

Developing a Congregational Money Autobiography

An autobiography is a story about oneself. Has your congregation ever written a story about itself? It could be as simple as collecting the Presidents' Report each year and putting them in a book. It could also be a collection of thank you letters that individuals and organizations have written to your congregation over the years. A Money Autobiography focuses specifically on the principles, attitudes and practices related to the teaching and management of money in your congregation. How would this story read? Over the years there are probably several individuals who have played a key role in shaping this story.

An autobiography can be approached in many ways. One approach is to take a timeline from the founding date until today and mark key activities, teachings or memories that shaped the congregation's relationship with money. A second approach is to invite members to respond to the following questions and then create a narrative story based on their observations. Whichever approach you use, the following questions may help stimulate thinking.

1. What is your first memory of learning about what it means to be a steward in this congregation?
2. How was your relationship with money shaped by this learning?
3. What has been your most positive experience with money in the life of this congregation? What has made this experience so positive?
4. What has been your most negative experience with money in the life of this congregation? What has made this experience so negative?
5. How does your congregation recognize financial health as an expression of faith?
6. How would you describe the current financial status of your congregation?
7. What activities or events in your congregation shape the current relationship between money and mission or ministry in your congregation?
8. What messages do these activities or events send to different age groups in the congregation?
9. Is your congregation generous? If so, in what ways?
10. Are there events in the congregation's history that have impacted the congregation's relationship with money?
11. What have you learned about the relationship between money and being a steward in the last year through your congregation?
12. What positions or people have helped shape the understanding and use of money in your congregation?
13. What kinds of risks is your congregation willing to take with its financial resources?
14. How does your congregation teach people to have a healthy relationship with money?
15. How does your congregation teach people to be generous?

Reprinted and adapted with permission from Keith A. Mundy