



STEWARDSHIP AS A WAY OF LIFE

FORMING A STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE OR TEAM

Not another Committee?!

There is some truth in the observation that “God so loved the world that he sent His Only Son - He did not send a committee.” Although, it can be argued that the first thing His Only Son did was to form a committee (The Twelve Apostles). The Apostles were a vital part of the success of the mission of Jesus Christ. Despite their doubts and denial of Jesus, they were the first to eventually believe in Him and to try to imitate Him. They accepted the responsibility of being good stewards of His mission and His message. Catholic faithful today can do no less.

If the Pastor Does Not Build the Committee, it is built in vain.

The involvement and example of the pastor is essential to the success of any initiative in a parish. A parish stewardship committee or team is no exception. The pastor is the initiator, leader, cheerleader, teacher, promoter, mentor, protector, and linchpin of a stewardship committee. A stewardship committee can help a pastor be more effective in fulfilling his role as leader, teacher and sanctifier. A well formed and properly directed stewardship committee can be a real asset to the pastor, the parish pastoral council and staff of the parish.

A parish stewardship committee often functions within or under the Parish Pastoral Council with the general responsibility for stewardship awareness and the annual stewardship program or activities. The committee could consist of five or more members, less with a smaller parish or mission. A smaller parish or mission may even need to add stewardship responsibilities to an existing committee or council. Members could be appointed to serve three years. Always select both a chairperson and vice-chairperson to insure the presence of qualified, experienced leadership.

A Stewardship Committee or Team should:

- Be living examples of a good steward;
- Focus on the attributes and attitudes of a good steward, not financial concerns;
- Lead and promote the conversion and formation of good stewards;
- Be distinct from the Parish Pastoral Council and the Finance Council; and
- Be responsible for stewardship awareness and annual stewardship renewal.

Stewardship Committee Members are people who:

- Accept responsible for the quality and maturity of their own faith;
- Understand that prayer is not so much about what we say to God, but more about what we are willing to hear from God;
- Have identified, accepted, and developed the talents, abilities and gifts they have received from God, and use them to the best of their ability for their own benefit and the benefit of others;

- Are motivated by a desire to help others grow in their relationship with God;
- Are willing to work to improve the quality of discipleship lived by the members of their community of faith;
- See themselves as Church, and as Church, to see themselves as evangelizers;
- Are not afraid to grow, and who are willing to embrace change with an open mind and heart as a necessary part of growth; and
- Are REAL COOPERATIVE - Responsible, Enthusiastic, Accountable, and Loving (REAL); and Collaborative, Optimistic, Objective, Patient, Energetic, Reliable, Authentic, True, Inventive, Vibrant, and Eager (COOPERATIVE).

How Many Members?

Jesus had Twelve Apostles. One abandoned Him, one denied Him and one doubted Him. A parish stewardship committee should anticipate that some members will be enthused at first, but may drift away. Twelve is a good number, but so is six. A committee of six to twelve members should be sufficient. The membership of the committee should reflect the age, gender and ethnic demographics of the parish family.

Appointed or elected?

The first members of the Stewardship Committee should be appointed by the pastor. He may seek the counsel of the Pastoral Council. The pastor may also name the chair of the committee, but that may be left to the members to decide.

The pastor, in consultation with the first members of the committee, should determine the term of office and the manner in which members are added to and leave the committee. Staggered term lengths and a limited number of terms have proven successful in many parish organizations. The chair should be limited to two years.

Can We Give to Others What We Do Not Have Ourselves?

The answer is no. In order for a stewardship committee to communicate an authentic understanding of stewardship to the people of the parish and move them to become good stewards, the committee members must first be informed and aware of the Church's understanding of good steward and stewardship. The committee should begin with the Bishops' 1992 Pastoral, Stewardship, A Disciple's Response. Every member should be provided with a copy, and the committee should spend a few meetings in prayerful contemplation of the insights and wisdom of that document, before trying to decide on a course of action.

Appended to this document is A Good Steward's Reading List. It contains several other publications that make clear the joy of being a good steward and give the Catholic faithful the courage to be the good steward God calls us to be; and to stand in awe before the Good God who created us to be a good steward.

Here You Go...

- Decide how many members will be on the committee and purchase a sufficient quantity of the Bishops' 1992 Pastoral, Stewardship, A Disciple's Response;
- Select the person to chair the stewardship committee, at least through the formation process. Provide that person with a copy of the pastoral letter
- Select the people to serve on the committee; provide them with copies of the pastoral letter.
- Schedule an orientation and organizational meeting;

- Arrange for training and support from the Stewardship as necessary.

A Stewardship Committee is Something Like a Duck:

On the surface, a duck seems calm, occasionally quacking out some instruction or warning, but underneath the surface, paddling and working like crazy. As a committee or commission of the Pastoral Council, the role of the Stewardship Committee is to provide advice and council to the pastor, and, virtually unseen to the rest of the parish, work very hard to carry out the plan and policies to increase the awareness and lived experience of good stewardship in the parish.

Things That a Stewardship Committee May Do:

- Pray for the guidance of the Chief Steward, God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and invite the parish family to pray for increased stewardship awareness in the parish through the intercessions at Mass and special prayer services.
- Discern and implement opportunities and experiences to help the parish family grow in their awareness and acceptance of their role and responsibility as stewards of God's earth;
- Make appropriate literature about stewardship awareness available for parishioners; and use the parish bulletin and pulpit announcements to keep stewardship awareness before the people.
- Determine the best approach to conduct stewardship appeals; and decide the best time to schedule the appeal(s);
- Consider whether to combine Time, Talent and Treasure in one appeal, or to conduct a Time and Talent appeal separate from the Project Advance appeal;
- Investigate and select the best method to conduct a stewardship appeal;
- Organize and coordinate all organizations and ministries in the parish to conduct a ministry fair for people to learn about the opportunities to be good stewards in the parish.
- Enlist, train and nurture volunteers to assist with stewardship appeals;
- Regularly evaluate the efforts and results of the Stewardship Committee and be open to change, if change is needed.
- Lead the effort to make the parish feel welcome and wanted and able to fulfill their role as good steward of God's generous gifts to us.

Look beyond the boundaries of the parish for ways in which the people and the parish family can fulfill their responsibilities as disciples of Jesus Christ to "make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them all that I have commanded you." Matthew 28:19-20.

Good Stewards are Formed by Other Good Stewards