

What is Stewardship?

On behalf of the Stewardship Team – Tracy, Mark, Stephen & me (Francis) – I’m honoured to begin our Stewardship Education journey with a short reflection on “What is Stewardship?”



Webster’s Dictionary describes stewardship as “the constructive management of resources, be they physical, intellectual, or environmental; be they owned outright or loaned or borrowed; for the benefit of the individual, for groups of people, for communities, and up to and including our world.” I’m sure we can all see ourselves, in some way, as part of this definition.

But, I suggest to you that there exists a deeper perspective that can be attributed to the term “stewardship.”

We believe that God has created us. And, in so doing, he has given us capabilities – let’s call them “gifts” – to use in managing and living our lives to the fullest. Gifts from God are not distributed equally among us. They are personalized, just for us, and vary in size, number, scope, and type with respect to other people. They are given to us according to His will, in keeping with what He expects of us, and consistent with what we are capable of accomplishing.

I believe our job as good stewards is to be aware of these personal gifts from God, to nurture and develop them, and then to use them well to further His Kingdom. And, not incidentally, to also benefit ourselves, our families, our neighbours, our communities, and our church. The parable of the talents in Matthew’s gospel may help to illustrate this.

You will recall that, in this parable, the master distributes talents (talents are a unit of money) to each of 3 servants, in accordance with their capabilities, and asks them to manage them in his absence. Servant # 2 was given 2 talents and doubled them into 4 talents. Similarly, servant #3 doubled his 5 talents into 10 talents. The master, on his return, praises these two servants, saying, “Well done! You have been good and trustworthy in a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your master.”

Servant #1, however, fearing that he may fail, buried his talent in the ground, where it was unable to grow. The master, very unhappy at not seeing a return on his investment, admonished this servant and banished him.

In the bigger picture, these “talents” are representative of all God’s gifts – too many to count – that God has given us, not just money.

Can you see yourself in this picture? Our gifts from God can be used wisely, as did servants 2 & 3, or not at all, as did servant #1. Rest easy. I don’t see any parishioners being banished from St. Paul’s for not using their God-given gifts anytime soon. However, I do think that gifts we ignore, deny, or bury down deep will limit potential gain for yourself and others, and fall well short of God’s desires and expectations for us.

Gifts that we nurture, no matter how large or small, and then use and share for everyone's benefit are exactly what God would have us use to further His Kingdom. So what are these gifts and how are they shared? We need look no further than our own family here at St. Paul's to discover the wide variety of gifts that are being shared so willingly.

For example:

- The Sunday morning coffee hosts, the funeral reception team, the trivia nights, the family games night, the pancake suppers, etc, all display the gift of hospitality.
- Elizabeth and Carl, our long time greeters for both members and non-members of the parish. This is a particularly important ministry for newcomers and visitors.
- Our wardens provide strategic and day-to-day leadership and oversight for the Parish.
- Minx and Moira plan and organize our annual Christmas Bazaar. Many volunteers give their time and share their talents to make the event a success.
- Our treasurer provides expertise to manage our financial affairs.
- Parents and young adults encourage and teach our children Christian values in Sunday School.
- Our choir and contemporary music group lift our hearts with music, not just on Sundays but frequently mid-week, for funerals and weddings.
- Sidespeople, crucifers, Eucharistic Ministers, intercessors, and our altar guild provide their services to ensure our worship experience is meaningful, reverent, and fulfilling.
- Lay people provide pastoral care and prayer, visits and phone calls to the sick and shut-ins.
- Technical expertise allows us to expand our reach into the community through quality virtual broadcasts.
- Beautiful gardens and well-maintained grounds significantly enhance our public presence in the community.

These are just a few of the many, and perhaps more visible, ministries at work in our parish utilizing the gifts that God has given to us to enhance our family and church life. These ministries are not just the gift of individuals but a collection of efforts by many volunteers, each contributing their personal gifts - large or small - and often in teams to make the whole enterprise work. The saying "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" certainly applies here.

Our parish offers many opportunities to utilize your gifts. I encourage you to consider what needs you might be able to fill with your time and energy - your gifts from God.

So, what is Stewardship? Everything we think, say, or do after we say, "I believe!"

In the weeks and months ahead, as we continue to explore various stewardship themes, I invite you to take inventory of the gifts that God has entrusted to you. Keep an open mind as to whether you are getting, or giving, full value for those gifts. And, if not, consider how you might discern, nurture, and best share those gifts to fulfil your potential, as well as God's purpose in furthering the building of His Kingdom.

Francis Christensen