



**PARISH STEWARDSHIP MANUAL**  
**OVERVIEW OF STEWARDSHIP**  
**Part 1 of 4**



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**Last Updated 28<sup>th</sup> October 2004**

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# 1 Foreword

This guide is written for Parish Priests, and for lay leaders called to assist in the process of fostering an environment in which stewardship is understood and **ultimately** becomes “A Way of Life”.

In recent decades people have struggled in resisting the evil “ism’s”, consumerism, individualism, materialism and hedonism. We are bombarded every day with messages that tell us we don’t have enough. The result... we find ourselves living with poverty, homelessness, high unemployment, out-of-control consumer debt, and a planet in which the environment is seriously threatened. There is a need to re-examine our priorities and respond to the question, “What does Jesus expect a community of people to be?”

Pondering this question forces us to look at the bigger picture. Stewardship is not a quick fix solution but rather a gradual re-focusing of our priorities in the six zones of stewardship – God, family, church, the workplace, community and the world.

Sharing the joy of stewardship provides us with the opportunity to build holy places in our lives, our parishes, our community and the world. As good stewards we understand that all we have – our families, our talents, our financial resources, our very lives – are all gifts given to us by a good and gracious God. One day God will require an accounting of the use each of us has made of the particular portion of these gifts entrusted to us.

*“Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.” 1 Peter 4:10*

This guide is **not** a blueprint or prescription. Stewardship education and formation hinges on the Parish Priest and parish Lay leadership having their own vision of a Stewardship Parish and a Pastoral plan that draws on all the gifts God has placed in the parish community. Stewardship is a gradual conversion of heart, mind, and values. The result is a parish community that develops an even deeper relationship with God, through the integration of prayer, nurturing the family, service and generously sharing in proportion to what we have been given.

“What you are is God’s gift ... What you become is your gift to God”

## 2 The Theology of Stewardship

This section is a summary of the United States Bishops’ 1992 Pastoral Letter on Stewardship.

### 2.1 To Be A Christian Steward

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

What identifies a steward? Safeguarding material and human resources and using them responsibly are one answer; so is generous giving of time, talent, and treasure. But being a Christian steward means more. As Christian stewards, we receive God's gifts gratefully, cultivate them responsibly, share them lovingly in justice with others, and return them with increase to the Lord.

## **Disciples as Stewards**

Let us begin with being a disciple - a follower of our Lord Jesus Christ. As members of the Church, Jesus calls us to be disciples. This has astonishing implications:

- Mature disciples make a conscious decision to follow Jesus, no matter what the cost.
- Christian disciples experience conversion—life-shaping changes of mind and heart—and commit their very selves to the Lord.
- Christian stewards respond in a particular way to the call to be a disciple. Stewardship has the power to shape and mould our understanding of our lives and the way in which we live.

Jesus' disciples and Christian stewards recognize God as the origin of life, giver of freedom, and source of all things. We are grateful for the gifts we have received and are eager to use them to show our love for God and for one another. We look to the life and teaching of Jesus for guidance in living as Christian stewards.

## **Stewards of Creation**

The Bible contains a profound message about the stewardship of material creation: God created the world, but entrusts it to human beings. Caring for and cultivating the world involves the following:

- joyful appreciation for the God-given beauty and wonder of nature;
- protection and preservation of the environment, which would be the stewardship of ecological concern;
- respect for human life—shielding life from threat and assault, doing everything that can be done to enhance this gift and make life flourish; and
- development of this world through noble human effort—physical labour, the trades and professions, the arts and sciences. We call such effort work.

Work is a fulfilling human vocation. The Second Vatican Council points out that, through work, we build up not only our world but the kingdom of God, already present among us. Work is a partnership with God—our share in a divine—human collaboration in creation. It occupies a central place in our lives as Christian stewards.

## **Stewards of Vocation**

Jesus calls us, as his disciples, to a new way of life—the Christian way of life—of which stewardship is part.

But Jesus does not call us as nameless people in a faceless crowd. He calls us individually, by name. Each one of us—clergy, religious, lay person; married, single; adult, and child—has a personal vocation. God intends each of us to play a unique role in carrying out the divine plan.

The challenge, then, is to understand our role—our vocation—and to respond generously to this call from God. Christian vocation entails the practice of stewardship. In addition, Christ calls each of us to be stewards of our personal vocations, which we receive from God.

## **Stewards of the Church**

Stewards of God's gifts are not passive beneficiaries. We cooperate with God in our own redemption and in the redemption of others.

We are also obliged to be stewards of the Church—collaborators and co-operators in continuing the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, which is the Church's essential mission. This mission—proclaiming and teaching, serving and sanctifying—is our task. It is the personal responsibility of each one of us as stewards of the Church.

All members of the Church have their own roles to play in carrying out its mission:

- parents, who nurture their children in the light of faith;
- parishioners, who work in concrete ways to make their parishes true communities of faith and vibrant sources of service to the larger community;
- all Catholics, who give generous support—time, money, prayers, and personal service according to their circumstances—to parish and diocesan programs and to the universal Church.

### **Obstacles to Stewardship**

People who want to live as Christian disciples and Christian stewards face serious obstacles.

In Australia and other nations, a dominant secular culture often contradicts religious convictions about the meaning of life. This culture frequently encourages us to focus on ourselves and our pleasures. At times, we can find it far too easy to ignore spiritual realities and to deny religion a role in shaping human and social values.

As Catholics who have entered into the mainstream of Australian society and experienced its advantages, many of us also have been adversely influenced by this secular culture. We know what it is to struggle against selfishness and greed, and we realise that it is harder for many today to accept the challenge of being a Christian steward.

It is essential, therefore, that we make a special effort to understand the true meaning of stewardship and live accordingly.

### **A Steward's Way**

The life of a Christian steward models the life of Jesus. It is challenging and even difficult, in many respects, yet intense joy comes to those who take the risk to live as Christian stewards. Women and men who seek to live as stewards learn that "all things work for good for those who love God" (**Rom 8:28**).

After Jesus, we look to Mary as an ideal steward. As the Mother of Christ, she lived her ministry in a spirit of fidelity and service; she responded generously to the call.

We must ask ourselves: Do we also wish to be disciples of Jesus Christ and Christian stewards of our world and our Church?

Central to our human and Christian vocation, as well as to the unique vocation each one of us receives from God, is that we be good stewards of the gifts we possess. God gives us this divine-human workshop, this world and Church of ours.

The spirit shows us the way.

Stewardship is a part of that journey.

### 3 An Overview of Stewardship

Stewardship is a way of life. For Christians who follow in the way of the Lord Jesus, stewardship is an expression of discipleship. When we recognise that God is the origin of all life, the giver of everything that we have and are, the source of our freedom and giftedness, the healthy person responds by thanking God through prayer, by serving God and God's people through ministry, by sharing our financial resources with those in need. Stewardship is a way of life based upon conversion of heart.

Why conversion? Because too often our hearts lack the vision and compassion that makes us true followers of Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament the prophet Ezekiel, speaking for God, makes this statement: "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26). Our God is a promise-maker; our God is a promise-keeper. When the Holy Spirit breaks into our lives our hearts become prayerful, our ministry joyful, and our generosity extravagant.

Stewards do four things:

- receive God's gifts gratefully
- nurture God's gifts responsibly
- share God's gifts justly and charitably
- return those gifts to God abundantly

Gratitude is the cornerstone of stewardship. All is gift for those who see life with the eyes of faith. God gives us our existence and talents, our time and our financial resources, our family and friends. Stewards express their gratitude by a life of generosity.

Stewards are serious about naming and developing the gifts and talents given to them for the sake of the community. As one poet asks: "What have you done with the garden entrusted to you?" (Antonio Machado) Responsibility and accountability are part of our call as disciples.

Stewards share. What has been given to us is not simply for our own use. Recipients are to become benefactors. So we return to the Lord and our needy sisters and brothers a just and sacrificial portion of all that comes our way.

A theology of stewardship looks to the future. Our lives here on earth are relatively short. One day we return to the Lord from whom we came. If we have lived in Christ and in the Spirit, then we will bear fruit, abundant fruit. Stewards yield a rich harvest.

Stewardship as a way of life based upon conversion of heart is broad in its range and demanding in its claim. Stewardship embraces all of life and challenges us to be faithful to our calling. The following passage articulates the range of this way of life:

*“Stewardship plays an important role in the lives of people who seek to follow Christ. In particular, Christians must be stewards of their personal vocations, for it is these that show how, according to the circumstances of their individual lives, God wants them to cherish and serve a broad range of interests and concerns: life and health, along with their intellectual and spiritual well being and that of others; material goods and resources; the natural environment; the cultural heritage of humankind.”*

Using the image of a garden we might ask ourselves the question – how well have we or are we tending the following gardens of our life?

- the garden of our body (physical garden)
- the garden of family – friends (social garden)
- the garden of the globe (ecological garden)
- the garden of choices (moral garden)
- the garden of our emotions (psychological garden)
- the garden of the city/nation (political garden)
- the garden of the “chip” (technological garden)
- the garden of history (historical garden)
- the garden of mind (intellectual garden)
- the garden of the arts (cultural garden)
- the garden of money (economic garden)
- the garden of our soul (spiritual garden)

Obviously, these gardens overlap and intersect. But each of them calls for a certain amount of tending and care. Each person must decide on how he or she will allocate their limited time and resources in attempting to be good stewards of these many gardens.

## **4 Stewardship: A Way of Life**

Over the years many people in talking of stewardship have used the categories of time, talent, and treasure. In our stewardship thrust, we will be using the terms prayer, service, and sharing.

### **4.1 Stewardship of Prayer**

Prayer is about our relationship with God. The most recent doctor of the Church, St. Therese of Lisieux, speaks of prayer in this way: “For me, prayer is an aspiration of the heart, it is a simple glance directed to heaven, it is a cry of gratitude and love in the midst of trial as well as joy; finally, it is something great, supernatural, which expands the soul and unites me to Jesus.”

Stewards nurture their relationship with God by having a prayer life. Whether that is two minutes or two hours a day, listening and responding to God is at the core of the disciple’s life. At times the prayer will be that of thanksgiving. At other times the prayer will be that of praise or petition or forgiveness.

Whether private or communal prayer, the purpose is to stay connected to God so as to do the divine will.

This dimension of stewardship can be measured to some degree. Of the 168 hours per week, of the 144 daily ten-minute segments, how much time do we use in prayer? And, of course, the most important prayer of all is the Eucharist in which we hear God's word and receive Jesus in the Eucharist. Stewards are Eucharistic people.

## **4.2 Stewardship of Service**

Ministry is about gifts and needs. We name and nurture the gifts God has given us; we place these gifts at the service of those in need. Ministries are many in number and find expression in the areas of worship, education, community, social justice, leadership, and evangelisation. The Epistle of St. Peter reminds us: "As each one has received a gift, use it to serve another as good stewards of God's varied graces" (1 Peter 4:10).

A theology of ministry and service emphasises that it is not so much that we do things for others but rather Jesus is doing something for others through us. Being aware of the difference between "for" and "through" changes our whole manner of service. That is why prayer is so important: it keeps reminding us that all stewardship is ultimately the work of the Lord taking place through the actions of faithful disciples.

Jesus came not to be served but to serve. Through baptism and confirmation we are called to a life of commitment to the wounded of the world. The Eucharist strengthens us in that mission and the Christian community hopefully support us in our responsibilities.

## **4.3 Stewardship of Sharing**

How we earn and spend our money is both a highly personal issue as well as a social concern. Having access to someone's cheque book is also having access to that person's value system. "*For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.*" *Matthew 6:21*

Stewards are generous people. Again, they have a grateful heart realising that all gifts come from the Lord. They feel an obligation to return a portion (be it 1%, 3%, 6%, 10%) to the Church and other charities. They refuse to be co-opted by a culture of greed and live a life of hoarding. A tough question has to be asked: can a person claim to be a disciple of the Lord if they are not sharing generously of their financial resources?

A strange phenomenon happens in the stewardship world. The greater the generosity and the greater the sacrifice, the greater the joy. Joy, according to some authors, is impossible without generosity. And as one author states, joy is the infallible sign of God's presence.

## **4.4 A Wider Approach to Fundraising**

While it is important to recognise what subtle messages we may be giving in our fundraising efforts, it is far more important to fit fundraising into the larger scheme of pastoral work. It is essential to ask ourselves, what it is we are trying to accomplish in the broad scope of our work and mission in the Church. How do we want people to image their God? How do we want them to see themselves and their relationship with God? How do we want them to look at their world and measure their lives? In short, where are we trying to take them spiritually? Implicitly and unintentionally, or explicitly and intentionally, we are constantly shaping the religious vision of people.

It would be good if we could first name what we are trying to accomplish overall as pastoral and spiritual leaders and then make our fundraising not only fit that larger project, but also serve it. Fundraising would not

then stand out on its own as an isolated task, but it would be integrated into our overall task as spiritual leaders. It would help shape vision in congregations and enable people to see themselves and their resources in a new way, a gospel way.

There are many approaches to fundraising and many theologies to back them up. Tithing, stewardship, and sacrificial giving are but a few of the key concepts used in fundraising programs available today. The problem with many of these theologies is that they take giving as the starting point for their theological reflection. Giving is the response that is sought and theology is used to provide a rationale for that giving. It would be far better pastorally, however, to think through theologically one's whole pastoral approach and allow the theme of giving to flow naturally out of that.

## 5 The Changing Role of the Laity

By implementing the stewardship education process in a parish one can expect that the parishioners will be more actively involved in parish life. This happens as they come to realise the place of God in their lives and the responsibility to share a living active faith, and to pass it on to the next generation. They will develop a greater desire to be Christ to one another, to care for each other, and to share their gifts with those in need.

As stewardship grows in the parish, more parishioners will make themselves available to serve others. There will be some resistance, however. People, including the Parish Priests, may resist change. It may be helpful to consider why there is resistance to change:

1. A desire not to lose something of value. If a small few have “*always taken care of things*”, they may feel that others cannot do it as well as they did. It helps to understand that God has given all of us individual talents, and that when we share these talents in the community we all benefit.
2. Misunderstanding change can be the greatest obstacle to change. Good communication from the beginning of the process will help deal with this problem. Education is extremely important. Education leads to knowledge and understanding, which leads to belief. The key to motivation is belief. The education component included in the process is critical.
3. Others will resist out of “fear”. They may not be ready to step out of their comfort zones. They may respond by saying, “*But I’ve never done anything like this before*” or “*I don’t feel like I have the necessary skills or knowledge*”. It is important to remember that, we must seek to discover and develop the gifts that God gives to each of us – gifts that enable us to fulfil the various vocations to which we are called.
4. Some still may not see the joy of stewardship, patience, persistence and prayer is needed. Stewardship as a way of life involves a gradual conversion.

*“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness. ”*

**Romans 12:2, 6-8**

## 6 Stewardship – A Summary

- a way of life.
- sharing our faith, evangelisation.
- an expression of discipleship by having the power to change how we live our daily lives.
- acknowledging that all that we have – each day, our talents, our families, our material goods – are gifts from God.
- gratefully acknowledging all the gifts God has given us and using these gifts to benefit our family, the Church, the community, and the world, while encouraging others to do the same.
- recognising Jesus, who gave his very life for us, as the ultimate steward and through the holy Eucharist, becoming more like Jesus each day. Can we follow Him onto the cross or only to the cross?
- following faithfully, sharing generously and lovingly, living responsibly and possessing sensibly.
- a 7-day-a-week Catholic Christian – our actions demonstrating to those around an attitude of hope, faith, charity and welcome.
- using our talents wisely and for the benefit of others.
- challenging that which seems unjust in society.
- using the resources of God’s gift of the earth wisely.
- being faithful and generous out of gratitude and love more than duty.
- becoming a community of disciples of Jesus working together and stewarding the life of the parish

## 7 Stewardship – Questions & Answers

### 7.1 *What does the word “stewardship” mean?*

Answer: Oxford dictionary defines stewardship as, being accountable for the management of another’s assets. The Church defines stewardship as:  
Acknowledging God as Creator and Owner of all that we are and all that we have. Our families, our talents, our faith, our wealth, our time, our very lives are all gifts from God. Stewards are caretakers of these gifts. Stewardship is receiving these gifts with gratitude. It is following faithfully, sharing our gifts lovingly and generously, living responsibly and possessing sensibly. Stewardship is responsible management of our gifts of time, talent and resources. It enhances our

relationship with God and each other. Being a “Good Steward” brings peace of mind and balance to our lifestyles.

## **7.2 What difference will, being a “Good Steward”, make in my life?**

Answer: The difference will be seen in our relationships, especially our relationship with God. Recognising God as the Giver of all that we have and all that we are brings us closer to God. Stewardship also builds happy healthy families and communities. Above all stewardship brings peace of mind and balance to our lives when we use all the gifts we having been given responsibly, trusting in God to provide us with all we need. Stewardship changes our motivation for sharing from ‘**giving to a need**’ to ‘**needing to give in gratitude**’ – for all that we have been given.

## **7.3 Isn’t committing to Stewardship asking a lot of me?**

Answer: At first it would appear that yes, stewardship is asking a lot of us. It challenges our current emphasis on materialism, consumerism and leisure time. It is important to remember that God does expect us to enjoy the fruits of our labour, stewardship simply challenges us to prioritise differently. It is an **attitude of gratitude**. It is a gradual conversion of heart, mind, and values. We become better managers of what we have been given. It brings peace of mind to our lives and the amazing thing about stewardship is that it is profoundly rewarding. So does stewardship ask a lot of us? In light of today’s consumerism perhaps, but when considering the benefits to family and community, definitely not!

## **7.4 Is Stewardship just another way the Church asks for more money?**

Answer: No! Stewardship is a complete lifestyle. It is our faith in action. Stewardship builds stronger relationships with God, family and community. Stewardship is about being Christ-centred rather than self-centred. Profound gratitude, justice and love become the fundamental motives for sharing. Stewardship takes a positive view of money. It sees money not as a medium of exchange but as a symbol of the person who has it. We reveal something about who we are by how we acquire it, use it and share it. It is not about giving to the needs of the parish budget; it is about needing to give out of gratitude to God.

*“For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints.” (2 Cor. 8:3-4)*

## **7.5 Am I expected to give all of my time, skill and resources to the church?**

Answer: No. Giving is not limited to the church. Most people give of their time, skill and resources to organisations outside the church. Stewardship is not limited to your individual parish. There are six zones of stewardship: God, family, church, community, work and the world. The percentage of time, skill and resources you give to the church requires personal prayer and reflection.

## **7.6 How important is it that children are taught about Stewardship?**

Answer: It is very important. Children today are struggling with a lot of issues. Not the least of which is self-esteem. What better way to build their self-esteem than by helping them realise they are a gift from God that they too have talents they can share with others. More and more parents are encouraging their children to return a percentage of their allowance or other income through the use of children's envelopes. Serving as altar servers or in the choir, or helping collect food and clothing for the poor, are wonderful opportunities for our young people to learn about stewardship. They too, are part of our community, our families. Encouraging them to share their gifts shows them that they are seen as gifts to us. Understanding stewardship at a young age builds a strong foundation for a life of receiving gratefully, living responsibly, and sharing generously.

## **7.7 What can Stewardship do for our Parish?**

Answer: There are three vital ingredients necessary for stewardship to come alive in a parish. The first is an active stewardship team that meets regularly. A second ingredient for stewardship success is a commitment to initiate and sustain *on-going stewardship education and formation*. The final ingredient is celebrating and renewing stewardship commitments annually.

## **7.8 What is Stewardship of Time and Service and how important is it?**

Answer: Giving of 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 skills 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 skills for the good of others.

Just as in stewardship of our finances, it is important that the giving of time and service be intentional, planned and proportionate. Many individuals commit a certain number of hours each week to prayer and charitable activities.

Giving of our time and skill is just as important as giving of our finances. God does not hold back on any area of His giving so we are not to hold back on any area of our giving.

## **7.9 Does paying school fees count as part of Stewardship of our Finances?**

Answer: Each person ultimately decides for him or herself what they count as their stewardship of their finances. In looking at the true meaning of stewardship, however, school fees would not be included in stewardship of finances because it is a payment made for services received. Stewardship is giving in gratitude to God with no expectation of receiving anything concrete, like an education, in return.

While school fees may not be included in stewardship of finances, it can affect the percentage of income that some families can give to the church and other charities.

## **7.10 What if I can't afford to give of my finances?**

Answer: The message of stewardship invites each of us to give our time, skill and finances in gratitude to God for our abundant blessings. For some of us, giving of our time and skill goes without saying. We recognize our giftedness and respond to the invitation to participate in the community of faith by sharing of ourselves.

Giving of our finances may seem unfeasible for many faithful Catholics, especially during trying economic times. One might ask "How can I give when I can't even make ends meet as it is?" This is where we are invited to an understanding that stewardship involves trust.

With trust and confidence in God we respond to the challenge to give of our finances and abandon ourselves to the providence of God. We accept that God is the controller of our lives. In trust and confidence we find that as we share, we shall be cared for in our needs; maybe not all of our wants, but certainly our needs.

Regardless of our circumstances, a life committed to stewardship includes giving of our finances as well as our time and skill. Our giving may begin small in size, and may be increased over time, but the key to our giving lies in our trust. When we give back to God from our "first fruits", we find that He will provide for our needs.

## **7.11 What about all the people in my parish who give nothing at all?**

Answer: The question is not "What about them?" It is "What about me?" As we grow in our Christian faith, we learn to become more honest with ourselves before God. Rather than scrutinize those around us regarding their giving, we turn within ourselves and ask "Is my giving enough? Am I truly giving to God from my first fruits, or am I giving God what is left over after all of my needs are met?"

While it is natural for us to compare what we do to what others do, our Christian faith calls us to consider how our actions conform to what God would have us do. In comparing ourselves to others we are missing the mark because as Christians we are called to be different from other people. Living a life committed to stewardship is part of that different way of living.

Each of us can find in our own hearts the seeds of faults we spot so easily in others. Our giving should not be based on what others give. Giving, rather, involves a personal decision we must make for ourselves, and then we offer our gifts to our parish and the community.

## **7.12 How can I commit to Stewardship of my skills if I don't have any skills?**

Answer: It would be difficult if you indeed had no skills but the truth is every one has at least one skill. Most people in fact have several skills and a few people have many. Some people have musical or artistic talents. Others are good at teaching, cooking, organizing things or encouraging others. Some people work well with children or the elderly while others are good writers or good listeners.

The number of skills we have is not the important thing. What is important is that we take time to discover the skills we have, develop and use them for the benefit of others.

In looking at our skills it is important not to confuse having a skill with excelling in a specific area. For example, you don't have to have the best voice to join the choir and remember, you can always do one thing better than everyone else and they can always do something better than you.

### **7.13 Why is it important to renew our commitment to Stewardship annually?**

Answer: It is important for a number of reasons. First, the message of stewardship like other messages in Scripture and teachings of the Church needs to be presented on a regular basis. Without those regular reminders and encouragements regarding Bible messages and Church teachings, we have a tendency to revert back to old ways. Second, just like in our spiritual life, we can always grow in our stewardship life. Renewing our commitment to stewardship gives us the opportunity to take the next step in increasing our giving of time, service and our finances. Third, there are those current members of the parish who did not participate in the previous year's stewardship program. Renewal gives them another opportunity to become involved in stewardship. Fourth, new people arriving in the parish since the last program will have the chance to commit to stewardship, many for the first time.

## **8 Establishing a Stewardship Team**

It is suggested that each parish form a permanent Stewardship Team, which will function year-round. Stewardship is an on-going programme, not a one-time event.

### **8.1 Stewardship Team – Mission (An Example)**

To develop and foster a Christian Community atmosphere whereby the spiritual and social needs of parishioners can be realised through a total stewardship programme of time, service and sharing of finances resulting in a sense of belonging, involvement and commitment for each parishioner.

### **8.2 Responsibilities of the Stewardship Team**

Each parish team will develop ideas and action plans based on the particular gifts God has placed within each parish community. The team's responsibilities may include but are certainly not limited to the following:

#### **8.2.1 Carry out the stewardship effort on an annual basis.**

These efforts usually run two or 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 Parish Priest would deliver a homily on stewardship and a lay person or couple would give a personal testimony on how stewardship is lived out in their life or lives. The last weekend would always be a Commitment Sunday, where parishioners would bring their commitment cards of time, service, and sharing to Mass and place them in the plate. The Parish Stewardship Manual provides details of an Annual Renewal.

#### **8.2.2 Recruit people to share their personal stewardship testimonies**

The lay witness testimony is probably the most educational, motivational and important part of the stewardship effort. The lay witness talk makes stewardship very real and practical for the people in the pews. The lay witnesses should be individuals from the parish who believe and practice the principals of stewardship in their own lives—those who give of their time, service and share their finances.

### **8.2.3 Prepare and keep up to date parish ministry bulletin**

A time and service list or bulletin gives parishioners an opportunity to become aware of the number and type of volunteer ministries available in the parish. Some parishes may have ten volunteer opportunities; others may have fifty. They may range from altar server to youth group counsellor. Some parishes develop an actual pamphlet or catalogue that provides a detailed description of each group or activity. Others may use a simple listing with little details. While the primary emphasis is on current groups or activities, items that you would like to start, such as welcoming team or an activity in support of the homeless, can be added.

### **8.2.4 Ensure volunteers are contacted and asked to become involved**

It is important that the stewardship team works with the appropriate parish commissions and groups to ensure that those who commit of their time and service are personally invited to become involved. This activity of the team is probably its most challenging task. It takes planning before the two or three weekend effort and follow-up after commitment Sunday to make sure people who volunteer actually become involved. If people are not contacted and instead just have their names put in a book or in a computer, then they will not get involved in future stewardship efforts. They will also start to believe that stewardship is only about money.

### **8.2.5 Evaluate the stewardship effort and awareness efforts annually**

All elements of the stewardship effort 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 get stewardship information out to people? What kind of results are we getting 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 symptoms of spiritual change are evident in the parish?

### **8.2.6 Publicise weekly stewardship thoughts and reflections in the bulletin**

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 people on a regular basis. These reflections can include Scripture quotes; quotes from books, magazines and newspapers; or ideas that you jot down while going about stewardship work in your parish.

Stewardship reflections could also be included. They would include profiles of individuals or couples in the parish who live lives committed to stewardship, questions and answers on stewardship, thoughts on stewardship, commentaries on stewardship, ministry spotlights, etc. You may also want to consider producing a special newsletter each year that focuses only on stewardship.

### **8.2.7 Make appropriate stewardship literature available**

Including stewardship brochures or pamphlets in the booklet rack provides people the opportunity to read and learn more about stewardship apart from any brochures that may be used for the annual effort. You may want to rotate three or four brochures throughout the year.

### **8.2.8 Incorporate comments about stewardship in the Sunday homilies.**

The team could suggest that the priest(s) incorporate comments about stewardship in the Sunday homilies on a monthly basis. In looking at the three-year cycle of gospel readings, there are 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 can be incorporated into the context of the entire homily.

### **8.2.9 Encourage support through the Prayers of the Faithful at Mass.**

The team can develop Prayers of the Faithful with a stewardship message that can be prayed at regular intervals throughout the year. Typically one stewardship prayer among all the other Prayers of the Faithful would be sufficient.

### **8.2.10 Develop a welcoming programme for new parishioners.**

Work with the appropriate parish teams to develop programmes for welcoming parishioners, whether it is by personal visits, in group meetings, or through the mail. Be sure to include a discussion of and materials about stewardship in the presentation and/or in the material distributed.

### **8.2.11 Develop a commissioning service for those who volunteer**

Work with the Liturgy Team 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 Prayers of the Faithful.

#### **8.2.11.1 Commissioning Service – Example**

**COMMISSIONING CEREMONY FOR MINISTRIES** (It is recommended that this take place after the Homily)

**PRIEST:** Today we rejoice for God has given us a great gift. The Good News, which is his Son Jesus, has been given to us. We have and share in a responsibility of ministering to others, passing on the Good News, to announce Christ by word, to believers and unbelievers. Some of the members of our parish have responded in a special formal way to proclaim this Good News. We now call them forth.

**COMMENTATOR:** (may be a parish leader, such as a head of the pastoral council). Let those about to be commissioned as ministers in our parish come forward. [Call the name of each ministry to be commissioned and the names of the people for that ministry.]

**PRIEST:** My brothers and sisters, Jesus said, ‘Go therefore, make disciples of all the nations.’ Will you continue to grow as disciples of the Lord by making every effort to hear the Word of God, integrate the Word into your lives and share the Word with others?

**MINISTERS:** I Will.

**PRIEST:** Are you prepared to fulfil all the responsibilities, which your ministry requires in fostering the faith of those directly entrusted to you (in the ministry of \_\_\_\_\_)?

**MINISTERS:** I Will.

**PRIEST:** Then this community of faith gratefully accepts your willingness to respond to God’s call, and I commission you to be ministers to the parish community. [turning to the community] My brothers and sisters, realising that we all share the call to ministry, do you pledge your support, through prayers, witness, and participation, for these men and women called by God from our midst and commissioned as ministers in our parish

**COMMUNITY:** We Do.

**PRIEST:** [to the ministers]. Receive this (some appropriate physical object) as a sign of your commitment to the ministry of \_\_\_\_\_ in our parish community. It carries with it our pledge of support through witness, work, and prayer.

**BLESSING OF MINISTERS:**

**PRIEST:** May God Bless you who will minister to this community, so that carefully performing the tasks entrusted to you, you may shepherd and feed the people of this parish and give glory to God in Heaven.

**COMMUNITY:** Amen.

**COMMENTATOR:** Let us show our support and recognition of their commitment. (through applause or whatever method is appropriate.)

### **8.2.12 Show appreciation for those in parish volunteer ministry.**

Gratitude is an important element of stewardship. Find a way to say “thank-you” to those people who volunteer in the parish. This could involve something as simple as an appreciation reception after Mass or as elaborate as a catered dinner.

### **8.2.13 Develop stewardship education for children, youth and adults**

The question of stewardship education for children and young adults is being addressed at Diocesan level and further information will be available in due course.

It is important to work with your RCIA team to ensure the catechumens and candidates have a good understanding of stewardship.

### **8.2.14 Add a children’s component to your parish stewardship effort.**

Include children in your 2 or 3 weekend stewardship effort. Consider forming a sub-team to address the entire field of children’s stewardship. Providing envelopes to children may be considered. The envelopes can be used to include a portion of their pocket money or a few lines on a piece of paper explaining how they lived that week as a steward.

### **8.2.15 Provide continuing education for your stewardship team**

The chairperson of the stewardship team should make sure each member receives the most current stewardship awareness information provided by the Diocese.

### **8.2.16 Develop an annual plan.**

Each team should develop a detailed yearly plan that includes the organisation and preparation for the 3 or 4 weekend effort as well as monthly awareness activities.

### **8.2.17 Expand your focus beyond the parish.**

Consider spreading the message of stewardship beyond the parish. One way to do that is to encourage the Broken Bay News to print stewardship profiles or stewardship questions and answers. You may even want to supply the paper with your own profiles and questions and answers.

Stewardship does not end when we leave the church on Sunday. The stewardship team should seek opportunities to be good stewards in the surrounding community and indeed, the world.

It is important to remember that the team members delegate responsibilities. They are not expected to do everything themselves. After all, being a good steward involves recognising the talents of others and being open to the ideas that others have to offer. When others embrace stewardship and are willing to share their time and talents, good things happen.

*“These differences belong to God’s plan, who wills that each receive what he or she needs from others, and that those endowed with particular talents share the benefits with those who need them. These differences encourage and often oblige persons to practice generosity, kindness and sharing of goods.”\**

*\*Catechism of the Catholic Church #1937*

## **9 Transforming Volunteers into Ministers**

### **9.1 Why do we need a new approach?**

Parishes have always had systems for finding lay volunteers for various ministries in the Church. Some have worked well; others have not. Traditionally two systems have been used. Does either of these seem familiar?

#### **9.1.1 Recruit! Recruit! Recruit!**

In this system church leaders invest a lot of time in *recruiting* people whom they believe are the appropriate people for the job; whether it be a catechism teacher, lector, youth minister, etc. Then they put them to work and forget them. There is little time spent matching the person to the ministry. The volunteer minister is provided minimal orientation and often left with little or no follow-up, support or supervision. This system certainly does not provide encouragement for others to come forward.

#### **9.1.2 Pleading from the Pulpit**

This system is characterised by fussing over the need for more volunteers. Sometimes even good old fashion “guilt” is employed as the Parish Priest or lay leader pleads from the pulpit for more involvement – “*Our children won’t have Catechism Classes this year if we don’t get more people to volunteer as teachers!*” Often volunteer sign up sheets will be distributed at Mass on Sunday. Some parishioners in the pews will respond; of those that do some may never receive a call, and disillusioned by offering to help yet not being called, may never volunteer again.

These two approaches, while working to some extent, never result in sustained volunteer ministry growth. The reason for this is that it is usually the same people every year working in lay ministries. These members are

over-worked and suffering burnout from lack of support and training. Others are satisfied being passive recipients of ministry, rather than being actively involved in the life of the parish community. In addition, some very gifted volunteers leave the church to serve elsewhere when the church is too poorly organised to respond to the offer of their gifts.

## **10 A better approach – motivation through belief!**

How do we motivate people to move from “pew-sitters” to “volunteers”?

How do we transform “volunteerism” into “shared ministry”?

A shared ministry system, based upon the principles of Stewardship, is the answer to the above questions. Each person has a unique gift package of interests, motivations, experiences, dreams, needs, skills, strengths and weaknesses and much more. In a shared ministry system parishioners are encouraged to discover their gifts. Stewardship takes the process from “volunteerism”, or *responding to a need*, to “shared ministry”, or *responding to a call* – our baptismal call. This happens as people begin to see their individual talents as a gift from God. Understanding and believing this they are then motivated to act out of a sense of gratitude for the gifts of each day (time) and the talents God has bestowed on them. Sharing their time and skills becomes an expression of their faith; it is their faith in action!

*“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them ‘Go in peace, keep warm and eat your fill’, and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what good is that? So faith by itself, if it has no works is dead.” James 2:14-17*

Having properly motivated people through belief, they are now ready to take action. There are some processes that need to be followed to develop our parish ministries. They include, and these will be explained in more complete detail in the following pages; planning, designing, recruiting, matching, training, support, evaluating and managing. The needs of the parish must be established with input from the community. This is the first step in planning. Parishioners then must discern their individual gifts. They must be invited personally, given the opportunity to share their skills where best suited, and supported with training and encouragement. Stewardship empowers the faith community. In addition to people recognising their own skills as gifts from God, they come to see each other as a gift from God and a gift to the community.

## **11 Discovering the Gifts of the People**

It is important for people to be given the opportunity to reflect upon their gifts before they give consideration to becoming involved in a ministry.

Please refer to Appendix B – Personal Reflection Guide. The guide incorporates a table where current and proposed future ministry involvement can be identified.

## **12 Developing Lay Ministries – The Process**

1. Planning

2. Designing
3. Recruiting
4. Matching
5. Training
6. Supervising
7. Supporting
8. Evaluating
9. Managing

At the centre of the various ministries of the parish are the gifts of the people. If the gifts of the people are to be connected to the challenges and opportunities of the community following the above process is critical.

*\* Note:*

**This model is taken from – “*Sharing the Ministry - A Practical Guide for Transforming Volunteers into Ministers*”** by Jean Morris Trumbauer.

## **12.1 Planning**

There are several important factors to consider when planning ministries in our parish.

These include the size of the parish, and the existing attitudes toward the sharing of time and skill. There may not yet be a sufficient number of motivated parishioners to implement all the ministries we would like to see developed. What does the parish community see as the ministry needs of the Church and community? Having the input of parishioners empowers them to take ownership of the ministry.

## **12.2 Designing**

There are three concepts to keep in mind when designing a ministry – *intentionality, creativity, and diversity*. We cannot continue to do what’s always been done. We must intentionally plan our response to the needs of the parish. Creativity refers to the need to be open to new ideas in how we plan our ministries. Diversity means we must draw on the many diverse experiences, interests and talents of the parish community.

## **12.3 Recruiting**

One method of recruiting presented in this guide is the “Time and Service” opportunities form. Two things are critical to the success of this form. First, the form must provide enough information. This will avoid the comment “ *I did not realise that the church even offered that service to our community.*” Secondly, immediately follow up with those who respond. Another method of recruiting, ***personal invitation*** is a most effective method. Furthermore it can be done anytime, and as frequently as needed, whereas “Time and Service” opportunity forms are distributed usually just once a year.

## **12.4 Matching**

There are two differences between those who sign a recruitment form and those who receive a personal invitation. The latter is likely a good match for the ministry. The individual signing up will likely require more information in order to ensure a good match. Once this has been established and a commitment made, it is very important that the individual receives acknowledgement through a thank you letter.

## **12.5 Training**

Training can take place in many different ways. Whichever is used, training gives the person confidence and stresses the importance of the ministry.

## **12.6 Supervising**

As lay ministers develop in their ministry, there are five commonly asked questions.

- Why am I here?
- Where am I going?
- How am I doing?
- Where can I go when I need help?
- What's in it for me?

The Parish Priest and/or lay leader provides a supervisory role. He or she is the resource person the lay minister looks to for leadership.

## **12.7 Supporting**

*“No one ever said thanks.”* Gratitude is very important! There are many ways to say thank you. Many parishes hold annual Lay Minister Appreciation social events. Whatever is done, showing gratitude for the sharing of their time and talent is vital. Support also involves encouragement and help along the way.

## **12.8 Evaluating**

Evaluating does not mean checking up on people. The goal is to help lay ministers assess their own growth and identify additional resources required. It also provides an opportunity to share ideas for ways to improve their ministry. Supervisors can also learn how they can be more helpful.

## **12.9 Managing Data**

How can we know where we are going if we do not know where we have been? Managing data involves the following two processes; the first, is keeping track of what has worked and what has not in the ministry so we can guide the ministry in the future. The second is to have a good system of coordinating the people who have offered to share their time and talent so that no one falls through the cracks. We don't want to hear *“I offered to help but no one has ever called me”* or *“I've only been called once!”*

# **13 Sharing our Resources**

## **13.1 Giving Back the “First Fruits”**

Stewardship in the holistic sense cannot be complete without considering the place our resources or personal wealth has in our lives and relationships, especially our relationship to God, Creator and Giver of all.

*“Honour the Lord with your substance and with the first fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.”* Proverbs 3:9-10

Giving of our first fruits is planning our financial gifts to those in need and our church *first* and then living on the remainder. This is counter-cultural; people are accustomed to spending first, paying the bills and giving from what is left over. People have been bombarded with consumerism for years and have had little challenge

to resist it. It will take time and careful teaching to wean people away from the greed of modern life. Patience and understanding will help.

This giving from our first fruits or thanksgiving, as it is often referred to, requires a real leap of faith. It requires that we place all our trust in the Lord knowing that God will always provide what we need to meet our family's needs and financial obligations. Giving in this way, however, brings a surprising amount of peace of mind to our lifestyles knowing that He always provides, "filling our barns" and "overflowing our vats."

### **13.2 How much should I give?**

The first step in thanksgiving is accepting that even our income is a gift from God and that a "good steward" gives back some of that gift out of gratitude for having received it. Trust is the second step. The question is, how much do we give back? Giving of our first fruits is a sacrifice and a great place to start. It makes our gift deliberate and planned. The bible suggests, in many places, a Tithe or 10%. This, for many at first, would be a hardship and unrealistic. However it should be, and is a realistic goal.

One of the indirect blessings of thanksgiving is better management of our personal finances and the self-control to resist the allure of consumer debt. Whatever percentage, 2%, 5%, or 10%, a person decides to give, it will likely be more than they are accustomed to. This will be a real leap of faith for them and will occur only after they understand Stewardship. So, once again, educating creates belief, and *belief motivates*.

## **14 The Apostle Paul's Teaching on the Offertory**

*"The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work."*

### **2 Corinthians 9:6-8**

Some would argue that they have worked hard for what they have. This thought can be countered by the argument that God has given us the opportunity and the talents for such work. It is important to remember that Jesus does not condemn those that earn an honest living. We are not judged by how much we have. How we got it, and what we do with it, is more important! We cannot consider our material possessions as our own. It is through the grace of God that we have all that we have.

Given that all belongs to God, ownership calls us to good stewardship. In the care of all goods, we are God's representatives and must answer to Him for how we carry out this responsibility.

*Parish Priests should resist the temptation to focus too much attention on stewardship of money rather than on resources in a broader sense.*

*It is important to remember that it is not the financial success of the Church that will make the difference in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It will be the full and enthusiastic participation of the People of God in the Church's mission that will spread the faith, renew interest in vocations, stabilize marriage and family life, and resolve the problems of the human community.*

Stewardship needs careful planning and should be introduced for the long-term development and renewal of the parish. Those parishes that have an urgent financial need should consider a fundraising drive to meet those needs. Stewardship is not about the church's finances; too much emphasis on money could completely distort the real meaning of stewardship. The fundraising activity can be based upon stewardship concepts without "introducing stewardship to the parish". This approach has been used in parishes with success. It normally follows that the parish adopts Stewardship fully in the following year.

## 15 Stewardship Education and Formation – The Process

Our parish has established an informed and highly motivated Stewardship Team. What's next? How do we bring stewardship into the lives of the entire congregation? The process contained in this section of the guide will assist our team in doing just that.

The goal in this process is to motivate our parishioners to embrace stewardship as **a way of life!** What motivates people? What moves a person to take action?

People are commonly motivated to act in order to get something or to avoid something. They take action because they perceive a benefit or pleasure as a result of the action taken, or they want to avoid pain or discomfort. Different emotions move people to take action, including fear, guilt, desire and jealousy. Often we are motivated by the media's image of who we should be and what we should have. This kind of motivation is usually short-lived. Once we have gained pleasure or avoided pain we are no longer motivated.

A source of motivation that is lasting and results in real commitment is belief. When we believe in something – be it our faith, our mission, our goals etc. – we act not for personal gain, but because our actions support our beliefs. The emotions involved may include, love, caring, respect and gratitude.

## 16 The Good Steward

- “The Christian steward is one who receives God's gifts *gratefully*, cherishes and tends them in a *responsible* manner, *shares* them in justice and love with others, and *returns* them with increase to the Lord.”
- There are then, four essential elements to stewardship: *gratitude, responsibility, generosity, and accountability.*
- Stewardship can never be reduced to occasional acts of charity or volunteer work. It is a way of life, the response of mature disciples to discover and develop their gifts.
- Stewardship is a life of total accountability and responsibility – acknowledging God as creator and owner of all material goods and resources.
- Stewardship bonds the spiritual with the physical dimension of life. It is a free commitment in faith to use all God's gifts: the environment and its resources, products of the economy, time and talent, to support the value and dignity of all persons.

- Stewardship is a gradual conversion of heart, mind, and values. We become more responsible and accountable managers of all that we are given.
- Stewardship is what we do after we say we believe. It is our *faith in action!*
- **Stewardship is what we are called to do in response to Jesus' invitation, "Come Follow Me"**
- Stewardship is "giving because we need to give" in gratitude for what we have been given, not "giving to a need" because we feel obligated.
- Stewardship asks us to assess our gifts and then to make a conscious decision as to how much and what part of these gifts we will return to God by giving to those in need and our Church.
- Stewardship brings peace of mind and balance to the good steward's lifestyle, since he or she is freed from an over-attachment to the things of the world.
- A stewardship lifestyle is counter-cultural to our materialistic, individualistic society. We are called to be caretakers, not owners, of our time, talents, and resources. We receive gratefully, share lovingly, live responsibly and possess sensibly.

End Part 1.