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PRIMARY STEWARDSHIP EFFORT MATERIALS
TIMETABLE FOR CONDUCTING THE STEWARDSHIP EFFORT

To use this calendar, first establish the date of Stewardship Commitment Sunday. Then, fill in the dates working backwards from there. On this calendar, the “X” represents Commitment Sunday. The Designation “X-10” on the calendar signifies “Commitment Sunday minus 10 weeks.”

X-10	Week of	Pastor and stewardship committee begins recruiting lay witness or couples to speak at all Masses on Weekend 1 and Weekend 2.
X-9	Week of	Mailings to parishioners are planned and scheduled beginning this week. Brochures are either designed by the stewardship committee or ordered from a company that publishes stewardship resources. (Refer to “Resources for Promoting Stewardship” at the end of this manual.
X-8	Week of	Envelopes and letterhead for cover letters are ordered from the local printer.
X-7	Week of	An article about stewardship is written and included as an insert in the next bulletin or parishes may wish to print their own Stewardship Newsletter.
X-6	Week of	Special activities such as making posters or banners are planned and assigned. A list of parish ‘time and talent’ opportunities are developed.
X-5	Week of	First bulletin announcement is placed in the church bulletin. Labels for four full parish mailings are ordered.
X-4	Week of	Lay witnesses meet with the pastor to coordinate their remarks. A second bulletin announcement is placed in the church bulletin.
X-3	Week of	Mailing #1 is made to all parishioners following this weekend. A third bulletin announcement is placed in the church bulletin.
X-2	Week of	WEEKEND #1. Pastor’s homily #1. First lay witness presentation. Mailing #2 is sent to all parishioners after Weekend #1. The fourth bulletin announcement is placed in the church bulletin.
X-1	Week of	WEEKEND #2. Pastor’s homily #2. Second lay witness presentation. Mailing #3 is made to all parishioners after Weekend #2. The fifth bulletin announcement is placed in the church bulletin announcing that ‘commitment cards’ will be mailed to homes during the week and they are to be returned to church the following weekend.
X	Week of	WEEKEND 3 – COMMITMENT SUNDAY. Pastor’s homily #3. Cards are presented at Mass. Sixth bulletin announcement is placed in the church bulletin
X+2	Week Of	During the week a thank-you mailing is made to those parishioners who have responded with time, talent and treasure commitment cards.

COVER LETTER FOR FIRST TOTAL PARISH MAILING.

(Date)

Dear (Name of Church) Parishioner:

Spiritual growth and renewal are a continuing part of the life of being a Christian. They are also vital to the life of our parish. An important aspect of this spiritual growth is embodied in the principle of stewardship. Through stewardship, we thank God for the many blessings we have received by returning to God a portion of the time, talent and treasure we have been given.

During the next few weeks you will be hearing more about stewardship and what it means in terms of your personal spiritual lives. You will also be asked to reflect on three areas of stewardship and how they are lived out in your life. Among the important questions you will be asked to reflect upon are:

- **Time** - How much time do you set aside each week in prayer and involvement in volunteer activities in our parish and in our community?
- **Talent** - How you are using your talents for the betterment of our parish family and for the community as a whole?
- **Treasure** - What percentage of your yearly income do you presently give to support your church and community activities?

This weekend at all Masses you will be hearing from me and from (name/names of lay witnesses) who will talk about their personal experiences with stewardship. During the next several weeks I suggest that you and members of your household spend time in prayerful thought about stewardship and your relationship with the Lord.

The enclosed brochure will help you understand the true meaning of stewardship. Please take the time to read it prayerfully.

Sincerely,

(Pastor's Name)

COVER LETTER FOR SECOND TOTAL PARISH MAILING.

(Date)

Dear (Name of church) Parishioner:

“Give and it shall be given to you... For the treasure you measure with will be measured back to you.” (Luke 6:38)

In the letter and brochure you received last week I asked you to reflect on the many blessings you have received and to consider this as a time for personal renewal in your relationship with the Lord. I asked you to think about stewardship of time, talent and treasure and how you might make a new commitment to giving.

- **Your Time** – For many of us time is our most precious commodity. The demands of work, school, community, parish and family are overwhelming at times. Occasionally we feel we must get off the merry-go-round and rethink what life is all about. We must seek to balance our time against what we know we must do. I would hope that you consider re-examining your priorities to give generously of your time to our parish and the larger community.
- **Your Talent** – Everyone is talented in some way. It may be in music, art, writing, organizing, planning, driving a car, supervising a project, and even making other people laugh. Our parish provides each and every one of you with an opportunity to use any talent you have. I hope you will consider committing a greater share of your talents to our parish and community.
- **Your Treasure** – Your financial support is a major reason we are able to continue to provide our religious, educational and social ministries. The primary source of our parish’s financial support is the weekly offertory collection. Stewardship of treasure involves committing a regular portion of our income to the church and community. It is important that a portion of your treasure is given to our parish. In the future, consider committing a percentage of your annual income to our parish and making your contribution on a regular basis.

This weekend at all Masses you will hear from me and from (name/names of lay witnesses) who will talk about their personal experiences with stewardship. Next week I will ask you to make a renewed commitment of your stewardship gifts to your parish. Then all will be asked to place your commitment cards in the offertory collection (or place it on the altar.) It will be a great day for all of us in the parish as we continue to build a community of faith.

The enclosed brochure describes more specifically how stewardship relates to our Christian life. Please take the time to read it prayerfully.

In the name of Christ,

(Pastor’s Name)

COVER LETTER FOR THIRD TOTAL PARISH MAILING

(Date) Dear (Name of church) Parishioner:

For the past several weeks we have been asking you to think about making a commitment to the parish based on what the Lord has given you. Now we are asking you to acknowledge your commitment of TIME, TALENT and TREASURE in a more formal way. I am asking you to:

1. Read and sign the covenant for Stewardship.
2. Study the Stewardship “List of Time and Talent Opportunities” sheet included, select those best suited to you and write them (or place a check by them) on the ‘Commitment Card for Time and Talent’. If you are already committing your time and talent, include your current parish involvement.
3. Complete the Stewardship “Commitment Card for Treasure”. Consider a percentage of your annual income as your level of giving. The financial commitment between you and the parish is a confidential matter.
4. Use the envelope that is included to return both your time and talent commitment card and treasure commitment card. Bring the envelope with you to Mass this weekend.

Please be generous with your time, talent, and treasure commitments. For your own spiritual growth and also for the parish’s spiritual growth, it is important that everyone in the parish become involved in stewardship. We need your commitment to continue building a community of faith.

Please be assured that you and your loved ones are in my daily prayers.

In Christ’s name,

(Pastor’s Name)

SAMPLE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL FOR STEWARDSHIP

Prayers of the Faithful help remind us of our faith and our values. The following may be used, written or adapted to better fit the needs of the parish.

- that we may be good stewards, managing well all that God has left in our care.
- that we may give generously of our time, talent, and treasure, in everlasting love and gratitude for the total sacrifice Jesus gave for us on the Cross.
- that we may be faithful and generous stewards, joyfully accepting our Lord's invitation to come and work in God's vineyard.
- for those who support the work in God's vineyard with their time, talent and treasure.
- that we may find joy in faithfully and generously giving our time, talent and treasure to produce fruit for the kingdom of God.
- that as good stewards, we may learn to recognize the difference between what we need and what we want, trusting that God will always give us all that we need.
- that we may be faithful and generous in giving to God what belongs to God, remembering that everything we have is a gift from God.
- that as good stewards, we may find peace in loving and serving the Lord.
- that as good stewards, we may strive to use our gifts to fulfill the plan that God intended for us.

Closing Prayers:

O God, loving Creator and Giver of all good gifts, bless our parish, strengthen our faith and grant us the spirit of Christian stewardship so that we may generously give of our time, talent, and treasure to spread your kingdom here in our church and throughout the world.

Lord, God, Creator of the universe, we thank you for the gifts, talents and abilities we have received. In return, accept the treasure we are about to collect and offer at the altar. May these gifts enable us to carry out the mission of the parish and the mission of the church in the world.

SUGGESTED BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS

First Bulletin Announcement: Our parish will begin a stewardship effort on (date). Stewardship is based on the spiritual principles of the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus. Stewardship is a way of thanking God for all the blessings we have received by returning to God a portion of our time, talent and treasure. Stewardship can change the spiritual lives of both individuals and the parish as a whole.

Second Bulletin Announcement: Stewardship is based on our need to give back to God out of gratitude, not on the need of the church to receive. It is based on the premise that all that we have and all that we are comes from God. As a way of giving thanks for all our blessings, we return a portion of the time, talent and treasure which God has allotted to us. Soon we will begin a stewardship effort at our parish. Please be generous in giving of yourself.

Third Bulletin Announcement: Christian stewardship provides spirituality that you can take home from church, exercise at work and express through personal involvement in the church and community. Please pray that our stewardship effort, which begins next weekend, will enlighten our entire parish. At all Masses next weekend we will be hearing from parishioners (name) who will share how stewardship affects their lives.

Fourth Bulletin Announcement: Our stewardship effort begins this weekend. At all Masses this weekend you heard from parishioners (names) about their personal experiences of stewardship. Next weekend you will hear from (name) parishioners. Please continue to give prayerful thought to your commitment of time, talent and treasure to the church and the community.

Fifth Bulletin Announcement: We continue our Stewardship Effort. Where stewardship has been implemented, it has changed the lives of both givers and receivers. At all Masses this weekend, you heard from our parishioners (name) about their personal experiences with stewardship. You will receive a commitment card in the mail later this week asking you to make your stewardship commitment of time, talent and treasure.

Sixth Bulletin Announcement: This is Stewardship Commitment Sunday. Please return your time, talent and treasure cards at Mass today. If you did not bring them to Mass today, please bring them next week or mail them to the church this week.

EXAMPLES OF HOMILIES FOR THE TOTAL STEWARDSHIP EFFORT

The following presentation serves only as samples. Pastors are encouraged to develop original homilies using methods they find most suitable.

Sample of Pastor's Homily #1

In the first letter of St. Peter he reminds us "As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace." Throughout Holy Scripture there are constant reminders that we are called to be stewards of all of God's gifts -- our time, our talents, our financial resources, our communities, the earth we live on with its natural resources, and our relationships with family and others. We must truly recognize that everything belongs to God and we are stewards or caretakers who are expected to use the gifts in service to one another. Simply put, stewardship is about how we use those gifts.

Today, we are beginning a stewardship effort here in our parish. It is an important and significant event in our parish life. It is one that will change the lives of each of us and which will change the life of our parish.

At the end of the three-week stewardship effort you will be asked to make a specific commitment to our parish of your time, your talent and your treasure. We ask for your commitment in writing for each of these important elements of stewardship. And we ask you to return your commitment cards on Commitment Sunday.

In the meantime you will hear from (or have heard from) two of our parishioners about how stewardship affects our lives. This week I am happy to announce that you will hear from (or have heard from) (name of presenter). And next week our presenter will be (name). We thank both of these parishioners for their act of stewardship in standing before our parish and sharing with us how stewardship is affecting their lives. (The Lay Witness presentation may be done either before the processional at the beginning of Mass or after Communion).

We greatly appreciate their willingness to come forward and explain Stewardship.

Stewardship is based on the spiritual principles of the old Testament and the teachings of Christ. Stewardship is a way of life. It is a way of thanking God for all the blessing we have received by returning a portion of the time, talent and treasure allotted to us.

We are asking all of you to spend the next two weeks praying and thinking about what stewardship is and how it can affect our lives. For some individuals it means thinking about stewardship and the commitments we make. For others, it means having a discussion with family members about the family's total stewardship commitment. In either case, we are asked to look at stewardship as a joyful return to God of the first fruits of what has been bestowed upon us.

In stewardship of time and talent we are called on to give of ourselves and our time to the church and to our community. In stewardship of treasure we give back to God by giving of our financial resources to our Church, to the diocese and to charitable organizations in this community. We look to Jesus for help in understanding what stewardship is and what it means. Jesus points out that we reveal our values by our actions just as a tree reveals what kind of tree it is by the kind of fruit it bears. This is very similar to what Our Lord says in the Gospel of St. Luke about the things we value, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Stewardship will make a difference. The difference is seen in several areas of our lives.

First, the difference is in the focus of giving. Instead of focusing on the needs of the group to whom we are giving financial support of our time and talent, the focus is primarily on God and our relationship with God.

Second, the difference is in the motivation for giving. Stewardship is an integral part of our spiritual life, and we give because we are grateful to God for what has been given us. We give freely because we want to, not because we have to.

Third, the difference is in the result of the giving. As we practice stewardship, we will find that we are growing spiritually and that our faith is deepened. In fact, we find that our lives are changed for the good.

Please take the next two weeks to read the letters and brochures we are sending you and listen carefully to what your fellow parishioners have to say about their commitments from the pulpit. Then it will be time for you to discern and give prayerful consideration to your personal commitment of how much you will be prepared to give of your time, talent and treasure.

**Sample Homily that may be used at any time throughout the Stewardship Effort.
Pay Back a Portion Out of Joy – Fr. Brendan McGuire, October 8, 2008**

Some of us rent the home that we live in; others own the home they live in, or probably the way we should say it is, we co-own our home with the bank. That is the reality we know. Most people do not actually own their own home outright; most have large mortgages which they pay and they co-own their house with the bank. They pay their portion to the bank as their portion of the ownership.

In renting a house, it would be strange if we were to decide not to pay this month's rent. I would just skip it for a couple of months because I don't really want to pay it. The way mortgage companies act today is quite simple: if we choose not to pay, they will foreclose. And we know how painful that reality is for some of us today.

The reality of our lives is very similar to that reality. We do not really own this body of ours. We think we do; just as we think we own our house. But we are really co-owners with the Lord as this body of ours is the temple of the Holy Spirit. That is what the Lord has called each and every one of us; a temple, the dwelling place of his spirit, in each one of us. To that end then we are co-owners with the Lord of even our own bodies and indeed, our whole world. And just as it would be absurd for us not to pay our rent or mortgage, it is equally absurd for us not to pay back to the Lord some portion of our lives and the fruit of our labors. After all, it is not completely ours.

Just like the financial crisis today brings to bear the fragility of one's financial state, so also when our body is in illness and lack of health, it brings fragility and vulnerability through all sorts of physical, mental or emotional disturbance. Our body can quite easily be attacked in these different ways. But we don't say our soul can be attacked because we believe that when we die our soul goes on to eternal life. So, in a sense, this body of ours is just a passing place for us. We co-own it with the Lord.

Today's first reading (Isaiah 5: 1-7) talks about the vineyard of the Lord; how God gives it to somebody to tend, to produce fruit and to give back then a portion, not the whole amount, just a portion back to the Lord. We are called to do that in our own lives. We are called to take what we have been given and to work in the vineyard; to work with our bodies and produce great things and do great things in our world. Then, we are also called to give back a portion of it to the Lord because it is not ours, and we are to do so out of gratitude. We do not do so out of a sense of obligation to some sort of vindictive landlord; we do it because it is the right thing to do. It is divine righteousness because we are given the gift and we are to use it with great joy.

The reason we say "great joy" with great clarity is the fact that the scripture language had special significance and certain images which referred to certain realities. For example, in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, the word "bread" was considered daily sustenance. At any time in the stories when they used the word "bread" it had to do with daily nourishment. However, that is not what Jesus used in today's gospel. Instead he used the words "wine" and a "vineyard." Those words were symbolic of the joy of life because people would have a drink of wine when

they celebrated a special occasion. So the vineyard is used here and not a field of wheat; Jesus uses a vineyard. In other words, we are given the great joy of life and it should then be a great joy to share a portion with the Lord. So our motivation to share our time and our talent is not out of some sort of obligation, although that may be real such as paying our mortgage or rent, but it is not meant to be the motivation of our lives. The motivation is wine which is symbolic of joy. We are called to share what we have because we realize we have been blessed. There are times when we find it easy to recognize God's presence, and there are other times when we find it more difficult to recognize how blessed we have been in our everyday life. But that is where we have to start.

We have to look at our ordinary daily lives and, even in the midst of these difficult financial struggles, still see the presence of our God. For example, in the midst of the economy in our country and in our world we realize we are under more financial pressure, but still we have our health and we have our children. If we move from a mortgaged house to a rented house, we still co-own. The point is that we still have the gift that God gives us, which is our very self, and that is our starting point. We give to others from the point of gratitude. We give of our time not just with our family, but we share it with our community and we share it with God because that is what we are called to do out of joy. It is divine righteousness to share whatever we have, a portion; not all of it, but a portion back to the Lord.

So as we leave here today nourished at God's table with bread and wine, we recognize God promises to do both: give us what we need in sustenance with the bread and give us the joy of always being with us in the wine. Today we will leave as a church community filled with our daily bread and the joy of life, realizing that we need to go and share; share with joy a portion of our time, talent and treasure.

Sample Pastor's Homily #2

“For we brought nothing into the world, just as we shall not be able to take anything out of it.” 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

This passage is one of many in Scripture which helps us understand and become aware of what the concept of stewardship is all about, and how, by discovering its true meaning, we will undergo a personal transformation. We are reminded that all of the “things” of this world are gifts from God, and should be used to bring us closer to God—the end for which we are created. In the words of Bishop Robert Morneau, “I’ve never seen a U-Haul following a hearse.”

Contrary to what many people feel or assume, stewardship is not a hidden term for fund-raising. It is a powerful concept that will change our faith life and the faith life of our parish. For stewardship is a way of life. It is based on the biblical view of God as Creator and us as servants. We are accountable to God for the use of our gifts of time, talent and treasure that are given us during our life on earth.

Stewardship means that we are not owners of all that we have on earth but we are only stewards of our time, our talent and our treasure. Stewardship provides us with the foundation for a deepened faith, for all of us, and for our parish. Stewardship begins with an awakening of the need that we have that no one can dispute, because it is universal and ever-present. It is the personal need of each one of us to return to the Lord a portion of the gifts God has given us of time, talent and treasure, in gratitude for what God has done for us.

Stewardship is the giving of the “first fruits” of what we have received, not the portion of the gift that is left over. You will find when you decide to give to God the first portion of your time, talent and treasure, that what at first seemed difficult soon becomes easy for you to do. What we have left over, we will find is more than enough for our own needs. Putting God first in our lives by practicing stewardship deepens our faith in a way that we would never have dreamed possible.

As you are aware, we are conducting a stewardship effort in our parish. Give prayerful consideration to how you might commit your time, talent, and your treasure to our parish. This coming week you will receive the third and final mailing of our stewardship information. And we will ask you to make a covenant of stewardship. By committing yourself to be a wise and prudent steward of your time, talent and treasure, you will enhance and enrich the quality of your faith and the faith of this parish community.

Let us prayerfully reflect on the power of stewardship, and let this concept transform our hearts so that we may live a life of greater fulfillment and peace.

Also, let us use the opportunity we have today to listen to one of our parishioners who has found the personal value of stewardship. Today we will be hearing from (or have heard from) (names of parishioners). (The Lay Witness presentation may be done either before the processional at the beginning of Mass or after Communion).

Sample Pastor's Homily #3

“Each must do as already determined, without sadness or compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” These words of St. Paul to the Corinthians remind us that our giving ought to be planned and determined in a prayerful way. Welcome to Commitment Sunday. Our three week stewardship effort concludes in our parish today. We all have spent some time over the last several weeks reading about stewardship, studying how it changes our lives and giving consideration to our responsibility to share our gifts with our parish.

We have heard from our parishioners about what stewardship means to them and how they live their lives based on stewardship.

Later in the Mass today we will be presenting our stewardship gifts. The ushers will come forward and collect our Commitment Card for Time and Talent, and our Commitment Card for Treasure. You will be asked to bring your commitment cards forward and place them in the stewardship basket. Our parish thanks each one of you for your commitment of time, talent and treasure.

Just a reminder: If you have not brought your cards with you today, please do so next Sunday. (Or, there are additional commitment cards in the pew for those who forgot to bring theirs today.)

Stewardship as we have learned is based on the spiritual principles of the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus. We have learned that those who have adopted stewardship have had their lives changed.

And, we have learned that stewardship is a way of life. It is a way of thanking God for all blessing given to us by returning a portion of our time, talent and treasure. Stewardship deepens our relationship with the Lord and gifts each of us with a sense of peace and joy. Jesus promises that by practicing stewardship we will grow spiritually. There are many references in the Bible to stewardship. In one passage Jesus tells us, “You can be sure that whoever gives even a drink of cold water to one of the least of my followers, will certainly receive a reward.” (Matthew 10:37-42). That reward also involves a growing trust in God's divine will. Symbolically, we give a drink of cold water when we make our time, talents and treasure available to our parish and to our community. Every parishioner is called to give a drink of cold water by supporting the parish. It brings Christ's healing touch to our faith community and to those it serves.

Our parish family is blessed with many members; each have special talents and abilities that can benefit our parish. Today we bring forth our gifts in God's name. I pray that the Lord will bless you as individuals and us as a parish as we generously share our stewardship gifts within our church community.

SAMPLE PULPIT ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following pulpit announcements about Stewardship can be made:

Weekend Number 1:

You have received a mailing from the pastor this week. During the next few weeks you will be asked to look at your giving of time, talent and treasure. You will be asked to make a commitment of your time and specific talents to our parish. You will also be asked to decide about the portion of your income you plan to give as a sign of gratitude to God for what you have been given and as a way of expressing your faith and trust in God. Please given prayerful consideration to your response.

Weekend Number 2:

As you are aware, our parish is in the midst of a stewardship effort. During the past week you did receive a letter from Fr. (name of parish priest) along with commitment cards for your giving of time, talent and treasure. Please spend some time this week prayerfully considering your response. Next weekend you will be asked to make a commitment to give of your time, talent and treasure to our parish.

Weekend Number 3:

Over the last few weeks we have asked you to give prayerful thought to your commitment of time, talent and treasure. Today is Commitment Sunday and today during Mass we will be asking the ushers to come forward and collect our commitment cards. (If the parish decides to have parishioners come to the altar with their commitment cards, explain this method).

LIST OF TIME AND TALENT OPPORTUNITIES

The following list of stewardship opportunities for time and talent, does give a broad view of some of the many ways that one can give of her/his time and talent.

Adult day care volunteer	Mother's morning out volunteer
AIDS effort volunteer	Music Ministry leader
Altar Server	Musician
Adult education facilitator	Newcomers' coffee
Arts and crafts teacher	Newsletter compiling
Artwork for newsletter and publications	Office work
Auto repair	Offertory Collections
Baby Sitting Services	Outreach to inactive Catholics
Baptism Preparation	Outreach to the Unchurched
Bereaved/terminally ill	Painting
Bible Study Participation	Planning Parish Meals
Board member of Community Agency	Pastoral Council member
Budget Planning	Plant and Shrubbery care
Campus Ministry volunteer	Plumbing work
Capital campaign volunteer	Prayer Group Leader
Catholic Women's League member	Prayer Group Member
Choir Member	Printing Services
Clothing ministry volunteer	Pro-Life volunteer
Community Life Committee	Public relations assistance
Computer Programmer	Sacramental Preparation
Crisis Line volunteer	School volunteer
Driver	Scout volunteer
Education Committee member	Sewing
Electrical work	Social Committee
Eucharistic Minister	Social Service Agency volunteer
Evangelization Committee	Sound systems/electronics
Family Life Commission	Social outreach
Finance Committee	Soup kitchen volunteer
Food deliveries to sick/shut-ins	Sports team coach
Habitat for Humanity volunteer	Stewardship Committee Team member
Hospital/hospice volunteer	Stewardship Committee Leader
Kitchen help	Sunday Children's Liturgy leader
Knights of Columbus	Sunday Children's Liturgy helpers
Lawn Care	Sunday Morning Coffee
Lector	Teacher
Literacy effort volunteer	Teacher's aid
Liturgy Committee member	Telephone ministry
Masonry/Carpentry	Typist
Men's Club	Usher/greeter
Migrant ministry volunteer	Visiting sick/shut ins
Minority ministry volunteer	Youth group leader and members

COMMITMENT CARD FOR TIME AND TALENT

Card to be placed on 6 x 4 card stock with the quote from Peter on one side)

GOD’S GIFTS FOR GOD’S PEOPLE

**“As generous distributors of God’s manifold grace,
put your gifts at the service of one another,
each in the measure you have received.
The one who speaks is to deliver God’s message.
The one who serves is to do it
with the strength provided by God.
Thus, in all of you, God is to be glorified
through Jesus Christ...”
(1 Peter 4:10-11)**

NOTE: On reverse side of card type as follows:

THE COVENANT FOR STEWARDSHIP

**Everything we have while we are here comes as a gift from God.
A Christian Steward is one who receives God’s gifts gratefully
and returns God’s gifts with increase to the Lord.**

I am called in stewardship at (Name of Parish)

NAME _____ PHONE _____

I am interested in the following ministries: _____

I would be interested in sharing my gifts in any ministry.

PERSONAL PLEDGE OF TREASURE

Our pledge is an affirmation of our relationship to God. It demonstrates our gratitude for all the blessings in our lives and our acceptance of the reality that all we have and all we experience are God's gifts to us. Our support in doing the ministries of (name of parish) returns a portion of God's gracious gifts so that the work we are called to do in our parish can effectively be accomplished.

Practically, our pledge enables parish leadership to prudently plan and budget for mission and ministry in our parish. Should you find yourself in circumstances that alter your ability to fulfill your pledge in one way or another, it can be increased or decreased by notifying the business office at (phone number).

The amount of your pledge in relation to a tithe is a prayerful decision that only you can make. As you pray and plan for your pledge, please remember the concept of giving of the first fruits: a tithe, or a percentage working toward a tithe, becomes the first item in one's budget.

AN INVITATION TO COMMITMENT OF TREASURE

While there is no obligation to tithe, offering 10% of our (monthly) income is a worthy goal. Many Catholics give 5% to the parish, 1% to the diocese, and 4% to other charities.

However, the commonly accepted definition of proportional giving is a gradual move toward biblical tithing. Stewards are asked to begin by calculating the current giving percentage, then to make a conscious decision to increase in small increments.

Annual Income		Weekly Stewardship Gift							
Yearly	1%	1.5%	2%	2.5%	3%	3.5%	4%	4.5%	5%
10,000	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00	9.00	10.00
20,000	4.00	6.00	8.00	10.00	12.00	14.00	16.00	18.00	20.00
30,000	6.00	9.00	12.00	14.00	17.00	20.00	23.00	26.00	29.00
40,000	8.00	12.00	15.00	19.00	23.00	27.00	31.00	35.00	38.00
50,000	10.00	14.00	19.00	24.00	29.00	34.00	38.00	43.00	48.00
60,000	12.00	17.00	23.00	20.00	35.00	40.00	46.00	52.00	58.00
80,000	15.00	23.00	31.00	38.00	46.00	54.00	62.00	69.00	77.00
100,000	19.00	29.00	38.00	48.00	53.00	67.00	77.00	87.00	96.00
200,000	28.00	58.00	77.00	96.00	115.00	135.00	154.00	173.00	192.00

COMMITMENT CARD FOR TREASURE

MY PERSONAL COMMITMENT OF TREASURE

(Name of Parish)

You know well enough that Our Lord does not look so much
at the greatness of our actions, nor even at their difficulty,
but at the love with which we do them.

--St. Therese of Lisieux

In Prayerful thanksgiving for my many blessings from God, this is my/our
financial commitment.

\$ _____ Parish

\$ _____ Diocese

\$ _____ Other Charities

Your commitment is not a contract with the parish; it is a covenant between
you and the Lord.

STEWARDSHIP LAY WITNESS MATERIALS **GUIDE FOR THE STEWARDSHIP LAY WITNESS**

Stories, we are all captivated by stories. Magazines and newspapers are looking for good human-interest stories. Every good homilist or preacher includes a story. Jesus, too, used stories to teach others. The Gospel writers, through their own stories that witness their lives with Jesus, still bring about life-changing conversions to millions of people now 2000 years later. Everyone can identify some moment when the life-story of another brought about a change for the better in their own life.

Far from “tooting our own horn” every time we share our own story, we are witnessing to the generosity of a loving God. It is one of the most powerful and effective means of presenting the stewardship message. Properly prepared, it has the potential to change peoples’ lives.

One of the most effective means of presenting the stewardship message is through the Stewardship Lay Witness Talk. This talk can be given either before Mass begins or at the completion of Communion by people who are already practicing stewardship in their own lives. It may be given by an individual or a couple. In some cases even children may participate. The talk has two purposes:

- to inspire people to become good stewards
- to share real life examples of how stewardship is lived.

Sample Outline for Composing a Lay Witness Talk:

- **introduce yourself** – while many of your fellow parishioners will know you, some may not. Give a description of your family, the number of years in the parish, etc.
- **properly define Christian stewardship** – it is a response we make in gratitude to God for what he has given to us. It is an intentional, planned, proportionate giving of our time, talent and treasure.
- **discuss how you began practicing stewardship** – when did you first become aware of the concept? Did you have reservations? Be honest about your first reactions. People will relate to any feelings of “discomfort”. How did your family react to the idea? Was the initial “plunge” difficult? How did you go about it?
- **when did you begin to experience the benefits?** - speak of the effect that stewardship had on your faith life. How do you and your family give of your time and talent? Were you able to give a full tithe (10%) right away? If not, how are you working toward that goal?
- **Urge your fellow parishioners to get involved** – invite the congregation to join you and your family in making your parish a stewardship parish. Ask them to

look at all that God has given to them and make a generous response to God's many gifts.

Tips for presenting a Lay Witness Talk

An important part of accepting the concept of stewardship is the personal witness and individual testimony you provide with your presence and the way you give your talk. The following are tips you could consider in preparing your comments:

- prepare your personal remarks so that you are comfortable with them. Use your own style, wording and delivery. Write out your talk word for word. Then, if you feel comfortable with the approach, use notes or key words to guide you through your presentation so that it is more natural.
- for you to give a good presentation, it is best for you to rehearse your talk aloud. If you just practice reading it silently, you won't have the same effect. If it is possible, practice it in the church when no one is there, using the sound system. Be comfortable enough with your material so that you can look up from your notes and make eye contact. In a large church, remember to turn to the sides occasionally to include everyone.
- if you are doing a renewal, ask the person who did the talk last year to listen to your talk and make suggestions from their experience. Ask the pastor to listen to you deliver your talk in the church and offer suggestions.
- Nervousness can make your throat dry. If you think this may happen, have a glass of water near you.

Some Do's and Don'ts for the Lay Witness

Do

- explain that stewardship means giving of the 'first fruits' not what is left over.
- talk about the personal need of each Christian to give back in gratitude
- say 'Many of you know from your own giving experience that what I have told you is true.' (Acknowledging that you are not in this alone.)
- stress the sense of joy and fulfillment that comes to those who give God the first share of their time, talent, and treasure as a way of expressing their gratitude and trust in God.
- talk about intentional, planned and proportionate giving. Explain what it means to you to give from your substance.
- emphasize that it is important to give all three: time, talent and treasure.
- explain that stewardship involves not only church (parish and diocese); it also includes community.

DON'T

- talk in bargaining terms.(e.g. “I gave this much time or treasure and God gave me this in return).
- Stress church needs or budgets
- Talk in dollar or time amounts: “If everyone could give \$10 a week”...”we need \$2 more a week” ... “give our fair share””if everyone could give 3 hours per week.”
- Use threats of possible consequences stemming from the failure to give: “We won’t be able to heat or air-condition the church”... “We’ll have to close the school”.
- Suggest that parish stewardship is an obligation.

To the Lay Witness

The most important goal of living a life based on the principles of stewardship is a deepening of faith...a real spiritual conversion. Your sharing your spiritual journey with other members of your parish family is a unique gift and a true statement of your commitment to stewardship. You are showing your gratitude by this sharing. Thank you.

Getting Started..... and Ending Up

Many find that the hardest part of a talk is getting started and winding up. To open your stewardship talk simply introduce yourself: “Good morning, (evening) I’m Jane Doe and this is my husband John. We are parishioners here at St. Mary’s along with our three children Manny, Moe and Jack. We would like to share with you what stewardship means to our family and how it has affected our lives.

The following is a suggested closing paragraph:

(If done at the beginning of Mass) “As we continue with our liturgy this morning (evening) and our gifts are brought forward, let each of us ask ourselves if this gift of our treasure which we offer today is truly a measure of the gratitude we have for what we have been given. Let us look at what we give to our church and the community in terms of time and service and ask ourselves if this, also, is proportionate to God’s gifts to us. Let us remember that the God who takes care of the lilies of the field and the birds of the air will likewise take care of each of us when we give generously and trust in God’s love.

(If done after Communion)

As we conclude our liturgy this morning (evening), let each of us ask ourselves if this gift of our treasure, which we gave today, is truly a measure of the gratitude we have for what we have been given. Let us look at what we give to our church and the community in terms of time and service and ask ourselves if this, also, is proportionate to God’s gifts to us. Let us remember that the God who takes care of the lilies of the field and the birds of the air will likewise take care of each of us when we give generously and trust in God’s love.

SAMPLE LAY WITNESS PRESENTATIONS *[next three samples not proofed]*

The following are actual presentations given by lay witnesses:

Lay Witness Presentation – Sample #1

Stewardship means different things to different people. Let me share with you what stewardship has come to mean to me. Reflecting back on the time spent growing up in Toronto, I've realized more and more not only how loving my parents were but also how wise they were. I learned a lot from my parents, but there are four things I learned from their example that have had a particular impact on my life. First, that God loves me. God is good and can be trusted. Second, was that each of us is given certain gifts and talents and one of our responsibilities in life is to discover what those gifts and talents are, develop them and use them to benefit others. Third, was to whom more is given, more is expected. Fourth, was that having a job and spending time with your family is important, but not enough, we also need to spend time being with and helping others.

With that kind of learning and the kind example of my parents, I did not have a great deal of difficulty in grasping the concept of stewardship of time and talent. I didn't call it that, but I did it. From the time I was in high school onward, I made sure I spent time doing things for and with other people, mostly through different types of volunteer work. As I continued to give of my time and talent, I realized that I was growing spiritually. God and other people became a more important part of my life.

After graduating from college and moving to Montreal, I continued to give of my time and talent through various church groups and community boards. Yet something was still missing. You see, I gave of my time and talent but not my treasure. I reasoned that I spent so much time in church and community activities that I did not need to give regularly to the church or other community groups. Sure, I gave some, but it was sporadic and unplanned.

It wasn't until my wife and I made an 'Engaged Encounter' seven years ago that I started to look even more seriously at my relationship with God. We realized that we couldn't hold back on any area of our giving because God wasn't holding back on any area of his giving. We also decided that we wanted God to be the center of our marriage. That led us to a decision to start giving of our treasure in a planned and proportionate way. We started giving 2% of our income to the church and other charities in 1984. Five years later, we are giving at 8% of our income to the church and other charities.

As we continued to give, we have learned that we are growing more spiritually and that our faith is deepening. By giving as we have, we have tried to place material things and money in their proper perspective. That has caused us to look at what we need versus what we want. For example, when we bought a new home almost two years ago, we bought a somewhat smaller house than we might have, if we hadn't been practicing stewardship of treasure.

Stewardship has become a way of life for us. It is not always easy, but we try to live it. Presently, I am spending 8 hours a week in volunteer work outside of my job and my wife is spending three hours per week in volunteer work. In the area of treasure, 80 percent of our giving is church-related while the other 20 percent goes to community agencies. My wife and I are planning to move to the biblical tithe, 10% of our income, next month.

Stewardship of time, talent and treasure has been and will continue to be an important part of our lives.

Lay Witness Presentation Sample #2

Stewardship: What is it? How do we do it? Will we like it? Does it hurt? Will it work for us? Why should we do it?

These are many of the questions that passed through my mind as we first considered stewardship as a program in my parish. We looked at various programs in existence and the more I looked at these, the more I became convinced stewardship was something our parish should do. I guess I was really experiencing my own conversion to stewardship as a way of life. I kept seeing that the church could never flourish and grow if everyone was supporting it like I was, with a contribution each week that I would never miss.

As I look back at my own decision on stewardship and its maturation in the last five years, I notice that my ideals have changed some. There were lots of reasons that I felt we should begin stewardship in our family. God has been very good to us. My husband and I have two healthy, happy children.

We have finally passed through the struggling years in our own business and now had time to think about other things. As I began to think about the church and what it meant to me, I realized that if everyone was making the kind of limited volunteer and financial commitment that I was, then the church would not be here for my children. There was no other way it could continue without a higher level of support from me and other parishioners.

Besides, I had great expectations of the church. It should be well equipped to teach my children all about the wonders of God. It should be able to care for the sick, feed the needy, care for the elderly.

If my expectations were right, then I had to do my part to make them a reality. I was already giving some time to the church and with that time, my talents. But there had to be a strong commitment of time and a commitment of treasure, if the church was going to be able to do all the things I wanted it to.

Once I decided that perhaps stewardship was something our family needed to think about, I was rather hesitant to bring it up for family discussion. My husband is non-Catholic. Would he feel the same as I do? How would we handle contributions of time and

treasure to two churches? After we talked about how we felt and agreed that it was something we would try, my husband offered a simple solution. We would give one-fourth of our treasure and time to his church and three-fourths to my church since our two children were members of our parish. We have never had a problem with this method.

Since we made our decision on stewardship, I think our outlook on lots of things has changed. We have become more supportive of various worthwhile needs and organizations in the community. I think it opened an avenue of thought that allows us to give without always questioning what we will get in return.

I came to embrace stewardship through the church but I have grown in stewardship to include the entire community. I feel that God expects us to minister to all people. My gift that fulfills my stewardship may be given to anyone who needs it. It is the giving and the support of God's children that is important. The spiritual rewards, the feeling of accomplishment that you are following God's way are the important things that you will reap from stewardship. You will know you are succeeding when the spirituality and feelings of stewardship far surpass the questions of how much you should give.

Lay Witness Presentation – Sample #3

My first encounter with Stewardship was in 2001. I sat in my parish church in Hamilton, Ontario and listened to two people tell their story, asking us to consider giving a percentage of our income and more of our time to the church and community.

Up until that time, I had thought I was doing quite well. I had always given what I thought was generously to the church, especially in terms of money. I had been taught to 'contribute to the support of the church', both in the separate school I attended and from my parents. When we were growing up, there was no Saturday Mass. Saturday nights was the time to get ready for Sunday. Baths, polishing shoes, washing and curling hair and getting our church envelopes ready were all part of the ritual. My Dad put \$5.00 in his envelope in the 1950's and each of us four kids put \$.10 in ours. These were placed on the mantle behind my mom and dad's wedding picture, ready to be picked up on our way to church on Sunday morning. When I grew up and got a job, I put \$5.00 in my envelope. I figured that was what grownups did.

We never consciously thought about the giving of time. It was just sort of expected that we would run errands for our neighbor who had only one leg, or cut the grass of the elderly lady across the street. It was just part of what you did when you took food to a family who had a death or someone in the hospital. These were the things I continued to do as an adult without ever giving much thought as to how much time was involved or why I was doing it.

It was only after listening to these folks that I began to realize I wasn't even close to giving in proportion to what I had. My dad's \$5.00 in the 1950's and mine in the year 2001 were entirely two different things. The little 'good deeds' I did for other people were nice, but kind of sporadic.

My life has been richly blessed. I had a family who loved deeply, parents who sacrificed to bring up four children and instilled in each of us a strong sense of church and morality. I was well educated, had a job, a home, friends and reasonably good health. God has given me many blessing and I had to give serious thought as to how I was responding to his gifts. It took a while for me to do something, because I didn't think I could raise my level of monetary giving, and I was pretty sure I didn't have any 'spare time' to volunteer. I eventually decided to 'take the plunge', but only on a trial basis of three months. I would give a tithe of 10% to my church and other charities, and I would find two more hours each week to volunteer for something. I fully expected to be able to say at the end of the three months, "OK, Lord, I tried, but it doesn't work." That way, I figured I would be "off the hook".

Well, at the end of three months, I found that all of the bills had been paid, I wasn't suffering from malnutrition, and I saved some money, bought clothes and went to the movies a few times. I also found that I wasn't worrying about money nearly as much as I had been. I had become a reading tutor in our city's literacy program and loved it. I obviously wasn't "off the hook", but was hooked.

Since that summer in 2001, the one overwhelming change in my life has been a deepening of my faith. I really trust that God loves me and will take care of me. God has done it, even when I wasn't sure it could be done.

I guess my response to those who question the concepts of stewardship, or who are hesitant, is this: At least give it a try. Give God the opportunity to show you that he is a loving and generous God. God can only do that when we give up control and take that step in faith.

FOLLOW-UP MATERIALS
SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER TO PARISHIONERS

(Date)

Dear (Name of Church) Parishioner:

I am most grateful for your generous response to our first parish stewardship effort. I thank you and am confident that the benefits of embracing a stewardship way of life will be a source of blessing for you. More than (number) households responded with commitment cards. While this is an excellent response for a first-time effort, we will be contacting those who have not yet returned their commitment cards.

It has been encouraging to see the number of people who responded to our Time and Talent opportunities. Your name and contact information has been given to the coordinators of ministries you selected. You will be contacted soon and given the opportunity to become involved in your chosen ministry. If you are not contacted, please let me know!

You have responded that you will contribute \$_____ (or ____%) of your income for the year. This indicates your strong financial commitment to our parish, and it helps me and our Finance Committee make responsible budget decisions for our parish. I am confident that you will honor your financial commitment. ***(See Note below).**

Again, thank you for your response to our stewardship effort. You have been a great help to me. And, I hope it has helped you in giving thanks for what you have been given by sharing with others.

Gratefully in the Lord,

(Pastor's Name)

***Note: if a parishioner responds to time and talent only, eliminate paragraph three in the above letter.**

**SAMPLE THANKYOU LETTER TO TIME AND TALENT RESPONDENTS
FROM THE COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE.**

(Date)

Dear (Name)

Thank you for responding to our parish's call for stewards. I was asked to join the Stewardship Communications Committee just over a year ago, and from my experience I must admit that I always seem to get more out of stewardship than I give. And, I haven't found a more friendly, helpful and appreciative group than the parishioners and staff of our parish.

Through advertisements, bulletins, inserts, newsletters, mailings, articles, posters and news releases, the Communications Committee is responsible for the publishing and release of information to the parish and community about the people and events of our parish. Our accomplishments over the past year include the publishing of the parish news, a directory of parish ministries and organizations, and the parish pictorial directory.

Our needs in communications involve many talents and tasks. Your response to the stewardship effort indicated an interest in some of these areas and the questionnaire enclosed is intended to give the parish a better idea as to what specific areas you feel you can best contribute, and the level of involvement with which you feel comfortable.

Please fill out the form as completely as possible and return it in the envelope this week.

And thank you again. Call me at (Phone Number) if you have any questions.

(Chairperson's Name)

LETTER TO THOSE WHO HAVE NOT RESPONDED

(Date)

Dear (Name of Church) Parishioner,

The response to our stewardship effort has been very encouraging. More than _____ individuals and families have responded and committed their gifts of time, talent and treasure.

I am most grateful to all those who have made their commitment. Our parish family will have even greater cause to rejoice if more of our households participate in the stewardship effort. If you have not received or perhaps have mislaid your stewardship commitment cards, the parish office would be most happy to provide you with another. If you still have your stewardship materials and are now in a better position to make a time, talent and treasure commitment but thought it might be too late, let us assure you, it is not too late!

Please spend time in a prayer of gratitude for God's gifts in your life. Discern what your portion is that you may wish to give back to the Lord. I encourage you to sign the Stewardship Covenant Card and make your commitment of time, talent and treasure. You may wish to mail your stewardship cards, take them to the parish office or drop them in the offertory collection at any Mass.

Thank you for your commitment to our parish and the community.

In the name of Christ

(Pastor's Name)

STEWARDSHIP TELEPHONE FOLLOW-UP

The following is a suggested approach to your telephone calls to parishioners who have not responded. Use it as a guideline in developing your parish approach.

- talk to the person(s) whose name is on the list, not to another member of the family. If they are not home, ask for a time when you can reach them. Leave a message that you are a parishioner who is calling on behalf of the parish.
- the purpose of the call is to follow-up on the homilies and mailings and get the person to respond to the request for their time, talent and treasure commitment. Most of the calls will be very positive. Not all parishioners will respond the same way and, regrettably, a few will be negative.
- your responsibility is to talk to them about the stewardship effort, listen to what they say, give them enough opportunity to state their feelings and then ask them if they will give special consideration and respond to the cards they have received in the mail. Signing the cards is an outward sign of making a commitment. No one will call them to task if they fail to live up to their commitment. Conditions may change, causing them to be unable to fulfill their commitment.
- please make sure that parishioners know we appreciate the contribution of time, talent and treasure they make to the parish. They may respond that they are already doing as much as they can. We would like them to list those current involvements on their cards. The issue here is for everyone to think about their blessings from God and take a fresh look at their time, talent and treasure contributions. They may decide there is no need to change their existing level of contributions and, of course, that is perfectly all right with us.

A suggested approach to the telephone calls:

“Hello, Mr., Mrs., or Ms. _____. My name is _____. I am a member of the parish and I have donated some of my time to the steward effort. How are you tonight? Fr. _____ asked me to call you to see if you have received the mailings from the parish in the last couple of weeks about stewardship. Have you received the mailings? The most recent one was sent with a letter and a brochure with response cards in it.

If “Yes”.... Have you had a chance to read them?

If “Yes”.... I hope you will be responding to Fr. _____’s request for your commitment. The cards can be brought to Mass this weekend. (If they are undecided, try to get them to respond and complete the cards.)

If “No”... I encourage you to read it and consider making a commitment to the parish. Thank you.

If “No” or “Not Sure”... Let me give you an idea of what it is all about.

For the past several weeks the parish has been conducting a Stewardship Effort. Mailings that went out during this time were asking all of us to make a renewed commitment of the time we offer to work for the parish. It is also asked of us, to commit our talents to the parish. And, finally, it is asked of us to make a commitment to the financial support of the parish through the weekly offertory collection.

We are inviting parishioners to fill out the Commitment Card for Time and Talent, and a Commitment Card for Treasure, and submit them in the weekly offertory collection, drop it off at the parish office or mail it to the parish office. I hope that you will respond by completing the cards and bringing them with you to Mass this weekend. If you would like us to send another card, we will do so.

(If a person wants another card, verify their name and address and give it to the church secretary to be mailed to them.)

ANNUAL STEWARDSHIP RENEWAL – ADDITIONAL MATERIAL
TIMETABLE FOR CONDUCTING THE ANNUAL RENEWAL

This calendar is designed for use by parishes that have been conducting an annual stewardship effort for several years. The stewardship committee begins by determining the date for commitment Sunday “X” and filling in the dates backward from that point.

x-6	Week of	Brochures ordered. Lay witness identified. Banner, bulletin boards or other appropriate promotional materials planned.
x-5	Week of	Check supply of envelopes/letterhead/labels. Make sure Time and Talent opportunity listings are up to date. Make copies.
x-4	Week of	Article in parish newsletter or bulletin.
x-3	Week of	Lay witnesses meet with pastor to coordinate remarks.
x-2	Week of	Mailing #1 made during this week. Bulletin announcement #1.
x-1	Week of	Renewal Sunday – Pastor’s introductory and endorsement remarks. Lay Witness Presentation made at all Masses. Mailing #2 during this week. Bulletin announcement #2.
x	Week of	Commitment Sunday – Pastor’s homily. Cards are presented at Mass. (Remember to have extra cards in pews for those who forget to bring them). Bulletin announcement #3.
x+1	Week of	Week after Commitment Sunday. Bulletin Announcement #4.
x+2	Week of	Thank you letter mailed to those who returned commitment cards.

* Bulletin Announcement #1, #2, #3, and #4 on next page.

BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR THE STEWARDSHIP RENEWAL

Bulletin Announcement #1

This week you will receive in the mail a list of time and talent opportunities available in our parish, and a brochure asking you to TAKE ANOTHER STEP on your stewardship pilgrimage. Please take the time to read them carefully as you consider your response to the Lord.

Bulletin Announcement #2

Today we have heard from _____(lay presenters), who have shared with us their experience of stewardship and how it has changed their lives. We thank them for sharing their story with us. Please pray for them and for all of us, that our hearts may be open and our response generous when we receive our Commitment Cards in the mail this coming week. Bring it to Mass with you next week on Commitment Sunday.

Bulletin Announcement #3

On Stewardship Commitment Sunday, it is a good time to ask ourselves the following: The question is not “How Much of What is Mine will I give to God?” Rather “How Much of What is God’s shall I keep for Myself?”

Bulletin Announcement #4

Our thanks to all those who returned their Commitment Cards last weekend. If you have not done so, you may bring them with you to church next weekend, put them in the mail, or bring them by the church office at your convenience.

SAMPLE LETTER FOR THE FIRST RENEWAL MAILING

(with brochure)

(Date)

Dear (Parishioner's Name)

Again this year those of us here at (name of parish) will have an opportunity to renew our commitment to living the life of a good and faithful steward. As we reflect on the many blessings in our lives, we will prayerfully ask if our corresponding gifts which we give back to the Lord are in proportion to what we have been given.

Many members of our parish family are making a most generous response and can attest to the sense of peace and the deepening of faith that they have experienced. I am confident that many others would like to respond more fully, but don't know where they will find more time or more money to give.

Perhaps the theme of this year's renewal TAKE ANOTHER STEP will help. If you find that you are presently sharing two hours of your time each week on a volunteer basis, could you TAKE ANOTHER STEP and share three? If you are currently giving one or two percent of your income to the church, could you TAKE ANOTHER STEP and increase it to two or three percent?

We have all been blessed in many and various ways and have a basic need to give thanks. Will you TAKE ANOTHER STEP in gratitude to God for what you have been given? He has promised that he will not be outdone in generosity.

My thanks to each of you for all you have done in the past and for your continuing generosity of time, talent, and treasure.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

(Pastor)

SAMPLE LETTER TO GO WITH SECOND RENEWAL MAILING

(with commitment brochure)

(Date)

Dear (Parishioner's Name)

This week you have received a brochure, the List of Time and Talent sheet and the Personal Pledge of Treasure worksheet. Also you have been asked to prayerfully consider your commitment for the coming year.

Each of us is blessed in different ways. We are asked to look at our blessings, our talents, our monetary resources and see if what we are returning to the Lord is proportionate to what God has given to us. It is an individual decision to be made by each person or family.

Please fill out the time and talent portion of the enclosed Commitment Card. Indicate those current ministries you wish to continue and any new ones you would like to begin for the coming year. Remember also that your community involvement is part of your time and talent even though it is not on the commitment cards.

As you complete the stewardship of treasure portion included with the brochure, please consider "taking another step" in the level of your gift. Bring both your Time and Talent and your Treasure Commitment Card with you to Mass this coming weekend or bring them to the parish office.

I am touched by the past generosity of all of our parishioners here at (name of church), and I am confident of your continued commitment to stewardship of time, talent and treasure.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Pastor

PARISH STEWARDSHIP EFFORT FOR CHILDREN **SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING CHILDREN'S STEWARDSHIP**

Parishes who have completed a successful first-time stewardship effort and are committed to promoting on-going stewardship awareness should consider the value of introducing stewardship as a way of life for the children and youth of the parish. A focus on children's stewardship with youth or children lay witnesses should be done in addition to the adult stewardship effort, either on a separate weekend from the adult lay witnesses or as part of a Children's Liturgy of the Word.

- **support** – it is vital to enlist the support of the pastor, pastoral staff, Parish Pastoral Council, Faith Formation Committee and (in parishes with a separate school) the school principal.
- **educate** – include a three to five week mini-lesson on stewardship in your faith formation classes. Feature some of these children's activities such as posters, banners, essays, etc. during the weeks preceding Commitment Sunday.
- **compile a children's time and talent list** – be sure to include adult ministries that would welcome participation on the part of children (i.e. housecleaning, lawn and garden care, visiting the elderly, etc.) Make that list available to the children.
- **communicate** – introduce the idea of children's stewardship early through bulletin announcements, parish newsletter articles, and bulletin board materials. Include a note on children's stewardship in the letter from the pastor.
- **provide a children's commitment card** – ask the children to complete their pledge of time, talent, and treasure as their gift of thanksgiving for all of God's blessings in their lives.
- **invite a lay witness** – ask a young person who is involved in ministry in your parish (altar server, children's lector, children's usher, etc.) to share with the other children what stewardship means to them.
- **follow-up** – see to it that each child who completes a commitment card receives a "thank-you" and an invitation to participate in the ministry they indicated. A contact with parents should also be made regarding their role in the child's commitment.
- **on-going awareness** – include a children's corner in your weekly bulletin, highlighting some of the time and talent items mentioned by them in their weekly envelopes. Include children's stewardship notes in parish newsletters, prayers of the faithful, faith formation classes and newsletters, and (when appropriate) in Children's Liturgy of the Word or homilies for children.
- **consider** – form a sub-committee of your Parish Stewardship Committee to address the current and on-going needs of children's stewardship.

CHILDREN AS LAY WITNESSES

Helpful suggestions for using children to present the Stewardship message to other children in the form of a Lay Witness Talk or dialogue.

- just as the adult Lay Witness Testimony is one of the most effective means of presenting the stewardship message to the adults of the parish, a well-done children's Lay Witness Talk can be an effective tool in presenting the stewardship message to the children and youth of the parish.
- such a talk should be given by a young person who is already practicing stewardship on a child's level in his or her own life.
- the talk, which is usually given after the homily, should be directed to the other children in the parish as a means of inspiring them to become cheerful givers of their time, talent, and treasure, and to share real life examples of how stewardship is lived.
- **this talk should be done in addition to the adult Lay Witness talk, on a separate weekend.**

Tips in choosing a child as Lay Witness

- invite a child who is already actively practicing stewardship in the parish. Children who are altar servers, youth ushers, youth lectors, nursery aids, etc. often show an understanding of stewardship in their lives.
- the child should be someone who attends Mass every weekend with his or her family. Often the entire family is involved in stewardship on both a parish and community level.
- Invite a child who is mature, articulate, and somewhat at ease in front of large groups.
- The child should be willing to work with the pastor (or his designate) in preparing the stewardship talk.
- The child should be willing to speak at all of the weekend Masses on the specified Sunday.

Consider a dialogue or an interview rather than a talk.

Even the most articulate and mature child can sometimes freeze in front of a large congregation at a weekend Mass. To help put the child at ease and make their testimony more effective, consider the following suggestions:

- invite the children of the parish to come forward and gather around the pastor and the child lay witness. The child who is doing the lay witness talk is now speaking to a much smaller congregation of peers, and the adults are privileged to listen without putting undo pressure on the child.
- separate the Adult Liturgy of the Word and Children's Liturgy of the Word in parishes. In this case, the children would gather around the lay witness along with the person overseeing the Children's Liturgy.
- introduce the Lay Witness to the group and include a little information on the child's family. Many of the children may already know the lay witness, but some may not.
- using a dialogue format, "interview" the lay witness with regard to his or her practice of stewardship. Ask the child to explain what stewardship means and share with the group real life experiences that relate to stewardship. The child should be given a copy of the interview questions and ample time to prepare answers from his or her own experiences. Then a time should be scheduled with the pastor or catechist to actually rehearse the program.

Some sample questions for a child's lay witness interview

- we have been promoting stewardship here at (name of parish) for many years. I know you have watched the adults come up here and talk about stewardship. What do you think stewardship is all about?
- if stewardship is really all about 'thanking' God for all the wonderful things God has given to us, what are some ways you use your time to thank God?
- we are reminded that all that we have and all that we are is a gift from God. God gives everyone special talents – that's just how God makes us, with special talents. "Tammy", what are some of the special talents that God has given you?
- how do you use those talents here at (name of parish) as a part of stewardship? How do you use your talents in the community? In your school?
- when you share your gifts of talent and time with everybody here at church, how does that make you feel?
- in stewardship, we are told that our money (or treasure) is one part of the many gifts God has given us. How can your treasure be given as a gift of gratitude for God's many blessings?
- you seem to really enjoy living as a good steward of God's many gifts. Do you have anything more you would like to say to your friends?
- how would you encourage the other children to get started in stewardship?

The pastor (or other adult interviewer) will help guide and direct the lay witness testimony. Using this format, the child won't have to worry about what comes next. This gives them the opportunity to speak from the heart in a relaxed and comfortable manner.

At the conclusion of the dialogue, the pastor:

- thank the lay witnesses for sharing their thoughts on stewardship and encourages all the children to think about their own special gifts and talents and how they might use them to serve God and one another.
- tells the children that they will have an opportunity, just like the adults, to fill out a commitment card on Commitment Sunday.
- explains that those children who do wish to make Stewardship a way of life and fill out a commitment card will soon thereafter receive a box of envelopes. The envelopes will have a place for them to write down those special things they do each week in thanksgiving for everything God has given to them. Children always have time and talent to share with others as a way of thanking God, and many children have treasure to share as well.

ON-GOING STEWARDSHIP AWARENESS MATERIALS
LETTER AND CARD FOR QUARTERLY REPORTING
TO INDIVIDUAL PARISHIONERS

Dear (Parishioner's Name)

“Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have: God is pleased by sacrifices of that kind” (Hebrews 13 – 16).

(Parish Name) is benefiting from the results of the stewardship effort. Our parish depends upon the generosity and sense of stewardship of the many parishioners who contribute their time, talent and treasure.

Enclosed please find a record of your financial contribution for the past three (or six) months. If you find any error in these figures, please contact the parish office as soon as possible.

All of us at (Name of Church) thank you for your gift of time and talent and your continued financial support for the work of our parish. Please remember to continue to use the weekly offertory envelopes.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

(Pastor's name) / (Finance Chairperson's Name)

The following card is suggested to go with a letter to parishioners:

<p>(Parish Name)</p> <p>Three Month Report of Sunday Offertory Collections</p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Reporting Months: _____</p> <p>Amount Received: Quarter (or half year) _____ Yearly Average Per Week _____</p> <p>Your Weekly Parish Stewardship Treasure Commitment was: \$_____</p> <p>Thank you for being generous in returning to our parish a portion of the many gifts God has bestowed on you.</p>
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STEWARDSHIP COMMISSION SUNDAY SERVICE

Sample #1.

After the gospel reading, the celebrant in the homily, based on the sacred text and pertinent to the particular place and the people involved in the church, explains the meaning of Stewardship. The celebrant then says:

Priest: Today, we celebrate with joyful hearts the gifts that God has bestowed upon all of us here at (name of parish). We give thanks and praise for those who share their time, talent, and treasure in the service to God and neighbor.

Reader: As they prayed, the place where they were gathered shook, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the Word of God with boldness. (Acts 4:31)

Assistant: We call upon our priests, deacons, lectors, catechists, religious educators and those involved in evangelization to please stand.

Reader: To whomever I send you, you shall go (Jeremiah 1: 4-9)

Assistant: We call upon our extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion and those involved in RCIA formation, baptismal and marriage preparation to please stand.

Reader: Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least of mine, you did for me. (Matthew 25:40)

Assistant: We call upon our parish outreach members, those who are involved with reaching the poor in the community and those involved in the social justice committee to please stand.

Reader: Train yourself for devotion. For while physical training is of limited value, devotion is valuable in every respect, since it holds a promise of life both for the present and the future. (1 Timothy 4:7-8)

Assistant: We call upon our Intercessory Prayer Group to please stand.

Reader: So now consider what God has done for you, and praise him with full voice. (Tobit 13:6)

Assistant: We call upon our liturgy committee and musicians, those involved with hospitality and greeting, our altar servers, and all those who serve the liturgy in another capacity to please stand.

Reader: That you should put away the old self and your former way of life...and be renewed in the spirit of your minds and put on the new self, created in God's way in righteousness and holiness of truth. (Ephesians 4:22)

Assistant: We call upon those involved in faith formation, faith sharing, members of our young adult and youth ministries, our school teachers and staff, and our stewardship committee to please stand.

Reader: As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace. (1 Peter 4:10)

Assistant: We call upon those involved with our pastoral council, our finance council and those who coordinate fund raising to please stand.

Reader: Be sincere in your love for others. (Romans 11:9)

Assistant: We call upon caring parents, loyal friends, ethical workers and loving children to please stand.

Reader: Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Assistant: We call upon all faithful members of our parish community to please stand.

Priest: Let us pray: (pause)
By your will, O God, we go out into the world.
With Good News of your undying love
we minister in the midst of human need
to show the wonders of your grace.
We pray for these women and men who minister for you
using their time, their talent, and their treasure.

Bless them.
May they be strengthened by our concern
and supported by your gifts.
Do not let them be discouraged,
but make them brave, glad and hopeful in your Word.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Creed follows

The General Intercessions follow and should include one on stewardship.

Sample #2 Stewardship Commissioning Sunday Service

To be done after the Gospel Reading or another appropriate time.

Celebrant: Loving God, you gave us faith as a means to know you and your Son. We have joined together here today to demonstrate to you and our brothers and sisters in faith at (Name of Church) that we hear your call to serve each other.

There are no small tasks in your vineyard. Each and every effort we make as individuals is made “in Communion” with our entire community. Each task receives value by your grace upon those who give and those who receive.

Inspire each of us to know that genuine faith in you and in your Son is best expressed by our love for and commitment to each other.

Leader: As leaders and members of councils, committees and organizations are identified, please stand and remain standing as you are joined by other groups in acknowledgement of your commitment and good works.

Respond: ‘Lord bless your faithful people’.

Will those who serve our parish as members of the staff, the Pastoral Council, the Finance Council and Building Committee please stand... Let us pray.

Response: ‘Lord bless your faithful people’.

Will those who serve on the Education Committee, our Faith Formation Team, Catholic School Teachers, Bible Study Leaders and those who volunteer in any way in religious education please stand... Let us pray.

Response: ‘Lord bless your faithful people’.

Will those who serve on the Liturgical Committee and those men, women, and children who help to bring the Liturgy of the Eucharist to life: this includes Lectors, the Eucharistic ministers who assist during Mass and who bring Communion to those who are homebound, altar servers, and all those involved who bring up the offerings please stand... Let us pray.

Response: ‘Lord bless your faithful people’.

Will those who serve at our liturgies as ushers and greeters, sacristans, and art and environment designers please stand and remain standing. We pray that they will continue to offer us the spirit of friendship, hospitality and love and that they will provide us with the reverent physical atmosphere to worship. Let us Pray:

Response: ‘Lord bless your faithful people’.

Will those who serve in Music Ministry: the cantors, the parish choir, youth choir, and the children's choir please stand and remain standing. We pray that they will use their talents to lead us in song and prayer through the lifting up of our hearts and voices. Let us pray.

Response: 'Lord, bless your faithful people'.

Will those who serve on the Evangelization Committee and the RCIA Process stand and remain standing. We pray that they will truly spread the good news of salvation and peace to all who search for union with God. Let us Pray.

Response: 'Lord, bless your faithful people'.

Will those who serve in Family Life Ministries – those involved in the Vocations Ministry, Marriage Preparation and Baptismal Team please stand. We pray that through this Family Life Ministry we may experience a stronger sense of family based on our common faith. Let us pray.

Response: 'Lord, bless your faithful people'.

Will those who serve in our Community – those involved in Senior Centers, Blood Donor Clinics, Crisis Centers, Nursing Homes, Care Centers and Hospitals please stand. Let us pray.

Response: 'Lord, bless your faithful people'.

Will those who are in service to our parish as church office volunteers, coffee and donut servers, drivers who provide rides, and parish newsletter and Sunday Bulletin workers please stand. We pray that the task of communications, service and fellowship within our parish will truly be an extension of the hospitality that Jesus himself provides to all who call upon him. Let us pray.

Response: 'Lord, bless your faithful people'.

Will all those whose talents and service often go unrecognized in our parish and those who pray daily for the people of this parish please stand and remain standing. We pray that all of us recognize our calling to pray for the people of our parish, especially those who are serving the parish in active ministry, those who are sick and homebound, and those who lead us in ministry, prayer and worship. Let us pray.

Response: 'Lord, bless your faithful people'.

Celebrant: Loving and Gracious God, we are blessed and we thank you for the richness you place in our lives. Fill our hearts with gratitude so that we may joyfully share our wondrous gifts of time, talent and treasure. Help us to be ever mindful of the needs of our parish family. Teach us to be good and faithful stewards. Show us how to take good care of each other and the world that you have entrusted to us. We ask all of this through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

PARISH STEWARDSHIP EVALUATION

Effectiveness of the Stewardship Committee On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being poor and 10 being superior, please evaluate the effectiveness of the Stewardship Committee.

1. The parish has a committee that nurtures a year-round stewardship effort. _____
2. The parish stewardship committee has a detailed annual plan. _____
3. The stewardship committee has detailed responsibilities on an on-going basis _____

Comments: _____

Stewardship Education On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being poor and 10 being superior, please evaluate the quality of the parish stewardship education program.

1. Stewardship education program for children _____
2. Stewardship education program for youth _____
3. A stewardship education program for young adults _____
4. Stewardship education program for adults _____
5. A stewardship education program for seniors _____

Comments: _____

Annual Stewardship Renewal On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being poor and 10 being superior, please evaluate the elements of the parish stewardship renewal.

1. Mailings from the pastor _____
2. Educational materials _____
3. Ministry Fair _____
4. Lay Witness Testimony _____
5. Time, Talent and Treasure Commitment Cards _____
6. On-going awareness activities _____
7. Overall Stewardship renewal _____

Comments: _____

Commitment and Growth One a scale of 1-10, with 1 being poor and 10 being superior, please evaluate the growth and change in the parish as a result of stewardship.

1. The parish shows signs of a long-term commitment to stewardship _____
2. The parish shows signs of spiritual growth. _____
3. The parish has grown in the area of community outreach _____

Comments: _____

RESOURCES FOR PROMOTING STEWARDSHIP IN THE PARISH

STEWARDSHIP RESOURCES:

Stewardship: A Disciple's Response – Diocesan Office

Stewardship: Disciples Respond. A Practical Guide for Pastoral Leaders – Diocesan Office

Stewardship Pamphlets – Diocesan Centre

Prayer Cards – Diocesan Centre

Diocesan Stewardship Introduction DVD by Ken Rolheiser – Diocesan Centre

More Than Silver or Gold (with CD) Homilies of a Stewardship Priest– Daniel J. Mahan – Saint Catherine of Siena Press
www.morethansilverorgold.com

Growing An Engaged Church, How to stop “Doing Church” and start BEING the Church Again. Albert L. Winseman – this is excellent material and it shows how Stewardship can change a church and how parishes can go about creating this kind of change. www.catholicstrengths.com

DVD – Family Gathering September 2008– Diocesan Office

Stewardship and Eucharist – Part I - Fr. Brendan McGuire

Stewardship and Eucharist – Part II – Fr. Brendan McGuire

Circle of Life: Living the Eucharist – Part III – Fr. Brendan McGuire

Stewardship Song – CD and Sheet Music – Diocesan Office