



# broadcast

from the Office for Young Adult & Campus Ministries  
at the Episcopal Church Center

october 2009

## Stewardship

Is there life beyond “Stewardship Season,” beyond the three “T”s, beyond pledge cards and boxed envelopes? Across the church we witness young adult and campus ministers striving to offer a vision of stewardship that is holistic, comprehensive, even life changing to the young adults they work with. In a culture that encourages young adults to live well into their means and often beyond, they look to nurture the kind of humility and gratitude which surrenders “mine,” as both object and idea, in order to live more fully into the bounty of God’s grace.

We asked our writers this month how they went about encouraging and instilling a sense of stewardship that stretched the imagination, that exemplified a different and often countercultural approach to the resources under their care. As you read about their experiences, consider the ways in which resources are handed from one generation to the next in your community. How do young adults and students learn to care, or not care, for the resources they inherit? Consider resources of tradition, culture, knowledge, social position, property and community. But also consider the resources young adults alone can offer to the church. How are young adults being encouraged to be good stewards in sharing their unique gifts with their communities and the world?

This Stewardship Season we give thanks for the good stewards each of you has been and continues to be in caring for the young adults of our church!

Paz y fuego,  
Douglas, Jason & Miguelina

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## Quest, community, stewards.

### Quests, Communities, Stewards

*Kai Harris, Diocese of California*

Stewardship is a common thread in church life – and beyond that, it is basic to life with God. All that we have – time, relationships, resources, our very being itself – are gifts from God. When we give gifts of time, talent and

treasure to our church community, we are doing far more than “keeping the lights on.” We are taking part in the quest to connect our own small life with God’s Life. Allow this essay to weave one take on this theme.

Questioning can be an expression of stewardship. How so? Questioning can be defined as an exploration of who you are and what gifts you’ve been given. And stewardship can be defined very simply as wisely using and protecting God’s gifts.

Have you gone on a Quest? Do you want to? How have you grown in the wise use and protection of whatever gifts you’ve discovered - from your own Quest or from someone else’s?

The Quest is an archetype of the young-adult journey into maturation and adulthood. Quests can be internal or external; close to home or far away. They can be physical, emotional, or spiritual – or all three. Quests share a common purpose: exploring new places in search of something. What difference do I make? Where do I fit in the world? How do I fit into God’s plan? But Quests are not just personal. They have an effect on the people around you – questions and new insights can arise for everyone involved.

This summer I completed my Master’s thesis on the effect that Young Adult Service Corps (YASC) missionaries have on the communities they leave at home. Missionaries do not only enter into new communities – they also leave a community at home. My research showed that



these communities at home learned and grew from the experience of having a missionary abroad. In other words, the personal quest is not entirely personal!

If questing is a journey you take with the support, love, and interest of family, friends, and church, then it is a journey that affects that community. Your journey, properly stewarded, will teach, inspire, and motivate your home community.

Knowing many YASC missionaries personally, and having been one myself, I believe it safe to label participants of this program Questers. My research found the following specific effects these questers had on their home communities.

- People in home communities were more likely to go on mission themselves after the experience of supporting a missionary;
- Religious community engagement in mission increased when missionaries either (1) sent more frequent updates or (2) taught about mission in the updates;
- People in home communities were better able to define mission after the experience of supporting a missionary.

Not everyone can or wants to go on a Quest. Those of us who do undertake a quest journey have a responsibility as faithful Stewards. It is our responsibility as a Steward of God's gifts to bring along our whole person on the journey. And the whole person includes our communities. Share the gifts we're given of curiosity, adventure, challenge, and growth with not only those we find along the way, but also with those we leave behind.

Go forth then and Quest. And as far as you can, take the people of God along for the ride!



## YOUR FAITH YOUR FUTURE YOUR FINANCES

A ONE-DAY 20S/30S RETREAT AT  
THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOHN

### Your Faith, Future & Finances

*Bonnie Snodgrass, Diocese of New York*

The basic formula was simple: a one-day group retreat on “your faith, future, and finances” with concurrently scheduled one-on-one sessions with financial professionals. The results were transformational and liberating.

Many young people do not talk to anyone about their personal finances, especially if they do not have a spouse or if money talk is taboo with their parents. But discussing our personal finances can be a spiritual act. Jesus discussed economics more than any other social subject. Talking about our money, or lack thereof, in religious spaces may be, as my friend Dana says, the only antidote to the emotions most of us feel regarding money - fear, resentment, failure, imprisonment, anger and isolation. We can exorcise those demons by the simple act of sharing our own financial stories and situations. Only then can we move on to the work of oikonomia (ancient Greek for “getting your house in order”).

The professional financial analysts who met with the young adults on the Saturday of our retreat were members of the congregation who volunteered their services. Participants signed up for 45-minute slots to discuss their budget, debt, goals, or specific financial areas where they wanted council (we asked them ahead of time to bring financial documents they might need and an approximation of their budget). Afterward, our finance people commented on the blessing of listening to the stories and working with people living on considerably less means than their usual clients! Note: The number of people who could attend a retreat at your church would depend on how many volunteers you could get.

10:00 am	<b>Arrive, breakfast, register for one-on-one slots</b>
10:30	<b>Opening Discussion</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introductions (name, occupation, family status, why you are here today)</li> <li>2. We would like everyone to share a bible story that guides how you think about money in your life</li> <li>3. Can you describe a way that money issues interfere with (or distract from) your relationship with God?</li> <li>4. What steps do you need to take to make peace with money?</li> </ol>
11:30	<b>Break</b>
11:40	<b>African Bible Study – Matthew 9:9-13</b> <i>We read the call of Matthen, the tax collector who became a disciple; other forms of Scripture study on money-related texts would work</i>
12:30	<b>Lunch</b>
1:30	<b>Walking Meditation on Cathedral Close</b> <i>We opted for a physical, non-talking meditation after lunch; you could try yoga or walking a labyrinth</i>
2:30	<b>Discussion: Socially Responsible Investing Led</b> <i>by one of our financial professionals who specialized in this topic and really encouraged us to think creatively about investing our finances for a greater good and to get a return on investment, a very positive way to end the day)</i>
3:30	<b>Break, clean-up, gather stuff</b>
3:45	<b>Closing “Instructional” Eucharist</b>



Included is the schedule we used, with some alternative ideas. Please feel free to alter this “open source” schedule as would work best in your context. We charged a nominal fee to cover the cost of two meals and materials.

In our opening discussion, debt and the true “value” of education were hot topics for many (bringing some to tears), along with “manna” jobs (tasteless employment that provides only enough for sustenance), being the first financially independent woman in one’s family, and knowing friends who did sex work to pay for school.

When we asked people to “share a Bible story that guides how you think about money in your life,” they brought up the parable of the sower and of the talents (our stewardship of God’s gifts), the lilies of the field and widow’s mite (put your trust in God), the prodigal son and year of jubilee (amazing grace trumping the almighty dollar), and Jesus’ teaching that we can’t serve both God and money. These economic stories illustrate some of the Bible’s most important lessons, inspiring and challenging us to find new frameworks to understand old fears.

By the end of the day, everyone left with a greater sense of peace and purpose regarding their personal finances, future goals, and ways these themes related to their faith.

*Bowie Snodgrass was Co-Convenor of the 20/30 Connection at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine from 2004-2006, when she planned this one-day retreat. She is former Web Content Editor for [www.episcopalchurch.org](http://www.episcopalchurch.org) and currently works as Director of Faith House Manhattan, [www.faithhousemanhattan.org](http://www.faithhousemanhattan.org). [bowie@faithhousemanhattan.org](mailto:bowie@faithhousemanhattan.org) Parts of this piece are excerpted from a column written for the Washington Window, “Finishing a year of fiscal thinking” <http://www.edow.org/news/window/march2006/bowie.html>*



## Gives Me Hope

*The Rev'd Sarah Midzalkowski, Michigan State University*

A former student of mine recently introduced me to a facebook group called GMH or Gives Me Hope. This group calls themselves an optimist’s answer to the ever-popular FML. (I trust I don’t have to translate) While I agree GMH is more optimistic than FML I don’t think mere optimism is at the heart of this site. Rather, GMH is a collection of thankfulness. Thankfulness seems to be lacking in much of

our society today and sadly our college campuses are no different.

Each year I give letters to the graduates of Canterbury MSU that tries to express the thankfulness I have for God allowing me to be their chaplain and the hope I have for their future. An excerpt from this letter reads,

“You have been given the two keys to anything and everything a human being could desire from life. The first key is your education. Whatever your subject or talent your education will open for you the doors to knowledge, fulfillment and opportunity in your life here on earth. The second key is your faith in God who is Three in One, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. By virtue of God’s grace you will lead lives of blessing and purpose that will end with entrance into God’s Heavenly Kingdom where you will live forever. Could there ever be a better way to start adult life?

But, just like anyone who is given a set of keys (from janitors to executives) you are now responsible for using those keys for good and worthwhile purposes that help others as well as yourself. You must use the keys you are entrusted with for greater good with honesty and integrity. If you use them to live for yourself alone concerned only for what you can attain while forgetting the lives of others then you violate the trust invested in you. You will fail your fellow human beings on earth and you will fail your God in heaven. But, if you use these keys to promote justice and peace and to help others then you will be a part of the raising up of humanity along with yourself. And, if you give an account of your faith along the way proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord of your life and acknowledging that all you have is a gift by God’s hands then you will take part in the very salvation of the world.”

Thankfulness is the soil that the seeds of hope are planted in. When we are thankful we acknowledge that we have been given a free gift from another who values us. Our thankfulness is a response to being valued or loved and this thankfulness inspires us to use our gifts to give to others. In this way God works in us to heal the world we live in. Thankfulness acts as the antidote to our sin-sickened hearts which when fearful want to beat only for ourselves and not for others. So when our hurts and disappointments make us want to exclaim FML instead we can pray to God and find grace and love, which are what GMH every day.



## A Culture of Stewardship

*The Rev'd J.R. Lander, Diocese of Olympia*

Every Thursday night during the warm months of the year, Today's young adults resonate with a holistic conversation about stewardship- a conversation that isn't limited to how much of one's money to give to the church annually. Young adults are more likely to give

financially to organizations in which they are personally involved- whether this connection is through volunteerism, leadership, or personal benefit from the organization's mission. This connection between one's finances and one's skills, talents, passions and finances provides the church with an immense opportunity to reorient our congregational life around a broad understanding of stewardship – stewardship that permeates every aspect of the community and stewardship that is not limited to the October month-long beg-a-thon that so many of our parishes practice.

I am currently helping Church of the Apostle's (COTA) in Seattle create a stewardship program. COTA is a diverse community, but one whose average age is in the mid 20's. Some of the members of the community come from Evangelical backgrounds, some from mainline traditions, and some from no religious practice at all. Most of these young adults are highly creative, deeply spiritual, and struggling with limited financial resources. We are seeking ways to create a culture of stewardship among the community.

What do we mean by a culture of stewardship? We hope that it will recognize where the young adults of the community are – struggling with finances, struggling with commitments, struggling to find their places in the world. We are looking at ways to talk more about leadership and volunteerism, and finding new ways to invite community members into both. We are experimenting with shorter pledge periods- such as 4 months or 6 months instead of a year. These will allow people to experiment with financial commitments to the church, without having to commit to a full year. Hopefully this will lead to longer-term pledges that represent an increasing amount of their financial resources. In addition to speaking of the 10% tithe, we will also speak of giving in terms of more tangible sacrifices- eating out one fewer time each week, ordering one less coffee drink each week, etc.

We also hope to help young adults as stewards of their own finances. Young adults in today's world live with unprecedented levels of personal debt. Recent studies have also shown that young adults, as a generation, tend to have little understanding of personal finance. Providing opportunities for young people to better understand how to manage their resources and their debt will be a fundamental part of the culture of stewardship.

But church and personal stewardship are not the only forms of caring for what we've been given. We must also inspire and encourage young adults to care for the world around them- the environment, their communities, our children – All that we have been given. And any culture of stewardship should include all of these.