needs like rent, utilities, and groceries.
- We're doing this series in community with the congregations at Central, Temple, White Lake, and Community UMCs and will participate in a pulpit swap on October 23.

Resources

Treasure by Jacob Armstrong and online resources like www.umc.org

- When the shovel finally hits something solid, will all the time, energy, and money spent to find the treasure uncover our heart's desire?
- Jesus cares most about our hearts, and he knows that our treasure is directly related to where our hearts are.
- Our hearts always follow our treasure. Jesus cared about our treasure because he cared about our hearts.
- We have to talk about finances if we want to talk about faith; they are connected.
- What do you want to invest in? What are you invested in?
- How do we find contentment?

The Sower: Redefining the Ministry of Raising Kingdom Resources

by R. Scott Rodin & Gary G. Hoag (used in Pastor Mary's class focused on financial stewardship and giving)

- Shift from transaction to transformation. **Related activity:** Let Pastor Mary know if you are willing to share your personal stories.
- Move from two-kingdom **bondage** to one-Kingdom freedom

- **Discussion point:** The author uses the term “bondage” to describe our ties to money. How do we feel about that?
- Focus on cultivating hearts that will joyously become stewards
 - From the owner to the steward
 - Relationship with God, self, neighbor, and creation
- Grow as a sower

Definition of **stewardship**: reflecting our Creator God through whole, redeemed relationships (with God, self, neighbor, and creation), and glorifying God by practicing in each [relationship] the ongoing work the steward.

- Can Jesus liberate us from the love of money? How do we find joy in generosity?
- Giving is a spiritual discipline.
- Adam Morris says, “Generous giving is a result of God’s work in people...true generosity flows from **transformed hearts** as they are conformed to the image of Christ who is generous.” We want to move from transaction to transformation. We don’t have to master the practice of generosity before we experience the rewards. Sometimes it means starting small – and being intentional and regular in our giving. (A good image is a mosaic – small pieces make something beautiful.)
- We plant the seeds, but God makes things grow. I Corinthians 3: 1-9
- How do we become rich toward God?
- Stewardship and sanctification go together – growing in holiness of heart and life. God is concerned with who we are and how we’re growing in faith and trust. Faithful stewardship draws us closer to God.
- How many of us spend time praying and seeking God in the area of giving and/or making a faith commitment?
- Stewardship invites us to participate in involvement, instruction, intercession, and investment.
- Richard Foster: “God’s ownership of everything also changes the kind of question we ask in giving. Rather than ‘How much of my money should I give to God?’ we learn to ask ‘How much of God’s money should I keep for myself?’ The difference between these two questions is of monumental proportions.”

Stages of Giving from Wesley K. Willmer:

- *Imitator* – childlike, mimic examples of giving when shown or instructed
- *Modeler* – takes beliefs and moral values literally with perception of God formed by friends, sporadic giving with an example to follow
- *Conformer* – faith is basis for love, acceptance, and identity, giving shaped by relationships, giving is the thing to do with some benefits (recognition, taxes, personal gain)

- *Individual* – begins to own faith and personally examine/question beliefs, proportional giving, can be a danger in pride and wondering why others don't give more
- *Generous Giver* – has an individualized faith and practice of giving and is interested in developing faith in others, recognizes that all we have is from God, joyful giving
- *Mature Steward* – focuses on God in giving and recognizes role as a steward of God's gifts, treasures in heaven, daily bread

The Spirituality of Fund-Raising by Henri J.M. Nouwen (used in Pastor Mary's class focused on financial stewardship and giving)

- How do we invite people to invest energy, prayers, and money in our mission, vision, and values? This is not begging, but inviting people others to join in God's work with us.
- This is a change (maybe even a conversion) in how we understand and relate to our resources.
- Our family life has influenced our relationship with money. Did we ever talk about it?
 - **Discussion points:** 1) Few of us heard many direct conversations about money growing up, although there were plenty of signs of that our parents were quite frugal with money. Dave's parents even paid cash for their home, finally installing carpet and other non-essentials once they had money to pay for it. The Booths tried to teach their kids to set aside 10% for retirement, 10% for giving, and live on the remaining 80%. 2) Credit card debt is a given in many households. How many people understand the real cost of using credit cards, especially when making the minimum payments? 3) Instant gratification. 4) Struggles with keeping up with others. 5) Giving kids too much. 6) Keeping money secrets is particularly hard when aging parents need care and the "kids" don't have any idea about their parents' finances. 7) Related story: Betty's son-in-law didn't know he was the executor of his father's estate. It was terrible sorting out the whole mess. Betty has a "I'm Dead. Now What?" book ready for her kids so they don't have the same mess. 8) When Jean's mother had a pelvic fracture at the age of 80, she had 24 hours to find a care facility. 9) Importance of having a will: No wonder we see so many advertisements for estate planning (David Carrier ads). The church deals with family problems around death. Consider hosting an event in the near future to help people "get their crap together" (Pastor Mary's words). Topics: Discussing finances and end of life plans with family before there is a problem. Estate planning. Funeral plans. Health care decisions. Durable power of attorney. Estate executor. Will location.

- Gratitude flows from the recognition that who we are and what we have are gifts to be received and shared.

Related ideas

Social media posts – tweets:

- #1 - We often think our treasure follows our hearts. Jesus says the opposite! Our hearts will follow our treasure. #treasure
- #2 - Where do you want to invest your treasure (your time, energy, and money)? Where are you currently investing? #treasure
- #3 - You can't serve God and money. How many masters are you serving? #treasure
- #4 - Investing our treasure in the things of God allows us to be a part of things bigger than ourselves. #treasure
- #5 - The closer we get to God, the more we are compelled to give away. #treasure
- #6 - Jesus sings his "don't worry song" over us. #treasure

Visuals: Treasure map, treasure chest, lock and key

Media:

We did not preview any videos as a group or talk about them except for the SNL skit.

- There are short worship videos available to use each week (less than 1 minute). Graphics from 2018 are also available with each week's video.
 - [Promo video](#)
 - [Week #1](#)
 - [Week #2](#)
 - [Week #3](#)
 - [Week #4](#)
- ["All Saints."](#) The movie is based on the inspiring true story of salesman-turned-pastor Michael Spurlock (John Corbett), the tiny church he was ordered to shut down, and a group of refugees from Southeast Asia. Together, they risked everything to plant seeds for a future that might just save them all.
- Do we want to have a movie night in October?
- "Saturday Night Live skit – Don't Buy Stuff." Length: 2:46 (trim to 2:17). Cost: Free. Web license: Probably not. The sure-fire way to get out of debt. First aired 02/04/06. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R3ZJKN_5M44. **Related hand-on item:** "Credit" card.

Activities: Five Small Steps Toward Generosity are from The ReImagine Group, *16 Creative Ways to Think about Stewardship and Generosity, No Offering Plate Required* ([available as a PDF on our website](#)).

- *Make a Blessings Tree:* Encourage our community to think about resources we can give other than money. Provide "leaves" for them to write the resource on and hang from a branch.

- *Give a Weekly Challenge to Live Generously:* Print simple acts of service as a challenge each week to take a small step toward thinking more generously including some specific to our community. Other, more general challenges can be used; such as, open the door for someone, look someone in the eyes, smile and say “hello,” take a neighbor a baked treat, or invite someone you would not usually to dinner.
- *Random Acts of Kindness Card:* Consider sharing stories on FaceBook.
- Encourage individuals and/or families to take a life inventory by asking “How could God better use our resources?”

Music: *Change My Heart, O God* (FWS 2152); *Freely, Freely* (UMH 389); *Seek Ye First* (UMH 405); *Everything and Nothing Less*

Social Justice Issue for October 2022: Gun Violence

Lynne’s Stewardship Pinterest Board

<https://www.pinterest.com/lynandlid/stewardship-series/>

October 9, 2022: “Where Is Your Treasure?”

18th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture: Matthew 6: 19-21 (MSG) **We are using The Message paraphrase to bring a fresh hearing/perspective to the readings.**

A Life of God-Worship

¹⁹⁻²¹ “Don’t hoard treasure down here where it gets eaten by moths and corroded by rust or—worse!—stolen by burglars. Stockpile treasure in heaven, where it’s safe from moth and rust and burglars. It’s obvious, isn’t it? The place where your treasure is, is the place you will most want to be, and end up being.

Synopsis: Sometimes the things we value and love most get the least of our time, attention, and money. Jesus said that our hearts follow our treasure – not the other way around! How do we find true contentment, making sure that our time, energy, and money are invested in ways that connect us to God?

Felt need: To rethink our relationship to what we have and how we spend our time, energy, and money

Visuals: Beach (from the Treasure – Week 1 video). [Examples from 2018.](#)

Hands-on item:

Activity:

Media possibilities:

- “Generosity Prayer.” Length: 1:50. Cost: Free with subscription. Web license: Yes. May we pursue righteousness and Godliness, for our hope is not in wealth. Our hope

is in God, our provider. <https://www.playbackmedia.com/mini-movies/119443/generosity-prayer>

- “A Sound Investment.” Length: 3:32. Cost: \$19.99. Web license: Probably not. It’s a usual day at the financial planning office... until a man comes in looking for investments that will last for eternity. <https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/49539/a-sound-investment>
- “Today We Give.” Length: 1:25. Cost: Free with subscription. Web license: Yes. Using scripture from Matthew 6: 19-21, this reflective mini-movie is a statement from us to God expressing the heart behind why we give. <https://www.playbackmedia.com/mini-movies/63990/today-we-give>

Music:

Children’s Time:

Social media:

[From Elizabeth Krogh:](#)

One lesson from Mary Poppins is knowing the difference between the value of money and its worth. We don't often stop to think about "value," but it is explained brilliantly to young Michael Banks by Mr. Northbrook who, during a chance encounter at the bank, gives Jane and Michael each a coin:

Michael: *I know the value of this: sixpence.*

Northbrook: *No, that's its worth. Its value's in how you spend it. Do good, and may you have good luck.*

It's easy to forget that **we are sending daily messages about what we value based on where and how we spend our money.** If no one valued that morning cup of coffee, there would be no Starbucks. If no one valued entertainment, there would be no movie theaters, no Hollywood, no Netflix. Open your last bank statement (a novel concept in our paperless/ online world). [What messages are you sending based on how and where you spend your money? Are those the messages you intended to send?](#) ← Key questions

NOTES: Storing up treasure on earth is opposite of being rich toward God. (See Luke 12: 13-21 and I Timothy 6: 17-19). Heavenly treasure doesn’t decline in value.

Discussion points: 1) Value vs. worth – see Mary Poppins illustration, above. 2) Dave Ramsey has a good deal to say about saving money. Imagine how much more individuals would have if they didn’t spend at least \$5/day on coffee at Starbucks. 3) Dave would encourage young patients to stop smoking by looking at how many millions of dollars they would have at retirement if they saved the money spent on cigarettes. 4) Bank and credit card statements show our true priorities. 5) Jean noted how much she saved while Covid was rampant – no impulse buys. She has always been careful to pace spending if she anticipates a large purchase, like a car, in the

foreseeable future. 6) Ed has taught some finance courses. It was frustrating to see the lack of organization around finances in so many households. 7) How has online shopping changed the way we use and view money? 8) Working from home has helped people save gas money.

October 16, 2022: “The Problem with Two Masters”

19th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture: Matthew 6: 24 (MSG)

²⁴ “You can’t worship two gods at once. Loving one god, you’ll end up hating the other. Adoration of one feeds contempt for the other. You can’t worship God and Money both.

Synopsis: We often feel conflicted in our lives because so many things seek our attention and our devotion. Jesus said you can’t serve two masters. Most of us are trying to serve a lot more than two! How can we serve God well so that other things fall into place and our hearts find true rest? **Are we willing to let go of money in order to follow God?**

Felt need: To put God first and follow the command to avoid idolatry

Visuals: City backdrop (from Treasure – Week 2 video). [Examples from 2018.](#)

Hands-on item:

Activity:

Media possibilities:

- “God and Money: Who Rules Your Heart?” Length: 2:12. Cost: \$20.00. Web license: Yes. The purpose of the mini-movie is to ask questions that get people thinking about their money and why they give. <https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/49385/god-and-money-who-rules-your-heart>
- “The Truth about Money.” Length: 3:03. Cost: \$19.99. Web license: Probably not. Culture has a lot to say about money, but what does the Bible have to say? <https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/60874/the-truth-about-money>
- “American Nightmare.” Length: 3:02. Cost: Free with subscription. Web license: Yes. A spoken word rap that presents a powerful message about the meaning of success and the dangers of falling in love with wealth and riches. Based on I timothy 6: 6-10. <https://www.playbackmedia.com/mini-movies/33785/american-nightmare>
- “Meet the Sanders: Bailout.” Length: 2:36. Cost: \$16.99. Web license: Yes. Jim and Joweena Sanders are broke and up to their eyeballs in debt. Here’s what not to do during an economic crisis. <https://skitguys.com/videos/meet-the-sanders-the-bailout>

Music:

Children’s Time:

Social media:

NOTES: Rick Warren: “Money has the greatest potential to replace God in your life...When Jesus is your Master, money serves you, but if money is your master, you become its slave.” (And it becomes an idol. – added by Pastor Mary. And it creates anxiety because we can’t seem to figure out when we have enough. – added by Karen Booth based on brainstorming discussion.)

Henri Nouwen: We cannot find security if our heart is divided.

Discussion points: 1) Bondage to money: Are we like Scrooge? Are we stingy, holding on tight to as much money as possible? Jesus says that it is the love of money, not money itself, that is evil. 2) Betty noted that athletes, coaches, and entertainers with crazy high salaries are not necessarily any happier than people with lesser means. How much is enough? 3) We are cautioned to not judge others. It is tempting to do so. 4) Positive example: José Andrés founded World Central Kitchen. According to their website, they are first to the frontlines, providing meals in response to humanitarian, climate, and community crises and building resilient food systems with locally led solutions. 5) Joel Osteen (Houston TX pastor, televangelist, and author) – prosperity gospel. 6) Jean was uncomfortable with how much money was spent on a Michigan International Speedway event. As a buyer for Meijer, she had been invited by a Valvoline rep. 7) Giving consistently and giving to God first are both transformative habits. 8) Turbo Tax shares data for “typical” tax returns for people with comparable. On average, the higher the income, the smaller the percent of income that is given away. 9) What about gambling? How many people are addicted and face financial ruin? Several of us know people affected by it. 10) Other problems: Online shopping (QVC). Scams soliciting donations.

October 23, 2022: “Giving Our Treasure Back to God”

20th Sunday after Pentecost

Pulpit Swap – Rev. Tim Dibble (White Lake UMC)

Scripture: Matthew 6: 1-6 (MSG)

The World Is Not a Stage

6 “Be especially careful when you are trying to be good so that you don’t make a performance out of it. It might be good theater, but the God who made you won’t be applauding.

²⁻⁴ “When you do something for someone else, don’t call attention to yourself. You’ve seen them in action, I’m sure—‘playactors’ I call them—treating prayer meeting and street corner alike as a stage, acting compassionate as long as someone is watching, playing to the crowds. They get applause, true, but that’s all they get. When you help someone out, don’t think about how it looks. Just do it—quietly and

unobtrusively. That is the way your God, who conceived you in love, working behind the scenes, helps you out.

Pray with Simplicity

⁵“And when you come before God, don’t turn that into a theatrical production either. All these people making a regular show out of their prayers, hoping for fifteen minutes of fame! Do you think God sits in a box seat?”

⁶“Here’s what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won’t be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace.”

Synopsis: We earn, spend, and (sometimes) save money. We also want to give, but sometimes giving is the last thought rather than our first. How do we hear Jesus’ call to humility in living and giving?

Felt need: To hear Jesus’ call to humility in living and giving

Visuals: Leaves for the “treasure tree.” [Examples from 2018.](#)

Hands-on item:

Activity:

Media possibilities:

- “Giving Inspiration.” Length: 2:10. Cost: Free with subscription. Web license: Yes. Living a life that is committed to giving is a powerful concept, especially when it’s focused on more than just money. <https://www.playbackmedia.com/mini-movies/86705/giving-inspiration-20>
- “Tithing.” Length: 1:57. Cost: \$15.00. Web license: Probably not. This is a video promoting the people to give back to God what He has giving to us. Tithing is an act of worship. <https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/43604/tithing>

Music:

Children’s Time:

Social media:

NOTES: Stewardship and sanctification go together – growing in holiness of heart and life. God is concerned with who we are and how we’re growing in faith and trust. Faithful stewardship draws us closer to God.

Discussion points: 1) *Mature Steward* – focuses on God in giving and recognizes role as a steward of God’s gifts, treasures in heaven, daily bread. Giving draws us closer to God and become more like him, i.e., generous, loving, and giving. 2) We are called to give in proportion to our income. There are examples of wealthy people who are generous: a) Oprah Winfrey – education and community outreach through her foundation. b) Dolly Parton – focus on literacy. c) Patagonia founder, Yvon Chouinard – focus on climate change and protecting undeveloped land around the globe. *The Chouinard family irrevocably transferred all the company’s voting stock into a newly established entity known as the Patagonia Purpose Trust in August. Sept. 14, 2022*

New York Times. 3) Stuff: Who wants to deal with it when we are gone? Will anyone want it?

October 30, 2022: “Don’t Worry ‘bout a Thing”
21st Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture: Matthew 6: 25-34 (MSG) **Key verses:** 30-34

²⁵⁻²⁶ “If you decide for God, living a life of God-worship, it follows that you don’t fuss about what’s on the table at mealtimes or whether the clothes in your closet are in fashion. There is far more to your life than the food you put in your stomach, more to your outer appearance than the clothes you hang on your body. Look at the birds, free and unfettered, not tied down to a job description, careless in the care of God. And you count far more to him than birds.

²⁷⁻²⁹ “Has anyone by fussing in front of the mirror ever gotten taller by so much as an inch? All this time and money wasted on fashion—do you think it makes that much difference? Instead of looking at the fashions, walk out into the fields and look at the wildflowers. They never primp or shop, but have you ever seen color and design quite like it? The ten best-dressed men and women in the country look shabby alongside them.

³⁰⁻³³ “If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers—most of which are never even seen—don’t you think he’ll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you? What I’m trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with *getting*, so you can respond to God’s *giving*. People who don’t know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don’t worry about missing out. You’ll find all your everyday human concerns will be met.

³⁴ “Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don’t get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes.

Synopsis: Worries about money are nothing new. Jesus knew that when he called us to stop worrying and remember that God cared for and provides for us. Do we trust God’s way of providing and willingly invest in God’s Kingdom work as a witness to the world?

Felt need: To offer our faith commitments with joy for 2023

Visuals: Birds. Lilies. A waterfall of worry (from the Treasures – Week 4 video). [Examples from 2018.](#)

Hands-on item:

Activity:

Media possibilities:

- “Do Not Worry.” Length: 1:56. Cost: Free with subscription. Web license: Yes. Worry... In times like these, it seems so easy to be consumed by it. But what did Jesus say about worrying? Matthew 6: 25-33.
<https://www.playbackmedia.com/mini-movies/13284/do-not-worry>
- “Birds and Flowers.” Length: 2:55. Cost: \$15.00. Web license: Probably not. Jesus invites us to fend off worry by looking at the birds of the air and the flower of the field. <https://www.sermonspice.com/sermon-illustrations/61849/birds-and-flowers>

Music:

Children’s Time:

Social media:

NOTES: Do we give out of our surplus – or do we give sacrificially?

Discussion points: 1) It is easy to say, “don’t worry about money,” but not easy to do when you don’t have money for basic needs. 2) Context: Jesus was talking to people who were probably poor. Imagine him saying, “don’t worry.” 3) The poor are still with us. Some locally, just outside our stores, and some further away at the border. 4) Some worries are legitimate. What can we do to alleviate them? How do our choices contribute to alleviating or exacerbating the problems? 5) Tithing is giving ten percent to God. We can get there (and even beyond) by taking baby steps. 6) What happens when two people marry who have opposite spending habits? Some couples find it helpful to have a single joint account for most expenses and much small individual accounts to manage without their partner. 6) It is best if both partners in a marriage are in the loop on managing their money. 7) Envy isn’t helpful. We don’t need to keep up with others. Adjusting expectations helps us become content with what we have.