

# Stewardship Is...

## **Working Definition of Christian Stewardship**

Christian stewardship is grateful and responsible use of God's gifts in the light of God's purpose as revealed in Jesus Christ. Christian stewards, empowered by the Holy Spirit, commit themselves to conscious, purposeful decisions.

Stewardship is lived out in:

- living and telling the Good News;
- sharing God in seeking justice, peace, and the integrity of creation in an interdependent universe;
- wisely employing God-given human resources, abilities, and relationships;
- sharing the material resources we hold and giving them in service, justice, and compassion;
- providing for future generations, sharing in the life, worship, and responsible stewardship of the Church and of its mission

Both for the individual and for the community, stewardship is a joyful act for the sake of God's world.

This definition comes from the Standing Rules of the Ecumenical Stewardship Center. The Episcopal Church is a founding member of this group and remains active in its continuing work.

### **Stewardship has also been defined as:**

What I do, with all that I have, after I say, "I believe."

Using the gifts God has given us to do the work God is calling us to do.

# Stewardship and Philanthropy

## Stewardship and Philanthropy:

### The Christian Strategy with Regard to Funding Mission

While we often talk about stewardship and philanthropy together when we talk about funding mission, they are different concepts.

## Philanthropy

This approach relies upon the presentation of a "case" which outlines the needs being experienced by persons other than either the prospective donor or the solicitor. The solicitor presents the needs of the "other" and the ways in which they may be met or alleviated through the generosity of the donor. As the name implies, the appeal is to our love of humanity and desire to do good.

### Key Elements

- Primary strategy is focused on persuading a prospective donor to become involved in the mission of the organization doing the asking. The mission is the organization's. The money is the donor's. The assumption is that as a donor becomes more involved with the organization, the amount of their donations will increase. Organizations, therefore, look for opportunities to strengthen these relationships.
- The relationship between solicitor and donor is very important. In deciding who should ask whom for a contribution, a key assumption is that it is important for peers to ask peers. In many communities, a "you support my cause and I'll support yours" quid pro quo is taken for granted.
- Recognition Programs - These may take many forms, including: naming of buildings, rooms, positions (university teaching chairs); listing in publications and other donor lists; and a variety of physical acknowledgements such as plaques on furniture, art, trees, etc.

## Stewardship

Stewardship teaches that all that we have and all that we are is a gift from God. We are, therefore, stewards of God's gifts during our lifetime. Discerning and carrying out God's purpose is the primary purpose of our lives. The gifts we have been given, time, talent, and money, are to be used for that purpose. The primary role of the church is to guide individuals in discernment of the mission for their lives and use of their resources in accomplishing it.

### Key Elements

- The primary objective of the organization (church) is to bring people into a closer relationship with God. Strengthening relationships with individuals is an important part of this but the goal is always to create an environment in which the relationship with God is strengthened.

- The key strategy is to encourage individuals to discern the gifts God has given them and the work God is calling them to do. God is the source of the mission and the money. Both are gifts over which the giver exercises faithful stewardship.
- Giving is taught as a significant spiritual practice. The Church encourages giving by providing a variety of opportunities to give. Giving is also seen as a joyful response to God's generosity to us.
- Recognition is seen as a means of witness. The goal of recognition programs is to provide givers with an opportunity to express their faith and encourage others.

From *The Alleluia Fund, A Guide for Dioceses and Congregations*, published by the Office of Stewardship, Episcopal Church Center, 2002

# The Three Faces of Stewardship

In gathering money for ministry there are several programs used to generate resources. These tend to happen developmentally and in sequence. They include:  
events/products/and services  
annual drives/offerings  
capital campaigns  
planned giving/endowment building  
These programs tend to happen in an organization in the order listed above.

In the stewardship language of the church, we talk about these activities in the context of three faces (or aspects) of stewardship. These are:

## **Ordinary Stewardship** **Extraordinary Stewardship** **Legacy Stewardship**

*Ordinary Stewardship* is the regular practice of returning to God a portion of all that God has given us. It involves teaching ourselves how to create a life built upon the notion that all that we have is a gift from God. This includes teaching the holy habits of keeping Sabbath and tithing and the concept that giving regularly of our time, talent, and money to God's work on this earth is as much a spiritual practice as prayer and worship.

*Extraordinary Stewardship* involves the special occasions that arise in the life of Christian communities that call us to give beyond our ordinary habit. They involve increased risk and encourage us to experiment with sacrificial giving in order to help the community realize an especially important goal. The best example of extraordinary stewardship is the capital campaign.

*Legacy Stewardship* is the way in which we address the matter of disposing of the accumulations of our lifetime. Who will use your "stuff" when you no longer need it? It is the opportunity to leave a planned gift that constitutes both a legacy to generations yet unborn and a final witness to those whom we hold most dear.