

INTRODUCTION

This **Stewardship Manual** is a work in progress intended to help parishes in the Archdiocese of Regina participate in a parish stewardship effort. It will contain educational material, information for implementation, a list of resources and numerous sample letters, brochures, bulletin announcements, prayers and materials to help make your parish stewardship effort a success. This manual will be printed in phases and is based on the experiences of many parishes throughout North America.

The Office of Stewardship in our Archdiocese will provide the parishes with:

- educational materials to help parishioners understand stewardship.
- resource persons to give presentations at the diocesan and deanery levels.
- training for lay witnesses and stewardship committees.
- regular communications about stewardship.
- assistance to the parishes, if requested.

The method of initiating and promoting stewardship may vary from parish to parish according to its size. The common thread that all our parishes will have is a sincere desire to promote stewardship as a way of life. The fruit of the stewardship effort that will be enjoyed by parishioners throughout this faith experience is a deeper appreciation of prayer and sacrament, increased ministry participation and increased financial support.

The Diocesan Stewardship Committee (2009) consists of:

Fr. Lorne Crozon	Regina	Rev. Msgr. Don Bolen	Regina
Sister Anastasia Young, SSS	Regina	Ken Rolheiser	Canora
Rev. Mr. Barry Wood	Regina	Vivian Bosch	Swift Current
June Krogan	Regina		

STEWARDSHIP – WHAT IS IT?

The American Bishops' Pastoral Letter of 1992 *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response* reinforces our commitment to work toward educating and assisting parishes and individuals in adopting this way of life. It states that:

Stewardship is an expression of discipleship with the power to change how we understand and live our lives. (Preface, p.1)

Disciples who practice stewardship:

- recognize God as the origin of life, the giver of freedom, the source of all they have and are and will be.
- are deeply aware of the truth that “The Lord’s are the earth and its fullness; the world and those who dwell in it.” (Ps 24:1).
- know themselves to be recipients and caretakers of God’s many gifts.
- are grateful for what they have received and eager to cultivate their gifts out of love for God and one another.
- acknowledge that stewardship is giving thanks for God’s blessings by returning an increase of our time, talent and treasure.

Characteristics of Stewardship

- Christian stewardship provides spirituality that the lay person can take home from church, exercise at work and express through personal involvement in the community and church.
- Christian stewardship successfully bridges the material world around us and the world of the Spirit within us.
- stewardship enables Christians to measure the extent of their faith and love of Jesus by the quality of stewardship they perform.
- stewardship gives joy! Those who give their time and abilities to the parish and community will experience joy if they give them for Christ. They are not, however, guaranteed freedom from frustration.
- stewardship is not job-oriented or project-minded. It is a way of life for a lifetime.
- Christian stewardship takes a positive view of money. It helps us to become aware that God is the ultimate giver of the gifts we have. To give to God should be from the top not from what may be left over. Stewardship is not giving just to meet the budget needs of the parish but to be concerned about where and how to share our abundance with the needs of others.

Jesus Christ is God’s greatest gift to us. Stewardship tells us to share a portion of our time, talent and treasure so that the Gift, Jesus Christ, may be given to those who do not know Him.

WHY STEWARDSHIP IN OUR DIOCESE/PARISH?

By participating in a stewardship effort, parishioners will experience a diocesan/parish renewal that will gather and unify God's people. Stewardship parish leaders will find that parishioners will become excited to share their gifts because of the blessings they receive, rather than responding only to the needs of the budget or the need for volunteers. When people are motivated to give out of a feeling of gratitude rather than guilt, recognition, reward, need or sacrifice, they begin to give the gift that God wants them to give—the gift of themselves. In doing so, they will experience the joy of belonging to Church.

Placing a greater emphasis on the financial and volunteer needs of the parish serves to encourage only minimal giving. However, emphasizing the personal need of the parishioner to give out of gratitude, enhances both the giving and its spiritual benefits while deepening their spirituality. Does it work? Yes, it does—as seen by the experience and testimony of many Christian stewards. It works best if there is no diluting the basic stewardship message. The results are dramatic. Parishioners respond to stewardship efforts because they are based on sound theological principles with God as our Creator and with us as God's stewards. Stewardship is based on the spiritual principles of the Old Testament and the teaching of Jesus.

The message of Stewardship will be effective when it is repeated throughout the year:

- through education and information – printed resources, presentations
- in homilies
- by lay witness presentations
- at parish activities and events
- in Sunday bulletins and other forms of parish communication
- by reaching out and touching individuals and families with a message that helps to deepen their faith and bring them closer to God.

KEY ELEMENTS TO INTRODUCE STEWARDSHIP IN OUR PARISH?

To organize a parish stewardship effort, the following key elements are necessary:

- **information**
 - **education**
 - **witness**
 - **invitation**
 - **commitment**
 - **follow-up**
-
- those responsible for the effort need to become **informed** on the subject of stewardship.
 - time is spent **educating** parishioners on the meaning of stewardship
 - the pastor and lay leaders are called to **witness** to the fruit of living a stewardship way of life
 - an **invitation** is extended to all parishioners.
 - parishioners respond by making a personal **commitment** to giving of their time, talent and treasure as a gift of gratitude for God's blessings
 - the ministry leaders **follow-up** by contacting, training and involving the new ministers
 - the pastor's gratitude is expressed through a message of thank you.

ROLES OF THE PARISH STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE –

Stewardship requires the collaborative ministry of the pastor and the lay leadership to lead the people to a realization that collectively, we are Church; that we are gifted by God to be Christ to one another; and that each one has a responsibility to live life gratefully as God intended.

“The parish needs to be constantly renewed on the basis of the principle that the parish must continue to be above all a Eucharistic community. This principle implies that parishes are called to be welcoming and fraternal, places of Christian initiation, of education in and celebration of the faith, open to the full range of charisms, services and ministries, organized in a communal and responsible way, capable of utilizing existing movements of the apostolate, attentive to the cultural diversity of the people, open to pastoral projects which go beyond the individual parish, and alert to the world in which they live”. (THE CHURCH IN AMERICA Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation ECCLESIA IN AMERICA of The Holy Father JOHN PAUL II, p. 69–70)

Role of the Pastor

The pastor’s commitment is necessary in all phases;

- to participate in the selection of the laity to conduct and be involved in the stewardship effort,
- to help coordinate the effort by delivering homilies that will motivate parishioners to understand and respond to stewardship in a meaningful way.

The success of the stewardship effort rests to a large degree on the pastor.

Some suggestions for the pastor include:

- spending time reading about and studying stewardship so as to understand its meaning and focus. A good resource for pastors is the U.S. Bishops’ Pastoral Letter Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response.
- examining your personal life and committing yourself to being a witness to stewardship.
- encouraging the pastoral council to read about and study stewardship and to reflect on their lives and make necessary adjustments.
- working with the pastoral council to form a stewardship committee and attending meetings; committing the parish to conduct an annual stewardship effort of time, talent and treasure for parishioners; carrying out stewardship awareness efforts every year.
- working with the stewardship committee to select lay witnesses who can speak to the importance and impact of stewardship in their lives.
- preparing stewardship homilies for stewardship weekends.
- incorporating stewardship ideas/images in Sunday homilies. Nineteen of the thirty-six parables taught by Jesus deal with possessions, time and talent.

- encouraging the parish to set an example for the parishioners by giving a portion of its financial support to community agencies and by committing to provide volunteers for community projects.
- thanking people for all they do to serve God by serving others.
- praying that parishioners will grow spiritually as a result of their embracing stewardship as a way of life.
- helping parishioners discern between their wants and their needs.
- focusing on being faithful, as well as successful, in stewardship.

Role of the Parish Pastoral Council

The role of the Parish Pastoral Council is very important in the stewardship endeavour. The work of conducting a stewardship effort in the parish is a shared responsibility of lay members and clergy under the leadership of the pastor with the advice of the pastoral council. Parish Pastoral Councils need to avail themselves of every opportunity to grow in an understanding of stewardship as a way of life.

Role of the Parish Stewardship Chairperson

The Parish Stewardship Chairperson is a full member of the Parish Pastoral Council.

Role of the Parish Stewardship Committee

In order for stewardship of time, talent and treasure to be understood, practiced and nurtured in the lives of your parishioners and in the life of the parish itself, it is important to have an active stewardship committee.

This Parish Stewardship Committee will:

- meet regularly to educate themselves on the meaning of stewardship through reading resource materials and discussion.
- define stewardship as they see it pertaining to their parish community.
- create a vision for the parish in consultation with the parish community.
- establish goals to achieve the vision.
- communicate the progress and activities to the parish community at large.
- educate the community about stewardship and invite its participation.
- continue to meet regularly when stewardship is established in order to expand the plan and monitor progress.
- report at monthly parish pastoral meetings.

FORMING A STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

The size of the Stewardship Committee will depend on the size of the parish family. A large parish may choose to have from six to twelve people on the committee. A small parish may need to add stewardship responsibilities to an existing committee or council. Stewardship Committee members should be selected to serve for a specific (preferably three year) term, with the option of renewing for a second term. To assure having new members who will bring new ideas, ask your original committee members to commit for one, two or three years for their first term. Select a Parish Stewardship Chairperson to ensure the presence of qualified, experienced leadership.

In recruiting parishioners to serve on a stewardship committee, consider the following qualifications or criteria:

- **Spiritually Motivated** – it is important that members be people of prayer and concerned about parishioners' relationship with God. It is important that they are people who are Eucharistic, who have a deep relationship with Jesus, who are grateful for that relationship and act with gratitude.
- **Exemplify and Live Out Stewardship** – Look for members who are already personally committed to stewardship as a way of life. They may not call it stewardship but they live it. Those committed to stewardship, offer their time in various parish and community activities and will also be committed, regular and generous financial supporters.
- **Envision Where Stewardship Can Move the Parish** – It is important that all members of a stewardship committee have a general understanding of stewardship before they join the committee. Some may see stewardship only as tithing our money; others may see stewardship as recycling paper products; others may see it as volunteering their time to church organizations only. Developing a working definition of stewardship will help consolidate the diverse viewpoints of the committee members. It is also important that the members be able to develop a vision of where the parish can be 5, 10, 15 years from now.
- **Have Personal Qualities that Contribute to Success** – invite parishioners to the committee who are accountable, persistent, optimistic, organized, patient, creative and willing to share their faith with others.

THE INVOLVEMENT OF OTHERS

The act of helping conduct a parish stewardship effort is in itself an act of stewardship. There are many tasks that need to be performed when a stewardship effort is planned, executed and followed up. In conducting a parish effort, the parish will need the time and talents of individuals for:

- designing artwork, posters and brochures
- printing cover letters
- affixing labels and postage and stuffing envelopes
- tabulating results and entering the data into the computer
- providing Time and Talent Reports to coordinators of the parish ministries
- telephone follow up with parishioners and ministry coordinators to assure that those who whose to be involved are contacted
- reporting results to the stewardship committee and Parish Pastoral Council

Begin building a list of people who have special talents in these areas and who can give their time when it is needed to help the parish.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF A STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

1. **The Stewardship effort of time, talent, and treasure is carried out on an annual basis.** This effort usually runs for three weekends every year.
 - on the first weekend and second weekend effort, the pastor will deliver a homily on stewardship and a lay person or couple would give a personal testimony on how stewardship is lived out in their lives.
 - the third weekend is Commitment Sunday. Parishioners are asked to bring their commitment cards of time, talent, and treasure to Mass and place them in the basket.

2. **Recruit individuals or couples to share their personal testimonies about stewardship with the parishioners.** The lay witness testimony is one of the most educational, motivational and important parts of the stewardship effort.
 - the lay witness talk makes stewardship very real and practical for the people in the pews.
 - lay witnesses should be individuals from the parish who believe and practice the principles of stewardship in their own lives, those who give of their time, talent and treasure.
 - parishes may consider producing a parish video with a focus on people and ministries instead of a single lay witness.

3. **Prepare a time and talent list or catalog of activities and organizations in the parish. It is important that this list or catalog is current.** A time and talent list or catalog gives parishioners an opportunity to become aware of the number and types of volunteer ministries that already exist in the parish.
 - the parish may choose to develop an actual pamphlet or catalog that provides a detailed description of each group or activity. Others may use a simple listing with little detail.
 - while the primary emphasis is on current groups or activities that are available, other activities or groups may be added; for example, a welcoming committee or a homeless shelter group.
 - a parish may wish to organize a stewardship ministry fair to promote the many parish and community groups that provide volunteer opportunities to parishioners.

4. **Ensure that those who volunteer are contacted and asked to become involved.** It is important that the stewardship committee works with the appropriate parish committees and groups to ensure that those who have committed to giving of their time and talent are personally invited to become involved in ministry or an organization. **This activity is the most challenging task of the committee.**

- ministry leaders who understand the importance of their position, the follow-up and training of new ministers will respond to the stewardship effort in a positive and timely manner.
- it is essential that good planning takes place before the three weekend effort and is followed up after Commitment Sunday to be sure that those who did respond, actually are committed.
- those who are not contacted after they have signed up will likely not become involved in future stewardship efforts. They will also begin to believe that stewardship is only about money.
- parishes may wish to bring the ministry leaders together for an appreciation event combined with an opportunity to share their stewardship experience and review the importance of the follow up procedures.
- it is important that the training sessions for new ministers be scheduled and publicized prior to the stewardship commitment weekend. This process calls ministry leaders to take responsibility for the training sessions.

5. Evaluate the stewardship and awareness efforts on an annual basis. All elements of the stewardship effort in the parish need to be evaluated annually. Look to the spiritual life of the parish when evaluating stewardship.

- evaluate symptoms of spiritual change that have become evident in the parish.
- review comments, criticisms and questions written on commitment cards.
- revisit the written materials published throughout the year e.g. letters, brochures, bulletin announcements, newsletter articles, etc.
- access the homilies and lay witness testimonies that were presented. Is the stewardship message being addressed?
- discuss ways and means that stewardship information could be brought to the people.
- share and celebrate the fruits that are being enjoyed because of the stewardship effort.

(See Appendix, p 44 for sample Evaluation Form)

6. Publicize stewardship reflections in the parish bulletin on a weekly basis throughout the year. It is important to keep people aware of the stewardship message on a regular basis.

- the reflections can include scripture passages, quotations from books, magazines and newspapers reflecting stewardship.

7. Provide appropriate stewardship literature on parish booklet racks. This gives people the opportunity to read and learn more about stewardship apart from any brochures that may be used for an annual effort.

(See Appendix, p 45 for stewardship resources).

8. **Publicize creative highlights in the parish newsletter on a quarterly basis to promote stewardship.** These may include:
 - profiles of individuals or couples in the parish who are committed to stewardship.
 - questions and answers on stewardship.
 - thoughts on stewardship.
 - commentaries on stewardship.
 - ministry highlights.
 - producing a special newsletter each year that focuses only on stewardship.

9. **Incorporate comments about stewardship in the Sunday homilies.**
 - the priest, on a monthly basis, could incorporate comments about stewardship in the Sunday homilies.
 - in some instances, the complete homily could focus on stewardship or a few sentences can be incorporated into the context of the entire homily,

10. **Encourage support for stewardship through the Prayer of the Faithful at Mass.** Prayer of the Faithful prepared with a stewardship message can be read at regular intervals throughout the year. Normally one stewardship prayer among the other intercessions would be sufficient.

(See Appendix, p 6 for sample Prayer of the Faithful)

11. **Develop a welcoming program for new parishioners.**
 - work with the appropriate parish committees to develop programs for welcoming parishioners.
 - include information about stewardship in the welcoming presentation or in the welcome packet.

12. **Develop a commissioning service for those who are willing to serve in parish ministries.**
 - work with the Liturgy committee to develop and plan a commissioning service to be held at all Masses on Commissioning Sunday.
 - check with ministry leaders to ensure that the ministers have been contacted and formed in their individual ministries.
 - the commissioning service is very effective when presented after the homily as part of the Prayer of the Faithful.

(See Appendix, p 40 for sample Commissioning Service)

13. **Show appreciation for those who are involved in parish ministry.** Gratitude is an important element of stewardship. This could involve an invitation to:
 - an appreciation reception after Mass
 - a catered dinner.

14. **Develop a program of stewardship education to be incorporated into the faith formation process for children, youth and adults.**

- work closely with the Education committee and R.C.I.A. team to ensure that the stewardship message becomes a part of the faith formation process.
- introduce stewardship into the Confirmation preparation program
- ensure that the RCIA catechumens and candidates have a good understanding of stewardship in their spiritual journey.
- Invite a motivational speaker to give a presentation on stewardship to adults.

15. Add a children's component to your parish stewardship effort.

- consider forming a sub-committee to address the entire field of children's stewardship.

(See Appendix, p 35 Suggestions for Implementing Children's Stewardship.

(See Appendix, p 36 for suggestions to prepare Children as Lay Witnesses)

16. Provide an opportunity for gift discernment. It is important for parishioners to discover their own spiritual gifts.

- provide programs and workshops on the discernment of gifts to better help parishioners find the ministry best suited for them.

17. Provide in-service and continuing education for your stewardship committee.

It is the responsibility of the stewardship chairperson to inform and invite the members of the parish to:

- read material offered on stewardship from the Archdiocese or other sources made available by the Archdiocesan Stewardship Committee.
- encourage deanery workshops on stewardship.
- attend diocesan and deanery workshops.
- make an effort to attend the Western Stewardship Conference.

18. Develop an annual plan.

- a detailed yearly plan that includes the organization and preparation for the three weekend effort, as well as monthly awareness activities, is very beneficial for a successful on-going stewardship effort.

(See Appendix, p 31 for sample annual renewal).

19. Spread the message of Stewardship beyond the parish.

- upon request from the Archdiocese, support diocesan stewardship publications by submitting stewardship profiles, stewardship questions and answers and any other information to promote and share stewardship ideas across the diocese.

WHEN TO CONDUCT YOUR STEWARDSHIP EFFORT

The schedule must be such that for several weeks, parishioners can focus on their personal decision about Time, Talent and Treasure. There is no particular liturgical season that is more appropriate than another for doing a parish stewardship effort. However, there are two times during the year more suitable for reaching parishioners. A parish stewardship effort is best conducted:

- in the spring months of April or May or the fall months of September, October or November.
- on weekends other than when important Church feast days or special liturgical celebrations are taking place.
- when no other major collection is going on in the parish, such as a parish capital campaign or the Diocesan Appeal campaign.
- on weekends when no special liturgies are being celebrated such as the Sacraments of First Eucharist, Reconciliation, Confirmation, or RCIA.
- when the schools are in session.
- when the pastor and stewardship team is available.

Conducting the stewardship effort effectively is based on organizing and implementing the following procedural steps.

- It should not be attempted without ample planning time nor should it be shortened from three weekends to only one or two weekends.
- It takes several weeks of effective communication, well prepared homilies and lay witness presentations to inform parishioners about the stewardship effort.
- Once the parish has begun the stewardship effort, it should be continued year-round under the leadership of the Stewardship Committee.

TIMETABLE/CHECKLIST TO CONDUCT A STEWARDSHIP EFFORT

- On your calendar, first establish the date of Stewardship Commitment Sunday, then fill in the dates working backward from there. A reverse calendar will be helpful. Included in the Appendix is a timetable for you to use in planning your parish effort.

(See Appendix, p 2 for a sample of the timetable)

Preparation: An up-to-date Mailing List is essential.

Mailings to parishioners are made on a regular basis. While it is not always possible to take all these steps, it should be understood that this is the best way to get the highest response.

- a good mailing list of registered parishioners is the lifeline of any parish communications effort.
- it is recommended that parish mailings include an envelope, cover letter and brochure.
- when addressing the envelopes, print addresses as close to the mailing date as possible so that the new parishioners who register during that period will receive the stewardship material, and those who have moved will be deleted from the mailing.
- have the mailing look as personal as possible.

ELEMENTS OF COMMUNICATION PRIOR TO AND DURING THE THREE-WEEK STEWARDSHIP EFFORT

Printed Stewardship Communications

The best way of communicating with parishioners is to ensure that the greatest number is reached. To ensure a comprehensive communications effort has been made, it is important to include a variety of printed means of communication.

Each form of printed communication has a specific role:

- The cover letter is used as an introduction from the pastor that describes the parish's stewardship effort and introduces more information in the accompanying brochure.
- The brochure defines and further explains the meaning of stewardship. The parishioner may keep a brochure while discarding the accompanying letter. Therefore, the brochure should be as up-to-date and complete as possible in the event that a parishioner may periodically review it.

Letters

Letters are very effective in reaching a broad base of parishioners. They are most effective when combined with a brochure.

(See Appendix, p 3, 4, and 5 for samples of letters)

Brochures

Brochures accompanied with a cover letter are an effective way of presenting the meaning of stewardship. Some parishes choose to design their own while others prefer to order educational brochures from publishing companies. Two brochures, one Time and Talent and one Treasure Commitment Card, should be used in the initial stewardship effort.

(See Appendix, p 45 for brochure resources)

Banners and Posters

Displaying banners and posters is a visible way of communicating the message. They could range from a collage of pictures of parishioners to poster boards created by students to express their thoughts on stewardship. It is very important that the parish plans to include banners or posters as a means of explaining the spirituality of stewardship.

Bulletin Announcements

There should be regular announcements in the parish bulletin during the stewardship effort. **(See Appendix, p 7 for sample of announcements)**

List of Time and Talent Opportunities

In the early planning phase of the stewardship effort, the parish Stewardship Committee should begin compiling a list of parish activities, ministries, organizations and community programs that provide avenues for parishioners to give of their time and talent. One way of compiling this information is to involve the leadership of the many parish groups through a written survey or a ministry leaders retreat or meeting.

(See Appendix, p 15 sample List of Time and Talent Opportunities)

Commitment Cards and Envelopes

An important component of the stewardship effort is the commitment card. Parishioners are asked to complete both the Time and Talent portion and the Treasure portion of the commitment card, and put them in an envelope. The third mailing should include an envelope for the parishioners to use in the handing in of their cards. The portion for Time and Talent should have space for the parishioner to indicate specific ministries or areas of interest, and the Treasure portion should have a space to indicate their level of financial commitment.

When the envelopes are received, they should be opened and the cards separated by Time and Talent and also by Treasure. It is important that the parishioner has written his or her name on each of the cards.

(See Appendix, p 16 and 18 a sample of the Commitment Cards)

Thank You Letters

Once the commitment cards are received, all those who made a commitment should receive a thank you letter from the pastor. Time and talent respondents should receive an additional note from the stewardship chair, pastor, ministry leader or appropriate personnel.

(See Appendix, p 26 for sample of thank you letter)

STEWARDSHIP PRESENTATIONS AT MASS

During the Mass, there are a number of communication opportunities to enhance the message of stewardship. Among them are:

Prayers of the Faithful

Prayers of the Faithful help remind us of our faith and our values. One petition can be recited every week throughout the year in the Prayers of the Faithful.

(See Appendix, p 6 for sample Prayers of the Faithful)

Homilies

The role of the spiritual leader of the parish is of extreme importance for stewardship to become a success in the parish. Parishioners look to the pastor and assistant pastors to lead them to understand stewardship and to motivate them to live stewardship as a way of giving back to God in gratitude for God's gifts to us.

(See Appendix, p 8 – 13 for sample Homilies)

Pulpit Announcements

These are valuable reminders for those at Mass about key steps that will be taking place in the Stewardship Effort. Parishioners will be interested in hearing about the process that will be unfolding in their parish.

(See Appendix, p 14 for sample pulpit announcements)

THE STEWARDSHIP LAY WITNESS

An important aspect of the stewardship effort consists of the stories and testimonials delivered to the entire congregation by individuals whose lives have changed as a result of stewardship. These lay witnesses are important to the success of the parish effort. There are many reasons for this:

- stewardship is a part of the internal change of heart, or conversion process.
- the Old and New Testament tell of stories of real people who became aware of the need to put their faith into action.
- the Gospel writers, themselves, are witnesses to the life of Jesus.

Lay witnesses send a strong message to the faithful about the importance of giving of ourselves, our possessions and time in gratitude for what God has given us. People are motivated by hearing that stewardship is being lived by other people they can relate to in their own parish. Christians throughout history have been raised to a new level of awareness by hearing the stories of how people just like themselves have grown to a deeper sense of spirituality.

NOTE: It is suggested that the same Lay Witness(es) speak at all Masses on a particular weekend. Everyone in the parish hears the same message. When parishioners gather in small groups to discuss the lay witness presentation, they know that everyone heard the same message regardless of which Mass they had attended.

Selecting Lay Witnesses

Invite lay witnesses from the parish who believe and practice stewardship as a way of life. Choose people who give of their time, talent and treasure in an intentional, planned and proportionate way. The witnesses should relate well to other parishioners, feel comfortable speaking to a group about their personal experiences, and be enthusiastic about their mission. Sharing how they arrived at their decision for stewardship will assist others to come forward with their gifts.

Responsibilities of a Lay Witness

It is very important that the lay witness or witnesses meet with the pastor to discuss how to present the concept of stewardship. It is important that the witnesses understand the pastor's expectations of the stewardship effort. Prospective lay witnesses might find it helpful to read Scriptural passages about stewardship. It is advisable that they read other material about stewardship included in this manual and The American Bishop's Pastoral Letter of 1992 *Stewardship A Disciples's Response*. The five to seven minute presentation should be written out. Sharing their personal experiences of how they use their gifts of time, talent and treasure will prompt others to reflect on their own lives. Stewardship will begin to have a new meaning.

(See Appendix, p 19 - 25 for samples of Lay Witness material)

THE THREE-WEEK STEWARDSHIP EFFORT

The First Week of the Effort (Weekend #1)

This is the week of extensive parishioner awareness about stewardship. It takes place by means of letter, brochure, homily and testimony.

- **a letter from the pastor, accompanying a brochure is mailed to the homes of all parishioners a few days before weekend #1.**
- **at all Masses this weekend, the pastor delivers a short homily followed by a presentation by a lay witness or couple.**
- **a second letter and brochure is mailed to all parishioners a few days before weekend #2.**

It is one of the most important weeks for the stewardship effort up to this time. Parishioners have received a mailing at home the previous week and this is the first time the pastor will give a homily followed by lay presenters giving their testimonies.

When a stewardship message is presented in a personal way by people who have made their own commitment to this way of life, then parishioners will begin to understand that stewardship is not just a short-term effort but rather a foundation for a deepening of faith and a way of life. The parish will now begin to have a sense of the life-changing and life-enriching concept of stewardship for them as individuals and the parish as a whole.

The Second Week of the Effort (Weekend #2)

This week precedes Commitment Sunday. During this week, the communication phase of the effort continues. Parishioners are becoming more aware of what stewardship means and how it can affect their lives in a positive way.

- **at all Masses this weekend, the pastor delivers a short homily followed by a presentation by another lay witness or couple.**
- **an announcement is made making parishioners aware of the mailing that will be coming this week which will include the important commitment cards. All parishioners are to bring their completed cards (one for Time and Talent; the other for Treasure) to Mass on Commitment Sunday.**
- **an announcement is also placed in the parish bulletin reminding parishioners to complete their commitment card and return it at all Masses on Commitment Sunday.**
- **within the week following weekend #2, a third letter and commitment card is mailed to all parishioners a few days before weekend #3 which is Commitment Sunday.**
- **also, prior to the Commitment Sunday weekend, place extra commitment cards in the pews for those who have not received a card in the mail. The rate of response will greatly increase by having extra commitment cards in the pew on Commitment Sunday.**

The Third Week of the Effort (Weekend #3) Commitment Sunday

This is the week when the entire effort comes together. Parishioners are invited to make a personal commitment of giving their time, talent and treasure in response to God's blessings in their lives.

- **at all Masses on that weekend, the pastor delivers a stewardship homily stressing the importance of giving out of gratitude, in keeping with the spiritual meaning of stewardship.**
- **the pastor invites all parishioners to bring their completed cards (one for Time and Talent, and another for Treasure).**

There are several ways in which the stewardship commitment cards can be presented to the parish. Listed below are three ways to present commitment cards to the parish:

- **to invite parishioners to come forward at the offertory and present their cards in the form of a gift, leaving them in the sanctuary area.**
- **to ask the ushers to collect the cards as a special collection.**
- **to have the parishioners present their cards when they make their regular weekly offerings.**

After the cards are received, the pastor:

- **extends an invitation to those who have not signed and returned commitment cards to do so, placing them in the offertory collection the following week or mailing them to the parish office.**
- **reminds parishioners that their commitment of time, talent and treasure begins right away.**
- **announces to the entire parish that ministry leaders will be contacting those who have committed to a specific ministry as soon as the data is gathered.**
- **thanks the parish family as a whole for their generous sharing of their time, talent and treasure.**

AFTER COMMITMENT SUNDAY

The effectiveness of the stewardship effort will be witnessed in financial results and volunteer commitment, but because stewardship is spiritually based, the results will be experienced in the hearts of those who have responded to the stewardship message. Evidence will be witnessed in quality. There will be more enthusiasm, increased joy, deeper individual commitment, a different outlook on service and increased attendance at Mass and special liturgies.

Parish Evaluation

Commitments of time, talent and treasure, on the other hand, can be measured.

- offertory giving can be compared to the previous years giving, prior to the stewardship effort.
- compare the number of volunteers participating from year to year.
- meet with the pastor to formally evaluate the results of the stewardship effort; include the Stewardship Committee chairperson, Finance Committee, and the complete Parish Pastoral Council of the parish.

(See Appendix, p 44 for a sample evaluation form)

Follow Up on Commitments

One of the most critical roles, and yet one that may be neglected, is adequate follow-up. It is important that a follow-up effort start with those who have already made commitments.

- separate the Time and Talent Commitment cards from the Treasure cards.
- the Time and Talent information should be entered into a database, and a report of all new and continuing volunteers should be given to the appropriate ministry leaders.
- the Treasure cards should be turned over to the appropriate person as designated by the pastor.

Time and Talent Commitment Follow-Up

The information collected on the Time and Talent commitment cards from the parishioners should be disseminated as quickly as possible to the various parish committees and groups that compare with the talents of the parishioners.

- The most effective way of compiling the information is through use of a computer database.
- Smaller parishes may enter the information into a table, or simply make enough copies of the time and talent cards to share that information with the ministry leaders.
- As soon as the ministry leaders receive their list of new and continuing volunteers, they need to contact the parishioners, thank them for their stewardship gift of time, and invite them to the next meeting of the ministry.

(See Appendix, p 26-30 for sample letters)

NOTE: It is important that approximately every three months, the Stewardship Committee follows up with the ministry leaders to assure that parishioners who have made time and talent commitments have been contacted. Individuals who have volunteered but have not yet become involved need to be contacted.

Treasure Commitment Follow Up

A summary of the commitments should be prepared for the Stewardship Committee and Finance Committee as an indication of the level of commitment being made to the finance of the parish. It is important to note that returned cards will not indicate the total income to be expected. The Finance Committee cannot use the totals from treasure commitment cards in preparing the church budget. For the individual, the signing of a treasure commitment card is a reminder of the spiritual commitment to give back out of gratitude.

A thank you note is sent to each parishioner. It should include a reference to the amount (or percentage) of the commitment made. The amount can be presented on a weekly, monthly and annual basis depending on how they have stated it on their treasure commitment card. One of the purposes of the thank you note is to acknowledge the gift and also to clarify that the amount (or percentage) is correct.

(See Appendix, p 26 for a suggested thank you letter)

Follow Up With Those Who Have Not Committed Non-Respondents and New parishioners

The stewardship effort is never really over during the year because the parish is a dynamic growing organization. It is necessary to follow up with those who have not responded as well as those who have joined the parish during the year.

It is important to make contact with parishioners who have not responded. A comparison of those who did respond with the total parish roster will identify the non-respondents. These need to be separated for follow-up mailings as well as telephone contacts.

New parishioners represent a significant opportunity for adding many gifts of time, talent and treasure to the parish. These parishioners may be neglected because they were not members of the parish during the stewardship effort. A Stewardship Committee member or designated parishioner will be assigned the responsibility of contacting these individuals as part of a welcoming committee. They will make a presentation on stewardship and present commitment cards to the new parishioner. Often new parishioners bring a new source of energy and leadership to parish life. Methods of welcoming will depend on the parish itself. It may be best to include stewardship materials in a welcoming kit or personally hand it to the parishioner at the parish monthly reception of newcomers.

(See Appendix, p 28 for a sample letter)

(See Appendix, p 29 for a sample telephone script)

PLANNING THE ANNUAL STEWARDSHIP RENEWAL

The Annual Stewardship Renewal is conducted in much the same manner as the initial effort. The essential components include:

- Timetable for the Annual Stewardship Renewal
(See Appendix, p 31)
- Bulletin Announcements for the Stewardship Renewal
(See Appendix, p 32)
- 2 letters from the pastor
(See Appendix, p 33-34 for sample letters)
- 2 brochures
(See Appendix, p. 45 for resources for brochures)
- Updated “Time and Talent” Opportunities
- Lay Witness Presentation (one weekend)

Pastor’s homily – Commitment Sunday