

From Father David:

Year Round & Holistic Stewardship

All too often I see the idea of Year-Round Stewardship as taking the Annual Pledge Drive and using the whole year to plan what will be done for this one event held over a few weeks, generally in the fall. Although it is important to allow plenty of time to plan the annual campaign for creativity to be able to flow, Year-Round Stewardship should be so much more in the life of our congregations than merely the annual campaign.

The reality is stewardship is the care of something that has been entrusted to the steward by another for the true owner's purpose. God hopes and desires that this will be a joyful experience for us filled with wonder. In the first Article of the Nicene Creed we say, "We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of everything that is, seen and unseen". So, it is through our baptism and deeper journey in Christ we find that responsible stewardship is not really about money, but it is about fulfilling Christ's mission and ministry in the world through the right use of all God's blessings entrusted to us. So we see that money is just a part of stewardship. And maybe it is better to say that money, and the use of it, is about stewardship rather than the other way around. The problem is that in our culture, money and things that relate to it, demand our attention. So the question is then how do we begin to refocus Stewardship in the Church to its intended purpose – Christ's mission in the world?

I believe we do this best when we take a holistic approach to stewardship in our congregations and begin the process of stewardship formation in the lives of the baptized. This approach celebrates who we are in Christ, what God has called us to do, and the resources God has given us to do this meaningful work. It also fosters gratitude and generosity in the individuals and the faith community. Naturally, this should be something we practice in our daily lives. Hence, the need for understanding and developing Year-Round Stewardship practices.

When we begin regularly to share the stories of ministry and what God is doing in our midst, and give thanks to God and to those doing these ministries, as well as those who support the church's ministries through stewardship of their financial resource, we take huge leaps toward Year-Round Stewardship in our churches.

So as we continue and complete the season of Annual Giving campaigns, I would urge you to examine the language you use and make sure that the focus is on your church's mission and not on money or "the budget." No one gives to a budget, they give to the ministries of the church. By focusing on your mission and ministries you will provide a stepping stone into the world of Year-Round Stewardship as we journey into the new Church year.

Remember, stewardship is not a choice; it permeates everything we do. The choice is whether or not we will be good stewards or poor stewards of God's blessings and therefore, of the Gospel.

Blessings,

Fr. David

Adapted from: *Lance Ousley who is the Canon for Stewardship and Development in The Episcopal Diocese of Olympia and Secretary, The Episcopal Network for Stewardship.*