

advancing stewardship

estate planning and other news

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Financial Planning for Christians

"How shall we use what God has given us?"

Christians are confronted with all the choices and options that confront the rest of society in the area of financial planning. We do not lack for information; on the contrary, we are deluged daily from all sides and through various mediums with pitches for our attention and money. As Christians, we have a different perspective that requires us to consider the motives of the forces that call for our attention and resources. The bombardment with information and an increasing array of options, have become a new reason that people do not plan. It's just too much and too confusing.

So where do Christians begin to plan? A good place to start is with an analysis of your present situation.

Where do you stand philosophically?

The Bible tells us in Exodus 19 that God is the owner of all that we 'possess'. Our time, abilities and finances all are a trust given to us for a while. How we exercise that trust to honour God, is a measure of our relationship with Him. Secular society has instituted some very strict guidelines and expectations, which trustees have to abide by in the administration of a Trust. If we consider our 'trustee' position in handling our possessions in relation to the Giver, it will enable us to make wiser choices.

Society considers the Christian approach to finances to be irrational. We respond to God's command to give the first portion back to Him. However many people who follow this practice testify that the remainder goes farther than the whole did before they gave part back. God does promise to bless the rest. He even challenges us to test Him in this.

Where do you stand Financially?

List your assets and liabilities and ask some questions about the relationship between the two. Are you committing too much of your income to service debts for things that you want? Create a Cash Flow statement or

Budget with realistic numbers. Fewer than 10% of people have such a document and use it in their decision making process. There is a saying that "If your **outgo** exceeds your **income** then your **upkeep** will be your **downfall**".

With a clear understanding of your starting position, you can develop a plan.

Consider the risks that you and your family face and cover them with appropriate products available in the market place. Young families may need Life Insurance to replace the income of the primary earner in the event of a death. The risk of disability and catastrophic health costs need to be covered off as well.

When considering investments, the risks associated with the different plans need to be considered. Often, investments offering higher yield come with a greater risk of loss resulting from market pressures. While safer, low risk investments may not adequately offset the combined effects of inflation and taxation.

Do not abdicate the responsibility for your financial decisions. You will always be the recipient of the benefits or failure of the choices you make. Many people have found themselves in serious financial difficulty because they thought that their chosen advisor was 'a fine person, perhaps a Christian' who "would not steer them wrong". Later, to their sadness, they will acknowledge that they relied too heavily on someone who did not really have the necessary expertise or whose motives were incompatible with their needs.

Consider your 'Life Cycle' position. There are different priorities at different stages of our lives. When we are young and have young families, there is a tendency to put off planning because we have high family expenses. However a small amount set-aside over a long period of time will benefit from the compounding effect of time on money. When we are older there may be more dollars available but less time to accumulate, or recover from adverse market events.

Strategic Planning Under Way at CSS

The Board of Directors of Christian Stewardship Services recently approved a year-long strategic planning process for CSS.

The CSS Visioning Committee will head up the project using the book *Successful Strategic Planning*, written by Patrick Burkhart and Suzanne Reuss as a foundational resource. This book was recommended to us by Redeemer College after having successfully completed their own strategic plan., using this book as a guide.

The project will begin with an internal assessment, conducted during February and March. This first phase seeks to discover what CSS thinks of itself and includes reviews of our market niche, organizational structure, finances and the effectiveness of our service delivery. A workplan for this first phase is under development.

From there, the focus of activity will become more outward in nature when an external assessment is conducted. This phase will focus on our various “stakeholders” such as donors, clients and past clients and will incorporate an analysis of “market” conditions and the social, economic and regulatory environment in which we function.

These activities will form the basis for identifying key medium and long term opportunities and targets, setting goals and objectives and building consensus around them during the final phase of the project.

The final stage of a strategic planning exercise is implementation of a plan and its evaluation. The effectiveness of any plan is linked directly to how fully an organization accepts it as a part of an ongoing process, so regular review and revision to our plan are key. Once a long range plan is implemented, an annual report that evaluates performance versus the plan’s objectives will be generated.

The Committee is currently seeking the services of a volunteer to act as coordinator for the project and is also exploring the possibility of using a Co-op student as plans develop.

Become familiar with the various investment ‘tools’ that financial institutions offer for use in the planning process. Understand that they are like puzzle pieces that can fit in place to make the picture complete. Each type of investment has both opportunities and drawbacks that should be considered in relation to the overall plan. Study the options thoroughly, just as you would in considering any major purchase like the acquisition of a home or automobile.

The financial services sector has become the largest industry in our country. It is driven by huge profits. There are many people holding themselves out as planners and consultants. Choose yours with care! If possible ask friends for referrals and interview several before you make a decision. You may be well served to use several, depending on their area of expertise. When you interview them consider how well they listen and understand your perspective and goals. Do they want to work with you in the development of your plan, or are they interested in selling you something? How would you feel about a doctor who writes you a prescription before he or she has taken the time to explore your symptoms completely? Is the person a ‘team player’? Do they work with other professionals who can fill in the areas that require special expertise in areas such as law and accounting?

In planning for your retirement, consider all of the sources that will contribute to your income. Government and corporate plans need to be integrated with personal investments to make up the whole. Finally, we cannot over emphasise the need to have a plan that is well researched and thoughtfully constructed. A plan that becomes the touchstone for the decisions about spending and investing. It is a fact that the vast majority of people spend more time each year planning their vacation which will last for 2-4 weeks than they will spend planning their retirement years, which could last 20 – 30 years.

In the space provided we can only touch on the general concepts involved with the planning process. If you would like to have more advice that is specific to your personal circumstances feel free to contact Christian Stewardship at 1-800-267-8890 and we will be pleased to arrange a confidential visit with you to review your plans at no cost or obligation.

Henry Eygenraam

Financial Planning — *Continued from page 1.*

CSS Spring 2000 Travel

Christian Stewardship Services' Staff travel across Canada on a regular basis offering free of charge, confidential counselling on personal finances, estate and will planning.

Spring 2000 promises to be another busy travel season for CSS staff and arrangements have now been made. To book a presentation for your church or school group or to arrange a personal visit in advance, please contact the CSS office.

January	Eastern Ontario
February 16 – 24 February	BC Lower Mainland Alberta — Edmonton — Red Deer
March/April April 5 – 15 April	Eastern Canada BC North Alberta — Calgary — Lethbridge

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A Henry Eygenraam, CFP, CLU, CH.F.
C.
Executive Director

Willard VanderPloeg, BCS



Volunteer Needed!

Christian Stewardship Services is seeking a part-time volunteer to supplement the efforts of its staff. Hours are flexible. If you possess good organizational and computer skills, please contact:

Henry Eygenraam, CSS
(905) 947-9262

Stewardship News

The joint Christian Stewardship Services and Christian Reformed Church Stewardship Education Co-ordinating Committee has been formed. The mandate of the Committee includes such things as:

1. Participation in the hiring of a Stewardship Education Co-ordinator.
2. Assisting Staff in development and implementation of the program.
3. Work with Staff to ensure effective use of resources.
4. Promote the program to the churches.
5. Act as liaison between the partners and evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

The Committee Members will be:

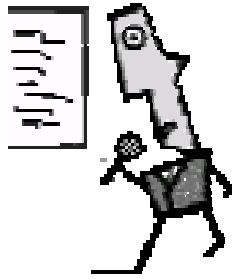
Martin Oldengarm; CSS Board, Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario
Susan Van Weelden; Professor, Redeemer College
Henry Contant; Development Director, Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia
Ben Vandezande; Executive Director, Diaconal Ministries in Eastern Canada
Henry Wildeboer; Pastor Consultant Home Missions
Henry Eygenraam; Executive Director, CSS Staff

Stewardship Education Co-ordinator

Expressions of Interest

— we are still receiving Expressions of Interest for this position. If you have a broad understanding of the Biblical concepts of Stewardship and the use of financial resources. If you have a strong interpersonal, group presentation, and adult education skills we would like to hear from you. For more information contact Henry Eygenraam at Christian Stewardship Services.

Need a Speaker for Your Event?



Christian Stewardship Services' staff participate in many public meetings each year, across Canada. Speaking engagements are often arranged by church or school groups, pre-marriage counselors, Bible study groups or individuals.

CSS seminars attempt to make topics understandable to all in attendance and bring Christian perspective and consideration to increasingly complex issues. Time is always planned for audience questions and comment.

The topic is often one of the following:

- Wills and Estate Planning
- Special Ways to Give to Charity
- Financial/Tax Planning
- Investments and Alternatives for Retirement

CSS Staff also do presentations for Christian Schools which focus on how to begin programs of special giving and utilize the services of CSS.

If your organization has an annual meeting or other function planned in the new year, Christian Stewardship Services would be pleased to participate. For more information, or to reserve a date, contact the CSS office or mail or fax the request form found elsewhere in this newsletter.

CSS Ready for Y2K

Christian Stewardship Services' staff have been preparing for the year 2000. Over the last six months, computer hardware, software and files have been thoroughly tested to ensure a smooth transition when the date rolls over to January 01, 2000.

All our computer hardware was found to be fully compliant, though we did discover a few minor software issues with our database software and related files. Our programmer was called in to correct these and we expect no further problems. We encourage our donors and clients to thoroughly review all their financial statements for this year end (including those from CSS) as a precaution.

Merry Christmas!

As we celebrate the birth of our Saviour, we wish everyone a blessed Christmas and a prosperous New Year in 2000.

From the staff at Christian Stewardship Services;

Henry Eygenraam
Willard VanderPloeg
Agnes Bunger
Jea
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Request for Information:

mail or fax to:

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Please provide the following:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> More information on the work of CSS | <input type="checkbox"/> Information on Public Presentations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Information on making a will / a copy of your Will Guide | <input type="checkbox"/> Information on CSS Endowment Gifts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have a representative call to arrange a visit | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Information on Charitable Gift Annuities | |

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