

## SECTION I. INTRODUCTION TO STEWARDSHIP

*“As Christian stewards, we receive God’s gifts gratefully, cultivate them responsibly, share them lovingly in justice with others, and return them with increase to the Lord.”*

Stewardship can be defined simply as making the most responsible use of one’s gifts and resources.

**Everything** we have is a gift from God: our time, our talents, and our financial resources.

Just as we recognize our talents and skills as gifts from God, which we offer back in service, we recognize our financial blessing as a gift, which we are also privileged to be able to offer back to God.

We are all called to offer our gifts to God, but there are times in our lives when all that we can offer is our time to care for a sick child or a dying parent. Even when our lives are less committed, we can only hope to contribute to one or two areas of ministry in the parish. However, when we intentionally and consistently support the work of the parish, we are sharing in all the ministries.

- We are part of the welcoming team.
- We are part of the outreach to the poor.
- We are part of the committed people who teach God’s word to our children.

Stewardship then is not a program or a gimmick. It is part of the **new way of life** to which discipleship calls us. Stewardship is what we do after we say we believe in Jesus Christ.

The vitality and vibrancy of our parish life in this Third Millennium of Christianity are dependent on the contributions of the believing community. The continued strength and witness of our parishes is contingent on our willingness to embrace stewardship as a way of life, and to allow

our faith to guide our lives in offering all that we have and all that we are to the glory of God and the building up of God’s kingdom.

Stewardship in a parish must have as its basis and beginning point a recognition of God’s goodness and blessings. It should also include:

- Education in the theology of stewardship for adults and children
- A commitment to be a welcoming community
- Respect for volunteers and recognition of their contributions
- Communication to the parishioners on the ministries and the financial health of the parish
- A willingness to form a cohesive and long-range plan for allowing parishioners the opportunity to offer their time, talent and treasure

**A Summary of the 1992 U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Letter:  
*Stewardship: A Disciple's Response***

Note: The full text is available online at:  
[www.usccb.org/stewardship/disciplesresponse.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/stewardship/disciplesresponse.pdf)

**To Be a Christian Steward:**

What identifies a steward? Safeguarding material and human resources and using them responsibly is one answer; so is generous giving of time, talent, and treasure. But being a Christian steward means more. As Christian stewards, we receive God's gifts gratefully, cultivate them responsibly, share them lovingly in justice with others, and return them with increase to the Lord.

**Disciples as Stewards:**

Let us begin with what it means to be a disciple – a follower – of our Lord Jesus Christ. As members of the Church, Jesus calls us to be disciples.

**This has astonishing implications:**

- Mature disciples make a conscious decision to follow Jesus, no matter what the cost.
- Christian disciples experience conversion – life-shaping changes of mind and heart – and commit their very selves to the Lord.
- Christian stewards respond in a particular way to the call to be a disciple. Stewardship has the power to shape our understanding of our lives and the way in which we live.
- Christian disciples and stewards recognize God as the origin of life, giver of freedom, and source of all things. We are grateful for the gifts we have received and are eager to use them to show our love for God and for one another. We look to Jesus for guidance in living as Christian stewards.

**Stewards of Creation:**

The Bible contains a profound message about the stewardship of material creation: **God created the world but entrusts it to human beings.** Caring for and cultivating the world involves the following:

- Joyful appreciation for the God-given beauty and wonder of nature
- Protection and preservation of the environment - the stewardship of ecology
- Respect for human life – shielding life from threat and assault, doing everything that can be done to enhance life and make it flourish
- Development of this world through noble human effort – physical labor, the trades and professions, the arts and sciences. We call such effort “work.” Work is a partnership with God – our share in the divine-human collaboration in creation. It occupies a central place in our lives as Christian stewards.

**Stewards of Vocation**

- Jesus calls us, as his disciples, to a new way of life – the Christian way of life – of which stewardship is a crucial part.
- But Jesus does not call us as nameless people in a faceless crowd. He calls us individually, by name. Each one of us, clergy, religious, lay person; married, single, adult, child – receives a personal call, a personal vocation. God intends each one of us to play a unique role in carrying out the divine plan.
- The challenge, then, is to discover and understand our role – our vocation – and to respond generously to this call from God. Answering the call of Jesus Christ – the Christian vocation – entails the practice of stewardship. In addition, Christ calls each of us to be stewards of our personal vocations, which we receive from God.

## **Stewards of the Church**

Stewards of God's gifts are not passive beneficiaries. We cooperate with God in our own redemption and in the redemption of others. We are also obliged to be stewards of the Church – collaborators and cooperators in continuing the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, which is the Church's essential mission. This mission – proclaiming and teaching, serving and sanctifying – is our task. It is the personal responsibility of each one of us as stewards of the Church.

*All members of the Church have their own roles to play in carrying out its mission:*

- Parents, who nurture their children in the light of faith;
- Parishioners, who work in ways to make their parishes true communities of faith and vibrant sources of service to the larger community;
- All Catholics, who give generous support – time, money, prayers, and service according to their circumstances – to parish and diocesan programs and to the universal Church.

## **Obstacles to Stewardship**

People who want to live as Christian disciples and Christian stewards face serious obstacles. In the United States and other nations, a dominant secular culture often contradicts religious convictions about the meaning of life. This culture frequently encourages us to focus on our pleasures and ourselves. At times, we can find it far too easy to ignore spiritual realities and to deny religion a role in shaping human and social values.

Catholics have entered into the mainstream of American society and have experienced its advantage. Many of us also have been adversely influenced by this secular culture. We know what it is to struggle against selfishness and greed, and we realize that it is harder for many today to accept the challenge of being a Christian steward.

It is essential, therefore, that we make a special effort to understand the true meaning of stewardship and live accordingly.

### **A Steward's Way**

The life of a Christian steward models the life of Jesus. It is challenging and even difficult in many respects, yet intense joy comes to those who take the risk to live as Christian stewards. Women and men who seek to live as stewards learn that “all things work for good for those who love God.” (Romans 8: 28)

After Jesus, we look to Mary as an ideal steward. As the Mother of Christ, she lived her ministry in a spirit of fidelity and service. She responded generously to the call.

We must ask ourselves: Do we also wish to be disciples of Jesus Christ and Christian stewards of our world and our Church?

Central to our human and Christian vocations, as well as to the unique vocation each of us receives from God, is that we be good stewards of the gifts we possess. God gives us this divine-human workshop, this world and Church of ours.

The Spirit shows us the way. Stewardship is part of that journey.



## SECTION II. PREPARATION FOR STEWARDSHIP

### Parish Listening and Planning for Stewardship

What brings life to a parish? What do thriving parishes have that struggling parishes lack? Most often, it is a strong, shared vision of ministry — a sense of who we are and what we are about as a parish community. *“Without a vision, the people will perish,”* says Proverbs 29:19. But how does a parish embrace life and develop a shared vision of ministry? Rarely does it happen naturally. It is most often the result of parish leaders engaging the parish in the pastoral planning or self-study process.

In a particular way, pastoral planning is the work of Parish Pastoral Councils. Finances and temporal matters are not normally within the scope of the Parish Pastoral Council’s immediate concerns. Each parish has another consultative body, the parish Finance Council, to assist the pastor in these matters. Each council needs a rapport with the other, while providing a particular service to the local community of faith.

Especially in the area of Stewardship, it is essential that the Parish Pastoral Council and the Finance Council work together with the pastor/pastoral administrator and the Stewardship Committee to formulate long-range planning goals and objectives for introducing and sustaining a stewardship approach to parish life.

It is suggested that Parish Pastoral Councils take some time at each meeting to discuss the U.S. Bishops’ pastoral letter on stewardship or other stewardship resources. After the Parish Pastoral Council has spent time in stewardship formation it can begin strategic planning for stewardship. The task is to discover how the wisdom and vision of stewardship can be shared with the entire parish community.

**While planning for stewardship in the parish it is helpful to keep these points in mind:**

- The support of the pastor/pastoral administrator is a vital component to the success of any stewardship effort.
- Any decision to begin stewardship formation **must** involve the pastor/pastoral administrator. Their thoughts and concerns as well as their hopes for the parish community provide an important framework to promote stewardship.
- Plan for total stewardship, educating parishioners concerning time, talent **and** treasure.
- Plan for ongoing stewardship (annual renewal).
- Reflect on the need for an updated database so that there is an accurate source of information regarding parishioners and their involvements.
- Reflect on the hardware and software needs to help manage the information.
- Re-invigorate or start a Stewardship Committee (**see following page**), to continue the efforts of planning, implementing and sustaining a stewardship approach in the parish.

## **Forming a Parish Stewardship Committee**

Following preliminary planning by the pastor/pastoral administrator, staff and Parish Pastoral Council, the next step in preparation for a new or renewed stewardship process is the appointment and/or selection of a Stewardship Committee. The pastor/pastoral administrator, Pastoral Parish Council and Finance Council should carefully select this committee. Individuals who are asked to serve on this committee should have a strong commitment to prayer and to the theology of stewardship.

The committee must be a working group, and individuals asked to commit to the committee should have qualities of perseverance, leadership and organizational ability. The pastor/pastoral administrator is probably the best person to identify these potential Stewardship Committee members. **The most effective method of recruitment is a personal call or visit by the pastor/pastoral administrator.** The Office of Stewardship and Communications can assist your parish by presenting an overview of stewardship or by conducting a workshop on stewardship for your staff or Parish Pastoral Council.

## **Duties of a Parish Stewardship Committee**

**Purpose:** The Stewardship Committee is responsible for planning and coordinating the appropriate stewardship preparation, implementation and resource development activities.

**Membership:** Membership should include the pastor/pastoral administrator and representatives of the Finance Council and Parish Pastoral Council. Others with experience in the following areas would be useful but not necessary: liturgy, database management, and faith formation.

**Term:** Members should commit to a two-year or three-year term.

### **Responsibilities:**

- Commit to personal study and reflection on stewardship.
- Work with other parish leaders to present stewardship appropriately and prayerfully.
- Research, prepare and distribute information that furthers the parish's experience of stewardship.
- Implement a process for parishioner commitment of time, talent and treasure with renewals on a periodic basis.
- Ensure that the parish maintains accurate records of volunteer involvement and financial commitment.
- Ensure that all parishioners who volunteer are contacted on a timely basis and are placed in appropriate ministry positions.
- Report to the parish the results of the stewardship effort.
- Evaluate each year's commitment process and revise as necessary.
- Work with the volunteer ministry coordinator and/or database manager to ensure that all staff and parish leaders receive the information necessary to contact all volunteers.
- Ensure that volunteer efforts are appropriately recognized and rewarded.

## **Parish Assessment of Current Stewardship Activity**

It is important for the Parish Pastoral Council and/or the Stewardship Committee to assess the current situation of stewardship in the parish. This step will involve research into the available alternatives for presenting stewardship, and will allow the committee to determine what is currently being done and what is possible within the context of present resources. This overall assessment should include a detailed financial assessment of the health of the parish, sources of income, etc. and an assessment of parish ministries. If a self-study or pastoral plan has been completed in the prior two years, this should form the basis for specific guidance.

The Parish Stewardship Assessment Guide is a beginning point for reflecting on current stewardship activity in a parish (**see following page**). The Guide may also be adapted to gather broader parish feedback.

Following the assessment the Parish Pastoral Council and/or the Stewardship Committee will want to determine the following:

- What things does our parish do well that support our stewardship efforts?
- What are the areas that need more attention before we call our people to a commitment of time, talent and treasure?
- What are the areas that will need to be addressed in the future?

## Parish Stewardship Assessment Guide

Circle the number that best fits the reality of your parish.

	1	2	3	4	5
	Not at all				Very much
1. Our parish has a viable mission statement.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Our parish has an effective way of listening to the concerns of the people.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Parishioners are encouraged to utilize their gifts as part of their baptismal call.	1	2	3	4	5
4. We provide a variety of ministries and activities that respond to peoples' needs and concerns.	1	2	3	4	5
5. We know who and how many people are involved in the ministries of the parish.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Regular efforts are made to discover parishioners' talents, and parishioners are invited to use their talents in parish service.	1	2	3	4	5
7. A description of parish groups/ministries is provided for parishioners.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Appreciation is shown for peoples' contributions of time, talent, and treasure.	1	2	3	4	5
9. We have accurate parish census data and a good method for record keeping.	1	2	3	4	5
10. We interview all newcomers into the parish to hear their histories and to help them discern where they can fit into parish activities.	1	2	3	4	5
11. We provide job descriptions for all parish ministries that clearly state the commitment needed.	1	2	3	4	5
12. We ask lay leaders to take only one major role in the parish.	1	2	3	4	5
13. We have one person or group to oversee/coordinate the ministries of the parish.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Training and learning opportunities are offered to volunteers.	1	2	3	4	5
15. The parish is not overly dependent on extraordinary fundraisers such as bingo and tickets to support its ordinary budget.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Parish leaders speak about and emphasize stewardship and financial giving.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Parishioners are given a clear account at least yearly of how parish money is spent.	1	2	3	4	5

18. The parish keeps up payments on its debts and financial obligations. 1 2 3 4 5
19. Parish facilities are appropriately maintained and adequate for the needs of the parish. 1 2 3 4 5
20. Parishioners are encouraged to plan their financial contributions and make a pledge each year by completing a commitment card. 1 2 3 4 5
21. The parish regularly shares a portion of its income with the poor or a needy cause. 1 2 3 4 5
22. The resources of the parish are sufficient to accomplish its mission; the goals and objectives flowing from that mission. 1 2 3 4 5
23. Members of the Finance Council are persons with interest and experience in budgeting; facilities management; and fundraising and development efforts. 1 2 3 4 5



## **SECTION III. ELEMENTS OF A STEWARDSHIP PLAN**

### **Commitment Process Variables**

Every parishioner should be asked in some way to make a conscious effort to analyze time, talent and treasure resources, and to make a commitment to use those resources for the benefit of the faith community. Some of the ways this is done are:

- Asking parishioners to listen as a fellow parishioner explains ministry opportunities.
- Asking parishioners to attend a Ministry Fair where ministry opportunities are presented.
- Asking parishioners to fill out a form that lists ministry opportunities in the parish.
- Asking parishioners to sign an intention card making a financial commitment to the ongoing support of the parish.
- Asking parishioners to use one form to make a commitment of Time, Talent and Treasure.

### **Communication to parishioners can be done in a variety of ways, including:**

- Mailing to parishioners' homes (letters, brochures, newsletters, email, etc.)
- Communication during Mass by pastor/pastoral administrator and/or lay witness
- Communications to be taken home (bulletin, inserts, etc.)
- Parish meetings
- Ministry Fair
- Workshops
- Websites

### **Communicating Stewardship**

An effective stewardship process must include planning and implementing communication about stewardship. Ideally elements of communication will occur inside and outside the context of Mass.

#### **Printed and Audio Visual Communications**

- *Direct communication to parishioners* - The stewardship committee should evaluate and decide on which types of stewardship material should be sent to all parishioners, and which should be targeted primarily to active parishioners.
- *Parish Newsletter and/or Web Site* - These tools are essential elements of communication to parishioners. A newsletter or web site allows parishioners to find out about all the daily and weekly activities and ministries going on in the parish.
- *Commitment Cards and Envelopes* - An important element of the stewardship effort is the commitment form or card. Parishioners are generally asked to complete a personal commitment of Time, Talent and/or Treasure at the conclusion of a Stewardship education process. The commitment forms or cards can be placed in a collection basket, mailed to the parish or brought forward and placed in a special container in the context of Sunday Mass.
- *Expressions of appreciation* - Volunteers should be thanked, directly by the pastor/pastoral administrator and by mention in the parish bulletin for contributions of time and talent. It's important to also thank any young people, by name, for any specific services they were able to offer. Financial contributions should also be acknowledged by an individual thank you.

- *Educational resources* - The parish should make available to staff, school, and parishioners a variety of resources about stewardship including books, videos and audio tapes. The Stewardship and Communication Office has a small but growing library and resources website.
- *Print resources* - A variety of brochures and pamphlets are available from commercial distributors. Some sample resources are contained in this workbook and/or are available via the Stewardship and Communications Office.
- *Bulletin* - The bulletin should be used to highlight ministries, to thank volunteers, and to regularly report the good news about the generosity of parishioners in their offerings of time, talent and treasure.
- *News releases* - Parish staff and ministry coordinators should utilize the news release to inform the public of parish programs and achievements. Newspaper articles about parish events engender pride in the parish.
- *Parish brochures* - Well-designed parish brochures that contain directions, hours of Masses and other useful information can be left at local hotels and bed and breakfasts.
- *Parish Ministry Directory* - An informative guide to the organization and activities of the parish for all parishioners. It communicates what is going on in the parish to new and present members. It can reduce calls to the church office for names and telephone numbers of contact persons for parish groups. See sample of a **Parish Ministry Directory** in Appendix B. The directory can be printed on 8.5 x 11 sheets or in a booklet form. The following are suggested items for inclusion.
  - Parish Mission Statement
  - Parish Goals
  - Description of ministries/groups
  - Skills/training needed
  - Time commitment
- *Kiosks/Displays* - Located in a central meeting place in the church or parish, these units can contain informational posters/pamphlets on various organizations and services within the parish. They can also include pictures of the parish staff, Parish Pastoral Council leaders, new families, etc.
- *Video/Audio* - Either an audio or videotape can be made of parish activities and given to new families to welcome them to the parish. Additionally, webcam systems are a new technology being used to reach out in a special way.
- *Lay witnesses* - There is tremendous value in having lay people share the story of their commitment of time, talent and treasure and comment on how such sharing has affected their lives (**sample talks in appendix**).
- *General Intercessions* - Including a stewardship intention in the recitation of prayers of petition every week serves as a continuing reminder of the importance of accepting stewardship as a way of life.
- *Communication from the pulpit* - One of the most effective methods of educating parishioners about stewardship is for the pastor/pastoral administrator and other priests to communicate their own commitment to stewardship. This is by far the most powerful force in motivating parishioners to become sacrificial givers and/or increasing participation in a special activity or event.

## **Timing Aspects of Stewardship Commitment**

Every parish must decide which aspects of Time, Talent and Treasure stewardship will be presented first, and whether any or all of these aspects of stewardship will be presented together.

Commonly, the aspects of Time and Talent are presented at one time and Treasure stewardship is presented at a different time. This is especially the case for parishes that are just beginning a stewardship education process. But others argue that to separate them is to dilute true stewardship as a way of life.

The following are possible times to focus on stewardship education and/or commitment:

- **January** – Discernment on “what I am doing with the time and talents God has given me” fits in well with the readings for each of the three cycles (Jesus’ Baptism, identity and mission). It could also relate to the image of New Year’s resolutions regarding use of time and talents in the coming year(s).
- **Lent** – This is a good time to imitate Jesus’ time in the desert: a time to step back, look at personal life/mission and the use of time and talents. It could relate to the RCIA rites: imagery of Catechumens, conversion of the baptized and the incorporation of new members.
- **Parish Mission** – A parish mission could offer an in-depth time for personal/communal discernment followed by a commitment Sunday.
- **Fall** – A time when parishioners return refreshed from summer break and are ready to sign up.
- **Concurrently with the CMA** – The Office of Stewardship and Communications can provide examples of parishes doing that.

## **Stewardship Committee Formation:**

True Parish Stewardship is more a process than a program. Consequently, sufficient time is needed to build a strong foundation. At least six months to a year is recommended in the start-up period:

**Months 1-2** - Stewardship Committee or pastor/pastoral administrator personally contacts anyone interested in serving on the Stewardship Committee, or anyone who has the gifts for this committee.

**Months 3-7** - Stewardship Committee meets to study the Bishops’ Pastoral Letter and other related resources. It is recommended that members investigate the activities of stewardship parishes. The Stewardship and Communication Office can conduct a workshop for the Committee, the Parish Pastoral Council and leadership staff. The previously mentioned “*Parish Stewardship Assessment Guide*” should be completed during this time. The Committee formulates a preliminary plan and approach.

**Months 8-12** - Stewardship Committee meets to finalize plans for a Stewardship education and commitment campaign. This includes developing a vision statement and/or slogan and timeline; and communicating with the Parish Pastoral Council and the Finance Council. Not to mention communicating with the Liturgy Committee to coordinate liturgy and activities for children in school and all others in Faith Formation.

## Sample Timeline

### Commitment Plan for Time, Talent and Treasure (see sample documents in Appendix C)

#### Month 1 – Campaign Preparation

Develop articles and marketing tools for the parish newsletter, bulletin, web site and common areas. Decide if a ministry fair will be held - if yes start preparations. Meet with leadership groups to discuss stewardship and the upcoming three-week stewardship event. Recruit and prepare a variety of Lay Witnesses. Prepare mailing(s) to homes, all handouts, including any commitment forms for children/adults. Coordinate with data-entry personnel for recording of commitments.

#### Month 2 - Build some buzz

Posters proclaiming “The Joy of Stewardship” and announcing the dates of the program should be up in the entranceway of church and all gathering areas four weeks ahead of time. Try to clear as much of the parish schedule as possible so people can concentrate on Stewardship. Bulletin and pulpit announcements preparing people for the process should start appearing four weeks ahead of time as well. Let people know that they will receive a mailing just before the process begins.

#### Pre-Weekend One Mailing

Initial letter to all homes signed by the pastor/pastoral administrator announcing the parish stewardship education and commitment plan. Include the “*The Joy of Stewardship – Our Parish Journey*” brochure that introduces the concept of stewardship.

#### Weekend One: Understanding Stewardship

- *Homily* should be a brief reflection on the meaning of stewardship, how it relates to the Sunday readings and to announce the beginning of the stewardship commitment process. (The “*The Joy of Stewardship*” video could be viewed to compliment the homily or at another time during the campaign.)
- *Parish Ministry Directory* should be distributed to the people in the pews immediately after viewing the video or hearing the homily.
- *Petitions* should contain a reference to stewardship.
- *Parish Bulletin/Newsletter Insert* on Time and Talent that highlights the “Joy of Stewardship” theme and contains a passage from scripture or short message about stewardship.

### Pre-Weekend Two Mailing

A letter to all homes about Stewardship of Time and Talent; with a list of parish ministries and an invitation to attend the Ministry fair, if one is being held.

### Weekend Two: Time and Talent

- *Homily* on the Scriptural references to Time and Talent.
- *Witness* by lay persons who practice the principles of stewardship. Hearing that these principles are working for others who are just like themselves motivates people. Invite people to the parish “Ministry Fair” if one is being held this weekend
- *Petitions* at liturgies should contain a reference to stewardship.
- *Parish Bulletin/Newsletter Insert* on the Stewardship of Treasure and the finances of the parish that is easy to understand.
- *Financial Report* – During announcement time a member of the parish Finance Council should present a brief summary of the parish Financial Report as preparation for next weekend. (“ Next weekend we will be asking all of our parishioners to look closely at our financial stewardship, it is important therefore to have some idea as to how the parish exercises its stewardship when it comes to using your financial contributions...”)

Although there are three legs to Stewardship as a Way of Life – the treasure aspect is often given a separate focus because it is the most misunderstood and needs the most education.

- *Parish Ministry Fair* - A lively gathering that both informs and excites parishioners. Additional copies of the Ministry Directory and the Time and Talent commitment cards should be available.

### Pre-Weekend Three Mailing

A letter to all homes discussing Stewardship of Treasure; includes a detailed financial report, a brief case statement for increased giving and a commitment form w/ instructions

### Weekend Three: Treasure Commitment Sunday

- *Homily* on the holy use of money that should include an affirmation for the willingness of people to give of their treasure in support of the mission of the church.
- *Witness* by lay persons who practice tithing or a generous level of giving.

Consider using a ritual at the Sunday liturgy to celebrate people’s commitment. At the time of the presentation of gifts, the assembly comes forward and presents their commitment/pledge cards along with their financial offering for that Sunday. The pastor/pastoral administrator could accept the commitments or they could be placed in an appropriate container. The pastor/pastoral administrator should place their commitment cards in the container first.

You should have extra commitment cards in the pews for those who forgot theirs. Give people who did not bring their commitment/pledge cards a few minutes at Mass to fill in their cards.

- *Petitions* at liturgies should contain a reference to stewardship.
- *Parish Bulletin/Newsletter Insert* that both thanks participating parishioners and reminds others that their response is important and would be appreciated.

### **Follow-Up Committee Activities:**

*The following is a list of steps that should be taken by the Stewardship Committee immediately following a Time, Talent and/or Treasure Commitment Campaign.*

- Acknowledge as quickly and as personally as possible everyone's commitment to the parish.
- Transmit names to all ministry coordinators.  
**Ensure that all parishioners who volunteered are contacted within two weeks** (very important).
- Ensure that all new names and information are entered onto the computer database.
- Meet to evaluate the commitment process and to consider the need for ongoing activity in the areas of welcoming, communication, appreciation and benchmarking.
- Get a report from ministry coordinators as to how the process is working; if someone has not contacted the people on their list, find out why and offer to help.
- Report to the parish council and to the parish the results of the stewardship events.
- Establish a plan and calendar schedule for the next stewardship commitment process.

### **Annual vs. Bi-annual Stewardship process**

Stewardship should be an ongoing process, including the elements of stewardship communication. However, the specific commitment process is an intensive period of education leading to a request for a commitment. This specific process can be accomplished annually or every other year. Factors that will effect this decision are:

- The specific needs for volunteers
- The presence or absence of a capital campaign
- The availability of resources to follow up on commitments

### **Ongoing stewardship**

The Stewardship Committee must develop a process for ensuring that the work of stewardship continues. This will necessitate a plan for identification, appointment and training of new committee members. There must also be an ongoing process for appreciating the work of volunteers and the financial contributions of parishioners. Thank you letters, bulletin announcements and annual dinners are some ways that parishes use to recognize and thank the generous gifts of time, talent and treasure they receive during the year.

## SECTION IV: FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

Everything we have comes from God; and the return of our gifts to God includes the sharing of our treasure. Our financial giving commitment grows out of that understanding.

As Catholics we believe that the biblical tithing (10%) is the proper standard for evaluating our financial gifts. It is generally accepted that this 10% (of gross) should be distributed as 5% to the needs of our parish, 1% to the Diocesan Catholic Ministries Appeal and 4% to other charitable needs such as community programs that meet our standards and help fulfill our values as Catholic Christians. Rather than focus on a particular amount of money, the stewardship approach to financial giving asks our parishioners to look responsibly at how we use the gift of our money, and to make a conscious decision to contribute a portion, a percentage of yearly income to help meet the needs of the parish. The amount of our contribution should be based on these principles:

- *Planned*– The decision requires the thought and prayer of the individual and family making the commitment. It should be based on income, budgetary needs and special individual/family circumstances.
- *Proportionate*– Our planning should ensure that we give the “first fruits” of our monetary treasure to God. Through prayer and sacrifice we should seek to determine what percentage of our income we can contribute, always striving to increase that proportion.
- *Sacrificial*– Our contribution should be from ‘the top’ – not from our abundance or what was left over, but from the substance of our resources.
- *Thanksgiving* – In grateful response to our blessings

### Preparation for Financial Stewardship:

Factors to consider when planning a commitment plan:

- Review of the financial condition of the parish
- Analysis of financial support (parishioner giving trends)
- Establishment of goals and objectives by the Stewardship Committee, Parish Pastoral Council and Finance Council.
- On-going education of parishioners and staff concerning stewardship and in particular the Biblical teachings of tithing.

### There are three models for Financial Commitment:

**Model 1** – Combine Time, Talent and Treasure Stewardship Commitment

**Model 2** – Separate the Treasure Stewardship Commitment from Time and Talent

**Model 3** – Offertory Enhancement is a program often used when a parish is in substantial and immediate need. Generally this model will ask parishioners to commit to a specific dollar amount in the form of a pledge. Independent consultants are available to assist parishes for a fee.

## Questions and Answers about Financial Stewardship

### **Q. Don't Catholics already give more than other religious groups in this country?**

**A.** According to some studies, Catholic households contributed on average less money to the Church and charities than all other religious groups in the United States.

Catholics - \$515	= 1.3% of annual income
Protestants - \$842	= 2.4% of annual income
Jewish - \$1,854	= 3.8% of annual income
All other - \$1,075	= 2.7% of annual income

### **Q. I already support government programs through my taxes. Doesn't that count as part of my financial stewardship?**

**A.** Paying taxes are a duty and obligation of citizenship. Stewardship of time, talent and treasure is our responsibility as Christians. The Bible clearly treats giving to the government as very different from giving to God through the Church and other charities.

### **Q. How much should I give?**

**A.** The benchmark for giving sacrificially is the biblical tithe – sharing ten percent of time, talent, and treasure. The practice of tithing is mentioned 39 times in the Old Testament and 11 times in the New Testament. The financial tithe is usually divided in this way: 5% of gross income placed in the parish Sunday collection, 1% to the Diocesan Catholic Ministries Appeal and 4% percent for other diocesan collections, needy families, Catholic schools and other charities.

### **Q. When is it okay not to give to the Church?**

**A.** It would not be good stewardship or responsible to give to the Church if you and/or your family would then not have the necessities of life. The difficulty for most of us is in deciding which things that we desire are wants and which are needs.

### **Q. I'm on a fixed income and I can't afford to give.**

**A.** For some people a planned gift or a gift left in a will may be a more appropriate way to give financially to your parish.

### **Q. I do give, but I can't give very much. Is that okay?**

**A.** The actual dollar amount of your gift is not important. What is important is that your gift is planned and proportionate to your income. Jesus told us that the contribution by the poor widow was greater than anything he had seen that day, because it was given with generosity and love.

### **Q. How should I fulfill my financial obligation?**

**A.** You may choose the manner that suits you best. You may give weekly, monthly or annually. It is helpful to the parish if you use your envelopes. Electronic transfer is both regular and efficient. Consideration should also be given to sharing your possessions or assets with the parish by including a bequest in your will, making a gift of appreciated stock or donating an item of value.

### **Q. Doesn't the Church talk about money too much?**

**A.** In fact, it is often difficult for pastors/pastoral administrators to discuss this subject, but they do so because it is part of our Catholic faith. In the preaching by our Lord that is recorded, there are 31 instances where Jesus talks about how we use our money and possessions. The Apostle Paul on a number of occasions urged churches to give money to help those in need.

## **Other Considerations**

### **Timing**

Initially, Financial Stewardship should follow Time and Talent Stewardship. No other major parish activity should be going on at the same time, especially not a capital campaign. There should be no other collection, either parish or diocesan, on the Sundays during the process.

### **Anonymous vs. Signed Commitment Cards**

Some parishes ask parishioners to pray and reflect about their financial commitment and to submit an unsigned card to the parish. The advantage is that parishioners may do so with a feeling of less pressure. The disadvantage is that the parish cannot measure or track this type of commitment.

### **Use of Envelopes**

All households should receive envelopes. They should also be provided for school age children.

### **Special Consideration for Those Who Give Nothing**

Some people who are registered in the parish do not attend parish liturgies and do not contribute to the parish. Consider whether you send the same information to all parishioners or segment it accordingly.

### **Accountability**

Accountability is essential for stewardship. Parishes should communicate the ways they are using the people's gifts and increasing them for the Lord through ministry. Use a weekly bulletin column to report levels of giving and how they compare to budget. Parishes could also share information of giving trends, average household contributions, envelope usage and EFT options. Mail a yearly personal contribution report to all parishioners indicating their total offering. Include a letter of thanks from the pastor/pastoral administrator along with the most recent annual report, or financial update.

## **Teaching Stewardship to Children and Youth**

In addition to using envelopes, it is important to incorporate the biblical teachings of stewardship into the curriculum for religious education and Catholic schools. Such information can help families reflect together on the use of their money through discussion on such family issues as allowances, chores, etc.

## **Ongoing Communication About Stewardship**

Communication about financial stewardship should be a vital part of overall parish communications. A report on financial goals and contributions should be included weekly in the bulletin. A brief "stewardship thought" helps keep the stewardship message in the total context of parish life.

### **Parish Tithes**

The ongoing commitment of the parish to financial stewardship should also include discussion by the Parish Finance Council and Parish Pastoral Council concerning the responsibilities of the parish to contribute to the support of the larger community and the world. Some parishes establish a goal of 10% parish tithing, that is, 10% of income is distributed to other Catholic churches or needy causes.

### **Other activities could include:**

- Workshop to assist parishioners with budgeting
- Workshop on consumerism and social justice teachings of the Church
- Planned Giving Workshops (wills and estates) contact the Office of Stewardship and Communications for more information



## **SECTION V: ELEMENTS TO MAINTAIN STEWARDSHIP**

The following activities will help parishioners maintain a stewardship attitude toward life. In addition to a strong and consistent communication plan, some parishes may consider creating a Coordinator of Volunteer Ministry position. It will also be helpful to your parish staff, Stewardship Committee and/or Coordinator of Volunteers to ensure that parishioner records are accurate and up to date. Every volunteer must be contacted and ongoing communication with volunteers should be a high priority for all parish organizations. It is therefore important to maintain an updated data processing system and database.

### **How to Encourage and Honor Volunteers**

Just as important as attracting and training volunteers is the goal of keeping volunteers and ensuring that their contributions continue to be productive for them and for the parish. Some of the important tips for working with volunteers include:

- Provide good feedback and allow input into decision making
- Give recognition
- Provide space and adequate resources for volunteers
- Respect volunteer time commitments
- Make meetings count - train staff and leaders on how to run effective meetings
- Don't overburden a few volunteers - seek always to involve new people
- Have good job descriptions with ending dates so that volunteers can either take a break or switch to a different ministry.

### **Suggestions for Welcoming**

Welcoming begins even before a new person steps into the church. Your parish should communicate its mission, its welcome and the times for liturgical celebrations to the wider community. This could include an attractive and useful web site, a brochure about your parish that is available to local realtors, and hotels, and an attractive sign on which the Mass times are large enough to be seen from the road.

It is important that each person who attends an event or liturgical celebration at your parish receive a welcome. The usher/greeter at Mass is a key person and possibly the only person from the parish who will speak with the new person. Greeters should warmly welcome parishioners to Mass and all parish activities. The parish should communicate to all parishioners their responsibility to be welcoming people – even in the parking lot.

One of the most effective ways to foster a sense of community and welcoming is for the parish to provide a coffee hour after the Sunday morning Masses. Ideally this would be every Sunday and would be provided free.

### **Welcoming newly registered Members.**

Consider implementing some or all of these suggestions:

1. Prepare a “Welcome Packet” to be given to all new parishioners. Items to include:
  - Welcome letter from pastor/pastoral administrator
  - Brochure about the church, staff, activities and a facilities floor plan
  - Parish bulletin with schedule of Masses

- Directory of Parish Ministries
  - A map of the local area
  - School and Faith Formation information
  - Stewardship information including commitment forms for Time, Talent and Treasure
  - Booklets on prayer, parish patron, and parish mission statement
2. When a newcomer wishes to register at the parish, consider a personal interview using one of the following methods.
- The pastoral staff schedules regular times at the parish office for a personal interview of newcomers
  - The parish secretary schedules an appointment for the newcomer with a member of the pastoral staff for a personal interview
  - The Parish Welcoming Committee or Parish Stewardship Committee calls the newcomer and schedules an appointment at the newcomer's home.
3. The registration interview should be more than a mere collection of data. The time spent in friendly conversation about people's background, occupation, interest, etc. often makes a lasting positive impression. It is important to convey to new people we care about you and we ask each parishioner to make a commitment by reason of stewardship to the parish. Remember to update the parishioner database after the interview.

4. Contact should be made by telephone or by a personal visit to those parishioners who do not return a registration or time/talent commitment form. Any commitment form that is returned should be promptly reviewed and the new person's name given to the appropriate contact person.
5. A periodic newcomers' social or coffee hour will enable new parishioners to meet other members of the parish family, both new and old. Newcomers should be personally invited. All members of the pastoral staff and Parish Pastoral Council should be present to personally greet the people, give a tour of the facilities and answer questions.

It is often possible to obtain from local City/Town Halls, realtors or other commercial suppliers, the names and addresses of new residents. Whatever people's beliefs, the Catholic community should make an effort to welcome them in a warm and friendly manner.

### **Suggestions for Stewardship and Youth**

As suggested previously, there are many ways of involving youth in a stewardship process. A few additional ideas are presented below:

- Include children and youth in the annual parish Time, Talent and Treasure commitment process. Design separate commitment forms – one for the young and another for teens.
- If you use a Time and Talent Commitment process specifically for youth, make sure that all young people who have volunteered are contacted. This is very important.
- Use the bulletin to thank young people for the time they spend assisting at parish functions.

- Provide information to families on allowances and chores, and provide an opportunity for families to discuss these issues.
- Provide information and handouts for children on stewardship topics.
- Encourage the use of children's envelopes and identify someone who will keep track of the financial contributions of children. Send children a financial accounting at the end of the year.
- Schedule a Stewardship Mass for children in Religious Education Faith Formation and, if applicable, the parish day school where they can pray specifically about the use of their time, talent and treasure and come forward during Mass to contribute their commitment forms.