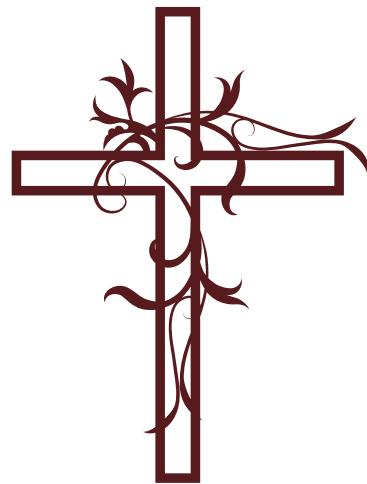


ARCHDIOCESE OF MOBILE

STEWARDSHIP MANUAL



PREPARED FOR THE ARCHDIOCESE OF MOBILE
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2012



STEWARDSHIP MANUAL

A Guide for Individuals and Parishes Who Wish to Develop Stewardship as a Way of Life

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Dear Friends in Christ,

God has given each of us gifts to make the world a little better because we are in it. He gave us time, which is our life span on this earth; talent, the special gifts entrusted to us for our lifetime; and treasure, the material resources accorded to us while on earth. Like the *Parable of the Talents*, we can choose to use these gifts or bury them.

The Gospels are filled with numerous examples of stewardship. From the “widow’s mite” to the “rich man and Lazarus,” to the “parable of the talents,” Jesus reminds each of us that we are called to live a stewardship way of life. If we choose to become good stewards of the gifts God has given us, it is our way of thanking Him for all of His blessings.

Stewardship is important to our spiritual growth as individuals, families, and parishes. In a spiritual and temporal sense, adopting stewardship as a way of life transforms us and changes the life of our parish as a whole. As baptized members of the Body of Christ, we should take every opportunity provided to us to live and promote stewardship as a way of life in our families, parishes, and communities.

Many of our parishes foster stewardship in some manner. Parishes that have been promoting stewardship for many years have discovered stewardship guides the faithful to higher levels of spirituality. These parishes have witnessed more people attending daily Mass, Holy Hours, and sacramental celebrations. More time was spent in individual and group prayer. Parishioners began to recognize their talents and to share them gratefully with their parish and community. The parish saw an increase in offertory gifts. All of these are fruits of a well-planned Stewardship Initiative.

This manual is a wonderful resource that will help those parishes who are seeking to promote stewardship as a way of life. It contains educational materials, information for implementation of a stewardship initiative, a list of resources, and numerous sample letters, brochures, bulletin announcements, prayers, scriptural quotations, and materials to help make your parish Stewardship Initiative a success. The Office of Development and Stewardship, which edited this manual, exists to help parishes in their efforts to demonstrate and promote the stewardship of time, talent, and treasure as a way of life. I am grateful for their work and encourage you to call upon their expertise when you need it. I hope that you will use this manual as a guideline in promoting stewardship in your parish.

Grateful for your generous sharing of time, talent, and treasure, I am

Sincerely in the Lord,

Most Reverend Thomas J. Rodi
Archbishop of Mobile



This Stewardship Manual has been created to help you conduct an annual parish Stewardship Initiative. It is based on the experiences of many parishes and dioceses throughout the country that have been willing to share their experiences with us.

The Office of Stewardship & Development will provide the parish with:

- Educational materials to help parishioners understand stewardship
- A model of how stewardship should be conducted
- Samples of direct mail pieces
- Samples of brochures and commitment cards
- Training for lay witnesses and stewardship committees
- Regular communications about stewardship
- Other counsel with the parish, as needed.

CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP
SUCCESSFULLY BRIDGES
THE MATERIAL WORLD
AROUND US AND THE
WORLD OF THE SPIRIT
WITHIN US.

The manner of promoting stewardship may vary from parish to parish depending on the size of the parish, its resources, and whether the parish is urban, suburban, or rural. Some of the parishes in the Archdiocese of Mobile have “winter visitor” and “student” populations that change from year to year, but every effort should be made to involve everyone in stewardship.

Large parishes may have an extensive list of stewardship opportunities that require frequent updates and are available on their website. Smaller and more rural parishes may have a dedicated stewardship committee with separate 2-3 weekend stewardship activities or they may unite with other parishes to combine their efforts.

To better fit the needs of individual parishes, the Archdiocese of Mobile has a season of stewardship that begins the first weekend in September and ends with the last weekend of November. During this time, parishes will select the two to three weekends they need to initiate stewardship.

The common thread for all of our parishes is a true desire to promote a way of life that embraces stewardship. All parishes will need active Stewardship Committees and to enlist the on-going help of others to improve upon what they do. Parishes promoting stewardship as a way of life will foster a deeper life of prayer and sacramental participation among their parishioners and will witness increased ministry participation and offertory gifts thanks to the fruits of their Stewardship Initiative.



Discussion of Concept

The Catholic Archdiocese of Mobile has developed an explanation of stewardship to provide an overall perspective, context, and direction for this important area of our Church. It is impossible to explain all there is to stewardship, for stewardship is also part of each individual's personal conversion process, which takes place throughout our lives.

- Stewardship is based on the spiritual principles of the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus Christ; and where it has been implemented, the lives of both givers and receivers have been changed for the better.
- Stewardship is a way of life, a way of thanking God for all His blessings by returning a portion of the time, talent, and treasure He has allotted to us.
- Stewardship engenders a spirituality that deepens our relationship with the Lord. Stewardship involves intentional, planned, and proportionate giving of our time, talent, and treasure.
- Stewardship addresses both individual parishioners as well as parishes themselves, as parishes fulfill their role as stewards of the resources entrusted to them.

The Bishops' Pastoral Letter of 1992, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, reinforces the need to work toward educating and assisting parishes and individuals in adopting this way of life.

In the Introduction to the Pastoral Letter, the bishops explain three convictions that are at the heart of stewardship:

1. Mature disciples make a conscious, firm decision, carried out in action, to be followers of Jesus Christ no matter the cost to themselves.
2. Beginning in conversion, change of mind and heart, this commitment is expressed not in a single action, not even in a number of actions over a period of time, but in an entire way of life. It means committing one's very self to the Lord.
3. Stewardship is an expression of discipleship, with the power to change how we understand and live out our lives. Disciples who practice stewardship recognize God as the origin of life, the giver of freedom, the source of all they have and are and will be. They are deeply aware of the truth that "*The earth is the Lord's and all it holds, the world and those who live there.*" (Psalm 24:1). Good stewards know themselves to be recipients and caretakers of God's many gifts. They are grateful for what they have received and eager to cultivate their gifts out of love for God and one another. (*Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*)

The Pastoral Letter defines stewardship in the following way:

"A Christian steward is one who receives God's gifts gratefully, cherishes and tends them in a responsible and accountable manner, shares them in justice and love with others and returns them with increase to the Lord."

"Each member of the Church shares in responsibility for its mission; each is called to practice Stewardship of the Church. Christians are also called to look outward and to place themselves at the service of the entire human community, especially those who are most in need."

The International Catholic Stewardship Council reiterates the bishops' statement.

"To practice Christian stewardship, we must share with others, both people and institutions, by giving them our God-given time, talent, and treasure as an act of thanks to God for all His gifts to us. Our parish—our local Christian community—provides one focal point where we can express our faith in worship and through acts of charity. The parish is more than just a church building or a geographic boundary. It is a community of faith and action, where we can see the face of Jesus in the face of a neighbor. That neighbor might be a toddler or a senior citizen, an immigrant or a fifth-generation American, a preschooler learning to count or an adult learning to read." Regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, financial status, or education we are called as members of one Body of Christ to share what the Father has given us with those in need.

Just as the Apostles dropped their fishermen's nets and followed Jesus 2,000 years ago, so we are called to follow His example in today's ever-changing world. Jesus was a person of faith and action and, as He indicates in Matthew 7:21, He expects the same of us:

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven."

Jesus made it clear in the Scriptures that being a steward of our time, talent, and treasure is the will of His Father. By addressing stewardship directly, Jesus made it clear how He wants us to live. Stewardship is based on God's Word, not on the fundraising needs of the Church.

Stewardship is based on an individual's need to give back out of gratitude; it is not based on the Church's need to receive. Stewardship is based on the premise that all that we have and all that we are comes from God and, as a way of thanking God for all His blessings, we are called to return a portion of the time, talent, and treasure allotted to us during our life on earth.

Giving our time, talent, and treasure is not limited to the Church. Many people give their time and talent as volunteers to community groups in addition to volunteering in their parish, and they give financial gifts to community, national, and international groups, in addition to supporting their parish.

So, as one can readily see, stewardship is not a fundraising gimmick. It is a way of life based on spiritual principles.

Characteristics of Stewardship

Christian stewardship can be identified by several meaningful characteristics, according to *Stewardship*, a national newsletter written by Parish Publishing:

- Christian stewardship provides spirituality that the lay person can take home from church, exercise at work, and express through personal involvement in the community and church.
- Christian stewardship successfully bridges the material world around us and the world of the Spirit within us.
- Stewardship enables Christians to measure the extent of their faith in and love of Jesus by the kind and quality of stewardship they perform.

- Stewardship gives joy! Those who voluntarily give their time and abilities for work in the parish and community will always experience joy if they give them for Christ. They are not, however, guaranteed freedom from frustration.
- Stewardship is not job-oriented or project-minded. It is a way of life for a lifetime.
- Christian stewardship takes a positive view of money. It sees money not only as a medium of exchange but also as a symbol of the person who has it. The way we acquire it, use it, and share it, we are revealed in those actions.
- Christian stewardship helps us to become aware that God is the ultimate giver of the gifts we have. To give to God should be from the top—not from what may be left over.
- Stewardship teaches Christians to be concerned about where and how to share their parish financial overflow. Stewardship is not giving just to meet the budget needs.

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

Stewardship of Time, Talent, and Treasure—Not a Matter of Chance

Stewardship involves intentional, planned and proportionate giving of our time, talent, and treasure. The following further explains this concept:

- **Intentional**—A deliberate decision is made to live out the Christian life in a certain way. That way is to thank God for all His blessings by returning to Him a portion of our time, talent, and treasure.
- **Planned**—Each and every year, a Catholic household living discipleship plans and makes stewardship of time and talent a part of its lifestyle and stewardship of treasure a part of its budget.
- **Proportionate**—A decision is made to give 5 percent of one's time and income to the Parish and 5 percent to the larger church and other charities.

Giving our time involves being with God in prayer and worship, sharing our love with family and friends, and volunteering our time in church and community activities that help others and promote justice.

Sharing our talents arises from the fact that God has given each of us the ability and gifts to do certain things well, and we are to develop those talents for the good of others. Many individuals commit a certain number of hours each week to prayer and charitable activities.

Sharing our treasure is as important as giving our time and talent. Since God does not hold back on any area of His giving, we are not to hold back on any area of our giving, especially in the crucial area of supporting our parish, Archdiocese, Catholic schools, and community organizations.

Our gifts of money do not substitute for gifts of time and talent. Neither do time and talent substitute for sacrificial giving of financial resources. All that we have is from God.



In conducting a Stewardship Initiative, parish leaders will discover that parishioners are more apt to share their gifts because of the blessings they have received as opposed to responding to the needs of the parish budget or the need for volunteers. When people are motivated to give out of gratitude rather than guilt, recognition, reward, need, or sacrifice; they begin to give the gift that God wants them to give—the gift of themselves. In doing so, they experience the joy that accompanies this giving. In a secular sense, a growing vibrant stewardship parish reaffirms parishioners' sense of return on investment and makes them more vested in parish life, a virtuous cycle. Parish leadership should model stewardship.

Placing a greater emphasis on maintaining the financial and volunteer needs of the parish serves to encourage only minimal giving. However, emphasizing the personal need of the parishioner to give out of gratitude and to help grow the talents entrusted by the Lord enhances both the giving and its spiritual benefits while deepening faith. Does it work? Yes, it does—as seen by the experience and testimony of many, many Christian stewards across the country. And, it works best if there are no compromises in its presentation and without altering or diluting the basic stewardship message. The results are dramatic. Parishioners respond to stewardship efforts because they are based on sound theological principles with God as our Creator and us as His stewards.

It is more effective in the parish if the message of stewardship is repeated throughout the year—in homilies and lay witness presentations, and at parish activities and events, in Sunday bulletins and in other forms of parish communication. The most important reason for the Stewardship Initiative is to reach out and touch individuals and families with a message that deepens their faith and brings them closer to God.

Organizing Your Parish Effort

Key Elements—Overview

A parish Stewardship Initiative should have several key elements: information, education, witnessing, invitation, commitment, and follow-up. Those responsible for the effort need to become informed authorities on the subject of stewardship. They then should spend time educating the parish on the meaning of stewardship. Beginning with the pastor and lay leaders, they should give witness to the fruit of living a stewardship way of life. The rest of the congregation should be invited to join them in making stewardship a way of life. The parishioners respond by making a personal commitment to give a portion of their time, talent, and treasure as a gift of gratitude for God's blessings. The pastor's gratitude is expressed through a message of "Thank You". The ministry leaders conduct the necessary follow-up to contact, train, and engage the new ministers as soon as possible.

The first step in organizing a Stewardship Initiative is to develop a realistic timetable. (See Resource Handbook, page 15.) The best way to do this is to have those responsible for the parish effort to meet with the pastor and liturgy committee to determine which weekend should be designated as **Stewardship Commitment Sunday**. Once this

is decided, then the rest of the schedule should be planned working backwards from Commitment Sunday.

While most of the planning activities must take place well in advance of any of the public activities of the Stewardship Initiative, as far as parishioners are concerned, the initiative is conducted over a three-week period.

Our Stewardship Initiative is centered on two to three weekends of intense communications because this maximizes the time and effort of the volunteers. It also gives parishioners ample opportunity to prayerfully consider their stewardship commitments.

Stewardship communications begin with bulletin announcements three weeks before the first mailing and continue for six weeks.

After Commitment Sunday, when the Time and Talent cards are collected, they need to be sorted, entered into a ministry database, and the results need to be distributed to the relevant parish groups and organizations for proper follow-up. Treasure cards are given to the person who maintains the parish's financial records. A thank you letter is sent to everyone who made a commitment.

Role of the Pastor

The pastor's commitment is necessary in all phases – participating in the selection of the volunteer laity to conduct and be involved in the Stewardship Initiative, helping to coordinate the effort, delivering homilies that motivate parishioners to understand stewardship and to respond in a meaningful way, and modeling stewardship personally before his parish.

In general, people will be lifted to the Biblical level of stewardship to the extent the pastor and stewardship committee inspire them. The success of the effort rests to a large degree on the pastor.

Suggestions for the pastor may include, but are not limited to:

- Spending time reading about and studying stewardship so as to understand its meaning and its focus. Good resources for pastors include the bishops' Pastoral Letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*; a short booklet written by Henri J. M. Nouwen entitled *A Spirituality of Fundraising*; and other Diocesan publications.
- Examining your own lifestyle to consider what kind of stewardship life you are living. If necessary, make adjustments in your own life and consider the impact it has on your spiritual life.
- Encouraging the pastoral council to read about and study stewardship, to examine their lifestyle and make any necessary adjustments.
- Working with the pastoral council, form a stewardship committee and attend meetings for the first six to twelve months.
- Committing the parish, along with the pastoral council, to conduct an annual Stewardship Initiative of time, talent, and treasure for the parishioners.
- Committing the parish, along with the pastoral council, to carry out stewardship awareness efforts throughout the year, every year.

- Selecting, along with the stewardship committee, lay witnesses who can speak to the importance and impact of stewardship in their lives.
- Preparing stewardship homilies for the stewardship weekends.
- Incorporating stewardship thoughts in your Sunday homilies when presented in the Scriptures for the day. (19 of Jesus' 36 parables deal with possessions, time, and talent)
- Encouraging the parish to set an example for the parishioners by giving a portion of the parish's offertory to community groups and by committing to provide volunteers for community projects.
- Thanking people for all that they do to serve God by serving others.
- Praying that your parishioners will grow spiritually as a result of their embracing stewardship as a way of life.
- Helping your parishioners discern between their wants and needs.
- Focusing on being faithful, not successful, in stewardship.

Role of the Pastoral Council

The role of the Pastoral Council in promoting stewardship is important to its success. The work of conducting a Stewardship Initiative in the parish is a shared responsibility of lay members and clergy under the leadership of the pastor with the advice of the Pastoral Council. Pastoral counselors need to avail themselves of every opportunity to grow in understanding stewardship as a way of life.

The members of the Pastoral Council should be asked to recommend people to be recruited and appointed to the leadership of the Stewardship Committee. The Pastoral Council also should help to ensure that stewardship is not a one-time activity, but rather a permanent part of the on-going life of the parish.

Role of Parish Commission and Ministry Leaders

The parish leadership in Liturgy, Evangelization, Parish Life, Community Life, Education, and Administration are important to the successful Stewardship Initiative. They should be included in the planning phase of the Initiative. Some parishes host an appreciation dinner for the various ministry leaders with a keynote speech on the spirituality of stewardship. Parish leaders are reminded of the important role they play in promoting stewardship as a way of life. They learn that stewardship is not necessarily about recruiting more volunteers for their various ministries. Instead, stewardship is about providing opportunities for parishioners to express their gratitude to God by giving a portion of their time, talent, and treasure in service to others. Responsibilities of the Commission and Ministry leaders include, but are not limited to the following:

- Provide information on each parish organization or ministry for a public list/catalogue of parish ministries
- Assist in updating the ministry list on a regular basis
- Help individuals to assess their unique talents that might be used
- Participate in the parish ministry fair by setting up a table or booth, manned by a member of their ministry; for the purpose of educating parishioners on the focus and responsibilities of the particular ministry

- Provide a pamphlet or brochure describing the mission of their ministry, the benefits of participating in the ministry, the type of training (if any) needed for the ministry, and contact information
- Contact personally those parishioners who express an interest in their ministry
- Invite those who expressed an interest in a ministry to a training session or initial meeting as soon as possible after Commitment Sunday
- Assist the Stewardship Committee in an evaluation after the parish stewardship effort
- Provide on-going awareness of stewardship as a way of life for members of their ministry

The Parish Stewardship Committee

In order for stewardship of time, talent, and treasure to be understood, practiced, and nurtured in the lives of your parishioners and in the life of the parish itself, it is important to have an active Stewardship Committee. In fact, surveys have found that having a Stewardship Committee is one of the primary factors contributing to the long-term “success” of stewardship in a parish.

Forming a Stewardship Committee

We suggest your parish form a Stewardship Committee that has the overall responsibility for stewardship awareness, the initial Stewardship Initiative, and stewardship renewal. The Stewardship Committee should be represented on the Pastoral Council to help maintain a spiritual focus on stewardship.

The size of the Stewardship Committee will depend on the size of the parish family. A smaller parish or mission may even need to add stewardship responsibilities to an existing committee or council. Stewardship Committee members, much like the Pastoral Council, should be selected to serve for a specific term (preferably three-years), with an option of renewing for a second term. To ensure having new members each year who will bring new ideas, ask your original committee members to commit to one, two, or three years for their first term. Always select both a chairperson and vice-chairperson to ensure the presence of qualified, experienced leadership.

In recruiting parishioners to serve on the Stewardship Committee, consider the following qualifications or criteria:

- Spiritually Motivated - It is important that members be people of prayer and be concerned about parishioners' relationships with God. If their primary concern is raising more money or getting more volunteers for the church, then they would not be appropriate to serve on the Stewardship Committee. Look for people who are Eucharistic, who have a deep relationship with Jesus, who are grateful for that relationship, and who act on that gratitude. These will be the people who spend time in prayer, study Scripture, and are often the people who go to daily Mass.
- Exemplify and Live Stewardship - Look for members who already are personally committed to stewardship as a way of life. They may not call it stewardship

but they live it. Those committed to stewardship volunteer their time in various parish ministries and community activities. The pastor will certainly know or can find out about people's volunteer activities at the parish and may even know about a person's involvement in the community. Those committed to stewardship will also be committed, steady, and generous givers to the offertory. Again, the pastor will know who these individuals are.

- **Envision How Stewardship Will Deepen the Faith of the Parish** - It is important that all members of the Stewardship Committee have the same general understanding of stewardship before they join the Committee and that this remains so once they are members of the Committee. Some people may view stewardship only as tithing your money; others may see stewardship as recycling paper products; others may see it as volunteering one's time only to church organizations. Developing a working definition of stewardship will help to consolidate the diverse viewpoints of committee members. It is also important that the members develop a vision of where the parish can be five, ten, and fifteen years from now.
- **Have Personal Qualities that Contribute to Success** - Look for people who are accountable (they do what they say they are going to do when they say they are going to do it), persistent, optimistic, organized, patient, creative and willing to share their faith with others.

Responsibilities of a Stewardship Committee

1. **Sustain the Stewardship Initiative of Time, Talent, and Treasure on an Annual Basis.** These efforts usually run two to three weekends every year. On the first weekend of a two-weekend effort and on each of the first two weekends of a three-weekend effort, the pastor delivers a homily on stewardship and a lay person or couple give personal testimony on how stewardship affects their life or lives. The last weekend is always Commitment Sunday, when parishioners bring their commitment cards of time, talent, and treasure to Mass and place them in the basket.
2. **Recruit Individuals and Couples to Share Their Personal Testimonies about Stewardship with Parishioners.** The lay witness testimony is one of the most educational, motivational, and important parts of the Stewardship Initiative. The lay witness talk makes stewardship very real and practical for the people in the pews. Lay witnesses should be individuals from the parish who believe and practice the principles of stewardship in their own lives—those who give a portion of their time, talent, and treasure. *Parishes that have been promoting stewardship for several years might want to consider producing a parish video with a focus on people and ministries instead of using lay witnesses.*
3. **Prepare an Annual Time and Talent List or Catalogue of Parish Ministries and Organizations—Keep it Current.** A time and talent list or catalogue gives parishioners the opportunity to see what volunteer ministries are available in the parish. Some parishes may have ten volunteer ministries while others may have fifty. Ministries may range from altar servers to youth group counselors to grounds keepers to communication specialists. Some parishes develop pamphlets or

catalogues that provide detailed descriptions of each ministry. Others use survey tools such as "Strengths Finder" to help parishioners discern their talents. While the primary emphasis is on current ministries, those that you would like to start (such as a welcoming committee or homeless shelter crew) can be added. *Many parishes have a stewardship ministry fair to promote their ministries with parishioners.*

4. **Ensure New Volunteers are Contacted and Asked to Become Involved.** It is critical for the Stewardship Committee to work with the appropriate Parish Commissions and other groups to ensure that those who formally commit a portion of their time and talent are invited personally to become involved. This is probably the most challenging task of the Stewardship Committee. It takes planning prior to the two- or three-weekend effort and follow-up after Commitment Sunday to make certain those who volunteer for ministries are signed up and contacted by the Chair of each ministry. If people are not contacted and only have their names entered in a book or computer, they will not be engaged in the ministries that will draw them closer to God and to a life of stewardship. Those who signed up but were not employed may begin to believe stewardship is only about money. *Some parishes bring their ministry leaders together for an appreciation event combined with an opportunity to present the stewardship message and the importance of follow-up. When ministry leaders understand the importance of their position and the follow-up and training of new ministers, they are more likely to respond to the Stewardship Initiative in a positive and timely manner. It is suggested that training sessions for new ministers be scheduled and "on the books" prior to the stewardship commitment weekend. Therefore ministry leaders must respond in a timely manner.*
5. **Evaluate Stewardship Initiative.** All elements of the Stewardship Initiative in the parish need to be evaluated. Review comments, criticisms, and questions received with commitment cards. Evaluate the written materials used throughout the year—letters, brochures, bulletin announcements, newsletter articles, etc.; discuss the verbal presentations—are the homilies and lay witness testimonies getting the stewardship message across? What more could we be doing to disseminate stewardship information to parishioners? What are the results from the stewardship effort? Always look to the spiritual life of the parish when evaluating stewardship. Do these efforts bring people closer to God? What signs of spiritual change are evident in the parish? (See Resource Handbook, pages 63-64 for sample evaluation form.) Establish SMART goals and track results.
6. **Publicize Stewardship Weekly Throughout the Year in Parish Bulletins.** It is very easy to put a few lines about stewardship in the bulletin each week. With little effort, it can be one way to keep the stewardship message in front of parishioners on a regular basis. Reflections can include quotes from Scripture, books, magazines, and newspapers; or ideas that you note while going about the work of stewardship in your parish.
7. **Make Stewardship Literature Available in the Parish Booklet Racks.** Include stewardship brochures or pamphlets in the booklet rack to give parishioners the opportunity to learn more about stewardship. You may want to rotate three or four brochures throughout the year. There are several companies that produce good stewardship materials. (See Resource Handbook, pages 67-70 for stewardship materials.)

- 8. Publicize Stewardship Reflections in the Parish Newsletter on a Quarterly Basis.** Stewardship reflections could include profiles of individuals or couples in your parish or other parishes in our Archdiocese who are committed to stewardship; questions and answers on stewardship; thoughts on stewardship; commentaries on stewardship; ministry spotlights, and so forth. You also might consider producing a special newsletter each year that focuses only on stewardship.
- 9. Incorporate Stewardship Comments in Sunday Homilies.** The Stewardship Committee might ask the Pastor or Priests celebrating Mass to incorporate stewardship comments in their Sunday homilies once a month. In looking at the three-year cycle of gospel readings, there are many opportunities to convey a stewardship-related message almost every month. In some instances, the whole homily could focus on stewardship. In others, a few sentences could be incorporated into the context of the entire homily.
- 10. Encourage Stewardship Through Weekly Intentions for Prayer of the Faithful.** The Committee could develop Intentions with a stewardship message for Prayer of the Faithful throughout the year. Typically one stewardship intention among all the Prayer of the Faithful would be sufficient. (See Resource Handbook, page 7 for sample intentions.)
- 11. Develop a Welcoming Program for New Parishioners.** Work with the appropriate Parish Commissions to develop programs for welcoming parishioners, both new and old. A system should be in place to greet visitors, welcome inquiries, and follow-up with newly registered parishioners during the first year. This can be through personal visits or by telephone. Be sure to include information about stewardship in the orientation presentation and/or packet.
- 12. Develop a Commissioning Service for Parish Ministry Volunteers.** Work with the Liturgy Commission to develop and plan a Commissioning Service to be held at all Masses on Commissioning Sunday. Be sure to check with all ministry leaders to ensure that the new volunteers have been contacted and formed in their individual ministries. This is best done after the homily as part of the Prayer of the Faithful. (See Resource Handbook, pages 60-61 for sample commissioning service.)
- 13. Show Appreciation for All Involved in Parish Volunteer Ministries.** Gratitude is an important element of stewardship. Find ways to say “thank-you” to the people who volunteer in the parish. This could be as simple as an appreciation reception after Mass or as elaborate as a catered dinner.
- 14. Develop a Stewardship Education Program to Incorporate in the Faith Formation Program for Children, Youth, and Adults.** Work closely with the Education Commission and Director of Faith Formation to ensure that the stewardship message becomes a part of the faith formation process. In many cases, incorporating stewardship language and terminology into the existing curriculum is all that is needed to promote stewardship among children and youth. The Archdiocese of Louisville (KY) has two stewardship curriculum books—*Good Things Are For Sharing*, for elementary grades, and *From the Heart: Stewardship Education for*

Middle and High School Age Students. Preparation for Confirmation should have a stewardship component. Work with your RCIA Director to ensure catechumens and candidates have a good understanding of stewardship. The adults of the parish might appreciate a stewardship presentation by a motivational speaker.

- 15. Add Children's Component to Your Parish Stewardship Initiative.** In addition to including stewardship education in the faith formation curriculum, include children in your two or three weekend Stewardship Initiative. Consider forming a sub-committee to address the entire field of children's stewardship.
- 16. Provide Opportunities for Discernment of Gifts.** Parishioners should be given opportunities to discover their own spiritual gifts and to use those gifts in service to others. Parish stewardship efforts can include programs and workshops on the discernment of gifts to help parishioners find the ministries best suited for them. (See Resource Handbook, pages 67-70 for resources on discernment of gifts.)
- 17. Provide In-Service and Continuing Education for Your Stewardship Committee.** The chairperson of the Stewardship Committee should make sure each member receives current materials sent by the Office of Development and Stewardship. Committees should plan to attend diocesan, regional and national stewardship events and to promote these events with fellow parishioners and parishes.
- 18. Develop an Annual Stewardship Plan.** Each committee should develop a detailed yearly plan that includes the organization and preparation for the two or three-weekend effort as well as monthly awareness activities. (See Resource Handbook, page 62 for sample annual plan.)
- 19. Expand Your Focus Beyond the Parish.** Consider spreading the message of stewardship beyond the parish. One way to do that is to encourage "*Catholic Week*" to print stewardship profiles or stewardship questions and answers. You may even want to supply the newspaper with your own profiles and questions and answers.

The Stewardship Lay Witness

An important component of the Stewardship Initiative is the stories and testimonials delivered to the entire congregation by individuals whose lives have changed as a result of stewardship. These lay witnesses are important to the success of the parish effort. There are many reasons for this. Stewardship is a part of the internal change of heart or conversion process, we know so well from the Scriptures. The *Old and New Testaments* are full of stories of real people who became aware of the need to put their faith into action. The Gospel writers, themselves, are witnesses to the life of Jesus.

Lay witnesses send a strong message to the faithful about giving of oneself, one's possessions, and one's time in gratitude for what God has given them. People are motivated by learning that stewardship works for other people who are like them. Christians throughout history have been raised to a new level of awareness by learning from others how a deeper sense of spirituality has taken over their lives.

NOTE: We suggest that the same lay witnesses speak at all Masses on a particular weekend. This allows everyone in the parish to hear the same message. When parishioners sit down in small groups to discuss the talk, they have the same frame of reference. When the pastor refers to something said by a lay witness, he knows that everyone heard the same message, regardless of which Mass they attended. In addition, if the Stewardship Committee recruits several individuals the first year, the pool of effective lay witnesses diminishes within a few years.

Selecting Lay Witnesses

Lay witnesses should be parishioners who believe and practice stewardship as a way of life—those who give a portion of their time, talent, and treasure in an intentional, planned, and proportionate way. They should relate well to other parishioners, feel comfortable speaking to a group about their personal experiences, and be enthusiastic about their mission. A potential lay witness may say, “Yes, I believe in giving back to God in gratitude, but I don’t want to stand up and tell everyone what I am doing because it sounds like I’m bragging about myself.” The response to that person could be, “By sharing with us how you arrived at your decision for stewardship, you will be testifying to the generosity of a good and gracious God and you will be reaching out to individuals so that they may come forward with their gifts.”

Responsibilities of a Lay Witness

The lay witness or witnesses need to meet with the pastor about how to present the concept of stewardship and to discuss the pastor’s expectations of the stewardship effort. Prospective lay witnesses might find it helpful to read Scriptural passages about stewardship. Many are contained in the accompanying Resource Handbook. We also recommend that they read other stewardship materials included in this manual and the Bishops’ *Pastoral Letter*. The lay witnesses should develop a 5-7 minute presentation sharing their personal experiences of how they relate their faith to their gifts of Time, Talent, and Treasure. (See Resource Handbook, pages 19-28 for Lay Witness guidelines, tips, and sample presentations)

Involvement of Others

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

- Design artwork, posters and brochures
- Print cover letters
- Prepare mailings by affixing labels and postage and stuffing envelopes
- Tabulate results and enter the data into the computer
- Provide Time and Talent Reports of New Volunteers to the Chairs of Parish Ministries
- Telephone parishioners and Ministry Chairs to ensure those who volunteered are contacted
- Report results to the Stewardship Committee and Pastoral Council

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

When to Conduct Your Parish Stewardship Initiative

There is no particular liturgical season that is more appropriate than another for doing a parish Stewardship Initiative. However, the months of September, October or November are the most suitable for reaching the greatest number of parishioners. These three months will become the Season of Stewardship for the Archdiocese of Mobile. Other months of the year may see less church attendance by regular parishioners due to vacations, weekend trips, and holidays. The Stewardship Initiative should not be conducted over weekends of important Church feast days or special liturgical celebrations. Thanksgiving weekend should also be avoided because many parishioners and their families travel out of town during this time.

In general, the best times are when:

- No other major activity is going on in the parish, such as parish capital campaigns, the Catholic Charities Appeal, a high school or grade school capital fund-raising campaign, a school annual fund campaign
- No special liturgies are planned such as First Communion, Confirmation, RCIA Rites, Sacramental Preparation Rites, etc.
- Schools are in session
- The pastor, parochial vicar, and office staff are all available

In addition, during the two- to three-week period in which the effort is conducted at Masses, there should be no other major collections for the Archdiocese especially on Commitment Sunday when the Commitment cards are collected. In other words, for several weeks parishioners should only focus on their personal decision to commit a portion of their Time, Talent, and Treasure.

Sequence of the Stewardship Initiative

Conducting the Stewardship Initiative is based on organizing and implementing the procedural steps outlined in this Manual. The Initiative should not be attempted without ample planning time nor should it be shortened from three weekends to only one weekend. The Initiative demands several weeks of communications, homilies, and lay witness presentations to communicate effectively what stewardship is. It cannot be done in one weekend. Think of the “parable of the talents” and how the parish would ultimately be judged on its efforts. Once the parish has begun its Stewardship Initiative, it should be continued year-round under the leadership of the Stewardship Committee.

Timetable/Checklist for Conducting a Stewardship Initiative

When conducting your parish's stewardship effort, a reverse calendar will be helpful. Included in the *Resource Handbook for Stewardship* is a timetable for you to use in planning your parish effort. To use the calendar, first establish the date of Stewardship Commitment Sunday, and then fill in the dates working backwards from Commitment Sunday. (See Resource Handbook, page 3 for calendar timetable.)

Preparation

A good mailing list of registered parishioners is the lifeline of all parish communication efforts. Since mailings are made on a regular basis to parishioners at most parishes, it is assumed that the mailing list is relatively up-to-date. If it is not, the parish should take the time to make the parish list more accurate. In larger parishes a roster of names and addresses will become out-of-date rapidly. In many cases, approximately 25 percent of the names and addresses change annually. A parish needs to have a mechanism for correcting and updating its mailing list, such as "Address Service Requested" from the U.S. Post Office, which automatically forwards the mail to the new address while sending the parish the corrected address for a small charge.

While mailings will reach registered parishioners, many people attending Mass are not registered with their parish and therefore are not on the parish mailing list. The Stewardship Initiative provides a wonderful opportunity to invite new parishioners to register. During the Stewardship Initiative it would be helpful to have extra brochures and commitment cards in the pews or in the back of church, and to announce from the pulpit that they are available for those who have not received a mailing at their home.

It is recommended that parishes use envelopes for their mailings rather than attempting to save money by using self-mailers. The most current research on direct mail indicates that the best response traditionally comes from a mailing that includes an outside mailing envelope, cover letter, and brochure. When addressing the envelopes, print addresses as close to the mailing date as possible so that the new parishioners who register during that period will receive the stewardship materials and those who have moved will be deleted from the mailing.

One technique of successful direct mail is to have the mailing look as personal as possible. In fact every element of the mail campaign should have a personalized look about it, if possible, which means:

- The address should be printed on the envelope rather than on a label
- The letter should be individually addressed with a personal salutation
- A First class stamp indicates personal attention

Mailings with the attributes noted above have a greater chance of being opened and read. While it is not always possible to take all these steps, it should be understood that this is the best way to get the best response. In some cases, the parish's mailing may be one of 50 to 100 pieces of mail the parishioner will receive during the week, so the parish should do what it can to ensure the envelope is opened and read.

First Week (Weekend #1)

A letter from the pastor with accompanying brochure should be mailed to the home just prior to Weekend #1. At all Masses that weekend, the pastor delivers a short homily along with a presentation by a lay witness or married couple. Depending on the tradition in your parish, this presentation takes place either prior to the start of Mass or at post-Communion.

As far as parishioners are concerned, this is the first week of extensive parishioner awareness about stewardship beyond the bulletin announcements. It is one of the most important weeks for the Stewardship Initiative because parishioners will have received a mailing at home the previous week, the pastor is giving his first stewardship homily, and lay presenters will be giving their testimonies.

Parishioners' reactions should be favorable, but some might say, "If they just wanted money from us, why didn't they just ask for it?" or "Stewardship just means they want us to tithe 10 percent to the Church." This is why a positive consistent message is so important.

When this message is presented in a personal way by people who have already made a commitment to stewardship as a way of life, then parishioners will begin to understand that stewardship is not just a short-term effort but rather the foundation for greater faith and a more spiritual lifestyle.

Through the letters, brochures, pastor's homilies, and presentations by lay witnesses, the parish will begin to have a sense of the life-changing and life-enriching power of stewardship for them as individuals and the parish as a whole.

Second Week (Weekend #2)

A second letter and brochure are mailed to all parishioners a few days before Weekend #2. At all Masses that weekend, the pastor delivers a short homily along with a presentation by another lay witness or married couple.

This week precedes Commitment Sunday. During this week, the communication phase of the effort continues. Parishioners are becoming more aware of what stewardship means and how it can affect their lives in a positive way. During the week, a third mailing is made to all registered parishioners. This mailing contains the important commitment cards. Announcements in the parish bulletin remind everyone Commitment Sunday is the following weekend and parishioners are asked to return their commitment cards at all Masses.

Third Week (Weekend #3 –Commitment Sunday)

A third letter and commitment brochure are mailed to all parishioners a few days before weekend #3. All parishioners bring their completed cards (one for Time and Talent; the other for Treasure) to Mass on Commitment Sunday. At all Masses on Commitment Sunday, the pastor delivers a stewardship homily and parishioners offer their commitment cards.

This is the week when the entire effort comes together. Parishioners are invited to make a personal commitment of giving a portion of their time, talent, and treasure in response to God's blessings in their lives. There are several ways in which the stewardship commitment cards can be presented to the parish.

Listed below are three ways to present commitment cards to the parish:

- Invite parishioners to come forward at the offertory or another time during the Mass, as if they were going to receive Communion, to present their commitment cards in the form of a gift by leaving them in the sanctuary area
- Ask the ushers to collect the cards during a special collection
- Ask parishioners to present their cards with their offertory gift

Parishioners are invited to make a personal commitment of giving a portion of their time, talent, and treasure in response to God's blessings in their lives.

The rate of response will be increased greatly if extra commitment cards are in the pew this weekend. Whatever method is used to present the commitment cards, it should be done with a spirit of gratitude, in keeping with the spiritual meaning of stewardship.

After the commitment cards are received, the pastor should invite those who have not signed and returned their cards to do so, by placing them in the offertory collection the following week or mailing them to the parish office. The pastor should also remind parishioners that their commitment of time, talent, and treasure, if possible, begins right away. He should announce to the entire parish that ministry leaders will be contacting those who committed their talents to a specific ministry as soon as the data is compiled. The pastor should thank the parish family as a whole for their generous response to share their gifts.



Printed Stewardship Communications

There is no one best way to communicate with parishioners to ensure that the greatest number of people have been reached, but it is important to have a comprehensive communication effort that includes the use of a number of forms of communication, particularly printed materials.

Each element of a printed communication should be assigned a specific role. For example, the cover letter should be used as an introduction from the pastor that describes the parish's Stewardship Initiative and the accompanying brochure should provide greater details of the effort. Oftentimes the recipient will keep a brochure and "toss" the accompanying letter, so the brochure should be as complete as possible in the event a parishioner refers back to it.

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Letters

Letters are very effective in reaching a broad base of parishioners. They are even more effective when combined with a brochure. (See Resource Handbook, pages 4-6 and 29-33 for sample letters to be used for specific mailings.)

Brochures

Brochures that accompany a cover letter are an effective means of presenting the idea of stewardship. Many parishes choose to design their own. Other parishes order educational brochures from publishing companies. Two brochures and one set of commitment cards should be used in the initial Stewardship Initiative.

Banners/Posters

Parishes have always used banners, posters, embroideries and drawings to communicate the message of God in a visible way in the Church. They range from montages of pictures of parishioners to poster boards created by young students to express their feelings about their religion. If it is appropriate, the parish communication's plan might include banners or posters to help explain the spirituality of stewardship.

Bulletin Announcements

During the Stewardship Initiative, there should be regular announcements in the parish bulletin. (See Resource Handbook, pages 8 and 16 for sample bulletin announcements.)

List / Catalogue of Time and Talent Opportunities

In the early planning phase of the Stewardship Initiative, the parish Stewardship Committee should prepare of a list of parish ministries, Archdiocesan opportunities, and community programs that provide avenues for parishioners to share their time and talent. One way to compile the information is to ask each Ministry Chair and parish group to submit a written list of opportunities.

A brief description of the ministry/organization should be part of the commitment mailing. A list of the special skills that are needed by the various parish groups should also be included. (See Resource Handbook, page 14 for example.)

Commitment Cards and Envelopes

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

When the envelopes are received by the parish, they should be opened and the cards separated by the Time & Talent portion and Treasure portion—making sure that the parishioner has written his or her name on each of their cards.

Thank-You Letters

Once the commitment cards are received, everyone who made a commitment should receive a thank you note from the pastor. Time and talent respondents receive an additional note from a Commission Chair, Ministry Leader or other appropriate personnel. (See Resource Handbook, pages 29-33 for sample thank-you notes.)

Stewardship Presentations at Mass

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

Prayer of the Faithful

Stewardship Intentions for the Prayer of the Faithful to be used during the two- or three-week effort are included in the Stewardship Resource Handbook, page 7.

Parishioners look to their Pastor, Assistant Pastors, and Priests to help them understand stewardship and to motivate them to accept stewardship as a way of thanking God for His gifts to us.

Homilies

The role of the spiritual leader of the parish is one of the most important elements of stewardship success. Parishioners look to their Pastor, Assistant Pastors, and Priests to help them understand stewardship and to motivate them to accept stewardship as a way of thanking God for His gifts to us. (Examples of homilies are included in the Resource Handbook, pages 9-12.)

Lay Witness Talks

The testimony of individual parishioners or couples is an important part of the presentation of the stewardship message. Testimonies by parishioners who are willing to share their own faith stories are extremely effective in communicating the message of stewardship. (Guidelines for the lay witness presentations and sample talks are included in the Resource Handbook, pages 19-28.)

Pulpit Announcements

These are valuable reminders for those at Mass about key steps in the Stewardship Initiative. (Examples are included in the Resource Handbook, page 13.)

While the Season of Stewardship for the Archdiocese of Mobile is September through November, it is most effective if the message of stewardship is repeated throughout the year—in homilies and lay witness presentations, at parish activities and events, in Sunday bulletins and in other parish communications.



Parish Evaluation

The effectiveness of the Stewardship Initiative cannot be judged solely on the basis of financial results and volunteer commitments. Because stewardship is spiritually based, the results will be in the hearts of those who have responded to the stewardship message. While it is difficult to see the evidence in quantitative terms, we can see it in qualitative terms (e.g. more enthusiasm, increased joy, deeper individual commitment, a different outlook, and increased attendance at Mass and special liturgies).

Commitments of time, talent, and treasure, on the other hand, can be measured. Offertory giving should be analyzed by looking at comparable periods in previous years, particularly the year prior to the Stewardship Initiative. A review of the numbers should include factoring in or out special situations such as one year having a month with five Sundays and another comparable period with four Sundays. The results should also compare the number of volunteers participating from year to year, if the data is available.

It is important that several members of the parish leadership meet with the pastor and associate pastors formally to evaluate the results of the Stewardship Initiative. This should include the chairpersons of the Stewardship Committee, Finance Council and Pastoral Council. (See Resource Handbook, page 63-64 for sample evaluation form.)

Follow-Up on Commitments

One of the most critical roles, and one that is neglected by many parishes, is adequate follow-up. It is important that a follow-up effort begin with the parishioners who have already made commitments.

The first step is to separate the Time and Talent commitment cards from the Treasure cards. The Treasure cards should be given to the appropriate person as designated by the pastor—the Finance Council chair, the parish bookkeeper, or the staff member who is responsible for recording parishioners' contributions. The Time and Talent information should be entered into a database, and a report of all new and continuing volunteers should be given to the appropriate ministry leaders.

Time and Talent Commitment Follow-Up

The information collected on the Time and Talent commitment cards from the parishioners should be disseminated as quickly as possible to the various parish commissions and groups that match with the talents of the parishioners. The most efficient way of compiling the information is through use of a computer database. Smaller parishes may put the information into a word or excel table or simply make enough copies of the time and talent cards to share the information with the ministry leaders. As soon as the ministry leaders receive their list of new and continuing volunteers, they should contact the parishioners, thank them for their stewardship gift of time and talent, and invite them

to the next meeting of the ministry. (See Resource Handbook, pages 29-32 for sample letters.)

The Stewardship Committee should follow-up with the ministry leaders to ensure that parishioners who made time and talent commitments have been contacted. Individuals who have volunteered but are not yet involved should be contacted.

Treasure Commitment Follow-Up

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

When the thank-you note is sent, it should include a reference to the amount (or percentage) of giving by the parishioner. The amount can be presented on a weekly, monthly, or annual basis, depending on how they have stated it on their treasure commitment card. One of the purposes of the note is to acknowledge the gift and make sure the amount (or percentage) is correct. This note has to come from the pastor. (See Resource Handbook, page 35 for suggested thank-you letter.)

Follow-Up With Those Who Have Not Committed

Non-Respondents and New Parishioners

The Stewardship Initiative is never really finished during the year because parishes are dynamic, growing organizations. It is necessary to follow-up with those who have not responded as well as those who join the parish during the upcoming year.

It is important to make contact with parishioners who have not responded. By comparing who responded against the parish roster, you can identify non-responders who are registered with the parish. Then, follow-up mailings and telephone calls need to be made to the non-responders.

New parishioners represent a significant opportunity for adding many gifts of time, talent, and treasure to the parish. Unfortunately, because they are not members of the parish during the Stewardship Initiative, they tend to be neglected. Someone on the Stewardship Committee or Pastoral Council should be assigned the responsibility of contacting these individuals, as part of a welcoming committee, including making a presentation on stewardship

As soon as the ministry leaders receive their list of new and continuing volunteers, they should contact the parishioners, thank them for their stewardship gift of time and talent, and invite them to the next meeting of the ministry.

and presenting commitment cards to them. Often, these individuals bring a new source of energy and leadership to parish life.

These methods of presenting stewardship to new parishioners will depend on the traditional ways the parish welcomes them. It may be best to make stewardship materials part of a welcoming kit that is presented to new parishioners, which can be given when they come to the church office to register or when they attend the parish's monthly reception for newcomers.

Letter

See Resource Handbook, page 33 for a sample letter to those who have not responded.

Telephone Contact

See Resource Handbook, page 34 for a sample telephone "script".



PLANNING THE ANNUAL STEWARDSHIP RENEWAL

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

- 2 brochures (See Resource Handbook, pages 67-70 for resources for brochures.)
- 2 letters from the pastor (See Resource Handbook, pages 17-18 for sample letters.)
- Updated "Time and Talent" opportunities
- Lay witness presentation (one or two weekends)
- Pastor's homily - Commitment Sunday

See Resource Handbook, page 15 for a time table for annual stewardship renewal.



A Component of the Parish Stewardship Initiative

Parishes that have completed a successful first-time Stewardship Initiative and are committed to promoting on-going stewardship awareness, should consider the value of introducing stewardship as a way of life to the children and youth of the parish. They have been eager and interested observers of the adult effort over the past year, and many of our young people already practice stewardship as part of their family's commitment. A focus on Children and Young Adult Stewardship should be done in addition to the adult Stewardship Initiative with youth lay witnesses either on separate weekends from the adult lay witnesses or as part of a Children's Liturgy of the Word.

Suggestions for Implementing Stewardship with Children and Young Adults in Your Parish

- ***Support.*** It is vital to enlist the support of the pastor, pastoral staff, Pastoral Council, Faith Formation Director, and (in parishes with a school) the school principal.
- ***Education.*** Include a 3 to 5 week mini-lesson on stewardship in your faith formation classes. Feature children and Young Adult activities such as posters, banners, essays, et cetera during the weeks preceding Commitment Sunday. (See Resource Handbook, pages 67-70 for resources on children.)
- ***Compile a Time and Talent List for Children and Young Adults.*** Be sure to include adult ministries that would welcome participation on the part of children and young adults. (i.e. housecleaning, lawn and garden care, visiting the elderly, et cetera) Make the list available to them.
- ***Communication.*** Introduce the idea of stewardship to young adults and children early through bulletin announcements, parish newsletter articles, and bulletin board materials. Include a note on young adults' and children's stewardship in the letter from the pastor.
- ***Children's Commitment Card.*** Provide commitment cards for young adults and children to complete their pledge of time, talent, and treasure as their gift of thanksgiving for all of God's blessings in their lives.
- ***Young Adults' and Children's Envelopes.*** Consider implementing use of a children's envelope that includes a space for sharing their weekly time and talent as well as treasure. (see Resource Handbook page 70 for resources for children's envelopes)

- **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 him/her.
- **Follow-Up.** See to it that each young person who completes a commitment card receives a "thank-you" and an invitation to participate in the ministry they indicated. Contact should also be made with parents regarding their role in the child's commitment.
- **On-Going Awareness.** Include both a children's and young adults' corner in your weekly bulletin, highlighting some of the time and talent items mentioned by them in their weekly envelopes. Include stewardship notes in parish newsletters, Prayer of the Faithful, faith formation classes and newsletters, and (when appropriate) in children's Liturgy of the Word or homilies for children.
- **Young Adults' and Children's Stewardship Committees.** Consider forming sub-committees of your Parish Stewardship Committee to address the current and on-going needs of young adults' and children's stewardship.

Young Adults and Children as Lay Witnesses

Helpful suggestions for using young adults and children in presenting the Stewardship message to their peers 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 Lay Witness Talk by children and young adults 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 in his or her own life. The talk should be directed to the other children and young adults 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 Young Adult or Child as a Lay Witness

- Invite a youth who is already actively practicing stewardship in the parish. Children who are altar servers, youth ushers, youth lectors, nursery aids, et cetera, often show an understanding of stewardship in their lives
- The young person 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 youth who is mature, articulate, and somewhat at ease in front of large groups
- The youth should be willing to work with the pastor (or his designate) in preparing the stewardship talk
- The youth 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 or young person can sometimes freeze in front of a large congregation at a weekend Mass. To help put them at ease and to 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
- In parishes that do a children’s Liturgy of the Word (separate from the adult Liturgy of the Word), the child’s lay witness presentation could take place at that time.
- 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 to him or her, and to share with the group real life experiences that relate to stewardship. The interview should cover all three aspects of stewardship—time, talent, and treasure. The child should be given a copy of the interview questions and ample time to prepare answers **from his or her own experiences** well ahead of time. Then a time should be scheduled with the pastor or catechist to actually rehearse the program.

Sample Questions for a Child’s Lay Witness Interview

- We have been promoting stewardship here at Our Lady of Perpetual Help for many years. I know you have watched the adults come up here and talk about stewardship. What do *you* think stewardship is?
- Since stewardship is really about “thanking” God for all the wonderful things He has given to us, what are some ways you use *your time* to thank God.
- We are reminded that all we have and all that we are is a gift from God. He gives everyone special *talents*—that’s how God makes us—with special talents. “Billy”, what are some of the special *talents* that God has given you?
- How do you use those talents here at our 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 being 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 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. He or she can speak from the heart in a relaxed and comfortable manner.

At the conclusion of the dialogue, the pastor should thank the lay witness for sharing his or her thoughts on stewardship and encourage all the children to think about their own special gifts and talents, and how they might use them to serve God and one another.

Tell the children that they will have an opportunity, just like the adults, to fill out a commitment card on Commitment Sunday. Explain that the children who wish to make Stewardship a way of life *and fill out a commitment card*, will receive a box of envelopes. The envelopes will have a place for them to write down the 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.

Stewardship is a grateful response to God’s love.

Based in Scripture, all that we are and all that we have flows from God as gift.

In turn, we serve as stewards of our spiritual and material gifts

and we share these gifts in love of God and neighbor.

