

Discovering Stewardship

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Education for Mission and Stewardship

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Discovering Stewardship

This issue of *Equipping for Stewardship* looks at the basics of stewardship and provides tools that you can use to introduce the concept of stewardship to people in your congregation.

Today, the concept of stewardship is not meaningful to many active church members, even though stewardship is at the heart of what the Christian life is all about.

A steward is a person who manages activities and resources on behalf of another. The biblical concept of stewardship is rooted in the understanding that we are created by God, we are invited to use all that God has given us - time, talent and treasures - to do God's purpose, as reflected in Jesus' life and ministry.

Stewardship is about Giving

A key part of stewardship is about exploring *what* and *how* we give back to God. These gifts reflect a joyful celebration of God's generosity to us and a sign of our ongoing dependence on God. In addition to money, we can use the things we own as tools of generosity. We can open the door of our homes for hospitality. We can share our vehicles, our cooking ingredients, our tools, our knowledge, our skills, our recreation toys and our time - share with others what God has give to us. For this reason many stewardship committees concentrate on encouraging people to give.

Stewardship is about Living

Stewardship is also about how we use all the resources God has given us in ways that honour God. A church exploring a comprehensive stewardship plan may also help people look for prac-

tical ways to live their lives - most of which happen outside the walls of the church - in ways that accomplish God's purpose. They may help people examine how to use time, talent and money to do God's work on this earth and to care for God's creation. They may rediscover the concept of Sabbath, and the role rest can play in living lives that honour God. It often requires individuals and the congregation asking some tough questions about the decisions they make with their resources and how they share them with others.

Stewardship committees in churches that embrace a comprehensive program of stewardship can become the most exciting committees of the church as they seek creative ways to help people discover how to use all their gifts to do God's work.



EQUIPPING FOR . . . Stewardship

Key Stewardship Concepts

- All that we are, and all that we have, are gifts from God.
- God loves us and wants us all to live joyful and productive lives.
- How we live our lives is important to God
- Regular giving of our time, abilities, energy and money is a spiritual practice.

Mission and Stewardship

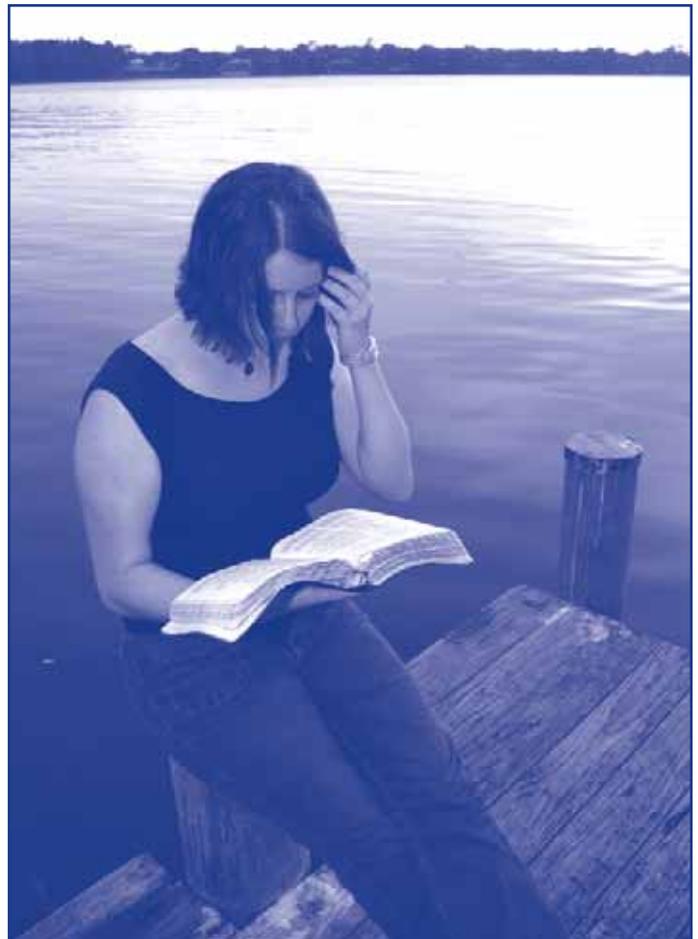
Mission and stewardship are very closely connected. If mission is proclaiming the good news in word and action, and stewardship is prayerfully using the gifts God has given us - our time, skills, and resources; then it is easy to see how a vision for mission motivates stewardship and good stewardship enables the building and spreading of Christ's mission in the world. Today many people are looking for ways they can use their time, skills and resources - financial or otherwise - to share the gospel story, care for the poor, speak out for the oppressed, tend the earth and demonstrate love and compassion for one another.

Money and Stewardship

A comprehensive stewardship program helps people make connections between faith and money. While money itself is simply a medium of exchange used to acquire goods and services, Jesus talked about our relationship to money and possessions more than anything else except the kingdom of God. Jesus understood the power of money to mimic God in a person's heart. Talking about money within the context of a faith community can help people recognize the fears and anxieties that operate in their daily lives. It can also lead to an acknowledgement of God's many blessings and freedom from the tyranny of consumerism that pervades our culture.

Sabbath and Stewardship

In today's culture of "24/7", people can quickly fall into the trap of going all the time. The concept of Sabbath - rest - plays an important role in stewardship. Rest for the person, rest for the earth, provides time to recharge and recuperate. It provides time for reflection and worship - important parts of being a good steward.



The Environment and Stewardship

Environmental stewardship comes out of an understanding that we are not owners, but stewards of God's good earth. We share the earth with all God's creation. Our stewardship calls us to find ways of caring for God's creation for the common good of all God's people and creation. Too often the concept of "dominion" in Genesis has been misinterpreted to mean that people can use all the world's resources and goods however we choose. When looked in the context of all scripture, it becomes clear that we are to care for God's creation as God would care for it, and use it to participate in God's purposes. This can be exciting and transformative work for Christians.

Justice and Stewardship

Working on behalf of people who can't speak for themselves is also a part of stewardship. When asked what faithfulness is all about, the prophet Micah answers, "To do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). When Jesus began his ministry on earth he declared he was here to "bring good news to the poor...proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind...to let the oppressed go free...to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

(Luke 4:18-19). Again and again when asked how to inherit the kingdom of heaven Jesus told people they needed to care for one another.

Children and Stewardship

Too often we neglect to teach stewardship principles to our children. Many of our moments for stewardship happen when they are not present. It is

important to find different ways to include children in opportunities to give to God and learn about stewardship.

Planned Giving and Stewardship

There are two sources or pockets from which we can give to the church. The first pocket is our monthly or current income (e.g. salaries, allowances or pensions). It is normally from this pocket that we contribute to the weekly offering or other special offerings or fundraising appeals. These types of contributions usually come from our wallets or chequing accounts and are part of our weekly or monthly budgets.

But there is a second pocket from which we can give to the church, a pocket that we often forget. This second pocket is comprised of the resources we accumulate over the course of our lifetime - assets such as real estate, stocks and bonds, life insurance, etc. Gifts given from this pocket are called "planned gifts," because they tend to be larger gifts that may require a significant amount of planning, particularly if you want it to take advantage of various tax-benefits that may allow you to give more.

The good news of planned giving is that there are ways that we can share our assets with the church to enhance its life and mission far into the future. Our planned gifts can provide additional funds for new ministries that would simply not be possible if the church depended solely on annual giving or other forms of fund raising. The Presbyterian Church in Canada has a Planned Giving Office to help congregations and individuals learn more about how planned giving can be a vital part of stewardship.

What About the Tithe?

A tithe is one-tenth or ten percent of something. In the Old Testament we find people instructed to give one tenth of the first fruits of their crops to God as an act of worship. In the New Testament, we find Jesus critiquing people for following the letter of the law, rather than the spirit of the law. Some were very careful to give their tithe, but neglected to show love and compassion to their neighbour. Today, Christians are encouraged to follow the spirit of the tithe and consider giving a portion of our income back to God as an act of worship and thanksgiving. This giving is not compulsory - or obligatory - but something we do out of love for God and love for our neighbour. Like a tithe, setting aside a regular proportion of our income keeps our hearts focused on God.

Stewardship is a Year-Round Ministry!

A stewardship committee might

- Start talking about stewardship all year long. Don't wait for a financial campaign.
- Find examples of people who practice good stewardship and share their stories.
- Find different ways to recognize people's stewardship throughout the church year and to show people how their stewardship makes a difference in people's lives.
- Look for opportunities for lively stewardship discussions. Financial planning, what makes a good will, current events, how to talk to children about money, the best use of our building and property, volunteering, discovering Sabbath - are all just a few opportunities to talk about stewardship.

Be creative!

Getting Started

A few stewardship activities

- Ask people in your congregation to define stewardship. Have them write down the definitions. Share these definitions in a variety of ways: post them on a bulletin board, put them in your newsletter, talk about them. After running a stewardship program ask people if their definitions have changed.
- Create a bulletin board where stewardship material may be included. Use a thermometer to record gifts to the congregation and *Presbyterians Sharing*. . . Post scriptures, quotes and stories from this newsletter to keep it current.
- Use the *Discovering Stewardship* and *How Then Should We Give* bulletin inserts to introduce some stewardship basics to your congregation. (Available from the Bookroom or online at www.presbyterian.ca under Resources.)
- Interview individuals who have interesting stories of stewardship. Ask them to share their experiences in a *moment for stewardship* during the worship service, put their story in your church newsletter or post it on the bulletin board.



Explore it More!

Stewardship of Time	Ecclesiastes 3:1-11; Ephesians 5:15
Stewardship of Talents	1 Peter 4:7-11
Stewardship of Treasures	Deuteronomy 8:10-18; Matthew 6:19-21
Stewardship of Earth	Psalms 8
Stewardship and Giving	2 Chronicles 29:14; Proverbs 3:9-10; Proverbs 11:24-25; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8:1-15; 9:1-15; 1 John 3:16-18; Acts 20:35; 2 Corinthians 9:17 Genesis 4:4-5
Stewardship and Living	Matthew 6:19-21,25-34; Matthew 22:37; James 2:14-18

From Living Faith:

We are not owners, but stewards of God's good earth.
Concerned with the well-being of all of life
we welcome the truths and insights
of all human skill and science
about the world and the universe.

Our stewardship calls us
to explore ways of love and justice
in respecting God's creation
and in seeking its responsible use
for the common good.

Living Faith, 2.4.1; 2.4.2

Some PCC RESOURCES: (available from the Bookroom)

- *Discovering Stewardship* Bulletin Inserts Six bulletin inserts produced by The Presbyterian Church in Canada to introduce some stewardship basics to your congregation. Download a copy at www.presbyterian.ca
- *The M Word – Talking About Money* is a twelve page study document prepared by The Presbyterian Church in Canada to help congregations begin to talk about money.
- *Stewardship. . . more than you thought.* A 14 page booklet produced by the Canadian Inter-church Stewardship Committee.

Stewardship Moments

Use these basic stewardship quotes to put in your bulletins, project on your screen prior to your worship service, put in a newsletter or post on your bulletin board.

Week 1

"Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received." – 1 Peter 4:10 NRSV

Week 2

"We discover the joy of giving when we discover that stewardship is everything we do from the moment we confess Jesus Christ as Lord." – Robert Bohl

Week 3

Stewardship has tremendous power - it changes the way we live - it will lead to conversion when theology is connected with everyday life. – Bishop Robert Morneau

Week 4

Stewardship is everything - a call, a gift, a lifestyle. – Rosemary Williams

Week 5

"Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." – Matthew 5:16b NRSV

Week 6

[Stewardship] is about living life in response to God's love. – Joe Douglas Reynolds, United Methodist Church

Week 7

It is well to give when asked, but it is better to give unasked, through understanding.
– Kahlil Gibran

Week 8

If I acknowledge God as the creator, it occurs to me that all I am and have is a gift.
– Martin E. Marty

Week 9

"What return can I make to the Lord for all that the Lord has given me?" – Psalm 116:12

Week 10

Giving is worship. Nothing could be more simple. – Mark Vincent

Week 11

"You have not lived until you have done something for someone who can never repay you." – John Bunyan (1628-88)

Week 12

The more we touch the intimate love of God which creates, sustains, and guides us, the more we recognize the multitude of fruits that come forth from that love.
– Henri Nouwen

Week 13

That's what I consider true generosity. You give your all, and yet you always feel as if it costs you nothing. – Simone De Beauvoir

How should we give?

- **Gratefully** – Giving is a joyful celebration of God's generosity to us and recognizes that all we have comes from God in the first place.
2 Chronicles 29:14
- **Intentionally and freely** – We plan our giving with thoughtfulness and prayer, not because we have to or ought to, but because we want to. Giving is voluntary and freely given, not from a sense of obligation nor with an intent to merit blessings.
2 Corinthians 9:7
- **Off the top** – By giving off the top of our income, instead of what is left over after everything else, we openly and deliberately declare God to be first in our lives and confirm our covenant with God.
Proverbs 3:9
- **Regularly** – We grow in generosity as we develop the habit of regular giving.
1 Corinthians 16:2
- **Proportionally, out of what we have** – We covenant to give a certain percentage of our income to God's work, according to what we have been given.
2 Corinthians 8:12
- **Cheerfully** – We give not until it hurts, but until it feels good. We learn that giving is a joyful act.
2 Corinthians 9:7

You can order the bulletin insert *How Then Should We Give?* free of charge from the Bookroom. It has the above points on it, and a chart which helps people determine their weekly giving based on their income and the percentage they choose to give.

Stewardship is...

- Our response to God's love in every area of our lives.
- Managing our resources, everything we are and have, for God.
- Understanding that everything I have is God's. It's only mine to use to glorify God and to build up the body of Christ.

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