

STEWARDSHIP (2/2013, TCP)

From the Diocesan Stewardship Committee:

Stewardship is a way of living that acknowledges God's ownership of everything and God's abundant blessings to us, and responds by tending, according to the examples given us in the Gospel, those resources that we otherwise call "ours."

Practically, Stewardship is lived out in the decisions we make as we manage resources given into our care—money, time, material possessions, physical health, the environment, talents, energies and attention, relationships and responsibilities at work or home or in the community. How do we spend, manage, save, and give generously of these resources? What disciplines (e.g. tithing, prayer, worship, rules of life) help us to live into a life of Stewardship? How do we learn, embrace more deeply and teach disciplines and attitudes of Stewardship in our households? How do we learn, embrace more deeply and teach Stewardship in our parishes—both in what we encourage among individuals and in how our vestries steward parish material and human resources and relationships? How do we learn, embrace more deeply and teach Stewardship in our Diocese and in the National Church—both in what we encourage among parishes and dioceses and in how our conventions and councils steward resources?

Stewardship for Parish Leaders:

The First role of parish leadership in Stewardship is to be stewards of the parish funds. As stewards, our purpose is not to protect funds from use (like the steward who buried his talent), but to use wisely parish resources for the mission of the church, according to God's calls to us. The vestry and Diocesan Deputies also act as stewards as they contribute to and participate in the life and ministry of the Diocese, the wider communion, and take our place among Christians and others in the world. Stewardship is self-giving and outward looking, not just self-preserving and inward-looking.

The Second role is to lead and teach personal stewardship.

- By word and example, call people to:
 - A life of prayer
 - Engage in Christian Formation and spiritual growth
 - Participate regularly in ministry in the church
 - Give generously outside your own interests to support the church and those in need.
- Call people to stewardship all year around: not just for pledging, not just for money, not just for the church.
- Pledging is a Christian practice of dedication of a portion of our resources outside of our own interests. It is similar to observing the Sabbath: keeping the Sabbath holy sanctifies the rest of the week; pledging serves to sanctify all our resources by starting with a specific part of our resources. God doesn't want some of our resources, God wants all of them dedicated to his service.
- Tithing is the ancient practice that uses 10% of our income as the portion to give away. Biblically, this came from the first fruits of the harvest—the first crops to be brought in (not the stale leftovers, but the freshest crops after the hungry winter). Those who practice tithing describe the experience as amazing, life-changing and entirely positive in learning to trust God and watch God provide for you.

There are three components to financial giving in the church:

- Annual Giving (annual pledges)
- Capital Giving (capital campaigns)
- Planned giving (wills and estates).

Annual Giving:

- Teach and talk about stewardship all year round.
- The most effective programs use:
 - **Bible Study,**
 - **Personal Testimony** of God's grace discovered through stewardship, and
 - **Small group conversation.**
- Effective Stewardship programs will always connect to the mission of the church.

Capital Campaigns: for special giving for large projects (generally building projects):

- Involve the whole parish early on; interview and get feedback on parish life and the proposed projects.
- Relate the projects to the mission of the church.
- As an example of good stewardship, tithed from the campaign to another organization in need.
- Create multi-level involvement of laity to lead the interviewing and one-on-one discussions inviting people to support the campaign.
- Plan ahead, and use consultants if possible. Start with a Quiet phase, where large donors are lined-up ahead of time, so that when the public phase begins, there is already momentum toward your goal. Then have a second phase where campaign leadership and parish leadership pledge. Then, with this momentum and witness already in place, start a public campaign to the rest of the parish (engage them personally as much as possible).

Planned Giving:

Teach and preach about stewardship in wills and estate planning. Often, these bequests will support an endowment: restricted funds from which interest can help fund operations or a particular ministry. But beware the lure of living off of dead people's money rather than the stewardship of the living membership. Endowments can keep parishes in a spiritual "persistent vegetative state" for decades. Design and support endowments to supplement mission, rather than to prop-up churches who have lost their mission.