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**January 9, 2008 - Happy New Year from the Companions on a Journey team!**

The beginning of a new year signal a time of change, discovering new goals or thinking about things in a new way. Maybe you'd like to get involved in a new group, committee or program at your church in an endeavour to take time to participate in things you enjoy. Do you wonder if you have the qualities needed to contribute. Maybe others only see you in one way and you'd like to try something different. Here's a quick exercise to begin to think about our spiritual gifts. It only takes a few minutes to complete. Envelop the process in prayer and perhaps begin to see new abilities that can be shared with others. Here's the link from the Evangelical Lutheran Church:

<http://www.elca.org/evangelism/assessments/spiritgifts.html>

**January 16, 2008**

Have you decided to make a New Year's Resolution to start an exercise program, maybe shed a few pounds? Here's a few thoughts on the stewardship of self :

A steward is someone who holds something "in trust". Another word would be "trustee". It begins with our very selves. Our lives come into being and continue in light of a relationship with God, who makes us stewards or trustees of our bodies, of our time and energy, of our work and purpose. One very important part of that stewardship is self-care -building habits and practices that strengthen and sustain our bodies in health. Diet, exercise, a life-giving practice of rest and work in rhythm are all part of our stewardship.

But something has happened to self-care in the past few generations. Health, once a means to an end - allowing us to work, play, serve and delight in God's world - has become, for many, and end in itself. Our bodies have been separated from our purpose, as if our bodies were our purpose, rather than serving a purpose beyond them, beyond us.

In our baptism, our bodies were washed with physical water and joined to the Body of Christ. We belong to Christ, and hold our lives "in trust" for the purposes of Christ. The potter has made us for a purpose, and that purpose is not something we conjure up, but something to which we are called.

It is good stewardship to keep our bodies/our selves as ready as we can be for the work we will be assigned. Part of that readiness is a matter of attentiveness to the One from whom our lives spring into being. Part of that readiness is regular connection with the gathered Body of Christ to receive the gracious gift of God's presence and purpose in the Eucharist. Self-care and self-offering are both part of our care - for our bodies and for the holy purposes for which they are intended.

*- An excerpt from The Rev. Dr. Michael Thompson, St Jude's Anglican Church, Oakville, Ontario*

## **January 23, 2008 - Some Thoughts on Visioning**

Stewardship can be defined in many ways. Bishop Burrill from the Episcopal Church describes stewardship as the responsible care of something entrusted to us from God and everything we do after we say "I believe". Visioning happens when we imagine the future. Does your church have a vision that matches your stewardship beliefs? Are your mission and vision statements more than 5 years old? Do your programs of mission and outreach intentionally reflect the values outlined in your mission and vision statements? Do you consistently proclaim the Gospel to your members and others in the community? Can your parishioners relate to your vision and mission statements?

It is the hope that all congregations in our Diocese will have a clear mission statement and vision by our 300th anniversary in 2010. To assist us with this goal Janet Marshall, Potentials East and member of the Stewardship Development and Resource Group has developed an easy to use workbook entitled A Journey Just Begun, A Parish Visioning Resource. It is a guide to assist your parish in developing or updating your vision through the use of prayerful discussion, group exercises, reflection and goal setting. We are beginning to introduce this resource in our Stewardship workshops and further information is available on our website. Join us in imagining the future.

## **January 30, 2008 - Gifts of Grace**

Mary Schramm has written a book titled "Gifts of Grace". In her book, she suggests that there are five steps in ascertaining and using your gifts.

The first step is to discover your gifts – and you nearly always discover your gifts in relationship; you rarely discover your gifts in isolation. For example, we discover our giftedness while at work: gifts for organization, leadership, cooperation. In a good marriage, a spouse is forever helping you to discover your talents and how to use those talents more effectively, from the time you are first married until you die. You are forever growing and changing, and a good partner is one who helps you to discover yourself and what you want to do next with your life. Friends also help you to discover yourself. They know your interests and resources and the changing circumstances of your life, and they help you to discover and expand your giftedness. I believe that it is very important to keep learning about, and using, your gifts at each and every stage of your life.

The second step is to accept the gifts which God has given you. This is the art of maturity – learning to accept the gifts that God has given to you and not given to you. A key indicator is how jealous and envious you are of other people and their gifts. If you are jealous and envious of other people's giftedness, or if you feel inferior, chances are you have not really accepted your own blend of gifts that God has given to you.

The third step is to enjoy your God-given gifts: to take pleasure in them – to appreciate what God can do through your life. For example, if you are an artistic person – a painter,

a sculptor, a photographer – you get a great deal of pleasure from creating a piece of your very own artwork.

The fourth step is to develop your gifts. Like all gifts, your gifts need to be put to work, to be exercised, to be matured. Nothing in this world becomes stronger without hard work and the investment of your time and energy. Just to rely on native talent and to avoid the hard work of developing that gift will lead you nowhere.

The fifth step involves all of the steps....and it is to surrender all your gifts to God. This means to give all of your gifts to Jesus Christ. If we don't, we will use our gifts for our own benefit...just to glorify ourselves. But you and I are called instead to glorify God, and to praise God each day for all of God's wonderful works done in and through us.

Do you realize that, when you discover your gifts, use your gifts, and surrender your gifts to Jesus, you are doing the will of God for our life? Perhaps you have asked yourself: What is God's will for my life? Very simply, to do the will of God is to discover and use and surrender your God-given resources to make the world a better place, to be the kingdom of God in your own time and space.

*-An excerpt from a sermon by the Rev. Mary Lewis, Anglican Diocese of Toronto.*

#### **February 6, 2008 - Stewardship Idea for Lent**

Have you given up something for Lent? Does your parish have a specific fundraiser going on right now? Make your Lenten discipline doubly effective and set aside what you would normally spend for you forgone pleasure during the 40 days of Lent and give the money you saved to the church on Maundy Thursday. Perhaps you have chosen to give up a special food. You could donate the special treat to a food bank or make your favourite chocolate dessert for a local homeless shelter. Instead of giving up something maybe you could plan to do something extra for your church like a small painting or cleaning job that no one else has found the time for. You get the idea, I'm sure you can think of many more ideas.

Generous and loving God, You call us to be disciples of your Son Jesus and good stewards of all your many gifts.

Open our minds and hearts to a greater awareness and deeper appreciation of your countless blessings.

Transform us through the power of your Spirit to nurture a Stewardship way of life marked by faith-filled prayer, service to our neighbour and generous sharing.

Teach us to be faithful servants of your gifts. May we return ten-fold The gifts entrusted to us.

We pray through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

#### **February 13, 2008 - Christians Should Respond Daily To God's Generosity by being:**

1. Grateful: Like the woman who washed Jesus' feet with expensive ointment and tears
2. Generous: Give from first fruits, not leftovers
3. Mindful of the Poor: Extend hospitality to strangers (Good Samaritan Parable)
4. Cheerful Givers: Give what you have decided in your heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver
5. Proportionate Givers: Give as God has prospered you
6. Faithful Stewards: To whom much is given, much is expected
7. Planners: Plan your giving

*-Steven Ramp, Lutheran Seminary Professor*

### **February 20, 2008 - The Purpose of Stewardship is Giving, Not Fundraising**

The primary purpose of stewardship is to help people learn the art of giving- to grow forward in our generosity. Giving is a learned behaviour and as our learning grows our generosity expands. The key to learning how to give is first learning how to receive. When we graciously receive what has been given, we learn to give out of compassion, generosity and love, not out of duty or sense of obligation. Therefore, an important first step in our stewardship journey is to learn how to accept and receive. Once we have learned how to receive, our stewardship journey then centers around growing, developing, advancing and building these gifts. God's gifts are meant to be grown and developed, especially the gifts of our lives, generosity, mission and hope.

*-Kennon Callahan, Giving and Stewardship in an Effective Church*

### **February 27, 2008 - From Scarcity to Abundance**

Although God operates from a theology of abundance, we often operate from a mindset of scarcity or of never having enough. Someone once said that the question we need to ask is not "How much of what I own should I give?" Rather the question should be "How much of what belongs to God am I willing to let go of?" Tithing is a useful tool, a measurement. As a tool it helps us measure our stewardship progress. But Christian stewardship is about more than money. It's a life-long journey. It is a way of thinking and acting, a lifestyle. We need to let go and let God work in our lives. When we do giving (of all kinds) will feel good and right. If giving doesn't feel good, we are probably still inwardly focused. Ultimately, Christian stewardship is about our relationship with God. Gifts given during our lifetime and upon death are expressions of the depth and strength of our relationship to and love of God, and serve as powerful faith statements to loved ones.

*-Living Stewardship: A Lifelong Journey*

### **March 5, 2008 - Stewardship of Time**

The other day in the car I heard a report on CBC Radio about how few people take vacation, how many people work all the time. The report quoted remarkable statistics about how many heart attacks might be prevented each year by a one-week vacation. I would imagine that depression would also figure in here. We desperately need the stewardship of time that finds the proper balance between God-given work and God-given cessation from work.

The balance between ordered work and restful ceasing from work is a deep necessity for mental health and the capacity of all of us to live full, productive and meaningful lives. Hence the stewardship of time might be considered every bit as important as all other forms of stewardship.

Each of us are called to establish patterns in our lives so we might steward our living fruitfully and joyfully in ways that God would have us live. Keeping Holy the Sabbath is an opportunity for reflection and downtime from our busy schedules. Since clergy and many others work on the Sabbath this day may not always be possible. So it is important to schedule in time for reflection. Make use of your planned “downtime” to enrich your relation with God and others through prayer, scripture reading, being in community with other Christians, enjoying our natural environment, etc. All of these activities are good stewardship of our time.

### **March 12, 2008 - The Steward's Response**

One thing you can always count on once you start talking about stewardship – it is only a matter of time (and, usually, a very brief time) – is that the conversation has turned to the subject of money and giving. That is really unfortunate because it gives the impression that money and giving are the only, or the most important, area of stewardship that really matters.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Stewardship embraces and concerns itself with the whole of life, every facet of life, including

Work leisure government family  
Economy health environment ethics  
Faith pollution recycling injustice  
Politics natural resources time community involvement

These are all integral parts of the order of creation, and have a bearing on God's will and purposes for creation. There is no facet of our life and existence that is unrelated to stewardship. It is all the direct concern of stewards and stewardship because it is all an arena in which God is vitally concerned and involved. One thing is for sure, when we are talking stewardship, we are talking one incredible adventure! And the truth is, the deeper we go into our study and understanding of stewardship, the more incredible and stimulating it becomes!

*-Rev. George Haynes, Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Texas*

### **March 19, 2008 – A Stewardship Prayer**

God, you have made our world and seen that it is good;  
grant to us, created to complete your work,  
the bright, beautiful vision that makes us care for what we do.

-New Zealand Prayer Book

As we journey through Holy Week and prepare to receive your gift of hope on Easter, let us be mindful of our commitment to be faithful stewards and to use our time, talents and treasure to further the work of your church. Help us to be true Disciples of Christ and stewards of his gifts.

### **March 26, 2008 - Stewardship of Family Time**

What's gone wrong? Families live in a culture today with values that often oppose those that Jesus taught.

Culture says, "Value things." Christ says, "Value people."

Culture says, "Put yourself first." Christ says, "Serve others."

Culture says, "Never be satisfied with what you have; yearn for newer, bigger, brighter."

Christ says, "The abundant life that I bring is peace, joy and contentment."

Culture says, "Hurry up, be busy, do, do, do." Christ says, "Slow down, remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy."

Culture says, "Money and power and status are our gods; worship them." Christ says, "God is God; worship God only."

#### Make Family Time a Priority

- \* Put it on the calendar.
- \* Limit other activities.
- \* Keep work under control.
- \* Plan a weekly family Sabbath.
- \* Eat together.
- \* Turn off the television.
- \* Talk together.
- \* Play together.
- \* Pray together.
- \* Have family fun nights.
- \* Make home a safe harbour.
- \* Celebrate differences.
- \* Speak with love.

**April 2, 2008** – repeat of last week

**April 9, 2008** - Christian Stewardship is ...

grateful and responsible use of God's gifts in the light of God's purpose as revealed in Jesus Christ. Christian stewards, empowered by the Holy Spirit, commit themselves to conscious, purposeful decisions.

Stewardship is lived out in:

- \* living and telling the Good News;
- \* sharing with God in seeking justice, peace, and the integrity of creation in an interdependent universe;
- \* wisely employing God-given human resources, abilities, and relationships;
- \* sharing the material resources we hold and giving them in service, justice, and compassion;
- \* providing for future generations;
- \* sharing in the life, worship, and responsible stewardship of the Church and of its mission.

Both for the individual and for the community, stewardship is a joyful act for the sake of God's world

*- From the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas*

#### **April 16, 2008 - Earth Day is April 22, 2008**

As Christians we are all called to be stewards of God's creation. Earth Day is a special time to remember this charge. Here are a few ideas you might consider for your parish and some great websites with plenty more ideas:

- \* Designate a "car-free" or "bike- to- church" Sunday
- \* Use only environmentally friendly cleaning products
- \* Convert lawn space to a community garden
- \* Plant a tree
- \* Hold one liturgy a year outside and focus on environmental stewardship
- \* Encourage youth to discover ways of "greening" your church

125 Ways to Green Your Parish: [www.greeningspirit.ca/files/125%20ways](http://www.greeningspirit.ca/files/125%20ways)

Renewing our Relationship with the Earth: [www.ottawa.anglican.ca/docs/renewing.pdf](http://www.ottawa.anglican.ca/docs/renewing.pdf)

*Kairos Canada: [www.kairoscanada.org/e/action/campaign.asp](http://www.kairoscanada.org/e/action/campaign.asp)*

#### **April 23, 2008 - Three Good Reasons**

Before you say no when asked to take a position in your church, think about some reasons why you should say "yes." There are at least three good reasons why every Christian ought to serve their church.

1. Your Christian life needs a service outlet. Nothing helps you to grow as a Christian like putting your faith into practice by teaching, singing, ushering, or serving on a church committee.

2. You have a testimony to share with others. The reason why you are asked to serve is that your fellow Christians have confidence in you and your ability. Your Christian testimony will be a good influence in the lives of those whom you lead and serve.

3. Your church needs you. How will your church get its work done unless members volunteer their time to teach and lead? When you accept a place of responsibility, you help your church move forward in the name of Christ.

Sharing your time, skill, experience...that's good Stewardship!

### **April 30, 2008 - Time's a-wastin'!**

This statement describes rather well the reaction of many to time. There is just so much time and no more. Of all of God's gifts, time has its limits. The real issue is not the length of life or the number of hours and minutes God gives us. The basic question is how do we use the time a generous God gives to us? Since we cannot add minutes or recycle time, we continually set priorities. "I'm too busy for that right now...I don't have the time to do that...Ask someone else—I can't spare the time." Each person must decide how he or she will manage the time given by God.

In your 168 hours a week do you allow:

- Time to give thanks and praise to God who has given you all the gifts of life -time, abilities, resources
- Time to see and react to the beauty of God's creation?
- Time to say "I love you" to others, just as God has said it to you?
- Time to use your God-given gifts to help and share with others?
- Time to live responsibly and responsively?

God has given you time to be used as a wise steward. Make the most of it! Enjoy it all. Use it all. Praise God by living life fully and faithfully!

### **May 7, 2008 – A little inspiration for Mom**

Spiritual Gifts for Kids: One of the joys of parenting is helping our children discover and grow into the gifts God has given them – including their spiritual gifts. 1 Corinthians 12 lists seven spiritual gifts:

- Prophecy – sharing the Word of God with others.
- Helps – a willingness to help others with their needs.
- Teaching – an ability to help others understand God's Word.
- Exhortation – the capacity to encourage and motivate others.

- Giving – a spirit of generosity.
- Leading – the ability to lead and direct others.
- Mercy – a sense of compassion for others and a willingness to act on these feelings.

Which of these gifts do you see evident in your children? Consider ways you can help your children use these gifts. Help them realize that God has a plan for them to serve others now, not just in adulthood. Talk to your church leaders about helping your children grow in their gifts.

Thank you Mom for all that you do to help us grow in faith!

### **May 14, 2008 - Visioning**

Did you know it is the goal of our Anglican Diocese that every parish has a vision for what we would like to be by 2010 and beyond?

One of the primary responsibilities of congregational leadership is helping people understand where they are going as a community, why going there is important, and how they can best get there together. Visioning for the future is not just a matter planning what you want to do, but discerning your congregation's call -- who you aspire to be.

Congregations require good planning and the formation of a shared vision, if they are going to remain healthy.

- \* Who are we?
- \* What has God called us to do or be?
- \* Who is our neighbour?

Visioning is a conversation, a dialogue. A holy conversation because it is about a people's understanding of their identity as a faith community, their sense of purpose, and their relationship with God: Who are we? What has God called us to do or be? Who is our neighbour?

To help you develop a vision for your parish we offer workshops and resources. Also check the 2010 site on our NS/PEI diocese website for more information.

### **May 21, 2008 - A Matter of Perspective**

Funny how \$20 looks so big when you take it to church...and so small when you take it to the grocery store.

Funny how labourious it is to read a chapter in the Bible...and how easy it is to read a best-selling novel.

Funny how time-consuming it is to spend two hours at choir practice...and how easy it is to watch a two-hour movie.

Funny how hard it is to help clean the church...and how easy it is to clean and polish the new car.

Funny how we can't think of anything to say when we pray...but we don't have any difficulty talking on the phone or to a friend.

On second thought, maybe these things aren't so funny after all. Perhaps they reflect our mixed-up priorities. Maybe our problem is that we're viewing our commitment to God through the wrong end of a telescope.

Giving of ourselves...our time, talent and money, adds meaning and pleasure to our lives. Try it.

### **May 28, 2008 – Synod Keynote Highlights**

The keynote speaker at last weekend's Synod was Bishop William (Bill) Burrill from the Episcopal Church in the United States. The focus of his talks were on stewardship. Here are a few points he made:

“Stewardship is the responsible management of something entrusted to our care.”

We are responsible for:

- \* Creation is a basic matter of stewardship, we are responsible for our earthly home
- \* Gospel- we are responsible as Baptized Christians to proclaim the good news of God in Christ
- \* Family & Extended Family- for the community in which we live and for peace and justice
- \* Personal Vocations- our careers and jobs and the best use of our God-given talents
- \* Our Own Lives- to live our best lives. Dear Lord change the world, starting with me.

A DVD of the keynote presentations has been made for each parish. If you have not received yours yet, please call the Synod Office to check on its whereabouts.

### **June 4, 2008 - "Hokey- Pokey"**

Our commitment of money shows up in the offering plate, often accompanied by the thought that it helps balance the church budget. But what if, when the celebrant holds up the offering plate at the altar, we saw instead, ourselves in that plate- our whole selves surrendered to God as an offering of thankful trust and faith in God and in God's purposes for our lives and God's church?

The Hokey-Pokey song celebrates: "You put your whole self in..." in thankfulness and joy for the love of God in Christ Jesus for us and for our blessings we have received in life and creation through God's unconditional love for all. "You put your whole self in" to the heart of God unconditional love in order to , as the rest of the song goes, "put your whole self out" into the world as an offering, Serving Christ in others, surrendering our whole self to God and joining God in God's mission of reconciling love in Christ Jesus. – An excerpt from Rt. Rev. Bud Cederholm, TENS Newsletter

Invite your Sunday school children to bring the offering forward. Sing the Hokey-Pokey song as a way to unite all ages in this joy-filled part of the service.

### **June 11, 2008 - Stewardship Ideas**

The Church of Saint Andrew in Cole Harbour is beginning to think about stewardship in new ways. They have made a small but meaningful change to their Sunday morning worship. When the offertory baskets are brought forward the layreader will pause hold up the baskets and the congregation will sing these few lines:

``All that we have and all that we offer comes from a heart both frightened and free.  
Take what we bring now and give what we need, all done in His name.``

Also the finance committee have created ``Count Your Blessings Jars.`` These brightly decorated Mason Jars contain a calendar for the months of July and August. On Sunday you give thanks for things like your home, family, church community. The other days of the week you are invited to put money in the jars for something you are thankful for. July 2: add 20 cents for each child living at home, July30: add 25 cents for each Bible in your home, August 20: add 20 cents if you have fresh vegetables in your home, etc. This could be a fun summer project for the whole family to reflect on all we are so blessed with in Canada. Jars are then offered to the church in September.

These are a few ideas. What new things are you doing in your parish. Please share your ideas by email with the Companions on a Journey group. We'll pass on your activities to others in the Diocese.

**June 18, 2008** – repeat of last week

### **June 25, 2008 - A Parable- Once there was a Church**

Once there was a church where the people took the offering back home with them. First it was collected and brought to the altar.  
After they asked God to bless it, they took it and put it back into their pockets. They mixed it up with all their other money, so that they couldn't tell which was blessed and which was not. Then they left. All week they spent as though each piece was blessed and was to be used lovingly.

-- By Herbert Brokering, Evangelical Lutheran Church

## **July 2, 2008 - A Stewardship Prayer**

Good and gracious God, our hope in giving is great. In Christ we share the hope that our lives will be transformed in generosity. In Christ we share a hope that our life together will be evidence of your hospitality. In Christ we share a hope that our witness will reach those hungry for good news. In Christ we recognize you have already blessed our lives, our church and our ministry. In our common wealth, let us be a blessing to you. In Christ we bring these gifts. Amen

## **July 9, 2008**

### **Stewardship Preaching Tips**

- \* Stewardship preaching starts with a personal philosophy of pastoral care. If people know you care about them they will listen. First and foremost provide pastoral care.
- \* All stewardship preaching comes from a basic premise – God is “the Great Giver, the creator and owner of all; we are the stewards.
- \* From time to time, do the work of reflecting on your own theology of giving and sense of God’s abundance and providential care in your life. Allow your own sense of gratitude and blessing to come through in your preaching.
- \* We are a people of the story which is why the narrative budgeting approach resonates. Reflect on and then tell your own stewardship story. People will listen.
- \* Remember - people want to know how your own personal sense of stewardship of your baptismal ministry is part of the very fabric of your life. Help people to understand that it is through our stewardship of the gifts of God we live out our baptismal promises.
- \* Use the Bible. From the very first book of the Bible, the image of God is one of an abundant, lavish giver. If we are created in God’s own image, then to deny that, we are not allowing ourselves to become what God has made us to be. Look for biblical stories about gratitude and abundance. Remind parishioners that Jesus talked more about money than he did about heaven or prayer.
- \* Talk of money in the church is within the context of “doing ministry”. Be unapologetic.
- \* Always invite others to give. People experience great joy in giving. People NEED to give.
- \* NEVER shame people into giving.
- \* Thank people often for what they have done, what they are doing, and what they will do in the future.

*From: Dave Ponting Director of Stewardship and Financial Development, Anglican Diocese of Niagara*

## **July 16, 2008 – A Stewardship Prayer**

**WE LOVE BECAUSE GOD FIRST LOVED US**

We love God because he first loved us;  
We forgive others because God first forgave us.

**WE GIVE BECAUSE GOD GAVE FIRST TO US:**

our life, all that we are  
creation, all that we have, our eternity  
We give to the hungry, to the homeless, to the victims of disaster, to the Church

**WE OFFER YOU OURSELVES, OUR SOULS AND BODIES TO BE A LIVING SACRIFICE**

Giving, or offering, is part of worship. It's part of how we respond to God.

*- From Mrs. Diana George, Christian Stewardship Advisor at Hereford Cathedral  
(Bishop Sue visited last weekend)*

**July 23, 2008** – And it was so...

Now it came to pass, as the summer drew nigh, that Mr. Church Member lifted up his eyes unto the hills and said, 'Lo, the hot days cometh, and even now are at hand. Come, let us go unto the hills where the cool air will refresh us and glorious scenes await us.' 'Thou speakest wisely,' said Mrs. Church Member. 'Yet three things, yea four, must we do before we can go hence.' 'Three I can think of, but not four.' responded Mr. Church Member. 'We must take care of the lawn, lock up the house and see that the mail is taken in, but the fourth eludes my mind.' 'The fourth is like unto the first three, yet more important than all,' said Mrs. Church Member. 'Thou shall reach into thy purse and give the Lord his share – that the good name of His church be preserved, the work of His kingdom go on, and that it may be well with thee. For thou hast more money now than thou wilt have when thou dost return.' And it came to pass that Mr. Church Member brought their offering envelopes to the church before they set upon their journey. The treasurer rejoiced greatly saying, "Of a truth the members of this church do love the Lord and their Church."

And it was so.

**July 30, 2008** – Six Steps in Christian Giving

Our Christian stewardship can operate on a number of levels. Where are we now? Where would Christ like to see us? Can we move up a level?

Survival. I give a bit when I'm asked because I hope the church will be there if I need it, though with any luck I won't have to. My giving is a bit of an insurance policy, really.

Supermarket. I'm happy to pay for the bits of the church that I want to enjoy. I can ignore the unchallenging or boring parts of the church, and still enjoy some benefits.

Support. I think the Church is important and that I'm a member of the supporters' club, so I'm happy to play my part in sustaining it.

Subscription. I see myself as a member of the church and want to contribute my fair share of the costs. Church membership is part of my identity, and others recognize that I play an important part in the life of the Church.

Submission. My understanding is that if I am to be a Christian I should put God first in my life. My giving is more about God than the institution of the Church.

Sacrifice. My Christian calling is to be Christ-like. I really do believe that God "demands my soul, my life, my all". Because God has given me so much, even his own Son, I want to give back, joyfully and sacrificially.

*-From an original idea by Robin Stevens developed by Jim Pendorf, Diocese of Canterbury*

### **August 6, 2008 – Stewardship of Creation**

One of the major themes to rise out of the Lambeth conference was the safeguarding of creation. Bishop Sue remarked that bishops from around the communion give a picture of a global crisis. She went on to say "In the Global South, safeguarding creation is a day to day activity, not an intellectual activity."

As Christians and indeed Anglican's, not only do we have a responsibility to act, but we are called to love and celebrate God's creation. We can work to protect our natural environment as individuals and as a church. Our individual actions and our collective actions as a church are part of the worldwide effort to ensure the long term health and sustainability of life on Earth. As individuals we may not be able to change the world single-handedly, but change begins with ourselves. We are not helpless to global climate change, changing ourselves is where we begin to make a difference. "Every Anglican must understand that it is their personal responsibility to live a rule of life that sustains and restores God's creation." Check out Bishop Sue's blog for more information.

What others have said:

"God writes the Gospel, not in the Bible alone but on trees, flowers, clouds and stars"- Martin Luther

"God is everywhere: in all things and in nothing. God is in the trees and seas; in birds and in beasts, in the soil under my feet and in my soul"- Kabir

"There is enough for everybody's need. But not enough for anyone's greed."- Mahatma Gandhi

## **August 13, 2008 – Christian Stewardship is a Response to God**

The Christian understanding of Stewardship is derived from our understanding of the nature of the generosity of God.

God the Creator: Because God is the Creator and has given us a special place in his purposes on earth and dominion over all other living creatures, we are called:

- to worship God and to give thanks for his goodness
- to use the natural world and other living creatures in the service of God and all people and not for self-interest and exploitation.

God the Saviour: Because God has made himself known most fully in Jesus Christ, and has acted uniquely and decisively in him to save the world and to give forgiveness, grace and eternal life, we are called:

- to put our trust in God and live in companionship with Jesus Christ
- to follow Jesus in showing love to others; to use our minds, bodies and possessions to glorify God, and to give practical help to people in need.

God the Holy Spirit: Because God has formed the Church, entrusted the Church with the Gospel and given gifts to us through the Holy Spirit:

- the Church is called to make Jesus Christ and the Gospel known.
- individual Christians are called to use their gifts in his service.

- *From Giving and Christian Stewardship, Church of England*

## **August 20, 2008 – A Response in Active Giving**

The word "steward" is used in the Bible to express the concept of responsibility for the use of material possessions and spiritual powers. Christian Stewardship may therefore be defined as the response which we the Church, collectively and individually, are called to make to God for all that he has given us and done for us, above all in Jesus Christ. Our response in Christian Stewardship is therefore active:

- \* as we respond to God in praise and thanksgiving
- \* as we look on the universe as God's creation
- \* as we treat the earth and its resources as God's provision for the needs of all mankind
- \* as we seek to consecrate our personal wealth to God
- \* as we regard our lives, our powers and possessions, our money and material wealth as gifts from God to be enjoyed and used in his service
- \* as we seek to be "Stewards of the Gospel" and to share in Christ's mission to the world

Unless our money gift has cost us something, it is not really a thanksgiving but more like a tip. And one of the tensions in our discipleship lies in whether we live our life and give

to God the odd crumb, or whether we give to God first, and then manage the rest. If the Christian disciple does the first, he will never be satisfied: If he does the second, he will always have enough.

- *From Giving and Christian Stewardship, Church of England*

### **August 27, 2008 – Stewardship Seconds**

\* Stewardship means learning how to receive as well as how to give. God's gifts can come from the most unlikely places; when we recognize and accept them for what they are, everyone benefits.

\* God gives freely and forgives freely. Can we do the same—not just with those around us, but with anyone who is in need of what we can give?

\* We need to listen to the insistent voices calling us to step outside our comfort zones and find new ways to share what God has given us.

\* Ignore the siren call of "there's never enough for me." The more we give, the less we will find we really need.

\* There are an infinite number of ways to express our joy and show our gratitude for God's gifts.

\* Stewards have the courage to take risks, to speak up so that others may be free to use their gifts.

\* How often does fear prevent us from giving as much as we are able to give? Stewardship allows us to choose to be free from fear by using our gifts to free others from what enslaves them.

\* Jealousy and grumbling over what we don't have, and what we think we need, can never satisfy us. But as we share what we have with others, God will continue to give us what we need.

\* As stewards, what we give is not as important as that we give.

*From [www.united-church.ca/planning/theme/seconds](http://www.united-church.ca/planning/theme/seconds) Stewardship Sermon Starters for Revised Common Lectionary*

### **September 3, 2008 – repeat of last week**

### **September 10, 2008 – Stewardship Nuggets for Back To School**

*"Love your neighbour as yourself. Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law." (Romans 13:9b-10, NRSV)*

Christian stewardship calls us to conduct ourselves with concern for others before self. Each age of development has a "me" attitude that parents sometimes overlook. Initially, this "me" attitude is an appropriate developmental stage. However, this self-focus is a driving force throughout our lives, especially in the "tween" and teenage years. This attitude is heightened by our hyperconsumer culture. (Note: When you are shopping at the local mall, notice the abundance of marketing efforts with a "me" focus.)

This self-focus can be tempered with a strong emphasis on teaching tweens and teens compassion towards others. The beginning of the school year is a great time to discuss the various expectations of the school, the church, and parents. Parents may choose to review their children's responsibilities at home (for example, cleaning a bedroom, emptying the trash, cutting the grass, loading the dishwasher) and the consequences for not fulfilling these expectations. Help your children begin to look outside of themselves to learn to care for and be considerate of others.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for new beginnings, such as the beginning of this new school year. We pray that we might develop close relationships with our neighbours from home, school, and church. Enable us to always show love and compassion to others. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, who seeks to develop an ever-closer relationship with us. Amen.

*From: Ruth M Blum, Centre for Christian Stewardship, United Methodist Church.*

**September 16, 2008** – repeat of last week

**September 24, 2008** – Twelve Keys to an Effective Church

By Kennon Callaghan

Here is a little of what we can expect from our upcoming Stewardship Conference: Shepherding an Effective Church in the 21st Century.

#### 1. A Concrete Mission

Discover what your church is called to do; find a hurt and meet it. A church needs a focus; it can't be all things to all people. Callahan suggests churches identify no more than three major mission objectives. Don't adopt a negatively stated mission such as simply surviving. Like a sports team, Callahan says, "Don't play to avoid losing, play to win."

#### 2. Effective Shepherding

Callahan believes that visitation by both pastor and laity with members, newcomers, the sick, shut-ins, and the unchurched is essential for a church to be healthy. When there's effective shepherding by the rector, Callahan says, the congregation will even give the preaching a higher mark than it deserves!

#### 3. Dynamic Worship

Sermons that are easily followed, provide humour and drama, and share something hopeful and helpful are key. There needs to be connected movement in the service that strings together one theme. Quality music by a gifted volunteer or staff person is essential for good worship.

#### 4. Good Group Ministry

People are looking for a place to belong. They want to be in community, not on a committee, Callahan states. People, not programs, need to be the focus of a church, and this largely happens through groups.

#### 5. Strong Leadership

Effective leaders are not simply enablers, responding to the congregation's wishes. Instead, leaders must be proactive, visionary, and willing to lead the congregation forward.

#### 6. An Effective Decision Making Process

Streamlined organizational structure keeps leaders from wasting time in too many committee meetings. The congregation should perceive the decision-making process as reasonable in length and effective at reaching decisions and achieving established goals.

*Stay tuned next week for the next six of "Twelve Keys to an Effective Church" by Kennon Callaghan*

**October 1, 2008** – Twelve Keys to an Effective Church, cont...

By Kennon Callaghan

Here are the next six Keys to an Effective Church. Last week featured the first six. It is sure to be an excellent Stewardship Conference: *Shepherding an Effective Church in the 21st Century*.

#### 7. Several Excellent Programs

Too many programs exhaust a church. Choose a few in which the church can be competent.

#### 8. Open Accessibility

This includes location accessibility-is the church easy to find? Are there sufficient green space and visible parking? It also includes ministry accessibility-is there ministry that attracts people and draws them in?

#### 9. High Visibility

Can the church facility be easily seen? Are the pastor, people, and ministries visible to the community? Is there a good church sign? In the final analysis, however, it's people who attract people.

#### 10. Adequate Parking

There should be a parking space, Callahan says, for every 1.75 people. Twenty percent of the parking should be empty, an invitation for seekers to stop in. A full parking lot communicates "there's no room for you."

#### 11 Adequate Facilities

There should be a balance between size and usage. The condition of the church property communicates what the congregation thinks of itself.

## 12. Generous Giving

Income goes up in relation to increased participation in ministries. It's also important to remember that money follows mission. A great ministry inspires greater giving.

### **October 8, 2008** – Stewardship Conference

Resources from the conference are now available on the Diocesan website at: <http://www.nspeidiocese.ca/stewardshipconference/index.html>

### **October 15, 2008** – repeat of last week

### **October 22, 2008** – Money is not the Problem

Perhaps the greatest theological challenge of our time is to preach the ethic of generous giving in a climate of possessiveness. We are in a culture of spending more than we earn. We are either empty inside or filling the void with stuff and we're frightened by the future. We have lived so long depending on our own efforts that we can't muster a "trust-and-the-Lord-will-provide" faith-based generosity. Our money is our identity, a ticket to being a real "somebody" in a possessing world.

The truth is we are abundantly blessed. All that we have is a gift-our material resources, our family and friends and our accomplishments. It is our responsibility as stewards who seek to grow to understand God has given us so much. God loves and God gives. Our world around us is crying out for the love of our Maker, for the sure knowledge that we are loved, that we are not alone. Are you blessed? List your top ten blessings and then see how many have a monetary value. Share what you think with family and friends. –*An excerpt from: Thanks Giving by Christopher Levan*

### **October 29, 2008** – Holy Habits During a Fickle Economy

All things come of Thee, O Lord...

1. Pray. Especially if you've tried everything else.
2. Bible study. Anglicans tend to explore lots of background on the possible authors of the Bible or details about word choice and translations, but none of those things has the power to transform a life. Instead read a Gospel looking for what is Jesus saying to you and how it may change your life.
3. Rebuke scarcity. Don't try to manage fear well or try not to let it upset you. Wholeheartedly rebuke it. Stand up to the fear of scarcity and say No! God does not live in our fear.

4. Claim abundance. In the story of the loaves and fishes, Jesus tells his disciples to feed thousands with a few loaves of bread and fish. The disciples retreat into scarcity because it is safer than the risk of relying on Jesus' wisdom. To risk feeling stupid or foolish, especially in financial matters, is to bravely claim the abundance God intends for his people.

5. It is more important to nurture holy habits than to fret over a budget. Sometimes budgets are the means by which we intend to notify God of our intent to place limitations on ministry. Instead, focus on holy habits such as: a. Keep the Sabbath. See what happens when you "do nothing" and allow God to influence your day. b. Tithe. Just as Jacob promised one-tenth of all he had to God in thanksgiving for all that God had done for him, consider that a tithe is an act of faith. "All things come of Thee, O Lord, and of Thine own have we given Thee." -1 Chronicles 29:14

6. Say thank you. If you have less now than you did before, that will feel a lot like scarcity. Take extra care to thank God out loud in exchange for every prayer of supplication.

7. You can't sell soap if you don't take a bath. If you think others should call on the Gospel, call on it yourself. If you think giving is important, give of yourself.

*-Terry Parsons, The Episcopal Church, New York*

### **November 5, 2008** – Teaching Generosity

So you would like to teach your children generosity, but there are no opportunities for them to practice it themselves.

Actually, opportunities are abundant. Here are some suggestions to get you started: First, children of all ages can be involved in the family giving process. Do your children know to whom you give? Parents who involve their kids in the decision-making process teach them early to value generosity. Second, children of all ages can give their time and energy in acts of service. Consider taking your kids with you to deliver a meal to a needy family, visit a nursing home, or rake leaves for an elderly neighbour. In this way, they will learn to give even before they have money of their own. Third, when children are old enough to have money of their own, whether from allowance or employment, parents can train them to give regularly and generously to the church. Fourth, above and beyond church giving, parents can give their children chances to give voluntarily to projects that excite them, exposing them to foreign missionaries such as the Primates World Relief and Development Fund, local ministries, and people in need, and explaining that they are free to give where God is leading them. The opportunities for children to practice giving are abundant; you should determine which ones suit your children best.

### **November 12, 2008** – repeat of last week

## **November 20, 2008** – Do Not Be Afraid

“Don’t be afraid,” Jesus tells us this over and over. Not only does Jesus tell us not to fear, but angels do too. Why do God and God’s messengers continually have to reassure us people? It’s because following Jesus and walking a path of discipleship occasionally gets scary. God pushes us out of our comfort zones, asking us to do new tasks, to see new things and — most scary of all — to look inside ourselves, change our ways of life and change our hearts. Fear keeps many of us from growing as disciples of Christ. If we let fear dictate our lives, we’d probably never read a lesson in front of the congregation, never visit a severely injured church member, never stand up against injustice, never reach out to the suffering. All these things can be scary at first. In the same way, fear is a key barrier to generous financial giving. We fear we won’t have enough if we give generously. We fear God won’t provide enough for all our wants and needs. Fear is a normal part of our faith life. It helps us move beyond our perceived limits. We grow best by facing fear — and then moving beyond it. When fear paralyzes us, we stay where we are and do not grow. If we want to learn to give generously, we need to serve in situations where we experience a little fear, someplace outside of our comfort zone. As we learn to trust God in small situations, we will trust God with our finances, too. So as we head into the fall and “stewardship season,” let us hear the words of Jesus reassuring us: “Do not be afraid.”

*-From an article by Rob Blezard, Stewardship of Life Institute*

## **November 26, 2008** – Giving From The Hand Of God

There is a saying from the Netherlands 'We give from the hand of God'

All we have is a gift given to us by an abundant and generous creator. God has big hands and generosity flows from those hands. They run over with abundant gifts for all people - no holding back, no sense of scarcity, no fear of giving too much, even the willingness to give to us the gift of Jesus. So when we give we do it with great joy and generosity because there is always more where that came from, in the hand of God.

During our season of Advent may we remember to offer joyfully to others as a reflection of God’s generosity in our lives.

## **December 3, 2008** – Lessons of the Depression

Things were bad," she said solemnly. "People were eating out of garbage cans." Her own family barely managed to keep food on the table – it was a steady diet of bland meals, but they were grateful just to eat. The Depression taught the economic lessons that mark many of that generation:

- The value of hard work and a decent job
- The blessings of good food, adequate clothing and a house that is affordable, safe, warm and dry

- The frivolousness of luxury
- The joy of generosity
- The preciousness of loving family and friends

These are the very lessons lost on succeeding generations. Instead of a sense of gratitude, we have a sense of entitlement, and instead of nest eggs we have maxed-out credit cards, an array of glitzy electronic devices that will be obsolete next year, and enormous homes whose mortgage payments are ballooning out of reach. Hearing about the threatening recession I looked at my own house, possessions and budget, wondering where I would cut if things got bad. And you know what? There was quite a bit I could do without. It taught me that I'm really not such a good steward, after all – from the clothes I no longer need to the four computers that I have. I could get by on much less. And that's the realization that leads to living more simply. Get rid of the excess. Get rid of a lot of the nonessential stuff that, in the end, is a waste of money and a distraction to our lives. It's time to focus on what's really important in life and to value the everyday blessings for what they are.

*-From Stewardship of Life, Rev. Ron Blezard*

**December 10, 2008** – repeat of last week

**December 17, 2008** – Advent Conspiracy

Have you heard about the Advent Conspiracy? What if Christmas became a world changing event again?

It's simple: Worship Fully, Spend Less, Give More, Love All

For more information check out the website: [www.adventconspiracy.org/](http://www.adventconspiracy.org/)