



Usage guide for Women of the ELCA’s five-part recorded series *God’s Gift of Money: Stewarding Money Wisely*

By Jenny Norris Peterson

Women of the ELCA produced a five-part interactive series offered live on Zoom on Saturdays between Oct. 7 and Nov. 4, 2023. Participants said the series presented important information and more women would benefit from seeing it and discussing the concepts presented with other women. This guide offers ideas for how you can use the recorded series with your WELCA circles and other WELCA gatherings.

U.S. women have enormous and increasing financial power, yet many women say they do not have much knowledge or confidence in making decisions about their money. WELCA provides an excellent setting for growing in knowledge about money together, rooted in a faith foundation about what God teaches about use of money and property. This resource can help you take a step forward in both knowledge and confidence, and can point you in the direction of next steps to take on your financial journey.

The five-part series is a component of the **2122: Growing Katie's Fund for the next 100 years** campaign. The series focuses on financial literacy. The sessions explore biblical foundations for giving, basic financial concepts, methods of charitable giving, retirement strategies and much more. A team of experts guide the explorations and answer questions.

This usage guide suggests ideas for how you could use the recorded sessions:

- one at a time over the course of five WELCA gatherings such as circle meetings and
- as a full series during a one-day or weekend-long retreat for women.

WHERE TO FIND THE RECORDED SESSIONS

You can find all five sessions by going online to:

- www.welca.org/katiesfund and scrolling down on that page to find the God's Gift of Money series.
- www.youtube.com and entering in the search bar Women of the ELCA God's Gift of Money. Dates are shown by the presentations when each was live. (Note: Sessions will not appear in sequential date order on the YouTube site.) Click to watch in the order you want.

LEADER PREPARATION

Preview the recorded webinar before you show it to the group. Take note of the time when the sections you want your group to watch and talk about together begin and end. You can use the bar in the bottom left of the screen to shift the presentation to various times within the full recorded session. Push stop when you want to stop the presentation at a specific point, and then click on the arrow button to get the recording started again.

MATERIALS NEEDED

You will need a computer screen large enough that the women in your group can all see and hear it easily. You could utilize a projector hooked up to your laptop computer to transfer the image from your laptop to a larger screen that is more easily viewed by everyone. Paper and pens/pencils for everyone.

Ideas for using sessions individually in a series at circle meetings or Women of the ELCA gatherings

Session 1: Living Out Our Faith through Our Use of Money

After you watch the recording together, discuss these questions. You can shorten the list if you have time constraints.

- Discuss the different models for charitable giving presented in the Bible: tithing, first fruits giving, giving away half as Zacchaeus promised Jesus to do plus four times the amount he had gained by cheating, and giving away everything. How can we use these models to become more generous ourselves?
- What money practices did you have in your family as you grew up? Do you follow these practices today, or did you diverge? And if you did diverge, what caused you to do it differently?
- Rebecca Sundquist spoke about how a female friend challenged her to begin tithing, even when she was struggling to pay all of her bills as a single mother of two children. She found a way to do that but said it felt like stepping off a cliff. Have you ever taken a leap of faith like that in your own charitable giving?
- Rhonda Templing talked about how once she and her mother decided to “live a stewardship life” and give more intentionally, they noticed that they started to receive more money themselves. Have you had that experience?
- Matthew 6:31-33 says, “Strive first for the kingdom of God.” What does that mean for giving, saving, and spending? How is God present in each aspect?
- Have you talked with your family about the financial resources you have and how you make decisions about your use of money? Why or why not?
- Did this session identify for you a step you could take that would help you move forward with more confidence in your own use of money?

Next steps

Ask participants to think about what they learned in this session and how it motivated them to take more control of their financial lives. Give each participant a 4” x 6” card and ask her to write down on the card one step she can take before the next session. It could be as easy as reading a financial article. It could be totaling up your own net worth--knowing all asset values and all debts/mortgage amounts. It could be booking an appointment with a financial advisor or a gift planning consultant.

Close with prayer

Gracious and living God, you created us, and we are yours. You shower us with blessings each day, more than we even recognize or acknowledge. Thank you for your love and your generosity. You ask us to be generous in return. We ask your guidance as we seek to make the best use of our blessings and as we strive to become more generous. Help us be good stewards of your gracious gifts. Amen

Session 2: Finance 101: A Primer for Gaining Confidence with Money

Questions for discussion

After you watch the recorded session together, discuss these questions. You can shorten the list if you have time constraints.

- A large life change such as a divorce, a major health crisis, death of a partner can trigger the need for a financial advisor. Have you faced a large life change since you last consulted with an attorney or a financial planner?
- What challenges, if any, have you encountered in managing your finances?
- Cindy and Ana spoke about charitable gift annuities and charitable trusts where donors receive an income stream for life, or for a set period of years, and enjoy many tax advantages when they give cash or appreciated assets to set up a planned gift. Typically, these gifts work well for people who are 65+. Has anyone in the group set up such a gift? If so, share how it has been working for you.
- Is there financial terminology you would like to understand better? Talk as a group about where you could get more information.

Next steps

Think about what area of financial planning or knowledge you need to learn the most about.

Commit to reading more about this topic before your next session.

Cindy and Ana mentioned that the ELCA Foundation offers on their website a free downloadable personal estate planning kit that has a Lesson Book and a Record Book that could be helpful to you: <https://foundation.elca.org/personal-estate-planning-kit>

Close with prayer

Loving God, the world of finance can seem intimidating. Yet each step we take in educating ourselves gets us closer to the goal of being a good steward of the financial resources you place in our care. Inspire us to take those next steps to becoming empowered women who make a real difference in the world through our financial decisions and actions. Amen

Session 3: Getting Ready for and Enjoying Retirement

Questions for discussion

After you watch the recording together, discuss these questions. You can shorten the list if you have time constraints.

- Where are you on the retirement road? Pre-retired, semi-retired, retired, or “refired?” Is this stage different from what you hoped for or expected?
- Kathleen Rehl encourages us to live with purpose. What is your purpose now?
- Have you considered changing your living situation to simplify and spend less on housing? Why or why not?
- Have you created or updated your estate plan in the last five years? Has anything changed in your life that requires adjustment in your financial or estate plan? Laws may have changed that affect you.

Next steps

- Think about your next life stage and how you would like it to look. What do you want to be doing that you aren’t doing now? What would you like to let go of? Do you need to make changes to make this workable?
- Kathleen talked about a Legacy IRA rollover to a charitable gift annuity for those who are age 70 ½ or older. Donors can transfer up to \$50,000 from an IRA to a charity in exchange for a charitable gift annuity that pays out fixed income to you for the rest of your life. The rollover counts toward your Required Minimum Distribution from your IRA. You can only do this once, under current law. Ask a gift officer at a charity how it would work for you. The ELCA Foundation is one resource to consider asking.

Close with prayer

Loving God, you love us fully at each stage of our lives. Fill us with your grace so that we can stay nimble and flexible in the face of change, both wanted and unwanted. Give us confidence that we can make wise, strategic choices so we can be your servants in the world, even as circumstances change. Help us live with purpose, keeping you at the center. Amen

Session 4: Giving Through Your Estate Plan

Questions for discussion

After you watch the recording together, discuss these questions. You can shorten the list if you have time constraints.

- Share a story about a time in your life when God provided what you needed and more so that you could also share with others.
- Brenda Mohr shares that 90% of the average American’s wealth is held in non-cash assets, and yet churches often encourage giving a percentage of income or giving from our checkbooks. How would thinking in a broader way about giving non-cash assets help you be more generous? Have you ever given a non-cash asset to charity such as part or all of a piece of property, stocks, or a valuable possession (jewelry, car, painting)?

- Have you ever filled out a beneficiary designation form for a CD at the bank, or your Individual Retirement Account (IRA) or pension plan account, or your insurance policy benefitting one or more charities? How easy or difficult was that for you to do?
- Brenda shared her parents' example of having four children and dividing their estate into five equal parts, with one part going to each child and one part going to ministry. Have you thought through your own beneficiaries for your assets and which assets make tax-sense to give to charitable institutions vs. individuals?

Next Steps

- If you don't yet have a will (and every adult needs one, married or single), ask some trusted friends or your pastor for referrals to good estate planning attorneys. Brenda Mohr tells us: "Careful estate planning is Christian stewardship in action."
- Consider meeting with a regional gift planner from the ELCA Foundation. They are not attorneys or financial planners but can help you think about next steps in your estate and gift planning. You can find the list of regional gift planners on the elca.org website--on the homepage, click on ELCA Foundation, and then click on Contacts.
- If you do already have a will, see if you have reviewed it within the past five years. Personal circumstances, financial values, and laws change over time, and it is a great idea to keep up to date with regular reviews of your legal documents.
- Consider adding Women of the ELCA, specifically Katie's Fund, to your list of charitable beneficiaries.

Close with prayer

Loving God, you shower blessings upon us. Open our minds and hearts to how we can be generous stewards of your resources both during life and after we have joined you in heaven. Help us seek out resources so we can be knowledgeable and confident stewards. Amen

Session 5: Philanthropic Possibilities: Ways to Give Right Now

LEADER Preparation

Go to www.welca.org/katiesfund. Click on the stories of how women in the 65 synods of the ELCA have used the \$1,000 seed money grants that Katie's Fund distributed to them. There is a live link under the highlighted stories to see the full list of recipients. Write down and share with participants the report of your synodical WELCA group's seed money usage.

On this webpage, scroll further down to find the link to the intention form for giving to the 2122 campaign raising funds to increase the Katie's Fund Endowment. Print enough copies to hand one out to each participant.

Questions for discussion

After you watch the recording together, discuss these questions. You can shorten the list if you have time constraints.

- What woman, historic or contemporary, has inspired you with her generosity?
- What has motivated you to give the largest financial gift you have ever given?
- Has a professional advisor helped you figure out how you could be more generous charitably? If you met with an advisor, what questions would you ask?
- How has Women of the ELCA touched your life and the lives of others you care about?
- Hand out sheets of paper and pens/pencils. Ask each participant to make a list of her assets and the estimated value, leaving blanks where she isn't sure of the value and needs to do more research. Include land or homes owned, retirement accounts, savings accounts, investment accounts, certificates of deposit at banks, life insurance policies, valuables such as jewelry, vehicles, and trusts. People do not need to reveal what is on their list. Is the total more or less than you imagined you would have placed in your care at this point in your life.

Next Steps

Invite participants to make a stretch gift to Women of the ELCA's 2122 campaign, payable over three years (up to five years if needed), using cash, stock, or other financial assets. Distribute statement of intent forms to participants.

Prayer

Good and gracious God, your blessings are never-ending. You are generous with us in countless ways. Help us take joy in giving as you take joy in giving to us. Work within us to strengthen the ministry of Katie's Fund so that this organization can be a blessing to new generations of women both in the United States and around the world. Amen

Ideas for using the five-part series as part of a daylong or weekend retreat

Use the session ideas described above for each of the five sessions. Think about how you want to space the five sessions over the time that you have for your retreat. Each session can take 90 minutes as you watch the recorded presentation together and then work through discussion questions and next steps.

For a weekend retreat, you might do one session together Friday evening before breaking for relaxed, social time. Then Saturday you could do two sessions each in the morning and afternoon

with lunch in between. If you are together over Sunday as well, you could do three sessions on Saturday, and save one for Sunday.

Here are added ideas you can utilize for your retreat as you have time available. Note that some require the leader to prepare materials beforehand.

Session 1

Added activity with Bibles

Read together:

Leviticus 27:30, 32 about tithing

Proverbs 3:9 about first fruits giving

Luke 19:1-8 about Zacchaeus, the tax collector

Matthew 6:19-21.

How do these biblical passages inspire your financial practices?

Session 2

LEADER preparation beforehand

Print out for each participant the list below of what Cindy Halverson and Ana Lugo from the ELCA Foundation said are important aspects of being financially empowered:

- Informed about financial accounts (involved in decision making, knowing account numbers, passcodes, contacts for financial accounts, what kinds of insurance you have)
- Skilled (knowing how financial vehicles work)
- Controls spending (don't take on unnecessary debt)
- Makes informed, wise decisions about giving, saving/investing, and spending
- Utilizes resources such as financial planners, gift planners, and educational resources such as publications and seminars
- Sets financial goals for the short- and long-term
- Makes and keeps a budget
- Understands own net worth and reviews annually

Activity

Give each participant these sheets. Ask participants to circle any items on the list where they could take further steps to strengthen their knowledge and practice. Invite them to take at least one of those steps before the next session.

Session 3

LEADER Preparation

Create and duplicate for each participant a sheet that has these 16 important values listed, each in its own dotted line box.

Bring several pair of scissors for participants to share, several tape dispensers, a pen/pencil for everyone, 4" x 6" cards for each participant.

- Achievement
- Adventure
- Aesthetics (music, art, literature)
- Authority (key decision maker)
- Autonomy (independence)
- Generosity (time, money)
- Health
- Integrity (justice, fairness)
- Intimacy (friendships, love)
- Pleasure
- Recognition
- Security(feeling stable)
- Service
- Spiritual growth
- Wealth (acquiring, saving, investing, spending)
- Wisdom (gaining it, sharing it)

Activity

Hand out the sheets listing these values. Take time to consider the 16 important values and invite each participant to use a pen to circle her top three. Then use scissors to cut out those three. Tape them onto a 4" x 6" card to talk about now and then carry home for further reflection.

Talk together about your choices and whether your life currently matches the values you identified. Large groups can break into pairs or trios for this discussion.

Session 4

LEADER preparation

Bring candles, matches, quiet instrumental music to play, and a piece of paper with a pen/pencil for each participant.

Activity

Invite each participant to take 10 minutes now for quiet time. Reflect on your charitable dream and how your financial plans match up with your charitable dream. Where is God calling you to make a difference? How can you strive for alignment?

Session 5

Talk together in groups of 2-4 people about how God is at work in your financial story.

Come together as a full group and talk about the thing that stands out for you most about your time together in retreat. How will this event impact your future planning?

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