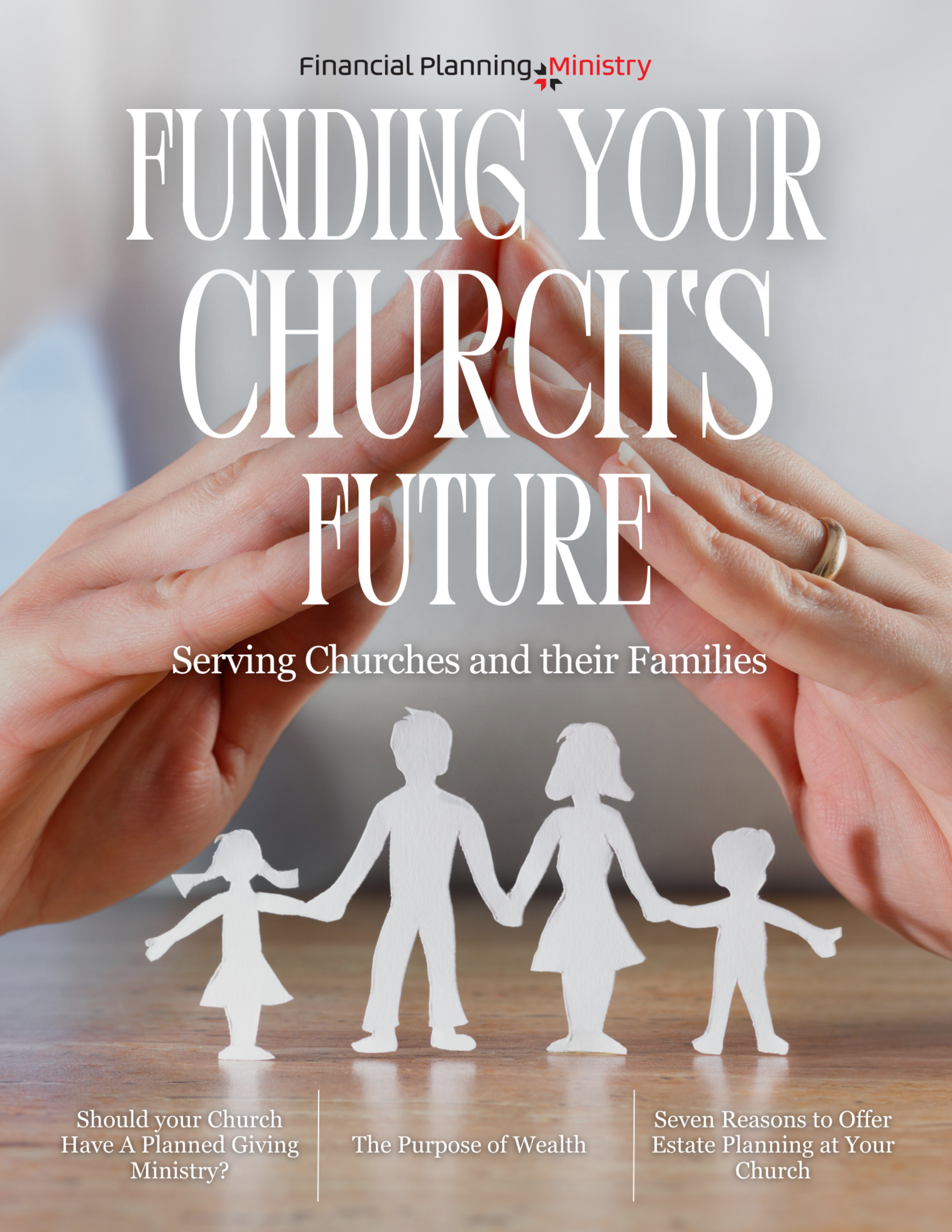
Financial Planning Ministry

FUNDING YOUR CHURCH'S FUTURE



Serving Churches and their Families

Should your Church Have A Planned Giving Ministry?

The Purpose of Wealth

Seven Reasons to Offer Estate Planning at Your Church

Should Your Church Have A Planned Giving Ministry?

Written by Clay Perkins & Leo Sabo

Planned giving is not for the faint at heart. Nevertheless, an increasing number of churches across America are hosting estate planning (wills and trusts) educational seminars. These churches are serving their members with essential end-of-life decisions while at the same time adding hundreds of thousands of dollars, even millions of dollars, of future gifts for ministry.

Understanding Estate Planning Ministry

It's not fund-raising.

Estate planning is not the same as fund-raising. Although fund-raising has its place and purpose for right-now ministry projects, estate planning is different. A planned giving ministry is kind of like a 25-year-old investing in their retirement funds while they barely have enough money to pay their bills today. Logic and reality tell us that most 25-year-olds do not have the fortitude to think strategically and long-term. Nevertheless, those few savvy 25-year-olds who do think long-term will undoubtedly reap the reward of a disciplined life.

Church leaders need to fund ministry today while considering the investment they can make to secure the future for the next generation of leaders that will follow. You can be like that savvy 25-year-old who thinks long-term and invests a little today to ensure the next generation's future.

It's about giving first, not receiving first.

An educational ministry in wills and trusts is about serving your members. **Did you know that over 60% of the families you minister to have no end-of-life documents?** No wills. No trusts. No health care directives. No guardianship directives. Loved ones left behind will most certainly face the frustration of not knowing for sure what the deceased would have wanted to happen to the estate left behind.

When there's no estate plan, families face the bureaucratic oversight of the deceased's estate known as Probate, which costs them time, money, control, and privacy, just to name a few. **Providing an estate planning ministry to your members is an act of generosity!**

What about "planned giving?"

Planned giving is an essential part of estate planning. Why? Because *"we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world." (1 Timothy 6:7)* Is this not what we believe and teach our church members? **Yet, most of our people will leave this earth having never been asked or challenged to consider what God would want them to do with the wealth they leave behind.** They will make their last gift, most likely the largest one-time gift of their life, and little to no portion of it will be given to fund God's work. Through an estate planning ministry, you can serve your people not only practically and financially but spiritually. You can educate them and provide them a way to store up their treasure in heaven, supporting the work of God by giving from their estate.

Planned giving is about *stewardship*.

As I have already mentioned, most of the families in your church will face Probate, either voluntarily or unbeknown. As their loved ones walk through this process, which could take nine months to two years, they will lose an average of 6-8% of the estate to probate fees. Even on a modest estate of $250,000, that's $17,500 in lost wealth. *"A sensible person sees danger and takes cover, but the inexperienced keep going and are punished." (Proverbs 22:3)* The cost of Probate is optional and unnecessary. Church leaders have the responsibility to equip God's people to steward all that's been entrusted to them faithfully. Would it not be better for each individual, and would the Lord not approve, if the wealth is used wisely and for the benefit of God's kingdom instead of being wasted?

Planned giving is preparing for the future.

More wealth will transfer in the next couple of decades than ever before in human history. Research tells us nine trillion dollars will transfer from one generation to the next in the next ten years. It's no wonder leaders of zoological societies, hospitals, research universities, etc., are active in educating their donors. Although I believe these are important institutions, I think The Church is more so, and its ability to accomplish its mission is in large part dependent on having the resources to do so.

If you'd like to learn how to provide this ministry to your people, talk to the experts at Financial Planning Ministry. FPM exists to fund ministry by educating families and facilitating generosity through planned giving. They provide a turnkey, plug-and-play option for you to serve your members. We know that together we can inspire biblical stewardship and generosity.

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The Purpose of Wealth

Written by D. Clay Perkins, Ph.D.

... Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things, Come and share your master's happiness! Matthew 25:21b (NIV)

It is an odd question for the son of a truck driver, who was the son of a sharecropper, to ask, but the question is valid: "*What is the purpose of wealth*?"

I understand there is a false presupposition that anyone who creates wealth is evil. This mindset comes from passages like "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10), which is true. Nevertheless, the same book presents the wealthy man as the hero in the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30). Also, Proverbs 13:22 reminds us that a "good man leaves an inheritance for their children's children."

"Indeed, the Jewish tradition views a person's quest for profit and wealth to be inherently moral."
— RABBI LAPIN

Somehow, most Judeo-Christians do not have such a noble view of wealth creation. Many Christians see wealth creation as inherently depraved. Perhaps that needs to change, since if one considers wealth creation morally reprehensible, then making money and building wealth become something to avoid rather than achieved. And, without wealth, many Christian endeavors would be unattainable.

So what is the purpose of wealth? One very materialistic view is "he who dies with the most toys wins." But, in truth, he who does die with the most toys still dies.

The "win" in wealth is not in toys. **The "win" in wealth is found in the purpose of money.**

What does God want us to do with our money?

God calls on us to give tithes and offerings (Malachi 3:7-12, Proverbs 3:9-10) to the local church. **One of the most worshipful things a believer ever does is give.** Giving is a matter of the heart. It is an act of love. We offer ourselves first, then give our wealth willingly, liberally, cheerfully, regularly, and proportionately (1 Corinthians 9:6-7 and 16:1-2, 2; 2 Corinthians 8:5, 12; 9:7). So **the "win" in wealth is that our giving is greater.**

God will often test us with our money. Be ready! (Luke 18 and 19, Joshua 7). There are many biblical examples of those who failed the test, and there are those who passed the test.

Will you pass the test?

Will you excel in the grace of giving? (2 Corinthians 2:8) Have you ever seen a U-Haul behind a hearse? Why do we try to keep that which we cannot keep? The win in a biblical understanding of wealth is passing the test.

God wants us to use our wealth to provide for our families (1 Timothy 5:8). **There is great satisfaction and joy in taking care of your immediate family and those in your church family.** I doubt anyone will ever recognize all the social welfare provided week after week by local houses of faith. The win in wealth is the ability to care for those you love.

Hospitality is opening your home to those you know and have deep relationships with and those with whom you have yet to build a friendship. **It is not about your home being extravagant or humble; it is about it being used to spread Christ's love (Romans 12:13).** Indeed, wealth allows us to practice the rich tradition of faith, providing for our family, and hosting friends in our homes.

Wealth allows us to fund Kingdom business (1 Kings 5-7; Luke 8:1-3). I look back at all the church expansions, Christian universities, missionaries, pregnancy centers, homeless shelters, medical missions, children's homes, etc. that I have had the joy to contribute to, and I smile. **There is great contentment in being a part of the expansion of God's Kingdom.**

While serving as an Executive Pastor, we were in a campaign. It was Sunday morning, and she made a beeline straight to me. I do not know how you feel, but when a church member on Sunday morning makes a beeline to me – often, it is not good news. She stopped, opened up her hands, and said – "The jerk left me years ago; it is about time this did something good again. " I looked and in her hand was the biggest diamond I had ever seen. So what did I do as Executive Pastor? I took it and sold it. And then we used it to fund the Kingdom.

Money matters. Wealth in the hands of a righteous man is noble. So whether you are a one-, two-, or five-talent person (Matthew 25:14-30), I pray you will be found faithful. I pray you will show an increase. May you hear the words, "Well done, you took what I gave you and created wealth."

Note: Adapted from the original publication, Perkins, D. C. (2017) *Stay Focused: Living right, Thinking right.*

Financial™ Planning Ministry

Seven Reasons to Offer Estate Planning at Your Church

Written by Clay Perkins & Donna Nicholson Stief

I serve on a medical missions board pro-bono. I confess that I am useless with medical terminology since I am not a medical doctor. Oh, well! I like serving with medical doctors because I love what they do and who they serve (and hey, it helps that they meet in great places that have great fishing!).

A dermatologist who serves on that board with me has become a great friend and fishing partner. A few years ago, after a day of lobster fishing, with him and one of his dermatologist friends, his friend dropped by my beach cottage unexpectedly. He wanted to know what I really do in ministry. Now mind you, I had told him multiple times! But now that I had his attention, I walked him through what Financial Planning Ministry (FPM) does. “We create end-of-life documents (wills and living trusts) that will help people take care of their families in a way that honors God.”

He was impressed to learn we have served 46,000+ families with $2.4 billion in expectancies in estate plans to fund God’s kingdom here on earth. He understood this, but then, with a perplexed look on his face, he stopped me and said, “I have a question.”

He explained that he was selling his medical practice and had just set up his estate plan. The lawyer and CPA that helped him had attended the same church as he for decades. Together, they served in the nursery, picked up trash in the parking lot, took care of the building, attended weekend services, worshiped together, etc. Frustrated and confused, He asked: “Why? Why did neither of those experts encourage me to give to my church in my estate plan? Of course, I would give to my church in my estate plan!”

At this point, I understood why he was perplexed. Unfortunately, I had no answer. What’s even more startling; this is all too common. It’s one thing for a non-Christian estate planner not to suggest considering your church and non-profit ministries that you care about, but this man was a Christian, a friend, and attended the same church. Now, this is not a criticism of him. It’s just a mindset that needs to be changed. And, as I said previously, this is all too common! But it doesn't have to be this way!

With the help of my friend, Donna Nicholson Stief (LCBC), below is a listing of *seven compelling reasons to consider offering an estate planning ministry to your church members* so that this same story does not happen to them.

1. Disciple Your Members: Help Christian Stewards become more like the "Image of God" that we were created.

We are created in the image of God. And God's generosity to us cannot be outdone. Since we are in His image, His desire is that we are also generous. Generosity is not just what we "do," but rather, who we "are." Ministers/Churches are intentional to provide structure for Christians to become more like God. The church disciples believers to steward their lives in a way that honors God, becoming more like Jesus, and live a life that is reflective of the image of their Heavenly Father.

Biblical stewardship and generosity transform the heart. God blesses our faith and trust when His children become generous people. By God's design, His children are to be conduits of the generosity He's given to us: to pour into others and advance the Kingdom. Think about it - God desires for His children to live open-handedly: to tithe, to give, and to be a conduit of His generosity.

Churches disciple their members to do that while they are living on this earth. But what they tend to forget is that a member's last act of stewardship should actually be decided <u>now</u>, while of sound mind, and then executed after their passing. What a noble task when the church offers a ministry that helps its members prepare their final act of stewardship, so they can be generous, becoming more like the "Image of God." This becomes a wise act of stewardship on the part of the church as well.

2. It’s a Ministry: Serve families now. One day, it *will* be too late.

Churches are experts at serving and caring for their members, especially when it comes to funerals and ongoing grief care. Where many churches tend to fall short is by not helping them long before the funeral ever happens in the first place. End-of-life will eventually happen; however, end-of-life preparation should happen now.

Most people, including your church members, are unfortunately clueless about the estate planning process, and a startling 64% of Americans do not have their end-of-life plans established. When end-of-life documents have not been established, the state and local governments take over, making decisions that the family member should have made while they were still alive on earth. This leaves the family helpless, and therefore the church is helpless in assisting them. It does not have to be this way!

The good news is, rather than having your hands tied, unable to help the family, the church has a unique opportunity to be proactive, saving the grieving family from even more trouble, stress, and costs. So, let’s be proactive! Serve them. Help them get ready for when the time comes for them to leave this earth. Serving your members this way is a ministry. It’s a ministry that gives you the unique opportunity to help your members to be prepared and avoid the mess that comes along with not having their affairs in order.

Providing a way for your members to obtain end-of-life documents allows them to decide now how they want their family, church, and other ministries they love to be cared for after they pass away. They can take comfort in knowing you provided a way for them to develop written documents that will guide their family and leave the government out of it. End-of-life documents are the core documents that everyone needs, as well as other accompanying documents that are equally as critical, including Power of Attorney, Guardianship of minor children, Health Care Directives, and more.

The Apostle Paul said in 1 Timothy 6:7, We all know that we came into this world with nothing. We will leave this world with nothing. We can’t take our assets with us to Heaven, but with the right end-of-life documents, attendees can decide to “send it on ahead” and take care of their family, church, and ministry partners as they wish. Churches serve families.

All families need this. And the good news is that when the church disciples others and offers a way to steward what they have been given by God, then generosity follows. Generosity is simply an outcome. It's a byproduct of those who love the Lord! To be perfectly clear, the motive is to disciple our members to be more Christ-like and serve them by providing an opportunity to take care of their loved ones and to store up treasure in Heaven. This is a ministry, not a fundraiser.

3. Offer Peace: Without a plan, grieving is hijacked by divisiveness.

At the time of death, families are overwhelmed and in pain. Without a plan, it will likely be a time of contention, leaving no peace for the family. Grieving is a natural God-given response to loss; however, without a plan, healthy grieving gets put on the back burner, as there is sure to be a mess, adding unnecessary stress, costs, and disagreements between family members.

Family members have their own varying ideas of what should be done with what has been left behind. And while the deceased may be a Christian, it's likely there are family members who are not. Even those that are Christian likely have differing ideas on what should be done at the time of their loved one's death.

We, as pastors, have seen more family arguments over "stuff" than we care to admit, and it all could have been avoided. Instead of grieving their loss, divisiveness and arguments often hijack their grief and divide the family with painful wounds. If minor children are involved, families can become split apart and not recover. This happens because the person who should have made the decisions is unfortunately no longer here. Also, without a plan, families will face Probate through their local government. This is costly, and the government pays for itself through the estate funds of the deceased.

Probate takes time, creates a loss of privacy, and delays families in receiving what is left of their inheritance. Sometimes it can take years! The cost of probate could have been avoided and, instead, could have been useful funds for the families and to advance the Kingdom. Help families avoid inner family fighting over "stuff" (and/or minor children!) and avoid unnecessary delays and costs so that years after passing, the family is still speaking to each other.

4. Everyone Needs a Plan! Correct the myth: “I do not need a will because I don’t have much.”

There are common myths out there that prevent people from establishing their end-of-life documents. Some think that because they are not wealthy, they don’t need these documents, not realizing it has little to do with wealth. Everyone needs a plan! Whether one has a little or a lot is not the issue.

A woman came to our educational event, unmistakably annoyed, and announced to everyone in the fellowship hall at the church, “I do not know why I am here. I do not have an estate. But the pastor told me to come, so I am here.” How do you respond to that? You just thanked her for being here and trusted God would answer her question through the presentation.

What a delight when during the presentation, at the time when the probate threshold was explained, she interrupted and exclaimed, “Well, I guess I do have an estate.” God indeed showed her why the pastor asked her to attend the seminar. The truth is, even if you own the most modest of homes, or even if you rent, you have enough stuff. And establishing end-of-life documents also includes critical documents such as Power of Attorney, medical directives, and guardianship of minor children. As we said: <u>Everyone</u> needs a plan.

5. Offer a Pathway for Generosity: Create an opportunity to be more generous than ever as a disciple of Christ.

It is a pleasure to watch someone realize just how generous they can be. Most people leave a percentage to their church. It is fun to see the smile and astonished look on someone’s face when they realize what 10 % of their net assets value is. And they realize there is still plenty they will be leaving for their children. Often, we hear, “Wow, I can give that much!” What a privilege it is as a Christ follower to help Christians discover they have the option to be the most generous they’ve ever been in their lifetime through their end-of-life estate documents.

Mature believers understand biblical stewardship, yet, even still, when they discover what they are able to give, it is a “God” moment. They realize they can ‘excel in the grace of giving.” (2 Corinthians 8:7). The church teaches the “why” for generosity. FPM teaches the “how.”

Here’s a statistic you should know: 2.74. Research conducted on IRS documents reveals that a person’s estate gift is 2.74 times their cumulative lifetime giving. Another statistic you should know is 50%. When believers include your church in their end-of-life documents, most researchers tell us that their giving over the rest of their life will double. (If you would like to track this in your church, please reach out to: Clay@FPM.org)

6. Meet a Felt Need: Create a Win/Win for the family.

Pastors have a heart that is always looking for that win-win scenario. By establishing an educational ministry in end-of-life document planning, you will have a win-win. A testimonial from one church attendee wrote: “I am so thankful that my church offers this. I really needed to do this!” This meets a real felt need that your members have.

Most people know they should have end-of-life documents, yet 64% of Americans do not have one. Why? Why would something that is so important, knowing death is inevitable, prevent people from establishing their end-of-life documents? The most common reasons we’ve heard for over 40 years are: “It’s too complicated. I don’t understand all of this” and “It’s too costly. I can’t afford to do this right now.” And lastly, “I’ll get around to it one day.”

It’s common thinking that we will all live to see another day, yet we know there is no guarantee that tomorrow will come. When this is the common mindset, end-of-life planning is very easy to put off. You are giving an invitation, opportunity, and a method for members to get it done while removing the barriers mentioned previously that have thus far prevented them from doing it.

Through church partnership, FPM removes the cost barrier for your members (making this a true ministry) while taking the complexity out of the planning process by educating your members in simple terms. Your members will understand what they need to know in order to make wise decisions for their families and will have a clear pathway to accomplish their end-of-life documents.

7. Win/Win for the Church: Pastors love to hear this!

We love it when our Partner church members express their gratitude for being served so well. Over 96% of FPM's survey responses from members are very positive. While it's common these days for people to tend to be quick to write a bad review, this is not the case with churches that offer FPM's ministry. FPM serves your church with excellence through education, love, and care. Your members love and appreciate you for offering them a ministry that cares for them.

Here are real testimonials from members and partners we have served:

<u>Member</u>: "Very trustworthy and beyond professional. FPM won our trust, and we are very grateful for the staff treating us with love and grace. You answered our questions promptly and completely. God bless your staff and organization."

<u>Partner</u> (church staff): "FPM has become a trusted partner in ministry. They are a huge blessing to our ministry and church family."

Conclusion:

There are many more reasons to offer this ministry, but there's <u>one final consideration</u> to contemplate: FPM's ministry is unique because it serves the <u>entire</u> church body; the rich and the poor, the young and the old, and everyone in between.

Many churches serve well those who are struggling financially by offering much-needed classes to help steward their finances biblically as well as caring for them through benevolence programs. They have a process in place for the struggling. Likewise, many churches also see the value of caring for the high-net-worth members who have just as much of a need for spiritual discipleship as anyone else. Yes, they can help fund large ministry projects. This is welcomed and needed! And appreciation is deeply and intentionally expressed to them by the church.

There's one other category, though. Can I challenge you today? What are you doing for everyone else in between? Sometimes it is assumed that the middle group, which is usually the largest group, is doing “okay.” There may be some great ways to engage the middle group in your church, including financial classes. But oftentimes, there’s nothing really “special” that can be offered to them like you can for the very rich and the very poor.

If you’d like to offer a special ministry that is a fit for your entire congregation, regardless of where they stand financially or spiritually, the ministry of FPM might be your answer. Rich, poor, or somewhere in the middle, we will all one day pass from this earth. FPM has a ministry to serve your entire church (including your staff and elders).

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