



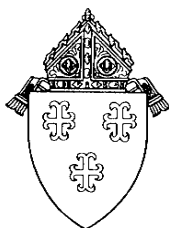
TIME · TALENT · TREASURE

A

GUIDE FOR

PARISHES DEVELOPING

STEWARDSHIP AS A WAY OF LIFE



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STEWARDSHIP: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PROCESS

As Catholics, we are encouraged to share what we have with others, to respect our neighbors as ourselves and to assist those less fortunate. We typically respond to this request when asked and proceed to go about our daily lives until the next request is heard. What most individuals do not realize is that by sharing of ourselves and helping those around us, we are, in essence, practicing Christian stewardship.

Stewardship is commonly misunderstood and associated with the concept of tithing, the practice of donating 10% of one's income. While the Second Vatican Council never created an official church law on tithing, it reiterated the importance of supporting the Church stating that Christians have a duty and an honor to give back to God a portion of their gifts. In 1992, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops expanded on this principle when they published a Pastoral Letter entitled *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*. Their definition of stewardship reached far beyond financial contributions and encouraged Catholics to live their lives as disciples of Jesus. Equipped with this knowledge, we have the "power to change how we understand and live out our lives." (*Stewardship: A Disciple's Response, page 1*) This thought conversion begins a life-long process of sharing our gifts of time, talent and treasure out of gratitude, not out of obligation. Living our lives as true stewards reminds us of our baptismal promises and becomes the motivational force behind our actions.

Introducing the stewardship way of life to your parish community begins with education. This guide explores several educational methods as well as shares suggestions on how to navigate your parish's stewardship journey. No "perfect" plan exists; parishes are encouraged to read this guide and utilize the information provided to best suit your parish community.

The Stewardship and Development Office is available to assist at any point during your journey. Likewise, other parishes throughout the diocese may also be a helpful resource as you move along the path towards a life of stewardship. A list of these parishes is available from our office.

By simply reading this guide, you have already taken the initial step on your stewardship journey. The pastor's role will be crucial to the success and implementation of stewardship within your parish (*please refer to A Guide for Pastors of Stewardship Parishes*).

RECRUITING THE STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Recruiting a Stewardship Committee is the most important step in your stewardship journey. Above all else, this committee will serve as the primary advocates for your parish's stewardship effort. Bringing a dynamic group of individuals who are well informed about the parish and its mission ensures accurate and energetic publicity.

Ideally, the committee should consist of five to fifteen people representing different ministries within the parish. Each parish has its own unique configuration and by combining members from different ministries, the committee can access the most diverse audience. Involving active parishioners for the Stewardship Committee ensures a smooth implementation of stewardship led by example. Parish leaders have a stronger understanding of the current state of the parish and a vision for future growth. Their leadership roles exemplify their commitment to see a project through to completion as well as their willingness to publicly share their faith. Other members of the parish community not already active within a parish ministry may also prove to be good candidates. These individuals may have the components of a great committee member but have been too hesitant to become involved or have not known how to go about becoming involved.

Gathering a motivated group of individuals with a unique set of talents from within the parish is essential for the committee to grow and broaden its presence within the community. As the stewardship journey expands, the committee may find it necessary to add to its membership. In many cases, the core group will remain intact with each assuming a leadership role. Each leader should be responsible for a sub-committee that will require additional recruitment.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

1. Develop, Execute and Evaluate a Parish Plan

The committee must decide on a plan of action. Evaluating the parish's current state will identify areas in need of additional support or areas that the parish has not yet developed. Clearly defining the needs and goals of the parish will lead to one or two main objectives for the parish. These objectives should answer the question "Why should stewardship be an integral component of parish life?" Many parishes find it useful to begin by establishing a mission statement for the parish. From this statement, it will be clear why and how stewardship plays a vital role in the life of the parish.

After deciding on the committee's objective, a projected timeline must be developed so needs and goals can be met. The timeline will be an invaluable tool to maintain a reasonable pace as the journey begins. Complete communication among all committee members and the parish as well as thoroughly planning each outreach effort will ensure a successful kick-off event. Once the journey has officially begun and ministries within the parish and the greater community flourish, regular evaluations will be necessary. Monitoring and evaluating parish trends will allow the committee to grow with the community and provide the parish with the tools they need to ensure personal and spiritual growth for all.

2. Compile a Time and Talent List of Current Parish Ministries

Review the activities available within the parish and share it with the community at large. Many parishioners may be willing to give of their time or talent but are unaware of how to become involved. This list should be updated periodically as new opportunities are developed. By distributing this list, you may prompt individuals to join an active ministry or propel others to establish a new ministry to serve and benefit the parish.

3. Coordinate Volunteers

Volunteers are needed for various positions to include lay witness presenters, ministry fair organizers, and hospitality coordinators. Assigning these positions and ensuring that they are staffed is an important task. Always take the time to express your gratitude for volunteers with a written note after they have shared their time. Recognizing volunteers creates a sense of community that may motivate volunteers to become more active within the Stewardship Committee or the greater parish community.

4. Public Relations

Keeping the parish informed extends beyond the initial educational introductory phase. As the effort flourishes, the community will look forward to new developments, new opportunities and results. Bulletin announcements, posters and direct mail are just a few tools that should be utilized to promote your progress. Establishing a parish stewardship newsletter is an effective method of keeping parishioners up-to-date with current stewardship news. Reserving a section of the bulletin for a "Stewardship Spotlight" also works well. When possible, visit other parish ministry committee meetings and inform them of your work.

PLANNING THE EFFORT

Choosing the time of year is critical when preparing to launch your parish stewardship implementation. Ideal times vary from parish to parish; however, be cautious and avoid seasons where weekly attendance is low or where liturgical occurrences take precedence. For many Rhode Island parishes, the weeks prior to Lent or the fall have proven to be effective periods to begin the journey.

Remember also that the weekend chosen to officially commence your stewardship journey should be planned well in advance to allow for an extensive public relations campaign throughout the parish community. Allowing 4 - 6 months of preparation will afford you enough time to reach all parties and effectively plan the journey.

ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL MINISTRY FAIR

1. Parish Ministry Fairs are held to generate awareness and enthusiasm among parishioners, ultimately increasing parish ministry and involvement. The Stewardship Committee chooses a date (weekend) to hold the fair. September/October/November have worked well for many parishes drawing the largest audience.
2. Use bulletin announcements, pulpit announcements, flyers around the church/school/parish center and mailing to all parishioners to promote the fair. Forward information to all parish leaders. Have a photographer on hand at all times during the fair. Displaying the photos after the fair will further publicize the event and share with those who did not attend a bit of what they missed. These photos will help new groups prepare for future ministry fairs.
3. Contact leaders of all parish ministries and ensure their participation. Confirm that the appropriate number of volunteers are scheduled to staff their booth throughout Stewardship Weekend. Compile a list of each parish ministry including a brief description, contact person, and telephone number (*please refer to Appendix A1 and A2*). This information can be included in a program for all guests. A guest book at each booth can be provided so those interested in learning more about the ministry, attending a meeting, or participating in an event can be contacted.
4. A general theme for the entire fair should be decided upon. Share the theme with leaders of ministries and encourage them to decorate their booth accordingly. Work with them to ensure that they have the materials necessary to assemble their booth (a booth may not be necessarily constructed - tables are sufficient). Ministries are encouraged to use their creativity to build upon the table. Creating a relaxed, informational-only atmosphere during the fair is of the utmost importance. Light refreshments add the finishing touch to your fair.
5. The primary purpose of the fair is to inform and educate the parishioners. Each ministry should have two representatives to greet guests and answer any of their questions. Flyers and brochures should be utilized to explain the purpose of the ministry and its most recent activities. Photos of past events serve as great display material as well as a list of upcoming events. Vibrant displays will work in exciting guests and drawing their attention (*please refer to A Guide for Planning and Organizing Your Ministry Fair*).

LAY WITNESS PRESENTATION

Lay witness presentations are critical to a successful stewardship effort. For many the most compelling reasons to embark on a stewardship journey come from thoughts and experiences shared by a peer. Having a member of the community speak to the congregation presents stewardship as a way of life attainable by everyone. When an individual shares their motivation for becoming involved and maintains their level of activity, parishioners are apt to identify this person as someone like himself or herself. "If they are able to adapt their schedule to include these types of activities, so can I." The committee may wish to vary the witnesses or comprise a series of speakers. Over the course of two weekends, parishioners should have the opportunity to hear from those who have been actively involved in parish ministries for years and from those who have just initiated sharing their time and talent. Both perspectives can reinforce the concept of stewardship. (*Please refer to A Guide for the Stewardship Lay Witness Presenter*).

PARISH TREASURE WEEKEND

Parish Treasure weekend begins in the same fashion as Stewardship Weekend. Develop a response card that allows them to write down their increased commitment. These cards are sent to each parishioner with a letter from the pastor. The letter asks them to bring the card with them during the parish's Treasure Weekend.

During the offertory, representatives from each family can process to the altar where they will offer their commitment card. This ceremony can be designed according to the style of each parish. Hospitality may be arranged after mass as a small token of appreciation for the parishioners. About two months after the parish's Treasure Weekend, prepare a follow-up letter to all parishioners who did not hand in a commitment card (*please refer to A Guide for Implementing Stewardship of Treasure*).

STEWARDSHIP ANNUAL RENEWAL

1. After time, talent and treasure have been introduced to the parish and ministries have flourished, an annual renewal should be planned. Presenting the core elements of stewardship on a recurring basis is essential to the longevity of stewardship within the parish. Annual renewals provide parishioners with the encouragement to strengthen their commitment and to increase their sharing of time, talent, and treasure. Many times renewal entices parishioners who were not among the first to become involved. Renewal follows the same planning cycle as the original implementation with a few alterations. It culminates with the Second (Third, Fourth, etc.) Annual Stewardship Weekend and Ministry Fair.
2. Publicity should follow the same format. Lay witness presentations should be scheduled for Stewardship Weekend. This time, presenters can speak about the growth that has taken place over the previous year within the parish and within themselves. Mailings to parishioners announcing Stewardship Weekend and the Ministry Fair can include photos from the previous weekend as well as highlights for the year. Bulletin inserts and pulpit announcements may also be utilized.
3. Scheduling of the weekend should occur in the same time frame as the previous year. Reserving that weekend each year will build a tradition within the parish and give everyone something to look forward to.
4. The planning of the Ministry Fair remains the same. Choose a different theme from the previous year. A competition is encouraged between each ministry to create an original booth. New ministries should be invited to attend as well as those who did not participate the previous year.
5. Depending on the fiscal needs of the parish, Treasure Weekend may not need to be held every year. Instead, a letter of thanks may be sent to each parishioner thanking them for increasing their support the previous year and asking them to maintain their current level (*please refer to A Guide for Your Annual Stewardship Renewal*).

MAINTAINING YOUR PRESENCE WITHIN THE PARISH AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

At this point it is apparent that the continuous process of educating parishioners on Stewardship is demanding. It is important to keep stewardship at the forefront through parish ministries, various activities and word of mouth. The following list provides a few ideas that may help to sustain the momentum you have worked so diligently to create. Remember that Renewal is the annual opportunity to examine why the parish turned to stewardship. The suggestions that follow are outlets that can be used throughout the year to reiterate the importance of your parish journey.

- **Bulletin Announcements**

These announcements are the easiest, most reliable means of communicating with your parishioners. Use them consistently to advertise an event, call for volunteers, or report on the success of a past endeavor. Identifying and reserving a regular space within the bulleting for Stewardship messages is a great tool. Two or three times a year, the bulletin space could be replaced with an insert that shares a human-interest story from someone who has benefited from the practice of stewardship. These stories encourage others on the journey and may motivate others who have not yet begun their life conversion. If the parish has donated time or resources to an external entity, communicate your appreciation through the bulletin.

- **Newsletters**

If the information you are trying to fit into the bulletin becomes too cumbersome, consider a Stewardship Newsletter. Newsletters may be sent to all parishioners or distributed by greeters at Mass. Depending on the activity within your parish, newsletters can be published on a semi-annual, quarterly or monthly basis. For many parishes, this newsletter becomes a vital communication tool.

- **Hospitality**

Greeters are selected for each Mass on weekends. Greeters, stationed at all entrances to church, simply extend a warm smile and a welcome to Mass. This simple and effective means lays a foundation for a strong and close parish community.

- **New Parishioner Packet**

Prepare a welcome packet of materials for each new family or individual that registers in the parish. This packet should include a history of the parish and its mission statement, the most recent church bulletin, a list of parish ministries with appropriate contact information, and school and/or religious education information. After two weeks, a person from the Stewardship Committee should make personal contact with the new member(s), introduce himself or herself and explain the role of stewardship in the parish. Identifying the committee and their respective roles within the parish will assist the new member with becoming acclimated with your community. New members of the parish family can be welcomed and introduced periodically at a Mass and their names can be printed in the bulletin. Some parishes choose to have semi-annual potluck suppers to welcome new members.

- **Parish Outreach**

If, after conducting the treasure aspect of stewardship, parish income reaches a level where basic operating costs are covered, the committee may suggest adopting a sister parish that has difficulty making their ends meet. Parishes who have chosen this ministry contribute a weekly percentage to the designated parish. Other groups have chosen to donate their time, talent, and treasure to other local charities in need of assistance. Regardless of the recipient, bring the parish together to collectively decide on the beneficiary of their stewardship.

- **Stewardship for Children and Young Adults**

When stewardship begins to take hold within the parish, incorporate ministries or activities for the younger generation. Lifelong habits take shape if stewardship is instilled at this age. If the committee decides to explore more opportunities for this age group, the following list of ideas may help.

- ✓ Incorporating stewardship into the school/religious education curriculum.
- ✓ "What does stewardship mean to me?" Hold a poster/banner contest where children can illustrate their interpretation of stewardship. Posters and/or banners can be displayed around the church/parish center/school during Stewardship Weekend.
- ✓ Develop a children's time and talent list to be published at the same time as the list of other parish ministries. This list can also be a part of the "New Member" packet. Many adult ministries can be altered to include children or spin off to create a children's branch (i.e., choir members, greeters, visiting the elderly, etc.)
- ✓ Reserve a section of all stewardship communication for children's news. Children can be encouraged to write this section.
- ✓ A committee comprised of children can be formed to focus on children's stewardship. A member of the parish Stewardship Committee may serve as advisor to this group.

APPENDIX A1 – EXAMPLES OF TIME AND TALENT OPPORTUNITIES (INDIVIDUAL LEVEL)

Senior Citizen facility volunteer	Funeral Servers
Altar service	Wedding Coordinator
On-call minister	Hospitality/Reception Committee
Carpentry services	Catechists
Computer Literacy program	Catechists Aid
Parent/Teacher organization	Substitute Catechist
Hospice	Special Religious Education Helper
Literary program volunteer	Confirmation Teacher
Parish welcoming committee	Youth Group Core Team
Evangelize to the unchurched	Ministry to the Sick
Plumbing	Baptismal Preparation Program
Usher and/or parish greeter	RCIA Inquiry Team
Girl/Boy scout volunteer	RCIA Hospitality Minister
G.E.D. tutor	Marriage Preparation
Automotive repair	Pro-Life Committee
Bible study initiator	St. Joseph Men's Guild
Financial planning	Rosary Society
Parish school board	Parish Cleanup Committee
Habitat for Humanity	Parish Grounds Committee
Knights of Columbus	Choir Member
Immigrant Ministry	School security
Parish Council member	Neighborhood Watch Program
Prayer Group leader	CCFA Committee chair or member
Stewardship Committee member	Metal and/or plastic recycling program
Youth Group counselor	Adopt a highway
Prayer Ministry	English as a Second Language Class for new arrivals to America
Eucharistic Adoration	Spanish as a Second Language Class
Usher	Counseling for groups or individuals
Lector	Mediation services for families
Eucharistic Minister	Adult religious education
Children's liturgy coordinator	Parent Sharing Group
Instrumentalist	

APPENDIX A2 – EXAMPLES OF TIME AND TALENT OPPORTUNITIES (YOUTH LEVEL)

Catholic Youth Organization	Help keep their school clean
Communal reciting of rosary	Plan and perform plays in church
Stations of the Cross	Organize a walk-a-thon or read-a-thon
Prayer evenings	Toy drives
Youth Choir Clothing drives	Youth Stewardship Committee
Organize youth Mass	Youth Lay Witness
Tutorial services	Extra chores around the house
Shovel snow/rake leaves/mow lawns	Bring pets to visit the elderly
Run errands for the homebound	

**If you would like to learn more about stewardship,
please contact:**

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