

BACK TO OUR WAY

A pastor shared a story centering on the congregation's response to his senior colleague's announced leaving. The senior pastor was a man of vision. He had a gift for seeing what was needed and for designing new programs to meet those needs. While at this congregation he developed a strong stewardship program which was creative, very systematic and an extreme change from the usual method the congregation used to receive annual pledges of financial support. He provided more than the ideas. His energy was the motivating force behind the development, and implementation of this program. He envisioned stewardship education as a year-round program with lifelong learning, which focused on understanding all of creation as blessing and gift. The programs he developed were in contrast to the once-a-year stewardship drive where people were asked to pledge time, talents and financial support — the program which people seemed to resent as “The church just asking for our money again.”

The senior pastor's efforts, creative insights and success with stewardship in this congregation did not go unnoticed. In time, he was asked by the judicatory to take a new position helping other congregations develop stewardship education programs. The associate pastor reported the action taken at the very first meeting of the leadership board after the senior pastor announced he would be accepting this new position. The board voted to abandon the programs the senior pastor had initiated. Before he was even out the door, literally, they voted to revert to doing

stewardship “the way we have always done it” before these new programs were initiated. They were going to do stewardship the right way, their way, the way they had always done it. Was this about keeping tradition, or was this action a statement of power and control, or a response to being wounded by one who did not consider them?